

Birkenhead Sixth Form College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
2000-01

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also inspects other further education provision funded by the FEFC. In fulfilling its work programme, the inspectorate assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Inspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. A member of the Council's audit service works with inspectors in assessing aspects of governance and management. All colleges are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

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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 1999-2000, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	6	44	44	7	0
Cross-college provision	9	45	38	8	0

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Sample size: 112 college inspections

Note: percentages subject to rounding

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 1996, would appear in the results for 1997-98 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

Birkenhead Sixth Form College

North West Region

Inspected October 2000

Birkenhead Sixth Form College is located on a single site campus on the Wirral. The core business of the college is the education and training of 16 to 18 year old students. The college has developed effective links with external organisations to widen participation. In preparation for the inspection, the college produced a comprehensive and detailed self-assessment report. Staff and governors participated in the self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements the college made about the strengths and weaknesses of its provision. They considered that a few of the strengths did not relate to practice that was in any way exceptional.

The college offers provision in eight out of the 10 programme areas funded by the FEFC. Since the last inspection, there has been a clear improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. The college has successfully recruited students from groups previously under-represented in further education. Courses are now provided in 12 centres away from the college. There has been a significant increase in numbers of adult students. Activities to promote the college are well organised and effective. Individual support for students and the monitoring of individual students' progress are good. There are effective arrangements for helping students who have learning difficulties

and/or disabilities. The college buildings are accessible to students who have mobility difficulties. Attractive wall displays provide a stimulating learning environment. The college has well-defined quality assurance procedures that staff understand. The management structure and lines of responsibility and communication are clear. There is a well-established annual planning cycle. Managers have made the improvement of students' retention rates on level 3 courses a priority. Some retention rates on advanced level courses are below the national average for sixth form colleges. Governors have an appropriate range of expertise that they use constructively to help the college. The college should further improve: the quality of tutorials; recruitment procedures for GCE A level courses; retention rates on advanced level courses; the use of information and communications technology in the curriculum; methods of obtaining feedback from students; arrangements for sharing good practice; aspects of governance; and the use of management information.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science	2	Support for students	2
Business studies	2	General resources	2
Creative arts	1	Quality assurance	2
English and modern foreign languages	2	Governance	3
		Management	2

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Birkenhead Sixth Form College was established in 1988 following a reorganisation of post-16 education in the borough. It is located on the Wirral about 1 mile from the centre of Birkenhead. Accommodation comprises one main building, erected in 1962 and modified in 1988, a new teaching block constructed in 1995 and two blocks of mobile classrooms. A new performing arts and media building will open in autumn 2000. The college has a gymnasium and a 'multi-gym'. Students use sports fields at locations throughout the Wirral.

2 The Wirral has a population of approximately 335,000. According to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' indices, the borough is the 44th most deprived area in the country. Unemployment amongst young people is high across the Wirral. In parts of inner-city Birkenhead, the unemployment rate is almost 21%. In three Birkenhead wards, over 30% of children are from one-parent families. Less than 1% of the population is from minority ethnic groups.

3 The college recruits almost 50% of its full-time students from five partner schools in Birkenhead. The remainder are recruited mainly from the Wirral. The college is in lively competition with a general further education college, eight selective schools and 11 high schools with sixth forms in the Wirral. Less than half the pupils in the partner schools stay on in full-time education and most of these come to the college. The college aims to accept applicants, irrespective of their ability and aptitude. It enrolls students on its general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) courses who have only modest general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) grades. The college has links with a number of special schools and endeavours to provide education for students with a wide variety of individual learning needs.

4 The college provides over 30 courses in eight of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) 10 programme areas. Courses are offered at levels 1, 2 and 3. They include GCSE, GCE A level, GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses, and courses leading to the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ), and certification in key skills. Childcare courses were recently introduced in response to local demand. In January 1996, the college diversified provision in order to attract those previously under-represented in further education. This provision has grown rapidly. In September 2000, the college enrolled 1,900 adult students on adult and community education courses and on courses at centres away from the college. Adult and community education evening classes take place on three nights a week. There are 28 sessions in 12 centres in the Birkenhead area. These courses are designed specifically to widen participation in education; some courses are part of a non-schedule 2 pilot. Many of the centres used by the college are in 'Pathway' areas, supported by European Social Fund funding.

