



**Office for Standards  
in Education**

# **Making a difference**

**The impact of award-bearing in-service training on school improvement**

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## Introduction

1. As part of the government's strategy for supporting teachers' professional development, funding is made available to higher education institutions, local education authorities (LEAs), professional associations and others to enable them to provide postgraduate in-service training (INSET) courses. About £23.5 million is awarded annually to support the training of around 25,000 teachers. This funding is managed by the Teacher Training Agency which has established two key principles to govern its use: (a) it is for the long-term development of teachers and (b) it should support training that has a demonstrable impact on raising standards in schools. The funds are distributed to INSET providers through a triennial bidding process, with bids being assessed against national priorities and quality criteria.

2. In 2001, Ofsted published a report summarising the outcomes of the inspection of training provided by all 84 providers that were being funded at the time.<sup>1</sup> A total of 207 individual courses were inspected. These inspections focused on the following aspects:

- identification of needs – was the training differentiated to meet specific needs?
- quality of training – did the training support teachers in raising the attainment of pupils?
- impact of training – did the training have a significant and demonstrable influence on classroom practice and/or on whole-school performance?
- quality assurance – were the quality assurance arrangements fit for purpose and did they lead to improved provision?

In each of these areas, at least four fifths of the training courses were judged to be good or very good.

3. This report describes the findings of a further inspection carried out by Ofsted in 2002/03 which explored in more detail the extent to which these courses make a significant and sustainable contribution to improvement in the participants' schools. In particular, the inspection focused on:

- how well the courses had been designed to support sustainable school improvement
- the ways that training supports school improvement
- the factors that enhance or reduce the impact of the training on school improvement

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<sup>1</sup> *In-service Postgraduate Training Courses for Teachers: an overview report of inspections of courses funded by the Teacher Training Agency*, (HMI 272), Ofsted, 2001.

- the effectiveness of the providers' monitoring of the impact of the courses on participants and their schools
- the extent to which the courses represent good value for money.

4. Her Majesty's Inspectors inspected 26 courses, offered by 15 providers who had been graded highly for impact in the previous inspection. Details of the providers and courses inspected can be found at Annex B. Inspectors held discussions with course leaders and tutors, examined a range of documentary evidence, such as course handbooks, participants' written assignments and course evaluations, and, where possible, interviewed current course members. They also followed up 65 teachers who had completed the courses in the previous three years by visiting them in their schools to explore the extent to which the training had led to school improvement. In the schools, inspectors held discussions with the participants, their senior managers, colleagues and pupils. Lessons were also observed. School development and improvement plans, schemes of work, performance data, and performance management information were scrutinised, where appropriate.

## Main findings

- ❑ Award-bearing INSET courses had supported participants in bringing about significant improvements to a number of areas in their schools, including: standards of pupils' work; teaching; pupil assessment and target-setting; curriculum planning; implementation of the national strategies; and systems for review and self-evaluation.
- ❑ The courses had: increased teachers' subject knowledge; improved their organisational, interpersonal and analytical skills; given them greater knowledge and understanding of current initiatives; and enhanced their leadership and management capabilities. As a result, participants were in a strong position to initiate change in their schools.
- ❑ In most of the courses, the high quality of the trainers, the length of the training, the level of demand, in terms of reading, discussion, analysis and assessment, and the tutorial support provided were key factors in developing the teachers' ability to contribute to school improvement.
- ❑ A key reason for the success of these courses in leading to school improvement is the focus of the training and assignments on the participants' own schools and on practical action to bring about change.
- ❑ Most of the courses took careful account of the individual needs of the participants, the improvement plans of their schools and the priorities identified by other stakeholders, particularly the LEA. All providers sought to involve stakeholders, such as the participants' colleagues or headteacher or an LEA adviser, in supporting their studies and in enabling them to bring about change in their school.
- ❑ The level of support given by headteachers, senior managers and other colleagues is a major factor in determining the extent to which participants are able to implement initiatives in their schools which arise from the courses.
- ❑ Almost all providers monitor the impact of the training on participants and their schools but only a minority try to assess longer-term change. Few monitor or assess the impact of courses on the standard of pupils' work.
- ❑ The high quality of the training provided effective professional development in relation to its cost. However, providers and schools do not give sufficient attention to value for money when evaluating the courses.

## Identifying development needs

5. The previous inspection highlighted the importance of matching training to the individual needs of course participants and of relating these to the development priorities of their schools. The importance of these elements of course design was confirmed by this further survey. Most of the providers' application forms require prospective participants to identify why they want to undertake the course and what they expect to gain from it. More than half the providers follow this up with an

interview in which a more detailed needs analysis is undertaken; just over a third use these needs analyses to develop individual action plans that influence the course design.

6. The course structure generally provides a broad framework of training, with participants negotiating the detail of their individual training programmes to ensure that their needs are properly addressed. Such flexibility in the structure and content of courses allows participants to mould the training to their own circumstances. Some courses, for example, offer a range of modules and participants select those which best match their needs. In many others, although the taught component is common, frequent individual tutorials enable personal needs to be met.

7. Almost half the providers engage in some degree of direct negotiation with the participant's school in order to focus the content of the training on the school's or department's development plans as well as on the individual's performance management objectives. For example, one course includes workshops to which participants' headteachers are invited in order to discuss the particular circumstances and priorities of their schools. In another course, each session or group of sessions concentrates on a key aspect of school management; between sessions, participants are expected to relate these ideas to their own school. This often has a marked effect on practice and helps participants to assimilate and apply relevant theoretical perspectives.

8. Almost half the participants identified the way in which courses link theory to practical action in their schools as a significant strength. The teachers' classrooms and their pupils provide the context for assignments and other practical tasks, and for discussions in taught sessions. The focus of the training is on the evaluation of what is happening in schools, reflection on this, and how to improve practice. There are good opportunities for participants to match course tasks and assignments to an aspect of their own work or to one of their school's priorities for improvement. Many assignments are related directly to the participants' performance management objectives or their school's or department's development plans. Many courses include a component on school-based action research that requires participants to apply research and inspection evidence to the evaluation of an aspect of their school's work.

