

University of Surrey

Registry Quality Support Office
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A further education teacher training
inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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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 teachers* and the guidance in the *Handbook for the inspection of initial training of further education (FE) teachers*, both published in September 2004.
2. It was conducted in two phases by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), supported by specialist Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated part-time in-service provision at Highbury College and Farnborough College of Technology. They focused on the quality of training and management and quality assurance procedures during the first phase, which took place in December 2007. During the second phase, inspectors concentrated on evaluating the achievements of trainees through observing their teaching and gathering evidence of their progress during the course. Phase 2 of the inspection was completed in July 2008.

Background

3. The University of Surrey does not offer any teacher training provision but validates courses at both Highbury College and Farnborough College of Technology. The teacher training programmes at the two colleges are not the same. Highbury College became an 'associated institution' of the university in 2006 and the university validates its part-time, in-service certificate/professional graduate certificate in further and higher education. Highbury College has 86 trainees on this programme. Farnborough College of Technology gained associated status in 1992 and since 2002 has been designated as an 'accredited institution'. Accreditation means devolution to the college of considerable responsibility for the maintenance and improvement of academic standards. Farnborough College of Technology has 104 trainees on its certificate/professional graduate certificate in further and higher education course.
4. Around half the trainees on these programmes work in colleges of further education. The rest are employed in other settings, such as adult and community, military, police or health service. Both colleges also offer awards, funded by the Learning and Skills Council, in 'preparing to teach in the lifelong learning sector'.

Effectiveness of provision

5. The overall quality of provision is adequate (grade 3). Both colleges train not just their own staff, but also others from a wide range of workplace contexts, to become competent teachers. Overall, trainees make satisfactory progress and improve their practical teaching skills, whether they are relatively new to their job or already experienced when they start the programme. Throughout their course, trainees benefit from good teaching, strong personal support and high quality resources. They enjoy the course and apply what they learn, from taught sessions and assignments, to their own context. Most reflect critically on their teaching and

make good use of feedback from tutors, colleagues and mentors to inform and improve their practice. However, a small minority of trainees do not make as much progress as they could. In some cases, this is because of the patchy quality of mentoring and subject-specific support. In others, it is linked to the slow development of trainees' reflective skills or to the variable quality of feedback they receive on lesson observations.

6. Overall, management and quality assurance are adequate. The colleges each have their own well-established systems to monitor and improve provision. Arrangements are not always sufficiently robust, though, to avoid the kind of inconsistencies in trainees' progress noted above. The two teacher training programmes that lead to University of Surrey awards each have different strengths and areas for development. Meetings this year between relevant staff at the two colleges have been productive in enabling them to begin to identify and share good practice.

Key strengths

Inspectors identified the following strengths:

- trainees' strong commitment to continuing professional development
- well-designed and flexibly timetabled programmes
- good teaching by well-qualified and experienced teacher trainers
- strong pastoral support for trainees
- productive integration at both colleges of initial teacher training, human resources and continuing professional development activities
- good accommodation, facilities and resources
- thorough systems for the moderation of written assignments.

Areas for attention

The partnership should address the:

- insufficient progress of a small minority of trainees
- uneven access to high quality mentoring and subject-specific support
- low take-up of mentor training

- variable quality of feedback on lesson observations
- inconsistent application of some quality assurance arrangements, leading to variability in trainees' progress.

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

Achievements of trainees

7. Trainees reach a satisfactory level of teaching competence in line with national qualification requirements. They make sufficient progress in relation to their experience and expertise at the start of the programme.

8. Trainees provide good support and demonstrate commitment to making sure their students achieve well. This is particularly evident on vocational courses with trainees skilfully guiding their students, in practical sessions, towards meeting the standards required by employers. In these lessons, trainees pay good attention to health and safety.

9. With a few exceptions, trainees are professional in their approach to teaching. In addition to teaching on a full or part-time basis, many have management and administrative responsibilities and they make a positive contribution to their workplace. Most trainees reflect critically on their teaching but, in some cases, written evaluations are more descriptive than evaluative. Trainees take note of feedback from tutors, colleagues and mentors. Whilst this leads to targets, action plans and improved skills for most trainees, issues that are identified as areas for development are not systematically addressed. Consequently, some trainees lack confidence, for example, in their use of technology or in setting targets for their students.

10. Trainees are competent teachers. Most teach effectively across an appropriate range of levels. They know their students well and establish a good rapport with them. They improve as practitioners, even when they already have had considerable teaching experience. Trainees generally manage their classes well. They routinely use a range of teaching and learning methods to ensure that their students learn and make appropriate progress. Many relish the opportunity to experiment with their teaching style. However, not all trainees vary their teaching and assessment methods sufficiently to accommodate different types of lessons or situations. For example, when teaching theory sessions, those who primarily teach practical subjects are not all sufficiently skilled in questioning techniques or maintaining students' interest.

11. Trainees have good subject knowledge and, where relevant, vocational experience. They keep up-to-date and are strongly committed to continuing professional development. The extent to which they further develop their skills in

relation to teaching their specialist area is too variable as it is dependent, to a large degree, on the quality of mentoring. The development of trainees' own literacy, numeracy and information technology skills is satisfactory.

12. Trainees plan lessons proficiently. Most take appropriate account of their students' needs as well as schemes of work and examination or syllabus requirements. They think carefully about their choice of activities and resources. For a small minority of trainees, planning to meet and assess the individual needs of their students remains an area for further development.

