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Introduction

1. This inspection was carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors supported by a team of specialist inspectors in accordance with the Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Education (2008-11).
2. The inspection draws upon evidence from all aspects of the provision to make judgements against all parts of the inspection evaluation schedule in the framework. Inspectors focused on the overall effectiveness of the training in supporting high quality outcomes for trainees and the capacity of the partnership to bring about further improvements. A summary of the grades awarded is included at the end of this report.

Key to inspection grades

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

Explanation of terms used in this report

Attainment is defined as the standard reached by a trainee at the end of their training.

Progress is judged in terms of how well a trainee has developed professionally from their starting point to the standard reached at the time of the inspection or at a suitable review point.

Achievement is judged in terms of the progress made and the standard reached by a trainee at the time of the inspection or at a recent assessment review point.

The provider

3. The University of York partnership provides initial teacher training in the 11 to 18 age range leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The partnership comprises over 50 secondary schools and at the time of the inspection there were 132 trainees on the course. All trainees follow a one-year post-graduate certificate of education (PGCE) initial teacher training programme, leading to a PGCE in one of five subjects: English, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science.

Key strengths

4. The key strengths are:
 - the trainees' outstanding professional skills, which include:
 - using a wide range of teaching and learning styles
 - taking risks in their teaching, including using creative and imaginative approaches
 - strong subject knowledge, which enables them to respond well to unexpected questions from pupils
 - an excellent understanding of subject-based pedagogy
 - employing a range of resources that focus well on pupils learning effectively
 - very thorough lesson planning
 - the highly coherent training programme, built on excellent communication across the partnership
 - the outstanding commitment of all involved in the partnership, demonstrated by contributions to course developments and working collectively in the best interest of the trainees
 - the excellent use of resources which responds sharply to trainees' needs
 - the provider's outstanding capacity to improve, as evidenced through maintaining high quality outcomes for trainees.

Recommendations

5. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider should:
 - enhance trainees' understanding of how to teach in a culturally diverse society to match the high levels of their core teaching skills.

Overall effectiveness

Grade: 1

6. The overall effectiveness of the provider in securing high quality outcomes for trainees is outstanding.
7. The provider judges trainees' attainment to be outstanding and inspectors agree. Trainees display strong personal skills: they understand their own role as learners; they are reflective practitioners, able to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses; and they form excellent working relationships with colleagues. In addition, they show excellent professional skills. For example, trainees use a wide range of teaching and learning styles and are prepared to take risks in their teaching, including creative and imaginative approaches. Because of their strong subject knowledge they are able to respond well to unexpected questions from

pupils. They show an excellent understanding of subject-based pedagogy and employ a range of well-selected resources that focus on pupils learning effectively. Lesson planning is very thorough.

8. The strongest trainees demonstrate good classroom management strategies and can assess pupils' work confidently against levels and grades. They display excellent questioning skills. The small number of weaker trainees have difficulties preparing work that meets the needs of all within the class and their planning does not always show an understanding of progression or anticipate likely problems.

9. The coherent and carefully-planned training ensures consistently high yet realistic expectations for a challenging course. As a result, trainees complete the course feeling well prepared for their induction year and with a wealth of teaching materials that they use in their early years of teaching. Newly-qualified teachers (NQTs) are highly regarded in local schools and some secure promotion relatively early in their teaching careers. Different elements of the course fit together extremely well; for example, taught sessions on teaching pupils with special educational needs are followed up the same week in school with discussions with the placement school's special needs coordinator and/or inclusion manager. This reinforces the trainees' learning very effectively.

10. Either prior to the course or in the first few weeks, trainees complete a careful self-audit of subject knowledge and devise an action plan to improve their knowledge during the training year. Their progress is then monitored regularly by course tutors. As a result, all trainees build effectively on their subject knowledge during the year and this helps them in the classroom to explain complex ideas with confidence. Trainees draw considerable benefit from the specialist input provided by visiting speakers as part of the university-based training and from visits to schools with particular strengths in provision. All trainees have had appropriate training in safeguarding and child protection and gain certification but not all are aware who the designated child protection officer in their school is.