9. Many of the most successful courses in the survey were developed as a direct response to needs identified by individual schools or groups of schools within an LEA. Half of the courses included the formal involvement of the LEA and were designed to ensure that the course matched the authority's education development plan as well as the needs of individual schools. An effective mechanism for ensuring a good match between the course content and regional priorities was the establishment of formal development or consultation groups, with representatives of the LEA and the schools. A small number of providers used their contacts with schools through their initial teacher training to canvas views about their courses.

*The aims of a course on 'raising achievement in city schools' focused on the need for action across the LEA, and in all phases, to support their education development plan. The core modules were designed in conjunction with LEA advisers and matched to the objectives of the development plan. Teachers on the course met as a group with advisers and had access to the authority's professional development programme. There were also regular meetings of course tutors with advisers to evaluate the course and to take account of changing priorities within the LEA and the schools. Written evaluations were completed by the headteachers of all of the participants' schools, as well as by all participants themselves, to ensure that their views about the effectiveness and impact of the course could be taken into account.*

10. Even when the courses had been initiated by the providers, they had generally attempted to gain the support of schools and the LEA.

*On a course for design and technology subject leaders, the tutors worked hard to get the commitment of the schools and LEA advisers in supporting the participants. Before the start of the course, the tutors made a presentation to a meeting of prospective participants, their headteachers and the LEA adviser, linking the course content and its outcomes to the needs of the LEA and individual schools. This was crucial in gaining the headteachers' and advisers' support.*

11. In a small number of courses, the involvement of the LEA was less formal and relied on personal contact between course tutors and particular advisers. Pre-course information and publicity were often effective in promoting the course as a means of school improvement and this was often instrumental in securing the support of headteachers and LEA advisers. Course tutors occasionally made presentations at governors' meetings to promote the training and to seek financial backing for prospective participants.

## **Supporting change in individuals and schools**

12. Most participants are motivated by the academic rigour of the courses, the extensive and focused reading, challenging discussion, analysis of a wide range of ideas and data, and critical reflection. Providers assume that course participants come with a high level of general professional understanding and so have high expectations of what they can achieve. The trainers examine the values that participants bring to the courses and challenge their assumptions and views about what constitutes good practice in teaching and learning. They encourage teachers to think beyond the immediate and the urgent, to analyse their current practice and to identify the changes necessary to bring about school improvement. Another common



feature is the way in which providers help participants view intended changes positively and give them the self-confidence to follow them through. Virtually all of the participants reported that, through analysis of their own practice and the training received, they had become more confident and skilled in justifying and managing change, and acting strategically in their professional roles. The training also increased their motivation to bring about school improvement.

13. The courses engage participants in exploring and understanding issues in depth so that they develop secure knowledge, skills and understanding. A range of training methods and forms of active participation are used to achieve this, including: regular reviews of individual action plans; high-quality presentations; seminars that model interaction with pupils and colleagues; and analysis of seminal publications. Case studies are also used well to prepare participants for applying what they had learnt to their own situation. Most courses also take account of the realities of teachers' other commitments and the programme of seminars, tutorials and directed tasks is often staged and timetabled carefully to take appropriate account of the participants' professional workloads.

14. Individual tutorials play an important role in supporting participants in the development of their own practice and in implementing wider school improvement initiatives. They help participants to make links between the taught course content, school-based activities, their own or their school's needs, and intended outcomes. Tutorials are also used well to monitor the development and progress of individuals, and to modify their targets and the nature of their school-based work.

15. The courses help participants to develop their understanding of strategies for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, including the use of qualitative and quantitative data. The extended length of these courses gives participants time to undertake a substantial school improvement project: defining an area of enquiry; analysing their current practice; planning for improvement; taking action; evaluating it; and reflecting further. Course providers generally support and guide participants effectively at every stage in this process. This helps considerably in developing the teachers' ability and confidence to bring about school improvement.

16. The level of support given by headteachers, senior managers and other colleagues is a major factor in determining the extent to which participants are able to make use of what they have learned, especially their ability to implement initiatives linked to the training programme in their schools. Other important factors include the individual's role in the school, the relevance of the course content to the school's priorities, the nature of the proposed area of school improvement and the willingness of other staff to learn from or participate in teacher-led developments. Since senior managers largely determine the school's priorities for change, when participants' intended outcomes are consistent with their school's aims and priorities they generally receive particularly high levels of support.

17. Providers use a range of effective strategies to secure the involvement of senior managers and other staff in supporting participants and creating a positive climate for their work. These include requiring participants to find mentors in their schools to assist them in their studies. In one course, the tutors enlist the support of headteachers as mentors; in another, headteachers are asked to designate a tutor from the school staff to monitor participants' school-focused studies. Where this

responsibility is assumed by a senior staff member, the support can be particularly beneficial. One provider requires headteachers to endorse participants' action plans and appoint a review partner to monitor the participants' targets at the start, during and at the end of the course.

*The commitment of schools to supporting participants on a diploma course in educational management was secured through clearly defined partnership arrangements. Each school was responsible for providing mentor support and for supporting learning sets which allowed small groups of participants to meet with senior members of staff who had been trained by the provider. Each school was also required to identify a senior manager as a link tutor who attended all the taught course sessions and liaised with the learning set facilitators, the participants' mentors and with the provider. One participant on the course stated that his mentor, a deputy headteacher who was also his line manager, was very influential in enabling him to put into practice the ideas from the course. The mentor's guidance helped him to reflect on what was appropriate for the school and its pupils, and complemented the university-based training.*

18. An important factor in the teachers' experience is the general support they receive from their colleagues in completing school-based tasks. Many courses require participants to review the content of the training with other staff and to evaluate the impact of the course on their teaching and on the curriculum. A particularly effective strategy on some courses is the creation of teacher support groups which are often successful in changing the culture of professional development in schools and in encouraging teachers to act as researchers. The collaborative nature of these school-based groups provides a valuable forum for sharing and discussing progress with similarly motivated colleagues who understand the particular context of the school. In the best examples, meetings include presentations by individual participants which are evaluated by the group.

19. Whole-school improvement is most effectively achieved when groups of staff from the same school undertake the course together and a small number of providers run their courses in schools. This had had a very positive effect in some of the schools visited.

