

Promoting improvement in initial teacher education (ITE)

As part of the ITE inspection framework from September 2012 Ofsted is promoting further improvement in the ITE sector by providing annual dissemination conferences and associated web-based materials for each of the thematic inspections conducted alongside individual inspections of ITE partnerships in 2012–13.

During 2012–13 these focused on:

- primary mathematics
- secondary modern languages
- secondary science
- secondary history.

Thematic inspection of secondary history

The evidence base

- During the course of 2012–13, subject-specialist HMI inspected provision and outcomes for history trainees in eight of the 39 ITE partnerships inspected. Six ITE partnerships were based in higher education institutions and two were employment-based partnerships.
- Nineteen trainees and six newly qualified teachers (NQTs) were observed teaching history. A further 33 trainees and nine NQTs were interviewed. Meetings were also held with 11 history course leaders and 24 school-based history subject mentors.
- Trainees' planning files and course documentation were reviewed.
- Evidence was also gathered at dissemination presentations that Ofsted's National Lead for history gave to trainees and trainers in 13 individual ITE partnerships.

Key findings

- History trainees are some of the best trainees to enter secondary teacher training.
- High-quality recruitment and induction ensures that trainees on secondary history training courses are well qualified and leave their courses as highly competent professionals with the potential to be outstanding teachers.
- Trainees have good subject knowledge which they can apply to their teaching of history, high expectations and a willingness to try different teaching approaches.

- Training courses are well structured and well delivered by a series of knowledgeable and enthusiastic course leaders. This is particularly the case in relation to partnerships based in higher education institutions.
- Trainees are well supported by their course leaders and by a dedicated group of subject mentors based in the history departments of the schools in which they train.

Suggestions for improvement

Overall, secondary history training is highly effective. However, there are aspects of practice which could enhance further the provision for trainees.

Course leaders for secondary history should:

- provide greater guidance on how to plug subject knowledge gaps, including making greater use of subject community resources
- focus more directly on a range of practical strategies to ensure trainees have a greater understanding of how to enhance students' historical thinking, develop progression in students' conceptual understanding in history and differentiate effectively to meet the needs of all students
- ensure assignments focus on subject-specific practice as well as generic teaching practice
- prescribe pre- and post-training-session reading as well as detailed, yet manageable, lists of subject-specific texts, articles and websites to help trainees strengthen their subject knowledge and keep up to date with the latest thinking on teaching and learning in history
- ensure that trainees are more aware of history in primary schools
- strengthen the role of the subject mentor so that all mentors
 - know not just what to do but how they might improve at doing it
 - have clear guidance on their roles and responsibilities
 - place greater emphasis on subject-specific comments in lesson observations and subject-specific targets in weekly meetings
 - ensure that these comments are appropriately recorded.

School-based mentors should:

- give trainees sharply focused subject-specific targets and advice as a matter of routine from the start of the training.

Non-HEI ITE partnerships should:

- focus much more on subject-specific pedagogy
- ensure trainees are able to teach effectively in a range of settings.

Resources

- Presentation: *Promoting improvement in secondary history*
- Data support pack: *History at GCSE and A level*

A range of resources is available on the dedicated history web pages and the good practice web pages on the Ofsted website.

These resources can be accessed at:

www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/our-expert-knowledge/history-0

and at:

www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/goodpractice?keywords=history%20good%20practice&remit=all&type=all

They include:

- the report *History for all* (090223), Ofsted, March 2011;
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090223.
- the professional development materials for both primary and secondary history
- good practice case studies for secondary history.