11. The assessment of trainees is accurate and thorough. The new system used to assess trainees is effective, although partnership managers agree that some details need adjusting. Mentors appreciate the benefits of the system and feel well trained in its use. Trainees receive sharply-focused and valued feedback on their progress towards the QTS standards. Lesson observations are well annotated and provide trainees with good guidance, including clear targets for improvement. Targets are reviewed weekly and refined to provide greater depth or breadth in order to secure further progress. The university has a thorough system of cross-moderating the judgements made in lesson observations, including joint observations by subject mentors with tutors and professional mentors to ensure consistency.

12. The quality of training is consistently high across the partnership. High levels of commitment and involvement from all mentors, and high expectations for trainees, enable the overwhelming majority of trainees to fulfil their potential. Excellent documentation and communication help mentors to feel involved and help to ensure that the training they deliver complements that delivered in the university. School-based training follows the university-taught programme very closely during

the initial school experience. During the main school experience, the training programme follows university guidelines but allows for flexibility between schools and opportunities to respond to trainees' needs. Mentors value highly the initial training they receive and the regular meetings that keep them up-to-date with course developments and that enable them to share good practice with mentors in other schools. Consistency of provision is promoted particularly effectively in the handover between placements. Not only are written records passed on, but a meeting between the trainee and both mentors means that additional information about the trainee's needs is fully discussed. As a result, trainees' strengths are built on very effectively and areas of weakness are addressed quickly at the beginning of the second placement.

13. The efficient use of resources, including staffing, makes a significant contribution to high quality outcomes. Resources in the university, including information and communication technology (ICT), meet the needs and expectations of trainees very well. Teaching rooms are well stocked with classroom resources and also contain recent journals on teaching, although provision in science is hampered by the very small laboratory area. The virtual learning environment (VLE), valued equally by trainees and mentors for its accessibility and relevance, provides a wealth of links to websites and access to information and shared teaching materials. Through the ICT audit, the provider is able to tailor resources sharply to trainees' needs; for example, through making sufficient laptops available for loan. A strong team of staff, many of whom are nationally-recognised experts in their field, provide excellent professional support and trainees appreciate the excellent additional resources they gain from invited speakers.

14. Trainees say that university staff are very approachable and easily available should they need support. No incidents of discrimination or harassment were reported. All groups make at least good progress. There is some difference in the provider's grades for male and female trainees over the last three years, with female trainees showing clearly outstanding attainment and males showing good attainment. Completion rates across the programme are broadly average. Trainees benefit from some high quality training sessions on teaching different groups, including pupils who speak English as an additional language; as a result, they are suitably prepared for teaching in a diverse society. However, trainees' experience is sometimes limited and not all trainees can provide clear explanations of how they would adapt their teaching for pupils from all different groups or backgrounds.

15. Recruitment arrangements enable the partnership to select high quality trainees, who have the intellectual capacity and interests to become good and outstanding teachers. All appropriate safeguarding checks take place. The interview process is comprehensive and thorough, and tutors in all subjects apply appropriate criteria that promote equal opportunities. Mentors are fully involved in the selection process. Successful candidates are given pre-course tasks to complete based on their interview responses. Overall recruitment targets are met consistently, including those in shortage subjects. Managers have introduced a range of strategies to address under-recruitment of minority ethnic candidates but these have yet to have a notable impact.

The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality Grade: 1

16. The provider is successful in sustaining high quality provision and meets the high expectations of both trainees and schools. The provider's excellent evaluation processes involve fully both trainees and school partners; managers seek and respond to feedback from tutors, subject mentors, professional mentors, and trainees past and present. Managers base evaluations on a range of carefully-analysed information about different aspects of the provision. Evaluation of the programme is supported well by rigorous and comprehensive evaluation at a departmental level. Thorough analysis of trainees' outcomes over time, including the outcomes for different groups, enables trends to be identified and monitored. Managers make excellent use of comparisons with national benchmarks to identify areas for improvement. Points noted in examiners' reports are analysed and action taken to address issues as required. For example, after examiners identified trainees' preparation for post-16 teaching as a relative weakness, the provider responded by adding extra training on diplomas and other aspects of the 14 to 19 curriculum. This has had a clear impact on trainees' understanding of relevant issues.