*A school-based Master of Business Administration course was supported throughout its existence by the senior staff of one school, several of whom, including the headteacher, had completed it. This support ensured that it had a high priority in the school's staff development programme. A particular strength of this school-based course was that 12 of the staff met regularly for training sessions. The group of staff undertaking the course together was a very powerful mechanism for developing the school's ethos and climate, and focusing its work on sustained school improvement. The outcomes had had a considerable impact on the school and led to numerous successful developments.*

20. Positive and sustained impact of the training across the whole school is more likely where the participants are headteachers or senior managers. Individual teachers generally have a more restricted sphere of influence. Having time available in school for participants to undertake their school-based tasks and research enquiries, particularly action research, is also an important factor that varies between schools, and between the primary and secondary phases. Primary teachers, especially headteachers, tend to have a greater influence on change across the school than those in secondary schools.

## Monitoring the impact of training

21. Providers monitor the impact of the training on the participants' own practice and that of their schools in a number of ways. In about a quarter of the courses, regular reviews of the participants' progress include an evaluation of their contribution to school improvement; in around a third, the assessment criteria for assignments and school-based tasks include an evaluation of their contribution. Senior managers in a number of schools are involved in this process, often drawing on evidence from performance management procedures and from departmental reviews in secondary schools or from monitoring teaching and learning in primary schools. A few courses assessed their effectiveness by comparing participants' initial needs analysis with what they have achieved by the end of the course. Other providers use end-of-course presentations by participants to monitor impact.

22. However, opportunities to monitor the impact of training are sometimes missed. Even though end-of-course evaluations are undertaken for the large majority of courses, these are used largely to evaluate the course content and delivery, rather than to assess its effect on participants or their schools. Indeed, about a third of these fail to include any evaluation of the impact of the course on the participants' practice or on their school. Even though participants' assignments are often linked to their school's development plan, around one in five schools fail to monitor effects on teaching and learning.

23. Providers and schools rarely attempt to quantify the effect of the courses on the achievement of pupils. Indeed, fewer than a quarter of providers make any

attempt to evaluate the impact on pupils. A few courses expect participants to produce portfolios of pupils' work to demonstrate how the course has led to improvements in the pupils' performance. Several providers use informal post-course contact with participants, for example through their attendance at other courses, or tutors' visits to schools to support trainee teachers, to provide some limited evidence of the impact of the training. In about one in ten courses, there was an expectation that LEA advisers would undertake some monitoring of longer-term impact through their visits to schools.

24. Only a few participants reported any medium- or long-term monitoring of the impact of their training by providers. In order to do this, participants had to draw up action plans at the end of the training for implementing change in their school. Course tutors subsequently evaluated the participants' effect on sustainable school improvement by visiting their schools, by follow-up meetings or by telephone interviews. A few providers undertake a formal audit one year after completion of the course, in which they ask participants to provide details of what they have achieved and of any improvements in the pupils' learning. Three providers gathered evidence on the promotions achieved by past course members as an indirect indicator of the effectiveness of the courses. While recognising the importance of monitoring the impact of their courses, several providers raised serious doubts about the feasibility of linking improvements in pupils' attainment to a teacher's participation in a course and of separating such effects from other school improvement initiatives.

25. About a third of the courses effectively communicate the outcomes of the training. Some participants had opportunities to share the outcomes within their own schools through staff meetings, whole-school training days and conferences. Some of these events were evaluated by the LEA and a report produced for wider circulation. A minority of providers have established procedures for publishing the outcomes of participants' work through journals or newsletters. The support provided by LEA advisers in disseminating the work of teachers was often influential; dissemination through the LEA's intranet, regional seminars and joint publications between participants, advisers and their tutors were all effective strategies.

*Dissemination of the outcomes of school-based research activities is an integral part of an Advanced Certificate in Literacy. Results are reported to the senior managers and governors of schools and are shared with other teachers at INSET days or appropriate meetings. Course participants and others from their schools are involved in an action research network which hosts termly Saturday morning conferences to focus on research, provide structured workshops and facilitate informal networking. The network's journal publishes accounts of teachers' developmental work and critical reflections on their professional practice. Participants and their schools receive copies of the journal and are encouraged to use the network website.*

## Impact of training on school improvement

26. Courses have improved the personal effectiveness of the participants in a number of ways, including: better organisational, interpersonal and analytical skills; enhanced teaching competence; increased subject knowledge; better understanding of current educational initiatives; and enhanced leadership and management capability. Annex A contains a number of case studies that illustrate how a number of course participants have drawn on their learning from these courses to bring about significant improvement in their schools. While the participants have had most impact in their own schools, the training has also enabled many to contribute to wider educational development in their LEAs, regions and nationally. A number of teachers attributed their promotion to other teaching, management or advisory posts to the effectiveness of the training.

27. A number of the course participants teach in schools that are particularly challenging, or those where the attainment of the pupils is not high enough and where their inspection reports have identified areas for significant improvement. These were often factors in stimulating teachers to embark on a postgraduate course to give them the depth of professional knowledge and expertise that was required to contribute effectively to school improvement.

28. Most courses had enabled the participants to improve the quality of their teaching. Analysis of teaching methods and ways of identifying pupils' preferred learning styles are commonly features of courses that focus on subject teaching or wider school improvement. All of the courses had made some contribution to improving participants' teaching capabilities through involving them in action research projects. These often led teachers to implement and evaluate innovative teaching approaches, such as accelerated learning, which led them to make long-term changes to their practice. Case study 1 (see annex A), for example, describes how a dissertation on peer-assisted learning helped the headteacher of an infant school to introduce more collaborative approaches to learning that have led to steady improvements in the performance of pupils. Evidence of improvement in the quality of teaching was seen in a number of the schools' inspection reports. However, only a minority of participants could provide evidence that these improvements had yet led to better results in National Tests or GCSE and Advanced level examinations.

29. The majority of courses helped participants to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of curriculum planning and organisation. They enabled them to develop and implement new schemes of work and devise teaching resources to help improve standards in their schools. The emphasis on developing research skills gave many teachers the ability to evaluate and analyse current practice in their schools more effectively, leading them to re-examine the pedagogy of their subject or phase. Case studies 7, 8 and 11 exemplify how teachers of religious education, geography and design and technology, respectively, have been able to develop the subject curriculum in their schools as a result of their enhanced subject knowledge from these courses.

