

CORNWALL SCITT SECONDARY EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT

External moderator report – Secondary QTS programme

Dates of moderation visit: 5th – 6th June 2018

Date of report: 20 June 2018

Moderator: Dr Victoria Door

Subjects sampled: Art, English, Geography, History, Music, Maths, PE, Science.

1 The accuracy of the assessments of trainees' attainment against the standards for QTS.

Do these compare favourably with other programmes you are familiar with?

2 main sources of trainee attainment were available: a) Written records, i.e. mentor/teacher observation forms, mentor meeting forms via evidence portfolios, and direct observation of mentors filling them in. b) Discussion with mentors and professional tutors and participation at debrief sessions, c) programme structure in terms of moderating visits.

- a) I was able to see the written sources for all subjects sampled. I was impressed by the way mentors captured performance and progress during individual lessons. Mentor and classroom teacher assessment of attainment was closely linked to QTS standards, evidenced in the way they were able to refer to Standards in discussion with trainees. The Lesson feedback forms are constructed to make specific and accurate connection to Standards. My own assessments agreed with judgements given by the mentors for the lessons I observed. Overall, standards are above those nationally. My observations and discussions show a level of satisfaction and quality which I do not meet elsewhere and these therefore compare most favourably with other programmes I am familiar with.
- b) Discussion with SCITT staff, participation in mentor meetings, joint lesson observations with mentors and discussion with them, and separately with trainees provided evidence that SCITT assessments of trainees are accurate. In the lessons I saw, attainment compared very favourably with other programmes with which I am familiar. SCITT's internal monitoring of grades over the last 3 years supports my own observations of a consistency of achievement of Grades 1 & 2 across the whole cohort.
- c) The system of visiting subject (2-3 times per year) and academic tutors (twice per year) adds a moderating view and check on accuracy of in-school assessments. In-school professional tutors have an overall responsibility for, and awareness of, trainee performance and do some drop-in observations.

2. Trainee performance. As observed or via portfolio scrutiny and discussion.

I observed 6 lessons, 2 of PE, one of Maths, one Music, one History and one Science (Biology) across Year 8, 9 & 10. I observed all lessons, except History, with the mentor. The following are pen portraits of the lessons and do not pretend to capture all the good practice observed.

Both PE lessons (Year 10) were good with outstanding features. In both I had the chance to observe two different trainees work with Year 10 mixed ability. One lesson was a BTEC class where the trainee showed care and sensitivity in working with students, drawing out good performances and sense of achievement. The SCITT PE tutor was observing, as well as the mentor, so I had the chance to hear their views, discuss assessment of attainment of the trainee, and to listen to a short debrief. In the other PE lesson, core PE, the trainee ran a very highly structured lesson, keeping students engaged. Both trainees were very good at getting students to reflect on performance and to improve on it, and both used careful grouping to get differentiation. The Maths lesson which I judged (with the mentor) to be outstanding with good features, the trainee managed to get a large group (31) of Year 8 to successfully use a compass to bisect angles, using motivational imaginary devices of chocolate cake and sailing ships between rocks. From the start, the trainee had the whole class engaged, modelling use of compass on the visualiser, and circulating to support students. Each student had a compass and the trainee ensured that there were no accidents and that all students behaved responsibly. It was a complex lesson, showing the trainee was at a stage to take risks and pull off an entirely active Maths lesson, with very few behaviour issues, and a sense of student enjoyment.

In a Year 8 History lesson, I observed a trainee with whom I had been able to have an in-depth discussion earlier in the day. I was also able to look through her portfolio of evidence. I saw many

examples of outstanding practice, including active use of the whole school differentiation policy and skilled questioning, supporting students to think more deeply. The trainee demonstrated expert subject knowledge, allowing her to be flexible in her response to student answers, and to make the lesson interesting. She used language for learning, e.g. asking one student to 'Talk, so she's hearing it!' and to a group: 'That's good. Talk to one another. Ingrain that knowledge!' The lesson was expertly structured and the trainee was able to be explicit about having to rush one bit and to justify the reasons for so doing.

This trainee had outstanding teacher presence which was both kindly and dynamic. She made you want to listen to her, seemed genuinely interested in what students said and kept her attention on the whole class and individuals.

The Year 9 BTEC Music lesson evidenced an outstanding trainee performance, who had expert subject knowledge, huge sensitivity to the class in the complex context of 'preparing for performance'. Her relationship with the class was sympathetic, but totally professional. A thorough, detailed lesson plan, including guidance for a TA, provided structure for students across a wide range of ability to perform and evaluate each other's performance. The trainee, who had total authority without being domineering, showed she could enable students to lead their own learning.

The Science trainee struggled a little in the Year 8 set 4 lesson that I observed. She was very nervous about losing control of quite a difficult class, and was perhaps compensating by doing rather too much telling and not enough asking. However, she did manage to enable most students to leave with a beginning understanding of a complex subject. The students I talked to thought that the trainee's lessons were 'fun' and were happy to work for her. One student with SEND said that he would like more activity and less talk. The student, mentor and myself were able to discuss that issue in the debrief after, and agreed that more attention was needed to supporting those who had literacy and attention problems and how that might be achieved.

3. Leadership of the programme: It is evident from discussions that both trainees and school-based staff are more than happy with the way the programme is led. A lot of autonomy is given to tutors running the core sessions at Truro, and those delivering sessions in school, and that things run so smoothly is a tribute to the leadership and administration. The course director, two part time assistant managers and administrator, all deserve praise for their continued direction and oversight of this outstanding SCITT. A key leadership strength is the quality of strategic planning, which supports SCITT's capacity to continually improve in light of national developments and policy.

