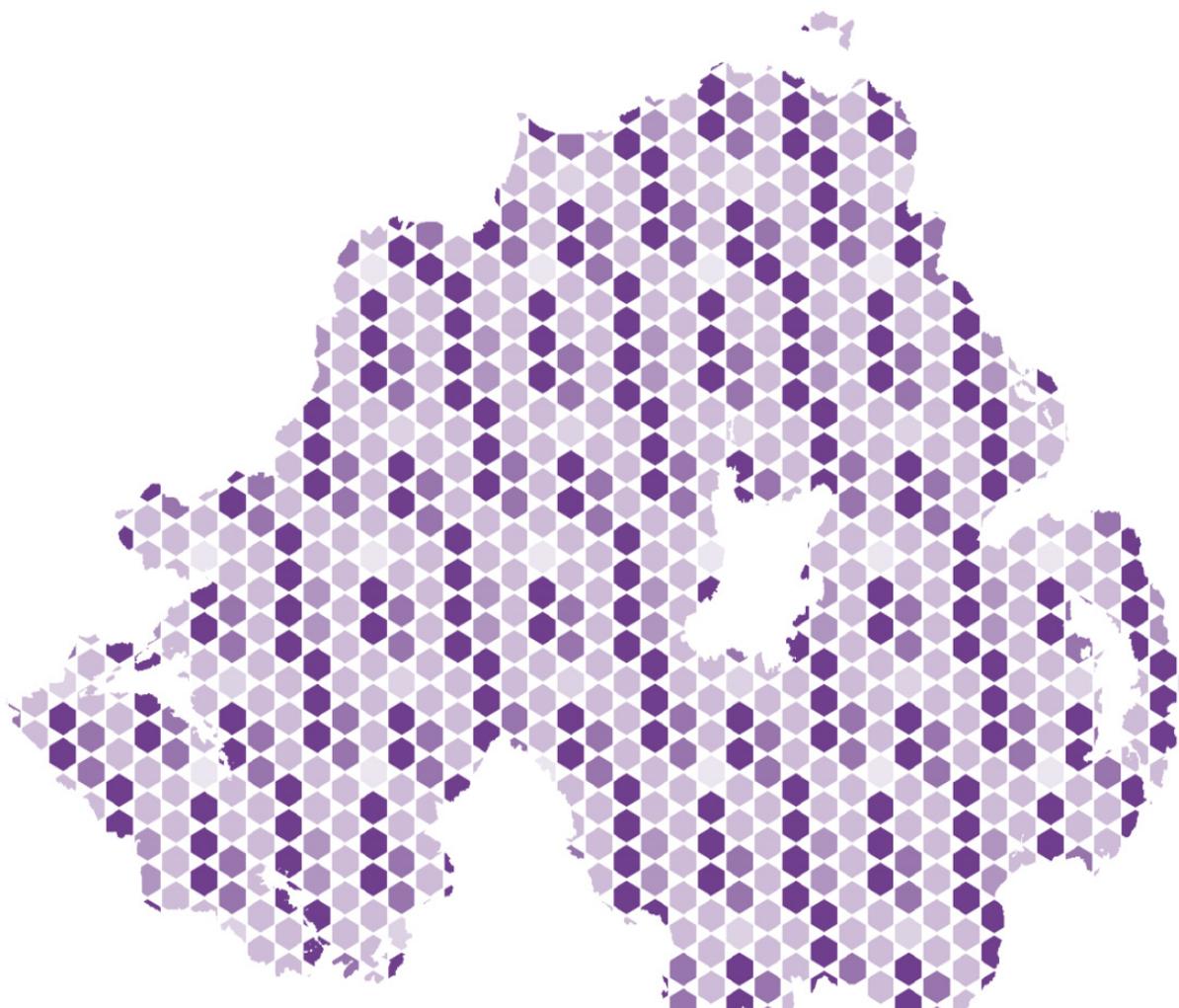


# TEACHER/HIGHER EDUCATION INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

An Inspection Report on the PGCE  
Programme, with a focus on  
Literacy and Numeracy, Queen's  
University Belfast