30. Courses led participants to introduce a range of effective strategies for monitoring teaching and learning and to produce curriculum plans based on clear

frameworks. Schemes of work were produced that matched National Curriculum programmes of study and examination requirements more effectively, and were focused better on the individual needs of pupils.

31. A particular strength of a number of the courses was the way that they had helped participants to understand the key objectives of the National Strategies and improved their implementation of them. Teachers used their course assignments to focus on specific aspects of implementing the strategies and the longitudinal nature of most courses allowed small-scale research projects to be carried out. These generally provided an effective means of developing the teachers' classroom practice and enhancing the success of the strategies in their schools. Case study 2, for example, describes how two teachers from a large primary school used an advanced certificate in literacy course to guide a number of significant improvements to the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) in their school. Similarly, the headteacher in case study 13 has been able to bring about improvements in the way that all teachers in her school approach the teaching of writing within the NLS.

32. Many courses focused on strategies for improving the assessment practices of schools and the use of their targets to raise standards. Teachers on these courses developed a better understanding of assessment strategies and the value of setting qualitative and quantitative targets; they also gained the skills necessary to introduce these procedures in their own schools. As a result, schools often introduced standardised testing and target-setting for individual pupils. Case studies 4, 5 and 6 illustrate how participants teaching in very different contexts have drawn on the enhanced knowledge and skills gained from these courses to implement much more effective assessment and monitoring procedures in their schools.

33. Many of the courses in the survey included aspects of training to improve the ability of teachers to lead and manage aspects of their school's provision. One in five courses focused specifically on this area of teachers' professional development. Some provided training for subject co-ordinators, while others were broader middle management and leadership programmes. All significantly improved participants' leadership and management capabilities and their ability to implement sustainable school improvement. For example, case studies 11, 12, 14 and 15 illustrate how teachers with leadership responsibilities in a range of subjects have both enhanced their own teaching effectiveness and been able to develop that of their colleagues. A key feature of these training programmes was the opportunity they gave for participants to undertake assignments and research enquiries on topics linked directly to current developments in their schools and to their management responsibilities. They were able to analyse and evaluate their own practice and become more aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their own department or school. This helped them to introduce improvements successfully. Also, the quality of improvement planning had improved in a high proportion of the schools as a result of the contribution of teachers who had attended the courses.

34. About one in ten of the participants followed-up by inspectors were judged to have made little or no significant contribution to school improvement as a result of the training. There were a variety of reasons for their failure to bring about change in their schools. The most important were:

- insufficient dedicated study time to complete assignments and research projects
- lack of support from headteachers and senior managers in implementing change
- colleagues' reluctance to change established practices and attitudes
- lack of liaison between INSET providers, LEAs, schools and participants, resulting in training that was not well matched to needs
- little systematic monitoring or evaluation of the impact of the training on school improvement
- the failure of participants to complete the assignments and research projects.

## Value for money

35. The high quality of training provided, the improved personal effectiveness of participants, the demonstrable effect on school improvement and the relatively low financial costs to participants and their schools, resulted in inspectors' judgements that the great majority of courses provide good value for money. Providers, schools and course participants, however, were often unsure how to assess the extent to which these courses provide value for money.

36. Providers generally had limited evidence on which to base a judgement of value for money. None undertook a cost/benefit analysis of individual training programmes, and value for money had not been evaluated in any depth. Schools, similarly, did not attempt any systematic evaluation of cost effectiveness; any analysis was informal and some headteachers and course participants had no idea of the costs involved. Others had some awareness of costs but found it difficult to make judgements about value for money.

37. Despite these limitations, providers claimed that their courses gave good value for money, based on indicators such as recruitment, attendance and completion rates, all of which were high or very high in the majority of courses. Additionally, higher education providers commonly evaluated the courses, using their institutions' general quality assurance procedures. A minority assessed their courses against the four best value principles:

- challenge: courses meet the provider's validation criteria
- competition: provider is active in several LEAs in publicising course details and recruiting participants
- comparison: data relating to recruitment, retention, success rates and external examiner reports is evaluated

- consultation: provider works closely with LEAs and encourages their involvement in the design of the course. Participants are involved in course evaluations.

*One provider suggests that value for money is indicated by efficiency, effectiveness and economy and is reflected in the auditor's reports, the views of stakeholders, and the combination of funding from the consortium schools, the LEA and the TTA. The use of a new CD-ROM for training illustrates efficiency and economy as it will provide extensive resources to approximately 150 participants per year. Effectiveness is illustrated by the fact that speakers and training venues meet agreed standards. The course is re-approved each year after a searching investigation of the quality and outcomes of the course. The overall high quality is confirmed by the external examiners' reports.*

38. The majority of providers were unclear about the precise details of the funding available for these courses. The financing of individual courses often came from a general programme fund and there was often some degree of cross-subsidy between courses. Some tutors argued that it would be difficult and time-consuming to isolate the funding of one course from the overall budget.

39. There was wide variation in the level of financial support given to course participants by their schools. For example, some schools provided supply cover only, others paid a proportion of the course fees, and a minority paid the full cost. Only a few participants were entirely self-financing. Schools mostly judged that providing financial support for teachers on their courses provided better value than sending them on shorter courses. There was a strong feeling from schools and participants that the training provided good or very good value for money and that the positive benefits were unlikely to have been achieved on less extended courses.