5 The college's mission, which has recently been reviewed, is 'to provide high-quality education for all'. To achieve this the college will:

- teach and support students as individuals to ensure their overall development
- offer a wide curriculum
- encourage participation
- promote partnerships
- support the development of staff
- ensure equality of opportunity
- provide the best possible working environment.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected in October 2000. Before the inspection, inspectors examined the college's self-assessment report and reviewed information about the college provided by other

Context

directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used data from the FEFC's individualised student record (ISR) for 1998 and 1999 for information on student achievement and retention rates. The college provided its own data for 2000. These were checked by inspectors against primary sources, including class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The data proved reliable when checked against these sources. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately two months before the inspection. Four programme areas and all cross-college aspects were inspected. Ten inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 41 days carried out the inspection. They observed 49 lessons, and looked at students' work and college documents. Inspectors held meetings with college governors, managers, other college staff, students and representatives from local community groups.

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000. Of the lessons observed, 74% were judged to be good or outstanding and 4% were less than satisfactory. The national average for good or

outstanding grades is 62% and the average for below satisfactory grades is 6%. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	11	12	4	0	0	27
GCSE	0	5	2	0	0	7
GNVQ	1	3	1	0	0	5
Other	3	1	4	1	1	10
Total (No)	15	21	11	1	1	49
Total (%)	31	43	22	2	2	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000 (%)	17	45	31	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Note: percentages subject to rounding. The total number of lessons includes tutorials

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8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Birkenhead Sixth Form College	15.0	87
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000	10.3	76

Source for national average: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report

Curriculum Areas

Science

Grade 2

9 Inspectors observed 10 lessons across the range of science courses. The college had carried out a thorough assessment of work in its science subject areas. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- good and some outstanding teaching
- achievement rates in GCSE science and in GCE A level biological subjects above national averages
- many students' success in progressing to higher education courses
- thorough analysis of students' examination performance to inform planning
- well-managed, well-furnished laboratories

Weaknesses

- some retention rates below the national average
- student achievement rates in GCE A level chemistry and GCSE biology below the national average

10 The college offers a range of GCSE and GCE A level science subjects. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the college's self-assessment report that science subject areas are well managed. Teachers meet regularly to review the progress students make. They carefully analyse students' examination results and use the information well in planning. Students are set target GCE A level grades and these are determined on the basis of their GCSE grades. Their progress and performance are monitored regularly. They receive a written report on their progress twice a year. Students speak highly of special support sessions they can attend to help them improve their

performance. These include sessions on mathematics for physicists and chemists and chemistry for biologists.

11 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the quality of teaching is a strength. In nine of the 10 lessons observed, teaching was always good and in some instances it was outstanding. Long teaching sessions were skilfully managed. There are comprehensive schemes of work for the new GCE A/AS level syllabuses. Lesson plans relate new topics to previous work. Appropriate reference is also made to future work. In one lesson, marked homework was returned and discussed, a new topic was introduced, students investigated what they had been taught by carrying out an experiment, and they tested their knowledge by working individually on a problem sheet. Practical work is good and students are given well-presented handouts and clear work schedules. Technicians provide effective support and help students with their learning activities. Teachers pay due attention to safety. Second-year students are competent and confident in practical work. Students new to the college demonstrated high levels of competence in newly learned skills and techniques. Teachers give clear explanations of the standard of work expected from students. In lessons, students develop the skills of problem-solving and investigation and they make good use of information technology (IT). Most teachers mark students' work accurately and give the students constructive comments on how they may improve their performance. Students on GCE A level chemistry courses, however, have their work marked less frequently and they receive fewer helpful comments on their work than students taking other science subjects.

