



Inspection of the Key Stage 2 training element of Key Stage 2/3 courses: 2002–04

October 2004

HMI 2352

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Document reference number: HMI 2352

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

1. In the spring of 1996, the Department for Education and Employment issued Circular Letter 1/96 outlining requirements for teacher training courses for the 7–14 age-range. Behind the introduction of this new route lay particular policy imperatives:
 - raising standards of pupil achievement in the later primary years through an increase in specialist teaching
 - improving recruitment to teaching, particularly in the secondary phase, for example by extending access to teaching through a diversity of training routes.

The aim to increase specialist teaching at Key Stage 2 was given particular prominence in the Circular Letter.

2. By 1998, 20 providers of initial teacher training (ITT) were running Key Stage 2/3 courses. These were of different lengths, including one-year and two-year postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) courses and two-year, three-year and four-year undergraduate courses. The number of subjects offered by each provider ranged from one to seven. With the exception of art and history, there was specialist training in all National Curriculum subjects and religious education, although training was offered predominantly in secondary shortage subject areas. All courses, both undergraduate and postgraduate, were full time.
3. From 1998 to 2002, all courses of initial teacher training were required to meet the Secretary of State for Education and Skills' criteria set out in Circular 4/98. All trainees training to teach in the primary age-range studied a specialist subject in addition to a generic primary studies programme. More recently, with the introduction of *Qualifying to teach* in September 2002, trainees following a primary course of study are no longer required to study a specialist subject.¹ For those trainees on Key Stage 2/3 courses, the implication is that they are **required** to select a specialist subject only for the Key Stage 3 element of training. In practice, these courses continue to focus on subject specialist training in both key stages while aiming to meet the full range of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 Requirements in *Qualifying to teach*.
4. As agreed with the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), Ofsted has inspected the generic Key Stage 2 training of 16 providers offering Key Stage 2/3 courses separately from the specialist subject training at Key Stage 3. This was so that judgements on Key Stage 2 training to teach the whole primary curriculum would not directly affect judgements about the quality of what were designated

¹ *Qualifying to teach* was introduced in September 2002. This document sets out the secretary of state's Standards, which must be met by trainee teachers before they can be awarded Qualified Teacher Status ('the Standards'); and the Requirements for training providers and those who make recommendations for the award of Qualified Teacher Status ('the Requirements'). *Qualifying to teach* replaced DfEE Circular 4/98 and has the same legal standing.

secondary subject courses for the purpose of TTA allocations. Separate reports have been produced on the Key Stage 2 training but, by agreement with the TTA, this training has not been graded. Of the 16 providers:

- five offered an undergraduate route
- one offered a two-year route leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)
- one offered both a one-year and a two-year PGCE
- nine offered a one-year PGCE.

With the exception of one school-centred ITT (SCITT) course, all the courses were HEI-led partnerships. The SCITT was primarily a secondary provider and the weakest of all the providers inspected. The shortcomings of that particular course were attributable largely to poor management and to instability of staffing which also affected the quality of the Key Stage 2 training.

Main findings

- The rationale for Key Stage 2/3 courses is no longer as clear as it was in 1996. The courses were designed to provide a subject specialism at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, yet most trainees appear to secure employment in primary schools where they are expected to teach across the primary curriculum.
- The rationale for offering both one-year and two-year PGCE courses for similarly qualified trainees is not clear.
- There are intrinsic difficulties for one-year courses in meeting the Requirements of *Qualifying to teach*. The main problem is arranging suitable experiences to ensure that all trainees are able to demonstrate that they meet the Standards for the seven-year span covered by Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.
- While the focus on specialist subject training has merits, the considerable time spent by trainees in teaching their specialist subject on their Key Stage 2 school placements leads to their having more limited experience of teaching the broader primary curriculum than trainees on a primary ITT course and, in particular, of teaching a sequence of lessons in the core subjects.
- Limited attention is paid to providing training in the teaching of the foundation subjects.
- Trainees' experience of teaching across the Key Stage 2 age-range and in schools in different contexts is often too limited and they have insufficient opportunities to gain an awareness of the teaching and curricular requirements of Key Stage 1.

- ❑ Despite difficulties with the design and structure of the courses, the quality of centre-based and school-based training is usually good, reflecting the quality of primary training in the same providers. Trainers model good practice.
- ❑ Trainees are generally placed in good schools with good practitioners. They are well supported and receive constructive and targeted feedback on their practical teaching.
- ❑ Judgements are sometimes made by providers about the trainees' teaching standards across both key stages on the basis of good evidence for one of the key stages but only very limited evidence for the other.
- ❑ One-year Key Stage 2/3 courses, in particular, are more successful in areas of the country where there is still middle-school provision to provide suitable placements.
- ❑ While there are no accurate figures on trainees' first teaching posts, anecdotal evidence and the choices they make for their final school experiences suggest that around two-thirds of those completing the courses intend to teach in primary schools.
- ❑ If separate grades had been awarded for the Key Stage 2/3 courses inspected, it is likely that two of the one-year courses would have been judged unsatisfactory.