4 The trainees' view of training with Cornwall SCITT: I spoke with eleven trainees across the curriculum during the visit. All eleven were positive about their training. The positive element which stood out was the support they received from the SCITT director and administrator, together with the support from school-based mentors and school staff. Trainees in one school in particular mentioned how they were valued by staff, and how they in turn valued the ethos of mutual respect, of students and staff, including senior management. I was able to observe this ethos in practice during my visit, e.g. the positive attitude staff had to each other and each other's subject. The 'layers' of support provided by SCITT, i.e. visiting tutors, and very quick response to emails, was also appreciated. Trainees recognised the good communication between their various schools and SCITT contributed to their sense of being cared for. Even though the spread of schools is quite wide across the peninsula, trainees did not feel alone. There was a camaraderie in the group, established at the start of the programme and then continued on Monday Truro sessions which was much valued. Trainees gave mixed responses to the idea of altering the sessions; although they liked to be in school as much as possible, the days at Truro up until the end of January gave them a sense of belonging.

Several trainees mentioned the value of being expected to gain school experience before starting the course. They were trainees who had backgrounds in areas other than education, who said they would have struggled if gaining that experience had not been insisted upon.

The initial programme at Truro had been the right kind of length, and although some input had seemed overwhelming and irrelevant at the time (e.g. sessions on data), at this distance trainees could appreciate their usefulness. They all found that links between Truro and the professional studies school-based programme were strong. When asked, trainees said they could see integration of theory and practice not only through the programme links above, but through the assignments and QTS portfolio. For example, the whole-school policy assignment 3 had tied in

with the opportunity to look around the whole school and get a sense of how things work as a whole. Trainees had been able to observe a spread of lessons and subjects, and their own timetables had been varied and allowed an appropriately wide learning and teaching experience.

5 The school based trainers' view of the training process and of the support provided by the SCITT

School-based trainers, i.e. mentors and professional tutors were positive about the process and support from SCITT. Good communication was cited as key, with any concerns being responded to, without delay. There was a cooperative way of working with at-risk trainees. Transition between university providers had not been an issue for them. Paper-work had not increased, nor had transition meant any difference in the professional studies programmes. One professional tutor mentioned that SCITT had been excellent in supporting the change in assignments. Schools appreciated the subject tutor visits. Mentors and PTS appreciated the fairly frequent and regular meetings (5 per year) where they could contribute to and keep up to date with developments, and network across most SCITT schools. There appeared to be a good attendance rate at these meetings. Professional Tutors spoke of the value they get from attending meetings, and do their best to get to them, even though they are aware that if they cannot attend, they will be sent minutes.

6. Programme Strengths. *For example teaching and learning features; quality of tutors & mentors; resources, structure, partnerships.*

- Close integration of practice and theory through the nature of the centre- and school-based programmes and the joint involvement of SCITT and school staff in them.
- Communication between all parties, presumably enabled by embedded structure and long-term relationships, together with a shared ethos of care.
- Skilled mentoring. The mentors I observed and spoke with have a high level of pedagogical insight and are highly skilled in sharing the 'how' of good pedagogy. They are open to continuing development, and have sensitivity to their trainees as learners, understanding the context in which trainees are placed and the nature of the demands placed upon them.
- Professional tutors and headteachers who have the best interest of trainees at heart and know how to balance this with best interest of their students.
- Subject leaders having overview of all trainees in their subject, together with a knowledge of the individuals, their needs and progress.
- Trainee well-being is monitored both in a formal question at start of mentor meetings, but also as part of the holistic care schools and SCITT offer.
- Consistency of grading in the 1-2 band, a result of careful selection, and the strong training programme and its application by staff.
- Resources were not specifically mentioned, but presumably this lack of mention means they are sufficient.

7. Recommendations. *Are there areas for improvement that should be included in the SCITT improvement plan?*

All the aspects of the Cornwall SCITT which I examined appeared to be working well. I am aware that much thought, work and commitment goes into maintaining the high standard of this SCITT so am unwilling to suggest any 'improvements'. I would encourage staff in their way of working which they have developed over the years, which also permits a flexibility of response to changing conditions.

One aspect which perhaps stands out as fundamentally important is the rigorous selection processes, involving all parties of the SCITT, whereby some very strong candidates are recruited. Such selection, together with the excellent programme, results in high quality teachers entering the workforce. It also means good use of time and resources, including manpower, which go into training these candidates, hopefully avoiding stress and disappointment for those who are not perhaps ideally suited for teaching. The stable recruitment numbers perhaps also add to maintaining the balance of SCITT, enabling strategic planning, including continuous development for new and existing mentors.

8. Other comments: *Enhancements opportunities like SEN & alternative provision placements; impact of involvement in pilot programmes, employment outcomes etc.*

Trainees at one school were proud to be working in a school which had received an award for their work in restorative justice. All the trainees I spoke with mentioned their satisfaction with the opportunities for a wide range of education experience, e.g. working with SEND students, and considered that the professional development side of the programme was very strong. I am aware that 4 of the trainees I met with 4 were able to do a 1-day visit to schools offering alternative provision, as a means to explore different ways of building relationships, approaches to behaviour management and motivation as well as delivery of their subjects to students out of mainstream education. 3 out of 4 of those trainees have already got jobs, so it is good to know this side of their training will not be wasted.

Employment outcomes are in line with the norm for this SCITT at this point in time.

9. Conclusion

SCITT has maintained its standards from last year. There is an excellent programme, which is a result of much experience, reflection and care, giving prospective secondary teachers the basis for a sustainable and successful professional career, a fact which is appreciated by trainees. Excellent communication across SCITT is a strong contributory factor to quality of training, together with the nature of the embedded systems and relationships with schools and SCITT staff.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Victoria Dor', with a stylized flourish at the end.