## Annex A: Case studies

### Case Study 1

*The headteacher of an inner city infant school wished to further her interest in collaborative learning and to engage in research that would benefit the school. She attended a university-based Master of Arts (Education) course in 'raising achievement in city schools' and undertook a project on peer-assisted learning. The course and project linked well to the headteacher's performance management objective of promoting collaborative learning.*

*The course enabled the headteacher to meet her needs through the selection of modules and the negotiated focus of assignments. The length and structure of the course gave her the opportunity to reflect upon and evaluate her own practice, beliefs and leadership style. Her dissertation on peer-assisted learning acted as a powerful stimulus for deepening her knowledge of teaching and learning and improved her analytical skills.*

*As a result, she has been able to introduce a number of improvements in the school:*

- *staff and governors have written a new teaching and learning policy, based on a shared understanding of good practice*
- *teaching assistants are employed to stay beyond the end of the school day to plan collaboratively with the teachers; they now play a major role in enhancing the development of pupils' spoken and written language skills*
- *there is a greater emphasis on collaboration between pupils and staff*
- *the school has devised a useful list of collaborative learning skills, which provides guidance on the progress that pupils should make from Reception to Year 2*
- *a more systematic and effective process of review and self-evaluation has been introduced in which curriculum co-ordinators play a greater role in evaluating their specialist areas, and lesson observation has become embedded in the school's culture*
- *pupils' performance has steadily improved over three years, particularly in writing, as a result of the introduction of collaborative writing partners*
- *a group of underachieving Year 1 pupils, the focus of the headteacher's research project, went on to exceed the targets set for their end of Key Stage 1 assessment.*

## Case Study 2

*Two teachers from a large primary school attended an advanced certificate course in literacy. One was the recently promoted English co-ordinator who taught in Key Stage 2. Her reasons for applying for the course were to strengthen her knowledge of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and to enhance her effectiveness as English co-ordinator in the school. The other had recently joined the school and taught in Key Stage 1. His reason for applying for the course was to enrich his teaching of English within the structure of the NLS.*

*The course required both teachers to undertake a research project related to the implementation of the NLS in their school. One focused on guided reading and developed a recording system which was subsequently adopted by the school. He also gave demonstration lessons on guided reading for colleagues and led training in this for teaching assistants. The other teacher focused on the teaching of spelling and devised a systematic approach through the use of spelling journals. She led staff meetings on the teaching of spelling across both key stages. The school adopted her approach and it is now used consistently by staff.*

*The course was successful in meeting the needs of both teachers. It enhanced their professional knowledge and expertise, and strengthened their leadership roles within the school. They became better informed about the framework and structure of the NLS, the relationship between reading and writing, and the role of speaking and listening in learning. It helped them develop a wider range of strategies for effective literacy teaching. Immediately after completing the course, the English co-ordinator was appointed by the LEA as a Leading Literacy Teacher, as was the other teacher in the following year. They now provide demonstration lessons and literacy support for schools within the LEA, contribute to annual literacy conferences by organising workshops to share good practice, and lead twilight sessions for English co-ordinators in their local area. They have also contributed to literacy workshops for trainee teachers.*

*Both have clearly used what they learnt on the course to improve their own teaching. They have also successfully communicated what they learned to other members of staff so that effective teaching strategies are now embedded in the school. The end-of-key-stage results and the school's own internal testing arrangements show clear improvements in the standards of pupils' reading.*

### Case Study 3

*The head of the English department in a secondary school that serves an area of economic disadvantage undertook a postgraduate diploma in school development in which she chose to focus on the strategies and processes that could be used to improve standards of reading. The school's latest inspection report highlighted the need to improve standards in reading and writing: a significant number of pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 had reading ages below 10 years.*

*She was fully committed to the course as it allowed her to refine and systematically change current practice in her department and raise pupils' achievement. The tutorial guidance that she received and the course documentation were excellent and contributed significantly to her understanding. She undertook regular reviews of her progress, which required her to reflect on and examine her teaching in relation to the school's context and relevant research findings.*

*Her research assignment was a powerful tool for improving her professional knowledge and especially for developing a greater awareness of the role played by literacy in supporting pupils' learning. As a result of the course, she was able to introduce changes that led to improvements in teaching and learning:*

- a reading recovery programme was introduced into the school as a direct result of the teacher's research. She set measurable targets over a four-year period, particularly in relation to the provision of training for teachers and teaching assistants and of facilities to enhance the pupils' literacy skills. A mobile classroom was purchased and furnished as a reading room, providing a calm atmosphere with an emphasis on reading for enjoyment. The number of reading books purchased for the library and reading room increased significantly*
- the development of reading skills was encouraged by requiring every pupil to bring a reading book to each English lesson and to spend the first ten minutes of the lesson reading it. Dictionaries and thesauruses were purchased and placed in every classroom*
- the pupils' confidence and enjoyment of reading improved significantly. They read aloud confidently in class, their spelling improved and they acquired a wider vocabulary*
- reading records were completed at the end of each session to track the progress of individual pupils. Miscues were identified and recorded; corrections were reinforced in subsequent sessions until they were understood*
- the majority of the 162 Year 7 and Year 8 pupils who took part in the reading recovery programme showed significant gains in*

*their reading ages. Of the pupils who completed the course, 50% improved their reading ages by at least six months*

- *the scheme was replaced by a 'reading to succeed' scheme and the improvement in reading ages was sustained. The new scheme had a different focus as it targeted Year 9 pupils who had limited comprehension skills. Of the pupils who completed this scheme, 50% achieved improved reading ages of one year or more.*

## **Case Study 4**

*The newly appointed 'director of inclusion' in a challenging multi-ethnic inner city secondary school undertook a course on raising achievement in city schools. The school had a high incidence of underachievement, particularly by boys.*

*The course provided ideas, understanding and skills that proved invaluable in helping her to address pupils' underachievement, including: matching teaching approaches to the pupils' preferred styles of learning; the use of strategies for identifying individual pupils' needs; and the use of data for setting and monitoring individual targets for pupils. She studied a module on inclusion that provided guidance on many of the issues confronting her in her new role. She was able to integrate theoretical inputs with practical action in her school, for example through school-based tasks and assignments.*

*Partly as a result of the teacher's work on the course, the school established a system of target-setting and pupil monitoring that integrated curriculum and pastoral support procedures. The system applies to all pupils but is focused particularly on tackling underachievement in the school. For example, weekly meetings of a pastoral support team have been established, comprising a wide range of key staff including: year heads; key stage co-ordinators; the school's special educational needs co-ordinator; learning mentors; the education welfare officer; and the home-school liaison teacher. This group discusses the progress of individual pupils against their targets and identifies appropriate strategies to support them. It also links with appropriate external agencies to help to identify the reasons for underachievement, triggering appropriate external, as well as internal, support.*

