

# North Bedfordshire Training Partnership GTP

Initial Teacher Education inspection report

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**Provider address**

Samuel Whitbread Community College  
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SG17 5QS

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Christopher Wood HMI

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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. North Bedfordshire Training Partnership is based at Samuel Whitbread Community College near Shefford and is accredited to provide training in a range of secondary subjects as part of the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP). At the time of the inspection there were 20 trainees in the following 11 subject areas: dance, drama, media, design and technology, food technology, religious studies, sociology, geography, psychology, music and information and communication technology (ICT). The course leads to qualified teacher status (QTS) in either the 11 to 16 or 14 to 19 phases. The partnership consortium also offers a route leading to a Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) with QTS, which was inspected at the same time and is the subject of a separate report. The two programmes are fully integrated, with a consortium board overseeing the strategic management of both routes.
4. During 2009–10 the training partnership was made up of 14 schools, nearly all of which are located in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire. These local authorities operate a three tier system. The range of schools available is

diverse. Most of the rural schools in the consortium are mono-cultural (white British), whereas the urban schools have much wider ethnic diversity.

## Employment based routes to qualified teacher status

### Key strengths

5. The key strengths are:
  - the thorough yet flexible procedures to recruit well-qualified applicants with the personal qualities that give them the potential to be good and often outstanding teachers
  - the trainees' enthusiasm, commitment and high expectations that are demonstrated in their very positive relationships with students and staff and their frequent willingness to take risks in their teaching
  - the frequently personalised subject knowledge for teaching sessions that are led by passionate and well-informed specialists who model good practice and address successfully the trainees' development needs
  - the high quality pastoral care and close attention paid to meeting individual needs that ensure trainees make consistently good progress
  - the regular and accurate tracking of trainee progress, supported by good external quality assurance systems, that identifies underperformance promptly and ensures interventions are put into place that successfully support trainees who are at risk of failure
  - the very strong commitment shown by the provider and partnership schools to training high quality teachers who meet the needs of local workforce development, underpinned by their effective collaboration and a shared purpose.

### Recommendations

6. In order to improve trainees' progress and attainment, the provider/partnership should:
  - ensure that all trainees are consistently provided with sharper developmental feedback and more challenging targets so that their progress accelerates by:
    - improving the quality of mentoring through refinements to mentor training and the provision of ongoing support
    - refocusing the strong quality assurance systems so that there is a greater emphasis on monitoring the effectiveness of mentoring and target setting
    - maintaining momentum and challenge for trainees during their second placement.
  - ensure that the good pedagogical and theoretical background provided in the professional studies programme is translated more consistently into trainees' classroom practice
  - ensure that all trainees have a secure understanding of how to teach in multi-cultural contexts.

7. In order to improve the quality of planning for further improvement the provider should:
  - ensure that improvement planning at all levels has clear milestones and responsibilities identified, with easily measurable success criteria, focused on trainee's outcomes.

## Overall effectiveness

**Grade: 2**

8. Inspectors observed five trainees teaching and interviewed an additional five trainees from the 2009–10 cohort. They conducted joint observations with mentors, observed mentor feedback, scrutinised tracking documents and reviewed the trainees' files. They found a close level of agreement with the provider's assessment that most trainees are making good progress and agreed with the provider's judgement that the trainees' attainment is consistently good. Most trainees have met the QTS Standards at a good or outstanding level during the past three years and there has been a discernable trend of improvement. The provider's accurate tracking and assessment indicate that the proportion of trainees with good or outstanding attainment has risen from around 75% in 2006–07 to just over 90% in 2008–09. On average, around a third of trainees have attained the higher grade although this proportion is set to increase this year.
9. Trainees are highly committed and demonstrate positive relationships with students and staff. They contribute actively to the departments where they are placed as well as at a wider whole-school level. They have high expectations of students' behaviour and use questioning techniques proficiently to extend and challenge the students' thinking. The best trainees are highly reflective and evaluate critically their own performance and progress. These trainees show maturity and initiative and are prepared to take risks in their teaching. The lessons they plan are imaginative, engaging and well informed by their confident knowledge of subject issues.
10. Recruitment procedures are of a consistently high quality. There is good involvement of subject leaders in the selection process and procedures offer flexibility to ensure that the strongest candidates are recruited while providing opportunities for applicants from a range of backgrounds. Good use is made of tasks to assess the suitability of potential trainees, the breadth of their subject knowledge and their strengths in numeracy, writing and verbal communication. The proportion of trainees from unrepresented groups is broadly similar to the sector average and the provider has been working to make its courses more attractive to trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are signs that this is working as there has been an increase in the number of successful minority ethnic applicants for 2010–11. The number of trainees who complete their respective courses is in line with the sector average whilst employment rates are consistently high. Trainees are well regarded by headteachers within the partnership and the majority find employment in local schools. At the time of the

inspection, 70% of the current trainees already had jobs in partnership schools. Many former trainees become successful partnership mentors and/or experience quick promotion to subject leader, head of year and even senior leadership level.

