

# University of West of England

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A primary initial teacher training  
Short inspection report  
2007/08

Managing inspector  
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## Introduction

The University of the West of England works in partnership with 238 schools to provide primary initial teacher education (ITE) courses. It offers three year undergraduate primary and early years programmes leading to BA (Hons) and a one-year post graduate programme, which leads to a post graduate certificate of education (PGCE). Post graduate trainees can specialise in a modern foreign language (MFL). At the time of the inspection there were 258 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: 1

The overall quality of the training is at least good.

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

## Key strengths

- the collegiate management which enables all partners, including trainees, to make an effective contribution to high quality training
- the effective systems to evaluate strengths and weaknesses and implement strategies which lead to improvement
- the cohesion, imagination and creativity of the course structure and content
- the high quality of central training
- the assessment procedures which are rigorous, robust and imaginative and model best practice very well
- the attention paid to identifying and meeting the individual training and development needs of trainees
- the attention paid to placing trainees in schools in different contexts.

## Points for consideration

- ensuring that information about the trainees' previous experience and development needs are more consistently shared with schools prior to placement
- making better use of the analysis of trainees' teaching skills to inform improvement planning at all levels.

## The quality of training

1. The strengths of the training recognised at the last inspection have been maintained and further strengths added. The structure and content of the training programme meet the Requirements very well. A particular strength is the very good focus on creativity which links subject teaching in English, mathematics and science very effectively with general professional studies. Links between creativity and strands involving the use of language across the curriculum, including humanities, the arts and English as an additional language are very strong. The university-wide graduate development programme has been successfully integrated into professional studies themes. These provide a unique and positive learning ethos which pervades all aspects of the partnership's work.

2. High quality training in the core subjects ensures that trainees have a good understanding of the National Curriculum and the Curriculum Framework for the Foundation Stage. The general professional studies programme provides trainees with a broad and balanced knowledge and understanding of the theory and practice of education. The course structure is very good and integrates themes from Every Child Matters and Excellence and Enjoyment well. As a result, trainees successfully link child development and learning theory to classroom practice. All training is focused effectively upon the Standards. The high quality of centre-based training results in trainees who are confident, passionate and inspired to teach.

3. Tutors are well qualified and have recent experience of primary education. They ensure they keep abreast of current issues in education and many regularly teach in primary schools. Tutors are very well informed, enthusiastic and provide inspiration and challenge even in areas where trainees initially lack confidence. They model good primary practice and are passionate about teaching and learning. Lectures and workshops are well planned with clear learning objectives and a good mix of activities. The content of the course ensures that trainees are very well prepared and confident in their ability to work with pupils whose first language is not English.

4. The quality of school-based training is good. Lesson observations provide clear subject specific feedback so that trainees know how well they have done in respect of their subject teaching and about their progress against the Standards. Regular reviews of trainees' progress enable school-based mentors and trainees to closely monitor progress towards meeting the Standards. The targets set following these reviews provide a sharp focus for observations. Schools are well informed in advance of the needs of trainees with potential difficulties but this good practice is not yet consistent across all placements.

5. Training is exceptionally responsive to the needs of individual trainees. Audits, tests and assessments of developing subject knowledge enable tutors to track progress accurately and take early remedial action if problems are identified. Trainees' personal action plans to remedy any identified weaknesses and their progress are regularly monitored. Tutors model high quality classroom practice very well in their use of a range of assessment opportunities and teaching styles to

support personalised learning. A very good range of learning styles is promoted including individual research, collaborative working and peer-based study groups. Trainees receive very good support from all staff including departmental technicians and the Media and Information Technologies Centre for Education.

6. Assignments are imaginative, intellectually stimulating and rigorous with very explicit links to the Standards. Tutors use a very good range of assessment procedures including presentations, audits of skills and knowledge and practical activities. Assignments seen were of high quality and illustrate very clearly trainees' commitment to their own professional development and to active, research based learning. Marking of assignments is of high quality and provides trainees with useful information about how well they are doing and how to improve further. Moderation systems are thorough.