Content and structure of the training

5. In general, the undergraduate and two-year postgraduate courses are well designed to enable the trainees to meet the Standards in each key stage by the end of the course. There is a good balance between the training in each key stage and the trainees on these extended routes have significantly more opportunities to teach across the whole of the Key Stage 2 age-range and ability-range. There is time, too, on these courses for the inclusion of additional elements. For example, in one two-year course, all trainees spend time in Years 6 and 7 to help them develop further their knowledge and understanding of transition and cross-phase issues; more time is also devoted to improving subject knowledge in the core subjects on two-year courses than on one-year courses.
6. In contrast, the trainees on the one-year routes have limited opportunities to demonstrate that they can meet the Standards in both key stages. They have reduced opportunities to teach across the whole of the primary age-range and ability-range, and to gain an awareness of the teaching and curricular requirements of Key Stage 1. In two of the providers inspected, the lack of breadth of Key Stage 2 experience is a serious weakness; some trainees complete their two Key Stage 2 school placements in the same school and with the same class.
7. The pattern of school placements varies between providers. In some, trainees complete school placements in both key stages before opting to undertake their final school experience in their preferred key stage. This can mean that some

trainees on one-year courses complete their only Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 3 experience at the end of the first term and, therefore, have their final assessment for this key stage at this early stage in the course. A significant number of trainees have limited experience of teaching at Key Stage 3 because of the particular structure of their courses and the fact that they choose to focus on Key Stage 2 for their final school experience. One provider, offering a one-year PGCE route, does not introduce Key Stage 2 training until the beginning of the second term, and the Key Stage 2 school experience is delayed until the second half of this term. This gives trainees too little opportunity to assimilate knowledge and gain experience of teaching pupils across a key stage with a four-year age span.

8. Middle schools offer good opportunities for trainees to demonstrate that they have met the Standards in the later years of Key Stage 2 and in Key Stage 3, as well as gaining useful experience of transition between the two key stages. However, with many local education authorities restructuring their school provision, there has been a decline in the number of middle schools. Only four of the providers inspected offer training placements in middle schools.
9. Trainees on one-year Key Stage 2/3 courses often have a heavier workload than other ITT trainees, as they strive to meet the demands of reaching the Standards at both key stages across primary and secondary phases. This may be a contributory factor to the high drop-out rates on two of the courses. There are significant weaknesses in the design and structure of the SCITT course, including a poor match between the timing of assignments and the training on the topics being assessed. These are partly attributable to the fact that this provider, at the time of the inspection, had no other primary ITT provision.
10. All the courses place a strong emphasis on equipping trainees with sufficient knowledge and understanding to enable them to teach the core subjects, including the national strategies, and information and communication technology (ICT), at Key Stage 2. The content of the Key Stage 2 courses in the core subjects, general professional studies and specialist subjects is generally appropriate and relevant. There are effective links between tasks, assignments, and centre-based and school-based training. However, owing to the breadth of demand of these courses, less time is available for the foundation subjects and religious education than is usual for trainees on primary training courses, with the result that Key Stage 2/3 trainees are typically less well prepared to teach these subjects. The onus is often placed on schools to ensure that these elements of training are covered but not all schools are able to provide sufficient suitable training in the foundation subjects.
11. To meet the subject-specialist dimension of Key Stage 2/3 courses, it is common for trainees to spend a considerable proportion of their Key Stage 2 placements teaching their specialist subject. This helps them to develop confidence and competence in teaching the subject and to build an understanding of progression from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. However, it reduces the time available to gain expertise in teaching the whole of the primary curriculum. For example, in one school visited, the trainees had spent only one week teaching numeracy and the next week teaching literacy.

12. The most successful courses planned their professional studies programme to take account of the different teaching approaches needed for pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3. They also exploited opportunities to reinforce the benefits of adopting, where relevant, teaching strategies more commonly used with primary-aged pupils when teaching Key Stage 3 classes.

Effectiveness of training

13. The quality of centre-based training is generally good. The single exception is a SCITT which, until September 2003, had been exclusively a secondary provider with no established tradition of primary training. Tutors are usually experienced primary tutors who base their Key Stage 2 training on other successful primary provision. They are well qualified, possess good subject knowledge and have recent and relevant experience of primary education and research. Training sessions in the core subjects are planned carefully, proceed at a brisk pace, focus on developing the trainees' pedagogical knowledge and understanding, and achieve a good balance between tutor exposition and discussion with trainees. Good use is made of visual aids, including ICT, to support teaching and learning. Trainers model good practice.
14. The quality of Key Stage 2 school-based training is also good both for the core subjects and for the specialist subject in the HEI-led courses. Care is taken to place trainees with good practitioners in good schools. One provider is making very good use of a training school where all staff are committed to taking responsibility for training future entrants to the teaching profession. School-based mentors and class teachers generally offer good support to trainees, particularly in planning the core subjects. They understand their roles and responsibilities in the training process, including the need for trainees to progress towards independent planning within a relatively short time. However, a minority of mentors in HEI-led partnerships, receive insufficient training and, consequently, the support for trainees is weak.
15. Significant weaknesses were demonstrated in both the centre-based and school-based training offered by the SCITT. Considerable staffing problems in the first term of the course, when the majority of centre-based training in the core subjects was programmed, resulted in inadequate coverage of the Key Stage 2 core curriculum and misunderstandings over the submission of assignments and tasks. In addition, 17 new primary schools, 12 new training managers and 24 new mentors joined the partnership without sufficient training or preparation. Consequently, they had a limited understanding of their roles and responsibilities in both supporting the trainees and assessing them against the Standards.