12 Retention rates on GCSE biology, and human physiology and health courses are above the national average for sixth form colleges. A high proportion of students on GCSE science and technology courses obtain grade C or above. The proportion of students on GCSE biology

Curriculum Areas

courses, however, who obtain grade C or above, is below the national average. Students' achievements on GCE A level courses in biology, human biology and physics are good. On these courses, a high proportion of students consistently achieve higher grades. A lower proportion of students obtain good grades in GCE A level chemistry. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, many students on GCE A level biology and human biology courses achieve grades higher than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE grades. Students on the GCE A level chemistry course, however, do less well. Retention rates are good on GCSE courses but they are low on GCE A level courses. In 1999, all 14 students who passed GCE A level physics went on to higher education courses in science, engineering or computing. In 1998, of the 31 students who passed GCE A level chemistry, 29 progressed to higher education

courses related to science. The remaining two students entered nurse training.

13 Teaching staff are well qualified. Specialist laboratories and preparation areas are well furnished and well maintained. As the self-assessment points out, since the last inspection, the two older laboratories have been refurbished to a high standard. Practical classes in the main are adequately resourced. In a small number of lessons, there was not enough equipment to enable students to work on their own and they had to carry out tasks in groups. All laboratories and adjacent circulation space are made welcoming. They are given a subject identity by wall displays of carefully selected, interesting materials relevant to teaching and progression to higher education and employment. In addition to the library provision, laboratories carry stocks of books and periodicals and have Internet terminals for students to use.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in science, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE science and technology	2	Number of starters	43	34	53
		Retention (%)	91	91	89
		Achievement (%)	54	60	51
GCSE biology/human physiology and health	2	Number of starters	67	56	80
		Retention (%)	82	86	84
		Achievement (%)	38	23	36
GCE A level biology	3	Number of starters	72	60	44
		Retention (%)	69	80	82
		Achievement (%)	96	98	94
GCE A level chemistry	3	Number of starters	46	48	32
		Retention (%)	59	73	73
		Achievement (%)	74	77	58
GCE A level human biology	3	Number of starters	15	22	28
		Retention (%)	40	68	64
		Achievement (%)	100	100	89
GCE A level physics	3	Number of starters	44	30	20
		Retention (%)	66	63	68
		Achievement (%)	83	100	69

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Curriculum Areas

Business Studies

Grade 2

14 Inspectors observed 10 lessons across the range of business studies courses including the integrated business technology course at stage 2. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report for business and the report for integrated business technology, but considered that some strengths had been overstated.

Key strengths

- wide range of courses
- much good teaching
- some good pass rates
- well-managed courses
- good use of industry links

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on advanced level courses
- the low proportion of students achieving high grades at GCE A level

15 The college offers a broad range of business courses for full-time students. This includes GCSE, GCE A level and GCE AS courses, and courses leading to an advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) or GNVQ at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the college's self-assessment report that part-time courses in the evening and at other centres meet needs of persons in the local community. Courses for full-time students are well managed. Most staff teach on both GNVQ and GCE A/AS level courses. The small team of teachers meets regularly to plan and review their courses, jointly developing learning materials and teaching and learning methods. Staff have a strong commitment to helping students to succeed. In a brief weekly meeting, teachers

discuss students who are failing to achieve their potential. They take GCSE grades students obtained into account when setting the students target grades to obtain in GCE A level. Teachers then monitor students' progress towards reaching the grades expected of them. Schemes of work are particularly good. They specify clearly learning objectives, the activities through which these will be fulfilled and the resources needed. There is insufficient sharing of the preparation of learning materials among staff teaching the same part-time courses at different centres.

16 Inspectors judged seven out of the 10 lessons observed to be good or outstanding. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, staff use a variety of appropriate teaching methods to sustain students' interest. Teachers combine clear exposition with effective questioning. In some lessons, teachers use imaginative teaching methods. Students find these enjoyable and exciting and they make them want to learn. In a foundation level lesson, students entered fully into the spirit of a game in which teams competed to produce the most comprehensive list of retailers' activities. Lessons are well planned and aim to develop students' knowledge and understanding. Teachers identify opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate key skills. Group work is well managed. Links with local and national organisations are used effectively to provide students with first-hand opportunities to find out about business. Students researching the impact of business structure and management style on business performance carefully planned how to collect information from bank employees during a workplace visit. Guest speakers provide a source of up-to-date information. Students are given well-presented and informative booklets on relevant topics. Most lessons are lively. In a few, however, students are not given demanding tasks that challenge them to think and use their skills to the full. In some lessons, students were not given enough scope to engage in discussion and extend their

Curriculum Areas

understanding through structured argument and debate.