17. The provider enjoys an excellent reputation locally: schools strongly support the partnership and feel fully involved. All involved speak highly of the partnership and have a strong commitment to evaluation and improvement.

18. Managers have introduced several measures that have improved provision and maintained high-quality outcomes. For example, the partnership has bid for and obtained funding for diploma training. The money has been used for staff development and to fund places to enhance trainees' experience of diplomas in schools. In addition, the provider responded to the Byron Review on e-safety: tutors and mentors have reinforced training to enhance trainees' understanding of e-safety. As a result, they understand both how it affects them as potential teachers and how it affects pupils in school. Underpinning all new developments, the use of the VLE has given trainees and mentors increased access to relevant information. Managers have been very effective in securing and developing a high-quality workforce to provide the training. An increasing range of experts contribute, from both inside and outside the partnership. As a result of the breadth of input, trainees are able to select from a wide range of well-focused resources in their teaching.

19. Tutors have recently become involved in a national project to raise standards of literacy. This project, which focuses on developing literacy through cross-curricular work, is having a positive impact on trainees' teaching in schools. For example, a role-play activity in science helped pupils' understanding of arguments for and against a particular course of action, and one mathematics trainee explained how his use of materials from the project in a plenary session had been particularly successful. Science trainees benefit from the university's close links with the National Science Learning Centre, which is located on the campus. From the team of science tutors, several are involved in GCSE course developments, such as the 'Science for the 21st Century' project and writing the new syllabuses for 2011. As a result, the

trainees benefit from the most up-to-date information and understand both current and future examination requirements.

20. A trend of improvement is evident in trainees' perceptions of the course. For example, the NQT survey shows trainees feel increasingly that the training prepares them well for their first year in teaching. Only one point for consideration was identified at the last inspection: to increase mentors' knowledge of trainees' subject knowledge needs. Evidence from minutes of meetings and discussion with mentors indicates that this has been fully addressed and the trial use of an e-portfolio is providing further support for some trainees.

21. Improvement planning is strong, particularly in involving a wide range of staff from across the partnership; it is well organised and focuses on key issues. Managers review plans appropriately at regular time intervals. However, written plans and external examiners' reports currently focus too much on provision rather than outcomes for trainees. The provider has an excellent record of taking actions for improvement in response to reports from examiners. All involved in the partnership understand their roles and responsibilities. Different members of the partnership are not only fully involved in improvement planning but are aware of priorities and respond well to new initiatives. For example, the new assessment system is a radical change in practice, yet all the mentors interviewed felt fully involved and supportive of it. They understand the reasons for the change and are keen to make the system a success.

22. Resource allocation is sharp and highly responsive to need. The provider's outstanding capacity to improve is reinforced by very strong leadership at subject level. Subject leaders demonstrate systematic and careful monitoring of trainees' progress and quick, decisive action when required. The provider is implementing strategies to reduce the gender gap in recruitment to several subjects. Although their impact is not yet widespread, the English group for 2010/11 is likely to include a significantly greater proportion of men than in the past.

Summary of inspection grades¹

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding; grade 2 is good; grade 3 is satisfactory; grade 4 is inadequate.

Overall effectiveness

		Secondary
How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?		1
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	1
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	1
	To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points?	1
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	1
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	1
Promoting equalities and diversity	To what extent does the provision promote equality of opportunity, value diversity and eliminate harassment and unlawful discrimination?	2

Capacity to improve further and/or sustain high quality

		Secondary
To what extent do the leadership and management at all levels have the capacity to secure further improvements and/or to sustain high quality outcomes?		1
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		1
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		1
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		1

¹ The criteria for making these graded judgements are in the Grade criteria for the inspection of ITE 2008-11; Ofsted July 2008; Reference no: 080128.

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