Inspected: June 2010

## CONTENTS

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1. SELF-EVALUATION AND INSPECTION	1
2. THE EVIDENCE BASE	1
3. THE POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION (PGCE) PROGRAMME	2
4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	3
5. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS	4
6. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING	5
7. CONCLUSION	7

## 1. SELF-EVALUATION AND INSPECTION

1.1 The inspection of the Post-primary Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) programme provided by the Queen's University School of Education (School) was conducted within the terms of the Department of Education (DE) Circular 2010/03 *Initial Teacher Education: Approval of Programmes* which sets out the requirements which programmes must meet to be approved by DE. The provision is required by the Circular to be of a quality which is judged by Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) to be at least satisfactory. The inspection adopted a focus on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum of the programme. The choice of a curriculum focus was influenced by the draft strategy *Every School a Good School: a strategy for raising achievement in literacy and numeracy* (DE, Bangor, 2008). The document *Self-evaluation and inspection of initial teacher education provision, 2009-2010* (Inspectorate, July 2009) contains the framework of quality indicators employed for the inspection.

1.2 In advance of the visit, the School produced an self-evaluation (SE) report (Annex 1 contains a short summary). In arriving at an evaluation of the levels of competence of student teachers, the School and the Inspectorate independently evaluated and reported on how well the student teachers are achieving and on the quality of provision for learning which, together, form a single summary performance level for the overall effectiveness of the provision (quality and outcomes). They also both evaluated and reported on the effectiveness of leadership and management, including the effectiveness of self-evaluation in securing improvement by raising achievement and enhancing quality. Lecturers were also invited to identify and describe briefly instances of effective practice which illustrate aspects of the self-evaluation and inspection framework. A small selection of these is included in this report.

1.3 Finally, the School and the Inspectorate reported an overall level for the programme areas being assessed. In all cases, the evaluations relate to six performance levels which may be interpreted as follows:

PERFORMANCE LEVEL
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## 2. THE EVIDENCE BASE

2.1 In November 2009, a team of inspectors visited the School and, in May 2010, a sample of 30 PGCE students was visited during their school-based work experience. Thirty-five taught sessions taught by the School of Education academic staff involving lectures, seminars and practical workshops in specialist subjects were observed during the inspection. The inspectors and the University staff conducted over 15 significant discussions which focused partly on their roles and responsibilities and partly on self-evaluation evidence produced for internal committees including The Learning and Teaching Committee. A formal discussion was held with a group of students in the University as well as with the students

during their school-based work. The Inspectorate discussed samples of the students' work with the students concerned; attended meetings; read policy, planning and evaluation documents; and reviewed the resources, including the provision for online learning. The visits to schools also allowed for a range of informal talks with, for example, teacher-tutors, classroom teachers, heads of department and principals.

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75% - 90%
A majority	-	50% - 74%
A significant minority	-	30% - 49%
A minority	-	10% - 29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

### 3. THE POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION (PGCE) PROGRAMME AT QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, BELFAST

3.1 The PGCE programme is a professional preparation course with two central activities, the training in the methods of teaching; and practical experience in schools. The PGCE course comprises three modules. The **Educational Studies** module focuses on general educational theory, its application in the classroom and a range of professional issues and is delivered through general lectures followed by small group tutorials and workshops.

3.2 Furthermore, each student follows a **Methods** course<sup>1</sup> for approximately two days each week. Each methods module has its own requirements, in terms of the special knowledge and skill-based competences which have to be addressed. A very small number of students take an Irish-medium enhancement programme in collaboration with St Mary's University College which includes undertaking the second school-based work placement in an Irish-medium post-primary setting.

3.3 Literacy and numeracy are addressed to varying degrees within the Methods courses. There has been some innovative and exciting work in Science, particularly with regard to helping the students become more aware of how to develop both literacy and numeracy for the learner. A greater emphasis needs to be placed on helping the students acquire the necessary skills to promote literacy and numeracy in schools.