17 The proportion of students on GCSE courses who achieve grade C or above is higher than the national average for sixth form colleges. Student retention and pass rates on the recently established integrated business technology level 2 course are higher than average. Pass rates on all levels of GNVQ have been above the national average in two of the last three years. Pass rates on GCE A level courses have matched national averages in each of the last three years although the retention rates have been significantly below the national average for sixth form colleges. The proportion of the more able students who obtain higher grades in GCE A level is low. This weakness was not explicit in the college's self-assessment report. Data on students' achievements show that many students are not achieving the GCE A level grades predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE grades. The retention rate on the GNVQ intermediate course is higher than the national average but on the advanced level course it is poor. Only three of the 10 students who started the course in 1997 achieved a certificate. Though the retention rate improved in 2000, it has fallen again on the current course. The quality of most students' written work is good and teachers provide clear comments on how it could be improved. In some cases, teachers did not check the quality of students' written notes.

18 Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Several of the classrooms used for this area of work are spacious and have course-related wall displays. Some have small collections of learning resources for students to use. Other rooms are drab and too small for the number of students in the classes using them. They are not suitable for some learning activities, such as those requiring plenty of space. Students have ready access to modern IT facilities for their own work but classes are not generally timetabled in rooms equipped with

computers. The range of books in the library is small and several books are out of date.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in business studies, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GNVQ foundation business studies	1	Number of starters	18	22	15
		Retention (%)	78	68	80
		Achievement (%)	93	64	75
GCSE business (grades A to C)	2	Number of starters	31	26	26
		Retention (%)	87	77	69
		Achievement (%)	41	74	72
GNVQ intermediate (business studies)	2	Number of starters	14	18	17
		Retention (%)	86	83	82
		Achievement (%)	83	79	57
Intergrated business technology	2	Number of starters	*	*	31
		Retention (%)	*	*	94
		Achievement (%)	*	*	70
GCE A level business studies (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	63	47	45
		Retention (%)	59	70	64
		Achievement (%)	91	93	90
GNVQ advanced business studies (one-year course)	3	Number of starters	18	10	8
		Retention (%)	56	50	100
		Achievement (%)	50	100	88

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Creative Arts

Grade 1

19 Inspectors observed 10 lessons across the range of creative arts courses. Inspectors mainly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the separate subject self-assessment reports. They considered, however, that some statements of strengths related to practices that were in no way exceptional. At the time of inspection, the college had taken effective action to rectify some of the weaknesses.

Key strengths

- outstanding teaching
- students' good achievements on most courses
- strong achievement of essential skills in creative disciplines
- teachers' constructive feedback to students on their work
- imaginative project work
- effective community links
- well-managed courses

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of IT in the curriculum

20 The department offers a wide range of advanced level creative arts courses. These cover art, performing arts, design technology, textiles and theatre. The curriculum is well organised and it is ably managed by subject teams. Changes in the curriculum have aimed to broaden the learning experiences available to students. Teachers meet regularly to review and discuss ways of improving the courses. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the organisation of the curriculum is efficient and effective. Staff have good links with the local community and students are afforded opportunities to work on

projects in the community and with local industries. The department has received sponsorship from the Wirral pathways project. Performing arts students extend their experience by giving performances in schools and public places. Courses are well managed. Imaginative schemes of work are well structured to provide students with opportunities to develop key skills within a vocational context. Individual students' progress is carefully monitored. Teachers use special sheets to record the progress of each student. These enable all teachers involved with a course to know the extent of each student's progress on it.

