

# Basildon College

REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
**1999-00**

THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL***

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### College statistics

## Grade Descriptors

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses
- grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses
- grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses
- grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths
- grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	10	53	30	7	–
Cross-college provision	14	54	23	7	2

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*  
Sample size: 104 college inspections

## Student Achievements

Where data on student achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in three ways:

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not included.

# Summary

## Basildon College

### *Eastern Region*

#### Inspected October 1999

Basildon College is a tertiary college in south-west Essex. A high proportion of its students are adults and the college recruits many students from disadvantaged areas. For the inspection, the college produced a self-assessment report which was subject to scrutiny by senior managers and governors. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the report but considered that insufficient weight had been given to weaknesses. Many normal aspects of provision were identified as strengths. Inspectors agreed with two of the 10 grades awarded by the college. Governors and managers have only recently started to address the poor levels of attendance, retention and achievement which were identified as weaknesses in the 1996 inspection report. Some improvements have been made to accommodation and equipment since the last inspection but standards of teaching have declined.

The college offers courses in nine FEFC programme areas. Inspection covered five of these curriculum areas and aspects of cross-college provision. The profile of grades awarded for lessons was substantially below the average for all colleges inspected in the previous year. Nevertheless, inspectors observed a few examples of outstanding teaching. There is satisfactory provision in visual and performing

arts but achievements on the majority of courses inspected were well below the national averages for tertiary or further education colleges. There are good links between the college and community groups. The college should address: poor student guidance and tutorial practice; ineffective support for students with poor basic skills; lack of effective monitoring of the college's performance; the decline in students' achievements; low levels of retention; inconsistent implementation of the quality assurance procedures; ineffective management of the curriculum; lack of systematic monitoring of some policies; the governors' inadequate monitoring of the college's performance and their lack of urgency in addressing the longstanding record of poor performance.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Mathematics and science	4	Support for students	4
Business and professional studies	4	General resources	3
Health and childcare	4	Quality assurance	4
Visual and performing arts	3	Governance	4
English and access to higher education	4	Management	4

## The College and its Mission

1 Basildon College was established in 1991 as a tertiary college following the reorganisation of post-16 education in the Basildon district. The college campus is located in Basildon, a new town in south-west Essex. In 1998-99, the college enrolled 733 full-time and 7,093 part-time students. More than 80% of them were aged over 19. In the same year, the college employed 124 full-time equivalent staff of whom 64 were full-time or part-time teachers and 60 were support staff.

2 The college recruits school-leavers, mainly on full-time courses, from over 40 schools and part-time students from across Essex. In Essex, the proportion of post-16 year olds continuing in education increased from 54% in 1990 to 70% in 1997. The figure for Basildon was substantially below the average for Essex at 63%. The attainment of pupils from schools in the town of Basildon is below the national average. In 1998, only 23% of year 11 pupils gained five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) passes at grade C or above, compared with 44% nationally. The eastern part of Basildon was designated an Education Action Zone in 1999, by order of the secretary of state for education and employment, in recognition of the poor performance of school pupils.

3 In 1998, the population of the district of Basildon was estimated by the Office for Population and Censuses at 164,300. The population of the county of Essex was recorded as just over 1.5 million in the 1991 census. Over half of those in employment in Basildon are classified as manual workers. Many large, multinational companies are located in the vicinity such as a tractor company, an automotive manufacturer and a telecommunications company. Basildon has good road and rail links to London and over 40% of the working population commute to work.

4 The college offers courses in nine of the 10 Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) programme areas. A total of 21 general certificate of education advanced/advanced supplementary level (GCE A/AS level) subjects are offered and 13 GCSE subjects. General national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) are offered at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. A comprehensive range of part-time vocational courses is available, many of which are linked to national vocational qualifications (NVQs). The college provides a wide range of vocational training including New Deal and other government-funded programmes. A variety of courses is offered in the community through outreach and distance learning.

5 The current college structure has been in place since September 1998. In addition to the principal, there are three senior postholders, with responsibility for finance and business services; the curriculum and clients; and marketing and business development. The college is subdivided into six strategic business units: the training college, the sixth form college, the community college, the business college, the open college and a projects unit. Each of these units is co-ordinated by a senior manager. Below this level, a third tier of curriculum team managers co-ordinate teaching, learning and student support.

# Context

6 The college's mission is to develop the capability of the clients it serves. In its mission the college places particular emphasis on:

- developing provision in response to needs
- enabling students to achieve their potential
- contributing to local economic and social development
- investing in the skills of its staff
- focusing on learning as the core activity
- collaborating with other organisations
- maintaining open access compatible with high levels of student achievement
- adopting flexible patterns of teaching and assessment
- striving for year-on-year improvement.

8 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the 62 lessons inspected, 40% were judged to be good or outstanding and 18% were judged to be less than satisfactory, compared with national averages for 1998-99, of 65% and 6%, respectively. The corresponding national averages for tertiary colleges for 1998-99 were 66% and 6%, respectively.

## The Inspection

7 The college was inspected during the week beginning 18 October 1999. Before the inspection, inspectors reviewed the college's self-assessment report and considered information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors were able to use data on students' achievements produced by the FEFC and based on returns of the college's individualised student record (ISR). Accurate ISR data were available to inform the inspection. The college submitted data on students' achievements from internal records for 1999 which were checked before the inspection against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The data were found to be largely accurate. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately 10 weeks before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by 11 inspectors and an auditor working in the college for a total of 54 working days. They observed 62 lessons, evaluated students' work and examined college documents. Meetings were held with college governors, managers, other college staff and students.

# Context

## Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	1	3	3	4	0	11
GCSE	1	7	7	2	0	17
GNVQ	0	3	8	0	2	13
NVQ	1	0	2	1	0	4
Other vocational	0	4	4	0	1	9
Other	2	3	2	1	0	8
Total (No.)	5	20	26	8	3	62
Total (%)	8	32	42	13	5	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

9 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. The corresponding national averages for tertiary colleges for 1998-99 were 11.0% and 76%, respectively.

### Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Basildon College	10.2	70
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*



# Curriculum Areas

## Mathematics and Science

### Grade 4

**10 Inspectors observed 16 lessons covering GCE A/AS levels, and GCSE courses in mathematics and science. They agreed with the findings in the self-assessment report but identified additional weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- good lesson planning in mathematics
- effective GCSE mathematics workshop
- widening participation in mathematics

#### Weaknesses

- narrow range of teaching methods and learning activities
- insufficient development of IT and other key skills
- poor retention and pass rates on many courses
- ineffective management of science courses

11 The college's GCSE and GCE A level mathematics and science courses attract students with a wide range of abilities. The availability of GCSE mathematics courses on a part-time, evening and open learning basis helps to support wider participation, particularly for adult students. Mathematics courses are well organised. The comprehensive course files contain awarding body information; student tracking documents; and detailed schemes of work, which are regularly reviewed. However, the course files for sciences are disorganised and some contain insufficient documentation. Teaching of application of number as a key skill is inadequately co-ordinated. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

12 Inspectors agreed with the college that lessons in mathematics are well planned. Mathematics teachers make effective use of group work and individual tasks to meet students' learning needs. The self-assessment

report acknowledges that science teachers use a narrow range of teaching methods and learning activities. They do not have an effective strategy to cater for the wide ability range of their students. The pace of teaching in science is slow, and students are not given enough to do. One GCE A level physics lesson on projectiles started with an ineffective introduction by the teacher. The use of a CD-ROM was almost entirely limited to the teacher reading text from the computer screen. The teacher then worked through a lengthy example on the whiteboard but made little attempt to draw any contributions from the students. One GCE A level practical lesson on enzymes was presented at an overly simplistic level. The teacher made use of outdated terminology and left an equation unbalanced. Students are not encouraged to develop their information technology (IT) or other key skills. For example, no assignment work requires students to use computers. GCSE mathematics students are set regular homework, and most science subjects have homework plans, but these sometimes emphasise reading at the expense of written tasks. Students who need extra support in mathematics, or who are developing their numeracy skills, are timetabled to use the mathematics workshop. The workshop contains a suitable range of paper-based learning materials and practical equipment but there are no computers. Because of timetabling restrictions, physics students with weak mathematics skills are unable to use the mathematics workshop.

13 Most staff are suitably qualified but the college has made use of inexperienced teachers and technicians without providing them with an adequate induction. Inspectors found no evidence of systematic staff development to update the subject knowledge of teachers. Laboratories are of a good standard and provide a pleasant learning environment. Specialist equipment is adequate. The library includes appropriate textbooks and books of wider scientific interest.

# Curriculum Areas

14 Some students' work in science is below the required standard. There are weaknesses in the presentation of practical results, omission of units in calculation, and some inappropriate calculations. The college recognises that pass rates in most science subjects and in mathematics are significantly below the national averages. In GCE A level mathematics, less than 20% of students who completed the course in each of the last three years achieved a pass grade. Pass rates in GCSE science are declining. The college has taken some steps to try to address these issues. For example, a self-study guide has been prepared to help students to develop their time management and study skills. Retention and attendance rates on many courses are poor. In two-thirds of the lessons observed by inspectors, the attendance rate was below 80%. These weaknesses were acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in mathematics and science, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE mathematics	2	Number of starters	299	213	81
		Retention (%)	71	60	62
		Achievement (%)	25	20	30
GCSE science	2	Number of starters	90	63	31
		Retention (%)	79	73	71
		Achievement (%)	49	48	27
GCE A level mathematics	3	Number of starters	52	28	14
		Retention (%)	77	79	79
		Achievement (%)	11	7	18
GCE A level sciences	3	Number of starters	48	54	28
		Retention (%)	42	48	64
		Achievement (%)	15	31	39
GNVQ science advanced	3	Number of starters	60	40	*
		Retention (%)	57	45	*
		Achievement (%)	32	33	*

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

\*provision moved to another college

# Curriculum Areas

## Business and Professional Studies

### Grade 4

**15 The inspection covered full-time and part-time courses in accounting, business studies and bookkeeping. Eleven lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but found additional weaknesses in teaching and learning and students' achievements.**

#### Key strengths

- effective academic support for individual students
- well-planned schemes of work
- good retention rates on NVQ accounting courses

#### Weaknesses

- inappropriate teaching methods in many lessons
- poor and declining retention and pass rates on GNVQ advanced business courses
- failure to address low retention and achievement rates
- insufficient opportunities for progression for full-time students
- insufficient opportunities for teachers to update their professional expertise

16 The college offers courses in business from foundation to advanced level, including full-time GCE A level business studies, NVQ courses in administration up to level 3, and a range of short courses in administration and office technology. The college also offers a full-time NVQ course in accounting at level 2, and part-time professional accounting courses accredited by the Association of Accounting Technicians up to level 4. Enrolments on many of the courses are declining. Recruitment to

GNVQ courses has declined significantly over the last three years, and the intermediate and advanced level courses have been withdrawn. The national certificate in business has also been discontinued due to low numbers. Enrolments for GCE A level business studies have fallen, and the college did not recruit sufficient students to run the NVQ level 3 accounts course. Few courses are offered on a modular basis. The range of courses for full-time students provides insufficient opportunities for progression from foundation to advanced level. Course teams meet on a regular basis, and meetings are minuted. Course files are generally well organised. Course reviews vary in content and presentation. For example, many record enrolments, attendance, retention and achievements, but the evaluation of key performance indicators lacks rigour. There is little evidence of any strategy or action by course teams aimed at improving retention and achievement. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

17 Inspectors agreed with the college that schemes of work are thorough and well organised. The best examples identify key objectives, learning activities, resources and learning outcomes, and make appropriate links between theory and business practice. Assessment procedures are thorough and effective. Inspectors agreed with the college that there are too few opportunities for students to undertake work placements and that links with employers are weak. Teachers give effective guidance and support to individual students. In a lesson on an NVQ intermediate accounting course, students worked purposefully on assignments: they showed an understanding of key issues, and the teacher was helpful and supportive. In the best lessons, teachers encourage students to work together in small groups, establish a good level of rapport, and make regular checks on students' progress and understanding. However, in many lessons, teachers use inappropriate teaching approaches

# Curriculum Areas

and fail to identify sufficient links between theory and current business practice. In a bookkeeping lesson, the teacher spent too long talking to the students without checking their understanding or encouraging a discussion about the subject. In other lessons, teachers did not adequately address the different learning needs of individual students.