3.4 Finally, the **practical teaching module** comprises two main periods of secondary-level school experience each lasting eleven weeks. This module is assessed by full or part time tutors visiting the student on placement and gathering information from three sources: teaching observations; the school experience file and reports about the progress the students have made by school colleagues.

---

<sup>1</sup> English, Mathematics, Science (Physics Chemistry and Biology), ICT and Computing, Social Sciences (Politics and Sociology), Modern Languages, Religious Education

#### 4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 The leadership of the PGCE programme is located within the School structures; additional roles and responsibilities within the PGCE course are distributed according to expertise and interest within a collegial system. When presented with curriculum changes, the PGCE Learning and Teaching Committee consider the implications for course design and subject-based working groups are allocated the task of bringing forward appropriate changes. For example, the roll-out of the revised curriculum in schools involved all PGCE staff in reviewing their courses.

4.2 This process prompted the revision and implementation of changes to the Educational Studies module. In September 2009, a new Director of Education for Initial Teacher Education responsible for the PGCE programme was appointed. It is evident from the findings of the School's SE report that all staff have a clear understanding of the process of, and the part they play in contributing towards self-evaluation within the PGCE course. It is important that the focus of the PGCE self evaluation on the emerging needs of the school curriculum is sustained, maintained and developed.

4.3 The strengths include the:

- effective planning and organisation within and across the three modules namely Methods lectures; Educational Studies and School-Based Placement;
- full participation and involvement of all staff in the self-evaluation process leading to the School's SE Report;
- prompt and efficient response by the various methods' teachers to the feedback from the external examiners;
- clear recognition of the strengths and areas for improvement in all disciplines.

4.4 The areas for development include the need to:

- exploit further existing partnerships with specialist schools in particular to allow students and schools to work together in promoting the particular specialism;
- promote further communication between the methods lecturers to improve the shared understanding of how best to promote literacy and numeracy across all areas;
- extend the good practice which exists in the methods courses through further monitoring and dissemination of the good practice across the School;
- establish an arrangement to monitor and disseminate the good practice which exists in literacy and numeracy in most of the main methods;
- ensure the consistency of the contribution of the part time teacher tutor with regard to the School-Based Work.

*The ICT portfolio project has developed from earlier 'IT Awareness' and Intel: Teach to the Future sessions and is designed to enable the students to learn about the core issues in online course creation. It forms part of the development of the student's personal ICT capability; in recent years it has extended to include the use of LearningNI and the use Web 2.0 tools to create online courses. It is designed to reflect the aspects of ICT competence which school pupils develop through the CCEA ICT Accreditation schemes.*

4.5 Based on the evidence from the inspection visits, the Inspectorate concurs fully with the strengths and recommendations identified within the SE report on the PGCE. A small number of additional recommendations, which the School has the capability of addressing effectively, have been indicated here. The School is very good at ensuring improvement through evaluating the quality of its own provision and taking action to build on its own strengths and address any areas for development.

**Overall, the effectiveness of leadership and management in securing improvement by raising achievement and enhancing quality is very good.**

## 5. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS

5.1 The students entering the PGCE course are graduates within and beyond the various methods. They generally possess a 2:1 degree, or higher, within the subject on offer.

5.2 The strengths include:

- the strong commitment demonstrated by the students to the welfare and pastoral care of the learners during their school-based work;
- the extent to which the students appreciate and have begun to demonstrate the General Teaching Council's code of values<sup>2</sup>;
- the extent to which the students show an appropriate awareness of the requirements of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and the development of the teacher competences in almost all Methods and Educational Studies classes;
- high level of critical appraisal by the student teachers of education issues and developments, particularly at this early stage of their career.

*"All PGCE student teachers are offered the opportunity for four weeks teaching experience in a special school or unit; twenty student teachers have found this an extremely worthwhile and enjoyable placement which have helped to extend their knowledge of differentiated teaching within the field of special needs education. Likewise, the special school staff appreciate having subject specialists teaching within their schools and units, so much so indeed that they very often ring up the School of Education's coordinating tutor to place a request for a student having a particular subject expertise. It is not unknown for some of our students to continue to work throughout the remaining weeks of the summer term on a voluntary basis."*

---

<sup>2</sup> The General Teaching Council's Code of Values and Professional Practice. 2007.