21 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that teaching is a strength and students enjoy learning. In nine of the 10 lessons observed, the teaching was good or outstanding. The wide range of projects and teaching methods engage and sustain students' interest and extend their understanding. In one inspirational lesson, students were able to explore timbre using a range of different percussion instruments. Ad-lib orchestration and humour were used to develop students' understanding of timbre. In particular, students enjoy planned activities that enable them to develop essential techniques in the creative arts, such as the effective application of paint and lettering skills. A trade union sponsored textile students' production of a large banner. The students visited relevant museums and offices to research information. They have designed the banner so that it will split into small units to be carried when marching. Students used an expert on banners and a union official as sources of specialist information for this project. Assessment is carefully organised. Most work is marked by two teachers and an appropriate sample is internally verified. Students receive constructive feedback in a variety of ways. These include: feedback whilst working in the studios; critical sessions; termly reports; and comprehensive comments in writing.

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22 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that students' achievements in creative arts are good. In 2000, all students passed their examinations in art, performing arts, textiles and the GNVQ in art and design. Students' achievements were above national averages on all full-time courses. All students completed the GNVQ course in art and design at advanced level and many obtained high grades. The proportion of students who obtained high grades was above the national average on all courses, except design technology and art. On both the design technology and art courses, however, many students exceeded the grades predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE grades. On the art course, 45% of students obtained grades higher than those predicted for them. Retention rates were mainly above the national average. On the part-time GCE AS art and design courses, the pass rate was above the national average but the retention rate was slightly below it. The attendance rate in the classes observed was above the national average. In general, students were punctual for lessons. All staff refused to tolerate any lateness and required any students who were only a few moments late to explain their lack of punctuality. Some exciting work is produced in the division, based on sound research and requiring the use of excellent technical skills. Design technology students enter and achieve success in industrial competitions regularly.

23 As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the lack of IT resources for art and design constitutes a weakness. Students do not have access to resources such as a roller press, photographic equipment and adequate computers to enable them to broaden their range of skills. There is little storage space where students can keep reference materials for their project work. The library is closed in the evenings when adults who are part-time students need access to art history books, as well as their art work and materials. The art rooms are sometimes crowded but staff organise

space well. They mount good educative displays on walls. A new performing arts building will be completed by the end of the year.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in creative arts, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCE A level art and design	3	Number of starters	51	51	38
		Retention (%)	73	73	79
		Achievement (%)	97	100	100
GCE A level performing arts	3	Number of starters	12	14	38
		Retention (%)	83	71	84
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100
GCE A level design technology	3	Number of starters	29	31	35
		Retention (%)	66	71	80
		Achievement (%)	89	89	88
GCE A level textiles	3	Number of starters	6	16	13
		Retention (%)	83	69	73
		Achievement (%)	100	82	100
GCE A level theatre studies	3	Number of starters	22	22	11
		Retention (%)	77	86	82
		Achievement (%)	88	94	89

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Curriculum Areas

English and Modern Foreign Languages

Grade 2

24 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in English and modern foreign languages on GCE A level, GCSE and adult and community education courses. They agreed with most of the strengths in the college's self-assessment report and identified an additional weakness.

Key strengths

- good teaching
- students' achievements above the national average on GCSE courses
- retention rates above the national average on some courses
- thorough analysis of students' performance to assist planning
- a wide range of particularly good learning materials

Weaknesses

- low achievement and retention rates on the GCE A level English course
- insufficient use of IT in teaching and learning

25 The departments of English and modern foreign languages offer a range of GCSE and GCE A level courses. Staff liaise closely with examination boards and were well prepared for recent curriculum changes. Teachers review their courses thoroughly. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that they carry out rigorous and detailed analysis of students' examination results across subjects and that this helps them in their course planning. Subject areas set realistic targets for students' achievements and the college sets targets for students' retention rates. Students of foreign languages benefit from opportunities to visit France, Spain and Germany and have some work experience abroad. Students of English

make visits to various local and national theatres. They also attend lectures on relevant set books at universities.