Meeting individual needs

16. The majority of HEI providers assess applicants' core subject knowledge as part of the interview process. However, the extent to which providers use these assessments to identify individual needs and share the information with tutors before the start of the course is variable. Most providers issue helpful pre-course

reading lists for successful applicants. One provider adopts the very valuable practice of sending all successful candidates a feedback letter identifying specific areas for development and suggesting appropriate reading and support materials. Good attention is paid to providing extra support and tuition, both before and during the course, to those candidates with specific needs, such as dyslexia or physical disability.

17. With the exception of the SCITT and the provider that does not start its Key Stage 2 training programme until the second term, the auditing and monitoring of subject knowledge and ICT are well established, rigorous and form the basis for identifying strengths and areas for development at the start of the course. Subsequently, the trainees are required to draw up action plans to address their needs, for example by attending extra training sessions to remedy weaknesses identified through the auditing process.
18. Providers adopt a range of strategies to support individual trainees throughout the course. For example, records of professional development, assignments and tasks, profiles of achievement, and regular weekly tutorials all form the basis for clear, detailed and constructive feedback and regular target-setting. Courses strongly encourage trainees to take responsibility for their personal professional development. There is considerable evidence that they are reflective and evaluate critically their personal progress. A particular strength of two of the courses is the high-quality support provided by personal tutors. However, there is no evidence to indicate that providers are yet adjusting their centre-based training programmes to meet more fully the individual needs of trainees.

Effectiveness of the assessment and achievement of trainees

19. Most providers have introduced systematic monitoring procedures, using a Standards profile as the basis for recording the trainees' progress and achievement of the Standards. However, only two providers have clear procedures for assessing the trainees separately against the Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 Standards. For the majority of providers, arrangements for assessing that the Standards are being met fully at both key stages are not well defined. The one-year courses have severe difficulties in arranging suitable school experiences in which the trainees can demonstrate the Standards in both key stages. Standards 2.1c, 2.1b, 3.3.2b and 3.3.2c are particularly problematic, especially for trainees who complete their school experience for one of the key stages at the end of the first term.
20. The trainees are required to maintain comprehensive portfolios of evidence incorporating written assignments, tasks, subject audits, lesson observations and their own self-evaluations of their teaching. In some cases, insufficient guidance is offered to help them select appropriate evidence and update their portfolios at regular intervals. This contributes to what is often felt to be an excessive workload at various points during the course.

21. There are clear criteria to support the assessment of assignments. However, six providers demonstrate weaknesses in their marking; comments are superficial and areas for development are not identified. Most providers adopt the good practice of second-marking a sample of assignments to ensure consistency and accuracy of grading. Despite these measures, consistency of marking between subjects is not always well managed.
22. Assessment of practical teaching at Key Stage 2 in the core and specialist subjects is thorough for most trainees. The exceptions include those trainees on one-year courses who opt to complete their final school experience at Key Stage 3. Most course tutors play a major role in co-ordinating the assessment arrangements for each trainee. These arrangements are generally well defined and rigorous. Almost all providers have introduced helpful lesson observation forms for use by tutors and school mentors. Most lesson feedback is well focused although, occasionally, too much emphasis is placed on giving feedback on pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour and too little emphasis on the quality of teaching and learning. Almost all providers have introduced good arrangements for the moderation of the trainees' practical teaching. Joint lesson observations by tutors and school mentors are a common feature of the assessment arrangements. All providers make appropriate arrangements for external moderation.

Points for consideration

- how the TTA should deal with non-compliance or unsatisfactory quality identified in the Key Stage 2 elements of some Key Stage 2/3 courses
- the rationale behind funding Key Stage 2/3 courses from secondary subject allocations when most trainees seek employment in primary schools
- the rationale behind funding both two-year and one-year PGCE courses, particularly where both are offered by the same provider
- what advice should be given to providers who find it very difficult to cover the Requirements of *Qualifying to teach* for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 in a one-year course
- how far the high drop-out rate in some courses is due to the perceived excessive workload of trainees
- how to achieve greater co-ordination between the two key stages of the training programme
- the need for guidance on how much time should be spent teaching a specialist subject during the Key Stage 2 element of the training programme

- collecting reliable data on the trainees' destinations, to include the age-ranges taught and the extent to which trainees gaining employment in primary schools are deployed as subject specialists
- what inspection programme Ofsted should carry out for Key Stage 2/3 courses in future.