*The school has directly tackled pupils' underachievement. The procedures for target-setting, monitoring and providing focused support for individual pupils have become firmly embedded in the school's practice. There have been significant changes in teaching approaches across the school to focus on recognising the individual learning needs of pupils. Key Stage 3 results have shown a steady improvement.*

## Case Study 5

*A newly-appointed head of the design and technology faculty in an urban comprehensive school wished to improve the standards of teaching and levels of pupils' attainment in the subject, both identified as weaknesses in a recent school inspection. She attended a one-year part-time postgraduate certificate course in managing design and technology provided by a professional association and led by university tutors.*

*The structure and content of the course enabled her to organise her studies to meet her own professional needs as well as to develop and implement improvement plans to address weaknesses in the design and technology provision in her school. She undertook course assignments that supported a number of developments; one of these involved undertaking a major revision of the use of target-setting and formative assessment to enhance pupils' attainment. As a result, a range of assessment and target-setting procedures and instruments were devised, including target sheets for every GCSE project, exemplification folders for National Curriculum levels of attainment and GCSE grades, project guides for all GCSE design and technology courses and assessment information sheets that clearly identified what pupils needed to do to achieve the higher grades. These were particularly valuable for pupils in helping them to structure their work to meet the assessment criteria.*

*As a result of these initiatives, the overall quality of the design and technology provision improved. The subsequent school inspection noted that standards in design and technology had risen considerably and inspectors attributed this to the excellent use of assessment strategies. GCSE results were among the best in the school. A number of pupils had taken their GCSE examination early and then completed Advanced Subsidiary modules at the end of Year 11.*

## Case Study 6

*The headteacher of a successful voluntary-aided primary school undertook a course on target-setting for school improvement. He was keen to develop further his understanding and skills in this area. Although pupil tracking was already in place in the school, he was not sure how to use the increasing amount of data available or how to set appropriate targets and devise ways to meet them.*

*As a result of his studies, the headteacher gained insights into the range of assessment data available and the different forms of testing, and learnt how to use assessment information and qualitative data to track pupils' progress, predict outcomes, recognise underachievement and identify weak teaching. He recognised that data on individual classes would help teachers recognise the needs of the whole class as well as individuals within it. The headteacher*



*learnt how to intervene appropriately in pupils' learning, particularly to raise boys' achievement. He gained the confidence to reject the LEA's baseline assessment system in favour of a system he had come across on the course. He felt that this alternative system was less onerous for teachers and gave regular data from the beginning of the Reception Year onwards.*

*The course had changed the schools' practice in a number of ways:*

- evidence from baseline testing is used to challenge teachers' expectations and the school tracks pupils' progress carefully against the predictions made by teachers at the beginning of the year*
- teachers use baseline and teacher assessment to identify children who are unlikely to reach a level 2B at the end of Key Stage 1. They interview the children's parents individually and stress the need for them to read regularly with their children and to help with homework*
- the school uses target-setting to improve standards, and booster days are employed across the school. Reading, non-verbal reasoning and mathematics tests are used to identify pupils who are underachieving or achieving above their targets*
- greater attention is given to raising pupils' self-esteem as a basis for improvement. A merit system was introduced to reward pupils for improvements in all aspects of the curriculum and their contribution to school life.*

*Overall, the course had given the headteacher the knowledge and skills to implement changes that were improving the quality of teaching and learning in an already successful school.*

## **Case Study 7**

*The head of religious education (RE) in an 11–18 comprehensive school in a small rural market town undertook an advanced diploma in education (RE). He was the only RE teacher in the school and did not have a specialist qualification in the subject. Before he took the course, the subject was offered for one hour per week in Key Stage 3 and as a GCSE option at Key Stage 4. There was no core RE in Key Stage 4 or post-16 provision.*

*The diploma involved distance learning, attendance at three optional residential courses, and the completion of six substantial school-focused assignments. As a non-specialist teacher of RE he was keen to gain expertise and a relevant qualification. There were high-quality course materials, very good training and effective tutorial support.*

*As a result of participation in the course the teacher:*

- *extended his subject knowledge and understanding of how to teach RE, in particular the significance of starting with human experience and developing conceptual understanding, skills and attitudes. This changed his view of the subject as well as of appropriate teaching methods and resources*
- *created new schemes of work and introduced new approaches to teaching and learning that took account of different learning styles and emphasised self-assessment. These changes led to high levels of pupil motivation, increased uptake of GCSE and improved attainment; for example, in 2002 71% of candidates in RE gained A\*–C and 28% A\* or A*
- *drew up proposals for providing RE for all pupils in Key Stage 4 and advanced level courses*
- *was subsequently appointed as an advanced skills teacher. He is now involved in training and supporting new RE staff in other schools. He is also part of a small team that works with teachers to diagnose teaching and learning needs across the curriculum, providing whole-school in-service training, and working with departments to develop effective teaching and learning strategies, linked to their school's improvement plan.*

## **Case Study 8**

*The head of geography in a rural secondary school decided to undertake a university-based Master of Arts (Education) course with an emphasis on subject studies. She saw the course initially as providing professional development through updating her own knowledge and understanding of geography. However, as it proceeded, it became evident to her that what she was learning could be applied both to her own teaching and more widely. The course gave her the knowledge, understanding, motivation and confidence to implement change in her own practice, the geography department and the whole school.*

*Her dissertation examined the differences in performance, by gender, in GCSE geography in the county's schools. It gave her an understanding of the complexity of this issue. One outcome was the close analysis of performance by gender in her own department, the factors affecting this and the implementation of strategies to mitigate these. These strategies have had some success.*

*The course gave the teacher new enthusiasm by updating her knowledge and understanding of recent developments in education, and in geography in particular, and provided her with the confidence to apply this enhanced professional knowledge to a wider context than the subject.*

*The major outcomes of the participant's involvement in the course have been:*

- *updated departmental schemes of work that have a greater focus on pedagogy, in particular the use of more active and independent learning strategies*
- *an increase in the range and variety of teaching styles used by the participant and her colleagues; these have contributed to the very good standards in geography at Key Stage 3 and excellent GCSE results*
- *her promotion to ‘thinking skills co-ordinator’, a role which includes preparing the school improvement plan, providing in-service training, representing the school with outside agencies, and producing teaching and learning materials across the curriculum*
- *her involvement in the school’s community learning initiative, which entails working with various external groups.*