## Management and quality assurance

7. Excellent collegiate leadership underpinned by very effective management systems enables all partners to make a strong contribution to high quality training and results in trainees who are reflective, confident and enthusiastic teachers and learners. High quality leadership and management have resulted in continued improvements in management, quality assurance and training. These improvements are supported by very good team work, attention to detail, high quality cross curricular and creative modules and the involvement of tutors in professional, subject studies and regular teaching in schools. As a result, there is very good cohesion across the courses and a rising trend of trainees achieving at the highest level.

8. The courses are increasingly popular and this enables the partnership to be more exacting in its selection criteria. Very well organised recruitment and selection systems are implemented rigorously. The university demonstrates a very strong commitment to education and this is exemplified in the close working relationship between the School of Education and the central admissions teams. This liaison ensures that the university's emphasis on inclusion and diversity is linked well with the education department's rigorous selection for teaching and the strong focus on the Every Child Matters themes. Colleagues from placement schools are fully involved in selection processes. Moderation systems are very thorough and ensure high levels of consistency. Interview procedures provide candidates with good opportunities to demonstrate their experience, attitudes and skills including their ability to work well as part of a team. Good use is made of interview tasks to identify areas of strength and aspects of literacy and numeracy which require immediate development. The partnership makes good use of the analysis of the initial audit to tailor courses and support. Procedures for checking candidates' suitability to teach are thorough.

9. The university demonstrates a very strong commitment to equal opportunities, inclusion and race equality and there are good systems, involving

colleagues in partner schools, to recruit, support and retain candidates from under-represented groups. Good systems are in place to support individuals and potentially vulnerable groups, for example men and mature trainees. As a result retention rates are good. All trainees explore issues relating to language acquisition and cultural diversity. Careful tracking of placements enables trainees to experience a rich diversity of school contexts including those with high numbers of pupils for whom English is an additional language. From being a point for consideration at the last inspection, this is now a considerable strength.

10. Partnership arrangements are very strong. Communication between the university, schools, trainees and other partners is very good and high quality documentation ensures that roles, responsibilities and expectations are very clear. The university has embarked on a series of training events for school-based staff and visiting tutors in order to further improve the quality and consistency of their support. Feedback from trainees and link tutors indicates that this is leading to improvements. Good systems are in place to support and monitor effectiveness through rigorous and regular feedback from trainees, schools, visiting tutors and link tutors. The current focus on developing a more equal partnership between the centre and partnership schools is already bearing fruit. It has resulted in good quality self evaluations to audit and inform partnership schools' widening contribution to initial teacher education. Clustering arrangements have been strengthened and provide excellent opportunities for schools to work together with link tutors to develop and share best practice.

11. Good induction and staff development systems which are linked to the strong collegiate approach ensure the high quality of centre and school-based trainers. Centre-based staff work together to plan and evaluate training, thus sharing enthusiasm and expertise. Tutors regularly undertake school based research and work alongside school based colleagues.

12. The university deploys resources very effectively. Highly regarded technical support is provided across most subjects and tutors use the dedicated classrooms well to demonstrate and share good primary practice. There are excellent library facilities and the virtual learning environment is very well used.

13. Since the last inspection, the university has worked very efficiently to improve the quality assurance and action planning process. Very thorough systems are implemented to monitor and evaluate provision and as a result, the partnership has a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development. The partnership makes good use of a wide range of information including regular feedback from schools, benchmarking data and rigorous evaluation of modules. Particularly notable is the strong commitment to encourage and enable trainees to be actively involved in shaping the learning process. As a result, trainees make a valuable contribution to course improvement. Improvement planning at all levels clearly reflects this close analysis and there is a good focus on raising trainees' professional skills and confidence. Recent action planning, which has focused on raising the achievement of early years and modern foreign languages trainees and the successful implementation of action plans, has resulted in a particularly sharp rise in the

achievement of these groups. Subject plans are very effective and feed well into the overall plan. There is a good focus on improving aspects of trainees' teaching although better use could be made of information about how well trainees teach to inform action planning and to evaluate it. Subject leaders are active in piloting ways of bringing this about.