

Hastings and Rother SCITT

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A secondary initial teacher training
full inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The Hastings and Rother School-centred Initial Teacher Training consortium comprises six schools and one further education college, and provides secondary initial teacher training courses. An additional associate school is used for trainees' placements. The consortium offers training in the 11-16 age range in mathematics, modern foreign languages and science.

Trainees spend the first year of the course attending training through evening sessions throughout the year, further training during some weekends and short periods of time in schools. This enables them to remain in employment during this first year of the course. Trainees then undertake two full-time placements, of one term each in the autumn and spring, in two different schools.

At the time of the inspection there were six trainees completing the course at the end of the spring term, and a third cohort of eleven trainees in their first year of training. The inspection focused on the six trainees completing the course this year.

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 full inspection of the provision and an inspection of the management and quality assurance arrangements.

Because of the small number of trainees involved in the course, there is no separate report on the Standards achieved by the trainees.

Grades are awarded in accordance with the following scale

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

Main inspection judgements

Quality of training: Grade: 3
Management and quality assurance: Grade: 3

The provider will receive its next inspection in accordance with the Initial Teacher Education Inspection Framework.

Key strengths

- the commitment to meeting local teacher shortages
- the leadership of the consortium
- the commitment of all staff and schools involved in the consortium
- the professional attitudes of the trainees.

Points for action

- improving recruitment and retention, particularly in mathematics and foreign languages
- sharpening monitoring and quality assurance procedures to check that training provides the quality and depth required
- clarifying the training role of subject mentors and providing them with the support required to undertake this role
- ensuring that all elements of training combine to enable trainees to make the progress of which they are capable.

Points for consideration

- providing trainees with more holistic feedback on their progress as teachers
- ensuring that trainees use the training in monitoring and assessment, differentiation and in meeting the needs of particular groups of students to improve their own practice.

The quality of training

1. The course structure, with training in the first year delivered mainly through evening sessions, presents some challenges, not least in ensuring coherence between the various elements. The consortium makes good attempts to provide trainees with some time in school during the first year of the course to develop basic teaching skills and to provide links with the training sessions. During these brief periods in school, trainees usefully work with small groups of students and teach short episodes. This has been improved further for the third cohort: there is a more even distribution of school experiences over the first year of the course, with the final school experience being in the first school where trainees will be placed in the following autumn term.

2. Trainees are provided with extensive training in the practical aspects of how to teach their subject, in the skills of class management and in the basic elements of planning. The programme of training in the first year of the course covers all of the basic elements of the subjects, as well as coordinating well with professional studies to provide a secure basis for the two school placements that follow. The assignments are used effectively to support this training. As a result, trainees are able to plan and teach competently across the age range and the breadth of their subject. The consortium carefully places trainees in schools that meet their needs, and the two placements are usually complementary to provide a breadth of teaching experiences. The schools ensure that trainees have good experiences across the full age range in terms of the breadth of the subject taught, and for modern foreign language trainees an opportunity to teach their second language. In schools, trainees receive good personal support and guidance which enable them to make progress. Trainees adopt very professional attitudes and become valued members of the school community.

3. Trainees are provided with a number of models of lesson plans, but their planning exhibits a lack of understanding of what elements need to be in a good lesson plan. In particular, a lack of focus on how intended learning outcomes will be assessed leads to lack of clarity in these intended outcomes. Whilst trainees conscientiously evaluate their teaching systematically, these evaluations lack focus on the achievement of the planned objectives. They do not inform trainees' training plan or, except in a limited pragmatic way, future lesson planning and teaching. The trainees' planning for how the needs of particular groups of students will be met is another weaker feature. Whilst these aspects are covered extensively in the training programme, trainees do not receive sufficient feedback to help them apply this training to their own practice.

4. Trainees competently use a narrow range of teaching strategies. They are encouraged to develop their own ways of teaching, but do not have the confidence to be innovative or to take risks. Trainees receive extensive and useful advice and feedback on classroom and behaviour management, and they are able to organise and manage their classes confidently and safely. The trainees are much less secure in the higher-order planning and teaching skills, such as monitoring and assessing students' progress against their intended learning outcomes, and supporting

students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with English as an additional language, and those who are identified as gifted and talented. Again, these are covered thoroughly in the training programme, but subject mentors lack the guidance and support they need to help trainees embed these into their planning and teaching.