18 Students have access to appropriate IT facilities, including a recently upgraded business IT workshop. Inspectors agreed with the college that handouts and other learning materials are up to date and well presented. Teachers possess relevant professional qualifications but there are insufficient opportunities for them to update their professional expertise or to share good teaching practice. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

19 Many students on intermediate and advanced level accounting courses produce good work. On GNVQ courses, students' portfolios are well organised and well presented. In the best lessons students worked well together, and showed application and enthusiasm. The attendance record of students in some groups is poor. This weakness is identified in the self-assessment report. Pass rates for GNVQ advanced business have fallen and are significantly below the national average. This weakness is not identified in the self-assessment report. Retention rates for NVQ accounting level 4 are consistently high and above the national average. The college recognises that retention rates on GNVQ courses are poor. Retention rates on GNVQ advanced business have declined sharply, and are significantly below the national average. There is evidence of declining retention on NVQ administration and GCE A level business studies courses.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in business and professional studies, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ intermediate	2	Number of starters	17	8	10
		Retention (%)	65	75	60
		Achievement (%)	100	38	67
NVQ accounting	2	Number of starters	54	48	65
		Retention (%)	91	88	75
		Achievement (%)	45	79	61
GNVQ advanced	3	Number of starters	22	27	15
		Retention (%)	59	59	47
		Achievement (%)	77	37	29
NVQ accounting	3	Number of starters	99	57	53
		Retention (%)	76	88	75
		Achievement (%)	26	51	30
GCE A level business studies	3	Number of starters	65	22	20
		Retention (%)	48	77	70
		Achievement (%)	16	35	92
NVQ accounting	4	Number of starters	70	40	37
		Retention (%)	96	98	95
		Achievement (%)	6	38	33

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

# Curriculum Areas

## Health and Childcare

### Grade 4

**20 Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering a range of health and childcare courses. They also inspected a recently introduced health and safety course delivered by distance learning, which is managed separately from the rest of the provision in this programme area. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report but found that several weaknesses were not identified, or were understated.**

#### Key strengths

- effective incorporation of equal opportunity issues in the majority of lessons
- well-organised distance learning provision

#### Weaknesses

- poor teaching
- poor management of health and childcare courses
- low pass rates on several courses
- poor retention rates on most full-time courses
- lack of established progression routes from the health and safety course

21 The college offers courses in health and childcare from foundation to advanced level. All the established full-time and part-time courses have falling numbers. The self-assessment report identified weaknesses in the management of the health and childcare curriculum area. Inspectors agreed with these weaknesses but found them to be understated. There is insufficient co-ordination of course teams and too few meetings between the curriculum team manager and the course team leaders. Course reviews are inadequate and make no use of benchmarking or target-setting. The monitoring of action plans lacks rigour. Planning is

unsystematic and there is little use of management information data to underpin decisions. The college has recently taken action to address some of these weaknesses but these actions have not yet had any effect.

22 There is a substantial amount of poor teaching on health and childcare courses, a weakness which is not recognised in the self-assessment report. Most teachers do not explain the intended learning outcomes to students and place insufficient emphasis on monitoring learning during lessons. In a significant number of lessons the intended learning outcomes were not achieved. In one lesson, students were given the task of judging the amount of fat in various foods. Students did not concentrate on the task and the teacher was unable to relate it to the wider issues of diet and nutrition. There is a lack of rigour in the development of key skills. Application of number work is not related to the vocational context of health and childcare. As the self-assessment report notes, equal opportunity issues are incorporated effectively into the majority of lessons. Feedback on students' work is frequently scant; sometimes there is none at all. Teachers do not tell students how to improve. All childcare students have placements which are monitored and students are helped to link practice to theory. However, this good practice is not evident on GNVQ courses where only some students have work placements and these are not appropriately monitored by teachers.

23 The self-assessment report acknowledged that there were too few full-time staff with a professional background in health and childcare and an over-reliance on part-time staff. At the time of the inspection, two new full-time teachers had been appointed. Physical resources are mostly satisfactory but the kitchen is too small for some classes and there is very little storage space for students' work.

# Curriculum Areas

24 The college recognises that achievement rates on most courses are low. During the period 1997 to 1999 all GNVQ courses, the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing and the certificate in childcare and education had pass rates consistently below the national average. The majority of retention rates are also below the national average, a weakness understated in the self-assessment report. A significant number of retention rates have fallen in 1998-99.

25 Inspectors agreed with the college that the distance learning provision is well organised. There are dedicated administrative support arrangements provided within the college's 'open college' unit. An introduction to health and safety course, delivered by distance learning and introduced in 1998-99, has attracted over 4,000 enrolments. The course is aimed mainly at employers and offers an effective means of raising awareness about matters of health and safety in the workplace. The course does not provide an adequate preparation for students intending to progress to courses leading to vocational qualifications. Teachers' marking of assignments on this course pays no attention to correcting spelling or grammatical errors and does not assist the development of students' literacy skills. The pass rate of 100% achieved in its first year is similar to the pass rates achieved on other introductory health and safety courses.