11. The centre and school-based training combine reasonably well and contribute successfully to the trainees' good progress and achievement. Trainees feel well prepared to teach because these programmes are well-organised, up-to-date and regularly model good practice. As a result, they develop quickly and their early good progress is sustained, for the majority, across subsequent school placements. The professional studies programme enables trainees to explore the relationship between wider educational theory and current practice. Trainees generally say that this programme and the associated written assignments, equip them well with the information they need to make successful starts to their school placements. A few trainees expressed concerns about the timing of some sessions and an occasional lack of coherence between the taught content and the subsequent links to their subject specific classroom practice. However, the provider's own trainee evaluations identify accurately which aspects of training are most successful and which require further revision and there is a track record of improving training where required. For example, recent improvements have been made to coverage of English as an additional language and 14-19 vocational education, as well as ongoing refinements to the reflective journal tasks.
12. Trainees benefit significantly from the subject leaders' expertise in, and passion for, their subjects. Informed by well-devised audits, they pay careful attention to the trainees' subject knowledge enhancement. The subject knowledge for teaching programme is rooted in effective classroom practice and is frequently personalised so that any gaps in knowledge are fully addressed. Recent initiatives in drama, for example, have focused on extending the trainees' exposure to a wide range of play texts while greater attention is being given in media to links with the creative and media Diploma. In addition, trainees say they particularly value the opportunity for peer coaching through the use of video.
13. Most trainees receive high quality written and oral feedback on their progress that is diagnostic and provides focused targets for development. The processes for both formative and summative assessment are generally well understood across the partnership and are consistently applied. Trainees appreciate greatly the time taken by mentors who respond quickly to their needs, and this enables them to make good progress. They also value the incisive and challenging feedback they get from professional tutors and the external quality assurance verifiers. Nevertheless, the quality of mentoring remains variable. Where mentoring is less effective, feedback is not sufficiently diagnostic nor does it provide trainees with sharply focused targets that enable them to make progress at a quicker rate. In these instances, particularly for those trainees whose second placement is towards the end of the course, the initial momentum is lost and this limits the trainees' progress during the latter stages of their training.
14. Headteachers are strongly committed to working in close collaboration with the partnership in order to train high quality teachers who meet both the local and

regional workforce needs. Formal and informal communication between the provider and schools is good and this close collaboration enables any issues that may arise to be dealt with quickly.

15. The provider's use of resources is good. Trainees have equitable access to high quality subject specific resources as part of their centre and school based experiences. They benefit from working alongside a wide range of knowledgeable school based professionals and are encouraged to use information and communication technology (ICT) both as a tool for learning and in classrooms. Trainees and school based staff report that the use of the virtual learning environment, although cumbersome at times, is improving year on year. This has enabled trainees to gather and record evidence against the standards more selectively. The annual centre-based mentor training is well attended and half termly mentor meetings are used well to track trainee progress, moderate judgements and offer some ongoing professional development. However, for some new and existing mentors, especially those who support trainees during the second placement, the timing of the single event initial training has been limiting. The provider is aware of this issue and now plans to introduce a mid-year training session as part of its drive to improve the effectiveness of mentor training and the impact that mentors have on the trainees' attainment and progress.
16. The provider is committed to promoting equality of opportunity. It has introduced a number of immersion days and short placement opportunities that have increased the trainees' practical understanding of supporting students from a wide range of backgrounds. However, whilst most trainees are knowledgeable when discussing strategies for working with students with special educational needs they are less confident when describing how to support students from different cultures or with English as an additional language. There is regular analysis of data relating to the achievement of different groups of trainees with sensitive action taken to address any areas for development. Very close tracking of trainee progress identifies problems early and triggers prompt interventions that are well matched to the individual's needs. Effective systems are in place to support trainees who are struggling or who encounter personal or family problems during the course. Consequently trainees say that they feel very well supported; and there are no significant differences in the achievement of trainees from different groups.