5.3 The areas for development include the need:

- for more work to be done in developing the ICT portfolio to benefit and support the work in the PGCE programme;
- for all students to be more reflective, as well as evaluative, with regard to their school-based experiences;
- for better consistency for all students to demonstrate in their teaching an understanding of the aims of the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

Overall the standards achieved by the students are very good.

## 6. QUALITY OF PROVISION FOR LEARNING

6.1 In each of the subject methods the aims are to provide for the students some of the essential background that is needed when working in schools. The students are encouraged to reflect on how children learn and how to improve their learning through the approaches used. It is also expected that students will develop their knowledge and understanding of matters relating to education in addition to teaching and learning. Students will also be able to develop specific skills in relation to discussion, debate and evaluation of current educational research and thinking. Much work is being done within the subject methods to ensure that the students are aware of, and working at, the most recent level of educational and curriculum thinking. In the best practice observed during taught sessions, the methods lecturers demonstrated and modelled effective pedagogy and promoted a wide range of teaching strategies and the student teachers engaged actively in appropriate learning activities.

*The PGCE science students join secondary and primary teachers to focus, through co-teaching, on creative approach to learning and teaching within science. Student teacher and class teacher teams share their expertise and co-teach science, using the creative approaches they developed during the school placements. Secondary school teachers and PGCE student teachers are very positive about their experience and the benefits for their students in terms of learning and enjoyment of science. Secondary school teachers see how working with the student teachers refreshes their enthusiasm for science and helps them gain an invaluable insight into new approaches for the curriculum. As a result of the project and the involvement of the PGCE student teacher one school planned and had great success with an after school science club.*

6.2 The strengths include:

- the quality of the university teaching most of which was very good or outstanding;
- increasing emphasis placed on the promotion of literacy particularly with regard to the effective modelling of good practice in the methods areas;
- good opportunities for students to engage well with the theory, action research and practice of teaching and learning; and
- good opportunities for the students to engage in cross-methods tutorials, particularly in relation to Education Studies.

*PGCE English students participate in several events during the course which exemplify partnership in practice. During the first teaching block they have a **Poetry Morning** when pairs of students go to several of the partner schools, in which some of them will spend their first placement. A student-pair teaches a couple of poems to a group of sixth-form pupils. This gives the students their first taste of real teaching in a small, relatively informal setting and, for the majority who have recently graduated, at a level to which they can readily adapt.*

6.3 The areas for development include the need to:

- ensure that students in all methods areas have opportunities to benefit from seeing good practice and current thinking modelled in the lectures;
- have a clearly shared, understood and co-ordinated approach towards the promotion of numeracy across all appropriate methods.

#### SCHOOL-BASED WORK

6.4 The students spend a eleven-week session in each of an 11-16 years and in an 11-18 years school.

6.5 The strengths of the school-based work include the:

- quality of the students' teaching observed, most of which was good or better;
- outstanding quality of feedback to students from the lecturers;
- good quality of school support for the student teachers;
- high quality of the school/schools partnership arrangements;
- good quality of feedback from some heads of departments and class teachers;
- the engagement of the students in the life and work of the school;
- the quality of the experience of some students in special schools.

6.6 The areas for development include the need:

- share within and across schools the best practice for hosting students placements allowing all to benefit;
- for all students to have some experience of teaching at 16-18;
- put in place more formal procedures to facilitate communication between hosting schools and the School;
- clarify the mechanisms for ensuring the quality of feedback given by the part-time tutors.

Overall the quality of provision for learning is very good.

**Overall, the quality of provision for learning and the standards achieved by the students is very good.**

## 7. CONCLUSION

7.1 In the areas inspected, the quality of the provision of teacher education (and self-evaluation) by this provider is judged by the Inspectorate to be very good. The provider is meeting very effectively the needs of the student teachers and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

© CROWN COPYRIGHT 2010

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part, except for commercial purposes or in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, provided that the source and date thereof are stated.

Copies of this report are available on the ETI website: [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk)