5. The development of trainees' own subject knowledge receives extensive attention and all trainees take their personal responsibility very seriously. They have less well developed understanding of subject pedagogy. Whilst considerable attention is given, in both the initial training and in schools, to how to teach the subject, much less attention is given to a consideration of why particular approaches are more effective in developing students' understanding. Consequently, whilst trainees are given considerable freedom to work outside the scheme of work they have insufficient depth of understanding of subject pedagogy to exploit this effectively.

6. Much of the lesson observation feedback trainees receive is of good quality. Their weekly meetings with mentors are recorded, developmental targets are set and strategies to achieve these are indicated. However, there is a lack of progression through these targets and they do not inform individual training plans well. The consortium makes use of a good set of grade descriptors and some trainees use these to monitor their own progress. They are used less effectively by mentors to set developmental targets. The strategies to meet targets often require trainees to carry out a task, but rarely direct focused training. Trainees make progress throughout the course, particularly in the practical aspects of teaching their subjects. The rate of progress they make, however, is limited by the lack of coherence of the training programme, notably the lack of clear links between the targets set for trainees and the use of these to direct training.

7. The assessment of trainees is secure at the pass/fail boundary. The use of well timed interim review points in both school placements usefully supports the monitoring of trainees' progress. The moderation of interim judgements of trainees' progress and final judgements against the Standards within each school ensures consistency. However, despite the use of the good set of grading descriptions, these judgements provide trainees with over generous views of their progress, particularly of the higher-order skills identified earlier. Additionally, although trainees' are given detailed reviews of their progress against each of the Standards, they are given little indication of their overall progress. For example, the summative judgments for each of the three groups of Standards in the report at the end of placement one provide little basis for setting targets for placement two. Even within this small group of trainees, there is some inconsistency in judgements across the subjects and schools.

Management and quality assurance

8. There is a well explained rationale for the course, for the model of training and for the course structure; the model serves well the practical needs of the identified target group of trainees. The consortium has a very strong commitment to

improving the recruitment of teachers in the area. The provision complements well other secondary provision elsewhere in the area; this is recognised by other providers who work with the consortium to provide support.

9. The consortium has a demanding set of selection criteria, that include the qualities needed for the model of training. All selection requirements are met. The criteria are applied rigorously, but with sufficient flexibility to allow the consortium to take well calculated risks. This means that the consortium does not take on trainees simply to meet recruitment targets. The high levels of personal support for trainees mean that all trainees are supported well and personal circumstances taken into account. The consortium makes good use of individually directed pre-course development, particularly for subject knowledge. However, despite improvements in the recruitment of science trainees to the third cohort and extensive and well focused efforts, recruitment and retention are still too low.

10. This is a very tight knit consortium of schools and one college, with very good involvement and commitment of a wide range of staff. Many people give considerable amounts of time and energy to make the consortium operate effectively. There are clear, and demanding, expectations of curriculum tutors, school programme managers and subject mentors. Roles and responsibilities are clearly identified in course documentation and cover all of the aspects expected. Curriculum tutors are committed and enthusiastic about their subject and about their training role. There are very clear and explicit criteria for selecting, and deselecting, schools and departments and these are applied rigorously. Despite lower than anticipated numbers of trainees, good efforts are made to keep all of the schools involved even when they have no trainees. A number of other schools are keen to join, and a system of associate schools is now being used to bring them into the partnership. This is a diverse partnership and the consortium is beginning to think creatively about how to best use this diversity to the benefit of all trainees.

11. The model of training is very demanding on all trainers. There are regular meetings of trainers, including subject mentors, and all trainers are provided with some good exemplification of best practice. However, subject specialist trainers do not have enough time to be able to work alongside subject mentors to guide them sufficiently in providing trainees with the support they need to apply the training to their practice. This leads to weaknesses in training which, in turn, results in weaknesses in trainees' practice. Whilst extensive monitoring and quality assurance procedures are in place, they are not detecting and dealing effectively with these less effective aspects of the course. Subject mentors provide secure basic subject training and offer models of good practice, but lack a deep understanding of the full range of their role in this 'personalised training' model. This arises from a lack of clarity about the mentors' role and insufficient support for mentors to undertake that role.

12. The consortium has a good management structure that ensures good involvement of all in the consortium. The director provides very strong leadership across the partnership. The consortium was very responsive to the feedback given during the first phase of the inspection, bringing about some significant

improvements in the provision. There is a strong commitment to making the changes required. Self-evaluation is thorough and comprehensive; improvement planning clearly identifies key priorities. Although this planning lacks a penetrating analysis of the nature of issues identified in this report, the consortium leadership now understands what needs to be done. The external examiner and external subject specialists provide useful feedback to the consortium. The consortium has the capacity to make the changes and improvements required.