## **The capacity for further improvement and/or sustaining high quality**

**Grade: 2**

17. The provider makes good use of regular and accurate data on trainee achievement. It analyses closely any trends in trainee outcomes, for individuals and groups, and uses this information to inform action plans and to identify development priorities. This is underpinned by comprehensive and accurate reports from the external examiner that offer astute assessments of the provider's strengths and areas for development. They also provide insightful recommendations for improvement that the provider routinely acts on and

incorporates into its action planning. Additional information is gathered from the regular school visits undertaken by well-respected, independent quality assurance verifiers. Their reports currently provide detailed and helpful information about the quality of trainees' performance and progress but could be even more influential if they focused also on the quality of mentoring and target setting.

18. The provider takes into account the views of users and there is regular contact with partner schools, through informal dialogue and strategic groups such as the consortium board. Headteachers and school staff feel listened to and are confident that they contribute to the evaluation process. They believe that their input is valued because they see that the provider responds quickly to their concerns and suggestions. The views of trainees are also surveyed regularly through questionnaires and through their course representatives who meet regularly with the joint programme coordinators. Trainees say they are confident about raising concerns and also report prompt changes to both the content and style of training as well as the nature of some assessment tasks a result of their feedback.
19. The joint programme coordinators are proactive in their determination to improve provision and outcomes for trainees and they ensure that high expectations are shared across the partnership. They have a strong and practical understanding of the educational landscape, strengthened by working closely with schools, local authority partners and other providers in the region. Together, they respond quickly to national priorities and are flexible in meeting changing local needs. Centre based training is reviewed regularly so that it is up-to-date and equips trainees for their careers in schools. The programme draws well on expert speakers, headteachers and other educational professionals, providing thorough coverage of current developments such as functional skills and assessing students' progress as well as the practical implications of influential reports such as those published by Rose, Williams, Byron and MacDonald. As a result trainees develop a secure understanding of broader school issues such as every child matters, assessment for learning and personal social and health education. The full day conferences that have been introduced have been well received by trainees and have strengthened further their awareness of issues of diversity, literacy and numeracy and 14-19 applied learning. These elements have contributed strongly to developing the trainees' confident and informed classroom practice.
20. Action plans at whole programme and individual subject level are presented consistently and are correctly focused on those areas of the provider's work that need to improve most urgently. These priorities are generally understood across the partnership and are monitored by the consortium board. Indeed, all partners are committed to securing improved outcomes for trainees and most are clear about their role in achieving this. Consequently there is a track record of success in maintaining high quality outcomes and affecting change successfully where a need for further improvement has been identified. Thus, the provider's current focus on ensuring that trainers and trainees have a better understanding of what constitutes outstanding practice is beginning to have a discernible impact on increasing the number of trainees attaining this

higher grade. Furthermore, the provider's ongoing review of which courses it offers, such as the planned introduction of business studies, means that the programme offer continues to meet the changing local workforce needs while offering subjects that are more attractive to candidates from minority ethnic backgrounds. Nevertheless, while action plans are based on the provider's accurate self-evaluation of its own strengths and areas for development they do not incorporate easily measurable success criteria that are tightly focused on trainee outcomes nor do they identify clear milestones to support purposeful monitoring of progress towards achieving these targets.

21. Ongoing improvements to provision and outcomes for trainees since the previous inspection, underpinned by the provider's determination to train the best teachers possible, demonstrate its good capacity to improve further. Indeed, during the inspection, the joint programme coordinators were keen to involve themselves in an open and highly reflective professional dialogue with inspectors as a means to ensure continuously improving outcomes and provision. All of the statutory requirements for ITE are fully met.

## Summary of inspection grades<sup>1</sup>

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

### Overall effectiveness

		Employment-based routes
<b>How effective is the provision in securing high quality outcomes for trainees?</b>		<b>2</b>
Trainees' attainment	How well do trainees attain?	2
Factors contributing to trainees' attainment	To what extent do recruitment / selection arrangements support high quality outcomes?	2
	To what extent does the training and assessment ensure that all trainees progress to fulfil their potential given their ability and starting points?	2
	To what extent are available resources used effectively and efficiently?	2
The quality of the provision	To what extent is the provision across the partnership of consistently high quality?	2
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

		Employment-based routes
<b>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?</b>		<b>2</b>
How effectively does the management at all levels assess performance in order to improve or sustain high quality?		2
How well does the leadership at all levels anticipate change, and prepare for and respond to national and local initiatives?		2
How effectively does the provider plan and take action for improvement?		2

<sup>1</sup> The criteria for making these graded judgements are in the *Grade criteria for the inspection of ITE 2008-11*; Ofsted November 2009; Reference no: 080128.

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