## Case Study 9

*The course participant had previously been a primary teacher for seven years. His present post involves responsibility for the co-ordination of the physical education of pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties within a 3–19 age range special school, and promoting the inclusion of the younger pupils in a local primary school where he works on a part-time basis.*

*The postgraduate certificate course focused particularly on developing an inclusive curriculum for pupils with severe and profound multiple learning difficulties. In the early stages of the course, tutorials helped to clarify and focus the teacher’s knowledge and understanding of inclusive practice and regular reference was made to the key principles of setting suitable learning challenges, responding to pupils’ diverse needs, and removing barriers to learning.*

*The course gave the teacher confidence to offer advice to his colleagues about the use of curriculum-based assessment and performance scales in order to assess and monitor the progress of pupils with severe learning difficulties. It developed his expertise in helping class teachers and learning support assistants to implement pupils’ individual learning plans, and enhanced his understanding of some of the barriers to inclusive practice. His ability to work collaboratively and confidently with psychologists, speech therapists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists was also improved.*

*The teacher works closely with the primary school’s special educational needs co-ordinator in supporting a group of nine pupils from the special school. He is also involved in team teaching with class teachers across Years 2– 6, working closely with two learning support assistants. He plans the initial visit made by the special school pupils and their parents to the primary school and gives particular emphasis to the crucial issues of induction, the development of positive staff attitudes and the management of the pupils’ challenging behaviour.*



## Case Study 10

*A recently appointed teacher in a special school was asked by the school to attend a course on severe learning difficulties (SLD) at a local college for one day a week. The course was devised by the SEN specialist staff at the college, in conjunction with a consortium of 11 local SLD schools, to prepare mainstream teachers to work in SLD specialist settings.*

*The match of the course content to the needs of the school and the teacher was good and the style of delivery, which encouraged participation, discussion, reflection, sharing of practice, and research, led to high-quality outcomes. She chose to carry out her individual research project in the area of intensive interaction, a teaching method that is of particular value to pupils in developing their early communication skills. The use of intensive interaction with her own pupils, including two pupils with a visual impairment, has motivated her to embark on a two-year part-time mandatory qualification in visual impairment.*

*The teacher gained a depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding of important themes within the SLD field. In particular, she developed teaching skills in the use of intensive interaction and the pupils' communication skills have improved as a result of this teaching strategy. The learning support assistants working within her class also made more effective use of intensive interaction as a result of working with her. She provided training for all the staff on the technique, which led to its more extensive use across the school.*

## Case Study 11

*A newly qualified design and technology co-ordinator in an inner city primary school attended a one-year, part-time postgraduate certificate course in primary design and technology because he wished to raise the standards of teaching and levels of pupils' attainment in the subject. These had been identified as areas of weakness in the school's recent inspection. Additionally, he wanted to raise the level of his own subject expertise and to enhance his ability to provide training for other colleagues.*

*The structure and content of the course matched his needs well. He was required to identify the areas of subject knowledge he wanted to improve and the priorities in the school's improvement plan for the subject. The university undertook a needs analysis to evaluate the participant's initial capability. The course content was flexible enough to address the topics that were identified in his school's improvement plan and the assignments enabled him to focus on key areas for development.*

*The course was very practical in nature and provided extensive subject knowledge training across all the relevant aspects of design and technology. It also examined a range of strategies for teaching and learning in the subject and provided opportunities to evaluate relevant teaching and learning resources. The teacher was able to produce many valuable resources for use in his school. A further area of study was the management and training of colleagues and the promotion of design and technology in the curriculum.*

*The training led to a number of improvements in the teacher's own effectiveness as well as in the provision for design and technology in the school:*

- *his subject knowledge and skills improved considerably, including his designing and graphics capability, practical skills, and knowledge of systems and control. His ability to teach design and technology also improved and he developed new planning skills and teaching strategies*
- *his management skills were enhanced, particularly his ability to support and develop the competence of other teachers to teach the subject. He provided effective in-service training for the whole school and gave in-class support to individual colleagues*
- *a new assessment scheme was introduced. He trained the teachers to assess pupils' capabilities and award National Curriculum levels of attainment more accurately. Assessment has improved, including the effective use of target-setting*
- *more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of pupils' work have been implemented and embedded in the school's practice*
- *the standard of pupils' work in design and technology has improved significantly; the quality of the pupils' designing and*

*making, and their ability to evaluate their work and other products, are now considerably better than at the time of the school inspection.*

## **Case Study 12**

*The information and communication technology (ICT) co-ordinator of an 11–16 secondary school joined a course on using ICT to improve subject teaching in order to update her knowledge of ICT developments. This improved her own competence in the use of ICT and gave her insights into the ways others worked with ICT and the problems that teachers of other subjects faced. The course provided ideas to improve practice in the use of ICT, and she developed her personal effectiveness to pass on what she had learnt to others.*

*Subsequently, she trained as a National Opportunities Fund (NOF) Platinum trainer for the training partnership that had provided the original course. She also became the lead NOF trainer in her school, where her role was to train teachers of other subjects up to the NOF gold level. She was keen that teachers used ICT because of the potential gains for the pupils, and successfully nurtured a growing interest in the use of ICT across the school. She began training staff from a very low level of use (bronze) and took the whole staff to the silver level. About half have registered to advance to the gold level.*

*The teacher has provided considerable support and the impact on her colleagues' use of ICT in subject teaching has been very considerable. Some staff were initially reluctant to develop new teaching approaches and were unconvinced of the value of using ICT. The teacher attributed her success in moving these staff and all departments forward to what she had gained from the original course – in particular, how to evaluate what teachers were doing in their classrooms and their feelings about introducing ICT in their teaching, and then how to find ways to meet their needs. She has been careful to introduce staff to ICT applications that were likely to show an immediate benefit. In this way, they have been more likely to be willing to look at other applications.*

*The school's inspection report noted that a number of subjects were making good use of ICT, especially English, design and technology, modern languages, geography and history. The role of NOF training was recognised as playing a part in this.*