# Curriculum Areas

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in health and childcare, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
National Open College Network introduction to health and safety	1	Number of starters	+	+	4,253
		Retention (%)	+	+	91
		Achievement (%)	+	+	100
GNVQ foundation (full time)	1	Number of starters	36	+	9
		Retention (%)	69	+	56
		Achievement (%)	36	+	0
GNVQ intermediate (full time)	2	Number of starters	33	31	12
		Retention (%)	73	77	100
		Achievement (%)	58	25	75
GNVQ intermediate (part time)	2	Number of starters	34	17	*
		Retention (%)	100	100	*
		Achievement (%)	18	0	*
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education certificate in childcare and education	2	Number of starters	42	36	19
		Retention (%)	67	86	84
		Achievement (%)	71	77	63
GNVQ advanced health and social care (full time)	3	Number of starters	29	18	18
		Retention (%)	24	56	61
		Achievement (%)	57	44	55
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing (full time)	3	Number of starters	39	26	24
		Retention (%)	46	65	62
		Achievement (%)	83	47	67
BTEC national diploma in childhood studies (full time)	3	Number of starters	34	27	+
		Retention (%)	71	59	+
		Achievement (%)	83	81	+

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

+course not running

\*data unreliable



# Curriculum Areas

## Visual and Performing Arts

### Grade 3

**26 Inspectors observed 13 lessons. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but found that weaknesses concerning students' achievements were understated.**

#### Key strengths

- effective development of the curriculum
- well-planned teaching
- good resources and equipment in art and design
- teachers' professional experience as artists and performers

#### Weaknesses

- poor standards of students' drawing and writing
- low retention rates on most courses
- poor progression from performing arts courses to higher education
- insufficient opportunities for students to develop vocational skills

27 The college offers a wide range of vocational courses in visual and performing arts at intermediate and advanced level. In addition, GCE A levels are offered in art and craft, photography, media and communications and GCSEs in media, design, photography, music and dance. The curriculum is well managed. There are regular team meetings and staff keep comprehensive records of all aspects of their work. Progress has been made in addressing weaknesses in curriculum development identified in the self-assessment report. Vocational courses have been redesigned to provide more realistic opportunities for students to achieve their objectives. In art and design, a programme of drawing and visual research has

been introduced to address students' weaknesses in these skills. In performing arts, opportunities for students to specialise in dance, music or drama have been introduced.

28 Inspectors agreed with the college that teaching is well planned. Schemes of work include assignments that describe clearly the aims and tasks required. There is a purposeful atmosphere in most classes. Teachers use an effective range of teaching strategies to develop students' skills. A GCSE dance class worked in small groups to develop short choreographed pieces in preparation for an examination. All students were involved, the work was thoughtful, and inventive dance sequences were beginning to develop. In some lessons teachers failed to check students' understanding of key concepts. Some assignment sheets are too wordy and do not state precisely the assessment criteria being used. For example, in dance work it is unclear if assessment is based on a fixed standard or on the progress being made by each student. Teachers' feedback on students' work is varied. The best examples provide detailed written commentary with clear statements on how the work can be improved. The poorest examples are in performing arts, where feedback is often a rushed note and a single grade. There are few opportunities for students on vocational courses to develop their practical work outside lessons or for performing arts students to rehearse in their own time.

29 Recent staff changes have helped to increase the vocational expertise of the teaching team. Most of the new staff are practising artists and performers. There are good facilities in art and design for photography, printmaking, ceramics, and three-dimensional construction. Some teaching areas have been remodelled to create a good professional set of open plan studios and workshops. A new industry standard IT facility has been installed for graphic design. The performing arts facilities are of a lower quality.



# Curriculum Areas

30 Art and design students have poor drawing skills. There is too much drawing from secondary photographic sources. Students' written work is generally poor. Inspectors agreed with the college that pass rates on some courses are high. Within the GCE A level programme, 67% of arts and crafts students gained A to C grades in 1999 compared with the national average of 59%. Pass rates on the GCSE dance, design and photography courses were also above the national average. However, pass rates in GCE A level media and in photography have been well below the national average for the last three years. In 1999, the GNVQ advanced art and design and the national

diploma in performing arts pass rates fell to below average from good levels in previous years. The self-assessment report identified poor retention as a weakness but underestimated the number of courses involved. There was poor retention on many courses during 1997-98. There is good progression within the college from intermediate to advanced level courses. Progression to higher education is less satisfactory. In 1999, of the 11 students completing the national diploma in performing arts only one applied for and obtained a place in higher education.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in visual and performing arts, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE design communication and media	2	Number of starters	114	92	65
		Retention (%)	58	55	65
		Achievement (%)	53	60	64
GNVQ intermediate in art and design	2	Number of starters	35	37	24
		Retention (%)	69	62	83
		Achievement (%)	75	67	80
BTEC first diploma in performing arts	2	Number of starters	14	10	11
		Retention (%)	79	40	73
		Achievement (%)	91	100	100
GCE A level art and design, media, photography, theatre studies and music	3	Number of starters	78	80	55
		Retention (%)	56	51	53
		Achievement (%)	52	61	58
GNVQ advanced in art and design	3	Number of starters	26	18	22
		Retention (%)	77	83	59
		Achievement (%)	93	80	58
BTEC national diploma in foundation studies	3	Number of starters	16	31	21
		Retention (%)	75	97	81
		Achievement (%)	33	85	88
BTEC national diploma in performing arts	3	Number of starters	18	13	28
		Retention (%)	44	13	54
		Achievement (%)	100	100	83

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

# Curriculum Areas

## English and Access to Higher Education

### Grade 4

**31 The inspection included GCE A level and GCSE courses in English and access to higher education. Inspectors observed 11 lessons. They found that the self-assessment report overstated the strengths and gave insufficient emphasis to weaknesses in student achievement and retention rates.**

#### Key strengths

- some good teaching and well-organised schemes of work
- good enrichment activities

#### Weaknesses

- poor achievement rates on all GCSE and GCE A level courses
- poor retention on all GCSE and GCE A level courses
- declining enrolments
- no overall co-ordination of English courses
- inadequate course planning
- insufficient focus on meeting the learning needs of individual students

32 English and access to higher education courses are predominantly located within the college's 'sixth form college'. Enrolment on all courses has declined over the past three years, although the new English language and literature course recruited an increased number of students in 1999. Inspectors did not agree with the claim in the self-assessment report that there have been improvements in pre-course guidance. Although course teams work well together and hold regular meetings to share ideas and resources, there is no overall co-ordination of English courses and no

development plan for the English curriculum as a whole. Course reviews are weak, with the exception of GCSE English, which contains a realistic analysis of data and a clear recognition of issues. Action plans are not systematically monitored; they make little reference to teaching and learning strategies. Although action has been taken to try to address weaknesses in retention it has not yet been successful.