13. In their work, trainees demonstrate an appropriate understanding of assessment issues, such as validity and fairness. As employed teachers, they routinely set and mark students' work and their assessments are accurate. In lessons, trainees generally use appropriate types of formative assessment. They keep suitable records on students' progress.

14. Trainees are knowledgeable about the additional learning support in their workplace. Those who teach in colleges liaise effectively with relevant specialist colleagues to ensure that students with identified needs, such as dyslexia and hearing impairments, gain appropriate support.

Quality of training

15. Both courses meet Standards Verification UK national qualification requirements. The programmes are well designed to prepare teachers to teach in a range of settings that include further education colleges, the National Health Service, armed forces, police, ambulance service, work-based learning and adult and community provision. Within this context, the taught elements are effective in supporting and informing trainees' workplace experiences. Assessments are well designed to ensure that trainees explore practical applications of theoretical models within their specialist area.

16. Training sessions are good. Well-qualified and experienced teacher trainers plan their lessons diligently and draw very effectively on the knowledge, backgrounds and skills of their trainees. Teacher trainers remain up-to-date with national developments and work together well within their own college to discuss and share good practice. Training programmes include appropriate reference to equality and diversity and some trainees choose to undertake additional detailed research into this area. However, the training does not focus sufficiently on equality and diversity to ensure that all trainees have sufficient knowledge and confidence to model good practice in their own teaching. Trainees are motivated, participate enthusiastically and enjoy the sessions. They recognise that the programmes are helping them to improve their teaching skills.

17. Resources and facilities for training, such as rooms and computers, are good. However, as the colleges acknowledge, the virtual learning environments are

at different stages of development at each college and opportunities to use this technology to share resources and ideas are not yet being fully exploited.

18. Personal support for trainees is good. Tutors are very flexible in providing both formal and informal support and this is a key factor in helping trainees to develop professionally. However, subject-specific support from mentors varies too much. Many trainees, particularly those who are employees of the two colleges, benefit from very good mentoring. Typically the mentor is a colleague with the same subject or vocational expertise and is highly supportive. A small minority of trainees, though, do not have a suitable trained, subject-specific mentor.

19. Initial assessment arrangements are generally satisfactory. At the start of their course, trainees are assessed to ensure that they are competent in literacy, numeracy and information technology. Applicants who need further development are offered support to improve their skills before starting the programme and/or during their course. This support enables them to develop their literacy and/or numeracy skills and to achieve the level 2 qualification they need before they complete the programme.

20. The assessment of trainees' work is satisfactory. All assessments are marked against clear criteria which are shared with trainees. Good systems are in place to moderate assessed work. The feedback on trainees' written assignments is helpful and constructive. Feedback on lesson observations is too variable. In most cases, it is thorough, with a clear analysis of what went well, and what needs to improve. In a small minority of cases, though, the feedback is brief and fails to challenge trainees sufficiently to improve.

Management and quality assurance of provision

21. Teacher training, in both colleges, is closely integrated with other professional development and human resource activities. This arrangement is particularly productive for those trainees who are employed at the colleges, allowing them to benefit from additional staff development and observation opportunities. Trainees who work elsewhere, and mentors from external providers, are not sufficiently integrated into these communities.

22. Recruitment and selection arrangements are satisfactory. Trainees are recruited from a wide range of backgrounds and the percentage from minority ethnic groups broadly reflects the local populations. Appropriate arrangements are made for induction and initial assessment.

23. Day-to-day management is good and programmes are well organised. Trainees appreciate the flexible timetable, enabling them to attend at different times of the day or evening. Course documentation is well written. Roles and responsibilities of all those involved in teacher training are clear.

24. Overall, systems to evaluate and improve provision are adequate. Both colleges have well-established quality assurance arrangements. The course review and associated action plan for teacher training programmes is more comprehensive and critically evaluative at one college than the other. Both colleges took suitable action to address the areas for development raised in the first phase of the inspection. The moderation of written assignments is thorough to ensure consistency and fairness and appropriate moderation of lesson observations is now in place. The monitoring of policies on equality of opportunity and the promotion of good race relations are adequate. Trainees' views are routinely sought and taken into consideration. The colleges acknowledge that mentor training remains an area for further development, as the take-up of training events for mentors is low.

25. Accommodation and resources at college sites are of a high standard. Trainees have access to well-equipped training rooms and good computing facilities. Trainees do not use university facilities in part due to pragmatic issues such as time constraints and location.

26. The university's involvement in the programmes is minimal. The university provides clear guidelines about procedures, processes and regulations in its quality assurance handbook. Liaison between college and university staff focuses primarily on administrative matters. To become an associated institution and to have courses validated, colleges must have in place quality assurance arrangements that meet requirements set out by the university. For Highbury, the university provides a moderator and external examiner, both from other institutions. The university monitors quality through the external examiners' reports and the college's comprehensive self-evaluation document. Farnborough College of Technology, as an accredited institution, is subject to a lighter touch arrangement, with external examiners but no moderators. It submits to the university an annual statement on all of its higher education programmes. At this summary level, it is not a requirement for the college to include a detailed, critical analysis of individual courses.

27. Although there is no requirement from the university for the colleges to work together, there are productive links between the two institutions. Staff have begun to identify and share good practice but, as this is at an early stage, it has yet to have a noticeable impact on trainees.