## **Case Study 13**

*The headteacher of an average-sized primary school had attended an advanced certificate in literacy course while at her previous school. It had enabled her to improve her knowledge and understanding of the National Literacy Strategy and examine methods for its effective implementation. The course had a strong focus on modelling effective classroom practice and had*

*been successful in enhancing her professional knowledge and expertise. It had increased her enthusiasm for, and commitment to, literacy development in pupils.*

*One of the headteacher's first priorities on appointment was to raise levels of achievement by developing the teaching of writing using high-quality texts as a stimulus. She provided a demonstration of how to teach a literacy hour in each teacher's class, using texts that had been recommended on the course and which she had tried out in her previous school. After demonstrating the lesson, she discussed her teaching strategies with the class teacher. This process was then reversed and she observed each teacher teach a literacy hour, followed by feedback and discussion. This approach, which combined demonstration and modelling, followed by analysis, made the teachers aware, in a non-threatening way, of what they needed to do to improve their teaching.*

*The headteacher also modelled the teaching of extended writing in all classes using good quality books as a stimulus. She followed the same process of feedback and discussion. Her approach persuaded the teachers of the benefits of using literature for developing and enriching pupils' writing. The response of the staff to these teaching strategies was very positive and they quickly became embedded in whole school practice.*

*Standards in pupils' reading and writing in the school have improved significantly, especially in the number of pupils gaining level 3 at the end of Key Stage 1 and level 5 at the end of Key Stage 2.*

## **Case Study 14**

*In 1999, the recently appointed head of English of an inner-city secondary school took a course on middle management, provided by a higher education college in conjunction with the LEA, to gain a stronger understanding of the factors necessary to bring about change in the school. The school had been placed in special measures two years earlier. The course linked well to the school's improvement plan, designed to improve this middle tier of management. During the course, the school provided opportunities for exploring and deploying strategies for change, through action research.*

*The course allowed the teacher a degree of flexibility to adapt the course material to her own and her department's needs. The taught course addressed key issues in the school's improvement plan, including the management of change. The essays and tasks required during the course enabled her to improve her analytical skills and to explore the underlying weaknesses of her department.*

*As a result, she was able to involve her team in writing a new scheme of work, based on a clearer identification of common aims and objectives. She felt greater confidence in her own leadership, having a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the staff in the department. Her skills of negotiation improved significantly and she became more patient in achieving her objectives. She allocated significant responsibilities to those whom she considered capable of exercising them effectively. Evaluation became an*

*established element of how the department worked. Teachers became more aware of the individual contributions they were able to make.*

*In 2002, when the school was next inspected, it was reported that the leadership and management of the department had improved and that the pupils' approaches to their work and their achievement in English GCSE examinations had improved considerably.*

## **Case Study 15**

*A science teacher in a large comprehensive school undertook a postgraduate diploma in education management. He had recently been appointed as second in charge of the science department with responsibility for Key Stage 3 provision in the subject. He wanted to develop his knowledge of different management models and of how to initiate and sustain change.*

*The course met his professional needs in a number of ways. He gained insights into the effective management of people, strategies for involving other staff in a team, and delegating tasks and responsibilities. He developed a more critical understanding of school effectiveness and the processes of organisational improvement.*

*The course assignments were explicitly linked to school improvement projects and they required him to analyse his own practice as a manager and identify strategies for improvement. He was subsequently promoted to head of the science department in the school in recognition of his enhanced professional knowledge and expertise in management.*

*The teacher successfully managed the implementation of a programme of thinking skills into the Key Stage 3 science curriculum, against initial resistance within the department. After a difficult start, it is now embedded in the teaching for pupils in Years 7,8 and 9. The initial analysis of the Year 7 pupils' thinking and analytical skills, and comparisons made with Year 8 classes, showed that the new lessons were having a positive impact on developing the thinking skills of the younger pupils. The results at the end of the year also showed improved cognitive skills. The initiative helped the department with the introduction of the Key Stage 3 science strategy and provision for gifted and talented pupils in the school.*

## **Annex B: list of providers and courses inspected**

### **Bury Metropolitan Borough**

Postgraduate Certificate: Schools Management Development Programme

### **Canterbury Christ Church University College**

Advanced Postgraduate Certificate: Literacy

Advanced Postgraduate Certificate: Severe Learning Difficulties

Postgraduate Diploma/Master of Arts in School Development

### **Design and Technology Association**

Postgraduate Certificate in Professional studies: Education – Primary Design and Technology (University of Central England)

Postgraduate Certificate: Managing School Design & Technology (Secondary) (Sheffield Hallam University)

### **Dyslexia Institute**

Postgraduate Diploma: Dyslexia and Literacy

### **GWIST**

Postgraduate Certificate: Target Setting for School Improvement (University of Bath)

### **Sheffield Hallam University**

Postgraduate Diploma: Education Management

## **South West Initiative for Training**

Postgraduate Certificate: Supporting the use of ICT in Subject Teaching

Postgraduate Diploma of Advanced Professional Studies: School Leadership and Management in the Primary School

## **St Martin's College**

Postgraduate Certificate of Professional Studies: Enhanced Subject Knowledge for Primary Teachers

Postgraduate Certificate of Advanced Studies: Middle Management for Secondary Schools

## **University College Worcester**

MSc: Educational Management & Leadership programme

## **University of Birmingham**

Postgraduate Certificate: Speech and Language Difficulties

## **University of Birmingham, Westhill**

Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma: Religious Education

## **University of Cambridge**

Postgraduate Advanced Certificate: Careers Education and Guidance Curriculum in Schools

Postgraduate Advanced Diploma in Educational Studies: Module on Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning through Enquiry

Postgraduate Certificate of Further Professional Study: The National Curriculum for Pupils with Severe and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties

### **University of Leicester**

Postgraduate Certificate in Professional studies in Education: Effective Learning in the Early Years

Postgraduate Certificate in Professional studies in Education: Subject Leadership in Secondary Schools

MBA: Educational Management

### **University of Southampton**

MA(Ed): Geography Education

MA(Ed): Physical Education and Curriculum Change Modules

### **University of Teesside**

Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Studies in Education: Curriculum Co-ordination (Secondary)

### **University of the West of England**

MA(Ed): Raising Achievement in city Schools