33 Inspectors agreed with the college that there are schemes of work for all courses and that learning outcomes are identified clearly. Access students receive an assignment calendar with clear guidelines. Lessons are well planned and provide a variety of learning opportunities for students. Teachers combine individual work with small group and whole class activities to try to develop the skills students need. In the best lessons, teachers harnessed students' own experiences to increase their motivation and involvement. In an access to higher education lesson, students worked together effectively in small groups to discuss approaches to interviews, from the perspectives of both interviewer and interviewee. In poorer lessons, not all students were learning effectively and there was some indiscipline. Not enough attention was paid to ensuring that all students' learning needs were met. Marking and assessment of students' work are conscientious. Teachers give helpful written guidance to students on how to improve. Teachers of English provide many enrichment activities for students. In 1998-99, students and staff made several visits to the theatre and to presentations by writers. A particularly popular event was a visit to the Lyric Theatre followed by a workshop.

34 As the self-assessment report notes, teachers and students make little use of learning technology during lessons. There are no identified base rooms for English or access courses and no wall displays to provide a subject identity.

# Curriculum Areas

35 The self-assessment report understated the weaknesses in retention and achievement. For the last three years, retention and achievement on GCE A level courses have been well below national averages. For example, in GCE A level English language, the pass rates were 28% in 1997, 64% in 1998 and 58% in 1999; the national average for all colleges in 1997 was 80%. In English literature, the pass rates were 25% and 50% in 1997 and 1998, compared with a national average of 85%. The course was discontinued for 1998-99. Pass rates and retention rates on GCSE courses are also low. Achievement on the access to higher education course is improving and is around the national average. The percentage of access students progressing to higher education is high; in 1999 it was 87%. Students' attendance is poor, as the self-assessment report acknowledges. In lessons observed during the inspection, there was an average attendance of 72% and attendance at GCE A level classes was only 65%.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in English and access to higher education, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE English	2	Number of starters	253	162	78
		Retention (%)	64	64	55
		Achievement (%)	39	32	38
GCSE English literature	2	Number of starters	23	16	7
		Retention (%)	61	67	71
		Achievement (%)	79	60	20
GCE A level English language	3	Number of starters	111	87	57
		Retention (%)	61	55	60
		Achievement (%)	28	64	58
GCE A level English literature	3	Number of starters	12	11	*
		Retention (%)	42	73	*
		Achievement (%)	25	50	*
Access to higher education	3	Number of starters	27	24	20
		Retention (%)	81	63	80
		Achievement (%)	77	53	88

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)  
 \*course not running

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## Support for Students

### Grade 4

**36** Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but found that many of the weaknesses had been given insufficient weight. Much of the action taken by the college to address weaknesses had not had time, by the inspection, to have a significant impact. As a consequence inspectors found little evidence of improvement.

#### Key strengths

- good counselling and welfare support for students

#### Weaknesses

- poor guidance before entry and at enrolment
- unsatisfactory induction
- weak tutorial practice
- poor recording of progress and achievement
- poor support for students with weak basic skills

37 The college's recruitment methods have not been successful in preventing a decline in enrolments. Guidance before entry and during enrolment is weak. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college is unable to guarantee the impartiality of pre-entry guidance. The applications procedure does not ensure that students receive comprehensive advice about the range of options available to them. Most applicants are interviewed by teaching staff and procedures are not in place to ensure consistency in the conduct of interviews. There are some established links between the college and schools for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college is working to develop and extend its links with other schools.

38 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that many students have received an unsatisfactory induction to their courses. Training for tutors in induction procedures is inconsistent. Many do not follow college guidelines for induction. However, some aspects of the induction process, for example, the introduction to the college charter and to the range of student services, are effective.

39 The self-assessment report recognises that there has been a lack of clarity in defining the role of personal tutors and that the system for monitoring and reviewing students' progress is weak. The college attempted to address these issues by introducing a new tutorial framework in 1999. Inspectors found that the new system has proved cumbersome and complicated to administer. Many tutors were uncertain about the requirements. In their observations of current tutorial practice, inspectors found that tutors' records of students' progress lacked thoroughness. For example, standard college forms designed to assist students with action-planning lacked details of individual progress and achievements. Few tutors had set students clear targets for improving their performance.

40 The organisation of additional learning support for students has been ineffective. In the self-assessment report, the college acknowledges that the system of additional support has lacked structure and flexibility. In the academic year 1998-99, there was no specific additional support for students with poor numeracy. Support for literacy was provided predominantly for students with learning difficulties. The organisation of additional learning support has been revised for 1999-2000. At the time of the inspection, the needs of new full-time students for additional learning support had been assessed. However, few students had received feedback following diagnostic screening. Additional support for the majority of students with poor basic skills had not been put in place. The college works closely with specialist staff from Essex County Council to provide specialist support for students with hearing impairment.

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This provision is well developed. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the support for students with other identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities is inadequate.

41 Inspectors agreed with the college that students benefit from having easy access to a range of welfare, financial, and personal advice. The profile of these services has been raised by locating them together in a centralised student services unit. The provision has also been enhanced by making the services available to part-time students during the evening and on Saturday mornings. There is good access to individual careers guidance. There is a careers library but much of the stock is outdated.

42 A good range of activities is offered to students through the complementary studies programme. However, uptake is low. The most popular activities are those which take place in the sports hall including badminton, squash and soccer. The college has a students' union.

## General Resources

### Grade 3

**43 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified additional weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- pleasant, well-managed site
- high standard of the refurbished accommodation
- good IT resources

#### Weaknesses

- deficiencies in the organisation of learning resources
- some poor teaching rooms
- inefficient timetabling

44 The college occupies a site of 19 acres set in a pleasant grassland area with trees and attractive shrub borders. There are six main accommodation blocks, most of which were constructed in 1971. The most recent building was completed in 1992. An adjacent sports hall is owned by the college and managed by Basildon District Council. In addition, the college rents accommodation from Essex County Council on a site some 4 miles from the main campus, which it uses for catering and construction courses. The buildings are well signposted, clean, and generally well maintained. Inspectors agreed with the college that there has been significant investment in remodelling and refurbishment. A high-quality, well-equipped hair and beauty salon has replaced two redundant laboratories enabling the college to introduce provision in this curriculum area. The spacious and welcoming entrance and reception area includes a course enquiries desk and a college shop. In some areas, such as art and design, corridor walls have been removed to create large open spaces suitable for multiple use. The refurbished areas are bright and attractive and are decorated in a corporate colour scheme. However, some teaching rooms are drab, untidy, or cluttered with excess furniture. Some curriculum areas lack base rooms. There is very little use of display material in most areas.

45 Inspectors agreed with the college that the library is spacious and well managed. It has a bookstock in excess of 21,400 volumes, and over 100 journals and newspapers. In addition, there is a collection of 1,400 audio and video cassettes and 39 CD-ROMs. There are 104 study spaces but no silent study area. The centre is staffed by a library and learning resources manager and four library assistants. It is open from 9:00 hours to 20:00 hours during term time and is also open during college vacations. There are no formal arrangements for liaison between the library and learning resources centre and curriculum staff. A library

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liaison committee, which used to serve this purpose, has been disbanded. There is no computerised cataloguing or book allocation system. The college recognises that this limits the ability to provide a referencing and enquiry service.

46 There are some inefficiencies in the timetabling of classes. In some instances there is a mismatch between the class size and the size of the teaching room. Students complain of gaps in their timetables. A more centralised approach to timetabling has been adopted but difficulties remain. The current timetable shows an uneven spread of classes on particular days of the week which places pressure on specialist facilities such as the computer suite and the library. The college has purchased a computer timetabling facility which it hopes will lead to more efficient timetabling.

47 During the summer of 1999 the college invested significantly in upgrading its stock of IT equipment. Students have access to 210 high specification, networked computers. A computer suite containing 120 networked machines has been established. There is an additional suite of 20 machines in an adjoining room mainly used by business studies students. A further 28 networked machines are located in the library. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is 1:8. All networked machines have access to the Internet. At the time of the inspection, the computer suite was mainly being used for timetabled lessons. Some computer lessons were also held in the library. This restricted the ability of students to use the machines on a 'drop-in' basis. All staff rooms have at least one networked computer.

48 There is access to all buildings for those with restricted mobility. As part of the refurbishment programme, the college has installed magnetic stays on some swing doors to make movement easier for those using wheelchairs. There is designated car parking for disabled drivers. The college playground

provides for the children of students, staff and the public. The attractive refectory has an adjoining student common room with pool tables and a television. Students have access to the sports centre and fitness gym on a daily basis and on one evening a week.

## Quality Assurance

### *Grade 4*

**49 Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that the college had underestimated the significance of the weaknesses. They concluded that the college had overstated the progress that had been made on quality assurance since the last inspection.**

#### **Key strengths**

- procedures for collecting evidence for self-assessment
- detailed analysis and reporting of complaints

#### **Weaknesses**

- inconsistent implementation of quality assurance procedures
- lack of rigour in course reviews
- insufficient analysis of data on student retention and achievement
- imprecise targets for improvements in retention and achievement
- unsystematic monitoring of action plans by curriculum teams

50 The college has made a commitment to improve quality but has not been able to translate that commitment into improved performance. A senior manager has responsibility for quality and reports directly to the principal. Other managers and staff have a clear remit for the quality of provision in their



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areas. The education committee of the corporation receives reports regularly on quality. However, the academic board has not effectively monitored the academic performance of the college. It did not meet for 18 months before its reconstitution in May 1999. It has no student representative.

51 The college produced its second self-assessment report in preparation for the inspection. The self-assessment identified the significant decline in the college's performance since the last inspection. Lesson observations were introduced in 1998 in an attempt to assess and improve classroom practice. Most staff have been observed more than once. The college attempts to address poor practice by requiring individual teachers to prepare action plans for improvement, which are then monitored closely. External consultants have assisted with the development of quality assurance systems and have contributed to the evaluation of the quality of college provision.

52 The self-assessment report makes insufficient use of national averages and benchmarking data when making judgements on students' achievements. Action plans to address weaknesses have few measurable targets. The inspection team could not support the college's claim that significant progress has been made in addressing weaknesses. Indeed, many of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection over three years ago have still not been remedied. According to the FEFC's publication, *Performance Indicators 1997-98*, 40% of qualification aims were achieved in 1997 and 36% in 1998. This compares with a sector averages of 66% and 70% for 1997 and 1998, respectively, which places the college in the bottom 10% of colleges within the sector on this measure. The college acknowledges that performance indicators and service standards for many non-teaching areas are underdeveloped.

53 There is a calendar of quality assurance activities that contribute to annual course reviews and self-assessment reports. Curriculum and course teams meet regularly but minutes of meetings rarely include a record of action to show what has been done to improve poor performance. The college's course review procedures are not implemented consistently across the curriculum areas and many reviews are superficial or incomplete. There is insufficient analysis of data on students' achievements. The action plan in response to external verifiers' reports is seldom completed. The link between course team meetings, course reviews and self-assessment is tenuous. The significance of these weaknesses was underestimated in the self-assessment report. The recently introduced quality assurance manual is a positive development. The manual attempts to integrate the different strands of the quality assurance system. The college has begun to take action to address non-compliance with the quality arrangements by checking course files.

54 The quality assurance procedures for the distance learning provision are not part of the college's standard quality assurance arrangements. This area is managed separately by the open college unit and has different review procedures. The college has achieved ISO 9001 in recognition that the procedures of the open college meet this standard.

55 Students' views about their courses and about the college are gathered through surveys and monthly student forums. The responses are carefully analysed and reported to the appropriate course teams and cross-college managers. In 1998-99, student surveys show a fall in satisfaction level between the mid-year and end-of-year review. In response to issues raised by students, improvements have been made to locker facilities and the refectory. In June 1999, the college canvassed the views of parents by postal survey but only 16 responded. There are no systematic procedures to gather employers' views about the college and its courses.

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56 The recently revised student charter is an attractive document and includes a section for parents and employers. It states clearly the standards the college aims to achieve in the service it provides. Charter commitments are clear and many have quantifiable targets. Procedures to monitor all charter commitments are not yet in place. Inspectors agreed with the college that the complaints procedure is clear and the system for dealing with complaints is thorough. Complaints are carefully analysed and the action to be taken to avoid recurrence is stated explicitly. In 1998-99, 144 formal complaints were recorded. Of these, 33 were complaints about the quality of pre-course information and 24 referred to timetabling problems.

57 Staff appraisal ceased in most areas of the college after the last inspection. A new appraisal scheme was introduced in January 1999. The college is making steady progress towards completing all appraisals by the target date of February 2000. Information from appraisals is taken into account when determining each individual's staff development needs, but priority is given to achieving the college's strategic objectives. During 1998-99, nearly all teaching staff and about 39% of non-teaching staff attended at least one staff development event. There is insufficient co-ordination of the outcomes from lesson observations, appraisal, and self-assessment when planning staff development activities.

## Governance

### *Grade 4*

**58 Inspectors and auditors agreed with many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report, but found that important weaknesses had not been identified.**

#### Key strengths

- governors' commitment to the college
- close monitoring of financial performance

#### Weaknesses

- limited progress in addressing the long record of poor academic performance
- slow progress in developing a system for monitoring academic performance
- inadequate arrangements for development and appraisal of senior staff
- inappropriate clerking arrangements

59 The corporation comprises 20 governors. They bring a range of expertise to the college, for example, in business, accountancy, personnel and education. Public advertising has been successfully used to identify potential governors. An appointment procedure for governors has been established. The procedure does not currently include a detailed outline of the responsibilities of a college governor, for example, through a job description or person specification. Governors have been reminded about eligibility criteria, but annual declarations of eligibility are not sought. The self-assessment report recognises that there is a need to improve the induction and training of governors. While some governors have attended external courses, there has been no structured training programme based on a needs analysis.

60 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that governors have demonstrated a high level of commitment to the college. There has



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been good attendance at corporation and committee meetings. The corporation has been influential in ensuring that the college meets the needs of the local community. For example it has encouraged bids for European Community funds in partnership with Basildon Council, and the establishment of IT training facilities to support companies undergoing restructuring.

61 The corporation receives and considers comprehensive information on the college's financial position at least once a term. This information is supported by a detailed report by the chair of the finance and resource planning committee. The self-assessment report notes the involvement of the corporation, since 1998, in the development of the strategic plan. Reports on progress are made regularly to the strategic planning committee and corporation. Governors have raised concerns about unrealistic timescales and the failure to meet agreed deadlines. Governors have not received regular monitoring reports on non-financial matters, for example, staffing numbers and staff utilisation.

62 The corporation has recognised the significant weaknesses identified in the last inspection report and introduced changes, but at the time of the inspection, there was no evidence of their effectiveness. However, there has been limited progress in addressing the long record of poor academic performance. This shortcoming was not mentioned specifically in the self-assessment report. However, the report acknowledged that the corporation lacked an effective system for monitoring the college's performance based upon the definition of key indicators of progress. An education committee, which had the remit to review performance, was established in July 1998. It has spent the past year in formulating a review system, which at the time of the inspection was only just beginning to be implemented. The lack of accurate and reliable information has, in the past, hindered the corporation in establishing robust targets for improving academic performance.

63 The FEFC's audit service concluded that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is weak. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument of government. The corporation does not substantially fulfil its responsibilities under the articles of government. It substantially fulfils its responsibilities under its financial memorandum with the FEFC.

64 The corporation has not agreed satisfactory training and appraisal arrangements for the principal and other senior postholders. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. There has been some limited appraisal based upon the achievement of targets in the strategic plan and linked to performance pay. The outcomes of these arrangements have not been fully recorded. There is no formal record of the appraisal and the process has not resulted in the identification of training needs. The principal's job description was recently revised. It includes nine main challenges, none of which refer to the need to improve retention and achievement rates.

65 The corporation delegates its work to committees for finance and resource planning, audit, strategic planning, employment, education, marketing and remuneration. A schedule of routine items for decision and monitoring has been established. The audit committee has established a procedure by which internal audit recommendations are systematically reviewed throughout the audit committee cycle. Copies of the corporation's minutes are placed in the college library. Clerking arrangements are inappropriate. The clerk to the corporation is a senior postholder and is also the college's director of finance and business services. He does not clerk all the committees of the corporation. Four other members of college staff and one governor also clerk corporation committees. Some committees are clerked by college managers or other staff who have a direct involvement in the business of

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the committee. For example, the education committee is clerked by the head of quality and staff development. Committee minutes do not conform to a common standard, and in some cases, they provide an insufficiently detailed record of meetings. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

66 The corporation has adopted a code of conduct. Standing orders have only recently been established but they are comprehensive. A register of interests has been established, but there is no formal procedure for all governors to annually update the register. Governors are however, requested to declare any interests at the start of each corporation and committee meeting. The corporation has also approved a 'whistleblowing' procedure. Governors have participated in a self-assessment process, attending special meetings and using an external consultant.

## Management

### *Grade 4*

**67 The college's self-assessment of management matches in part the findings of the inspection team. However, the self-assessment report overstated progress made towards securing improvements and did not give sufficient attention to key weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- extensive links with external organisations
- effective analysis of market needs

#### Weaknesses

- failure to improve poor retention and achievement rates
- lack of effective arrangements to monitor performance
- ineffective management of the curriculum
- inefficient use of resources in some areas
- needs of curriculum managers not met by management information systems
- lack of systematic review and monitoring of some policies

68 The college has failed to remedy key weaknesses identified in the 1996 inspection report. Attendance, retention and achievement remain poor and have deteriorated in many areas since the last inspection. Following the appointment of a new principal in 1997, the college established a recovery plan to address falling enrolments and poor levels of performance. Implementation of the plan has been too slow. The first two phases of the plan involved revision of the management structure and identification of minimum standards. These two phases have taken two years to complete. The third phase, starting September 1999, is concerned with addressing the poor levels of retention and achievement.

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69 The inspection team agreed with the weakness identified in the college self-assessment report that the 1998 to 2000 strategic development plan was over-ambitious. It sets too many targets over too short a timescale. The July 1999 update to the strategic plan clarifies the position by identifying the over-riding priority of the college as improving recruitment, attendance, retention and achievement. However, there are no effective arrangements to monitor progress towards achieving these goals. Targets for improvement in retention and achievements have not been disaggregated to provide targets for individual courses and curriculum areas.

70 The new organisational structure introduced in September 1998 was complex. Managers were unclear about their roles and responsibilities. Responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning was too remote from senior managers. The self-assessment report acknowledges that too many demands on middle managers resulted in ineffective operations. Subsequent revisions to the management structure have attempted to clarify roles and responsibilities. However, further alterations to management responsibilities and continuing staff turnover have left the college in a situation where many managers are new to their roles at the same time. Inspectors found weaknesses in the management of courses and student support. The self-assessment report acknowledges that the induction of new managers is not yet complete and that this has reduced the effectiveness of the management team.

71 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the system for informing staff of management priorities has been improved. There are regular briefings by the principal. The need for the college to improve its performance is well understood by staff. Arrangements for consultation with staff are not fully effective. Staff have had limited opportunities to influence and contribute to the

creation of college policies. The academic board did not meet at all between December 1997 and May 1999.

72 The self-assessment report recognises the need to rationalise the curriculum and provide more efficient use of staff and other resources. Low levels of recruitment for many full-time and part-time courses have led to inefficient and ineffective provision. Inspectors found low class sizes and inappropriate combinations of courses were having an adverse effect on teaching and learning. The college's own analysis of staff costs leads to the judgement that too high a proportion of income is devoted to staffing in some areas.

73 There is ineffective monitoring, implementation and review of key college policies. There is no staff handbook or manual which comprehensively documents all college policies and procedures. Insufficient attention is given by curriculum managers to monitoring equal opportunities. There are inadequate arrangements for the monitoring of health and safety. At the time of the inspection, the college's health and safety committee had not met for over a year. An audit, commissioned by the college and conducted by Essex County Council health and safety unit in June 1999, noted that the college had not carried out regular checks on portable electrical equipment. At the time of the inspection, these checks had not been carried out although they were planned for the following week.

74 Inspectors agreed with the college that there are extensive and productive links with external organisations. The college is viewed positively by the local training and enterprise council (TEC) and by employers involved in the distance learning provision. There are effective links with an extensive range of community groups including voluntary groups, arts and sports organisations. The marketing plan is based on detailed analysis of local needs and includes a clear promotional strategy. The

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college has successfully developed new provision in hairdressing and beauty therapy based on analysis of market need. However, implementation of the marketing plan has not led to improved recruitment in other areas.

75 Management information systems do not adequately support the information needs of curriculum managers. The systems do not provide routine monitoring reports on student or course performance. They do not allow tracking of applications through to admissions. Recently, the college has introduced systematic monitoring of students' attendance and retention based on the collection of data from registers. A college intranet, providing access for staff to data on students' attendance, began operation at the beginning of the academic year. At the time of the inspection, few staff had been trained to use the new system.

76 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The college is currently forecasting an operating surplus for 1998-99. There are sufficient levels of solvency and reserves. The finance team is appropriate for the college's size, and is managed by the director of finance and business services who is a qualified accountant and a senior postholder. Comprehensive management accounts are produced every month. A sensitivity analysis has been completed and course costing exercises are being developed. Budget holders receive monthly reports on expenditure together with good support from the finance team.

## Conclusions

77 The self-assessment report used by inspectors was the second produced by the college. Shortly before the inspection, the college provided an update of action taken in response to issues identified in the report. The inspection team found that these documents provided a useful basis for planning the inspection. Staff and corporation members were substantially involved in the self-assessment process. In some parts of the report, aspects of provision identified as strengths were considered by inspectors to be no more than is normally expected. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the report but considered insufficient weight had been given to the weaknesses. Inspectors disagreed with all but two of the grades in the self-assessment report.

78 Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of this report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

# College Statistics

## Student numbers by age (October 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	1
16-18 years	12
19-24 years	11
25+ years	75
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

## Student numbers by level of study (October 1999)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation)	32
Level 2 (intermediate)	28
Level 3 (advanced)	18
Level 4/5 (higher)	1
Non-schedule 2	21
Total	100

Source: college data

## Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (October 1999)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	108	614	9
Construction	4	4	0
Engineering	67	270	4
Business	121	576	9
Hotel and catering	60	28	1
Health and community care	92	5,003	65
Art and design	116	110	3
Humanities	114	390	7
Basic education	51	98	2
Total	733	7,093	100

Source: college data

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 28% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (September 1999)

	Per- manent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	61	3	0	64
Supporting direct learning contact	9	0	0	9
Other support	48	2	1	51
Total	118	5	1	124

Source: college data, rounded to nearest full-time equivalent

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£5,273,000	£5,351,000	£5,682,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£17.23	£16.75	£16.35
Payroll as a proportion of income	68%	66%	64%
Achievement of funding target	94%	100%	114%
Diversity of income	13%	13%	16%
Operating surplus	£180,000	£200,000	£140,000

Sources: Income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), FEFC audited accounts (1998), college (1999)

ALF - Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999)

Payroll - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), FEFC audited accounts (1998), college (1999)

Achievement of funding target - Performance Indicators 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Diversity of income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), FEFC audited accounts (1998), college (1999)

Operating surplus - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), FEFC audited accounts (1998), college (1999)

### Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	178	638	358	655	654	427
	Retention (%)	81	83	85	59	64	75
	Achievement (%)	48	43	36	57	46	42
2	Number of starters	974	1,130	816	854	734	696
	Retention (%)	68	70	73	71	68	70
	Achievement (%)	35	41	31	53	56	62
3	Number of starters	824	777	527	806	751	651
	Retention (%)	53	59	61	54	53	69
	Achievement (%)	34	34	50	49	43	53
4 or 5	Number of starters	19	12	15	114	99	88
	Retention (%)	100	92	93	75	77	78
	Achievement (%)	32	55	57	28	25	39
Short courses	Number of starters	113	167	268	246	60	783
	Retention (%)	58	83	82	71	60	82
	Achievement (%)	17	30	35	25	56	46
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	254	323	1,285	1,023	1,339	3,991
	Retention (%)	90	89	96	86	93	95
	Achievement (%)	35	29	20	33	36	32

Source: ISR

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