26 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the quality of teaching is good. In 10 of the 12 lessons observed, the teaching was good or outstanding. Students are enthusiastic learners. Most are attentive in class and remain focused on their work. Lessons are well structured and effectively planned. Teachers share lesson aims and objectives with their students. Students are clear about what they are expected to do. They are encouraged to work on their own, in pairs and in groups. Teachers closely monitor the progress of individual students engaged in group work. Teachers manage discussion sessions effectively and make sure all students participate in these. In one lesson on World War I poetry, the teacher was successful in drawing some perceptive comments from the students. In lessons, teachers of modern languages make extensive use of the language being learnt in order to help students develop skills of listening and comprehension. In the best lessons, teachers created a productive and stimulating learning environment. In one GCE A level German lesson, the teacher used a range of appropriate teaching methods successfully to help the students understand a difficult topic. The lesson was well planned and had momentum. The students were absorbed in it and the teacher enabled them to extend their knowledge and understanding. Teachers give students useful handouts containing comments from examiners' reports showing what the examiners look for in candidates' work. In a small number of lessons, teachers failed to keep all members of the class alert by directing questions at named individuals. Some students found it difficult to remember new vocabulary when this was not given a clear context.

27 Students' coursework is assessed thoroughly. It is returned carefully, annotated with detailed and helpful comments. Files of

Curriculum Areas

students' work are well organised. They show clearly the progress that students have made. There is good rapport between students and staff. Students value the help and support staff give them. The students' attendance rates are high and well above the national average.

28 As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the proportions of students obtaining grade C or above in GCSE English and languages, are above the national average. Retention rates on the GCSE courses are good. Students on the GCE A level course in Spanish obtain higher grades than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE grades. Students' pass and retention rates on GCE A level English courses are below the national average. Students on GCE A level English language and literature courses, however, obtain higher grades than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE grades. Many students lack confidence in oral work, but are more assured in their writing. Their written work, however, contains errors in spelling and grammar. Additional learning support within the subject area is available to students. Some students, however, did not follow the advice of their teacher to attend additional learning support lessons.

29 Most lessons take place in classrooms that are appropriate for the size of the group and the nature of the learning activities. They contain attractive displays of teachers' and students' work. Staff are suitably qualified and appropriately experienced. Part-time staff are well supported. Foreign language assistants play a valuable role in helping students improve their oral skills. Staff have produced a wide range of good learning resources which effectively supplement standard textbooks. Students now have more access to IT resources. Examples of good work produced through the use of IT equipment are displayed in corridors and classrooms. There is, however, insufficient use of IT as a learning aid. Many students do not use IT to improve the presentation of their work or as a means of carrying out research.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in English and modern foreign languages, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE English language (grades A to C)	2	Number of starters	113	131	186
		Retention (%)	74	83	83
		Achievement (%)	50	65	57
GCSE French and Spanish (grades A to C)	2	Number of starters	36	34	49
		Retention (%)	78	80	80
		Achievement (%)	79	88	79
GCE A level French, German and Spanish	3	Number of starters	37	31	25
		Retention (%)	74	72	65
		Achievement (%)	71	90	86
GCE A level English language and literature (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	47	48	40
		Retention (%)	75	77	71
		Achievement (%)	64	85	78
GCE A level English language (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	48	45	32
		Retention (%)	73	80	82
		Achievement (%)	81	83	78
GCE A level English literature (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	27	38	33
		Retention (%)	68	88	70
		Achievement (%)	85	83	79

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

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Support for Students

Grade 2

30 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report but considered others had been overstated. They found an additional weakness.

Key strengths

- effective promotional activities
- good support for individual students
- rigorous monitoring of students' attendance
- comprehensive support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- effective guidance for students on progression to higher education
- outstanding work experience programme

Weaknesses

- some poor tutorial practice
- inappropriate recruitment of some students to GCE A level courses

31 The college provides students with a learning environment in which they feel well supported. The number of students attending courses has increased, particularly at the centres in the local community. Childcare facilities are available to students attending courses at the centres.

32 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that activities to promote the college are effective. The college works closely with its partner schools. Staff visit schools to prepare pupils for course interviews. Staff attend careers events in schools and contribute to careers education programmes. College 'taster' days are well attended by school pupils. Interviews for pupils applying for college courses are held on school premises. Good

promotional literature provides objective information on courses and services available. A conference for new students gives them the opportunity to become familiar with the college and its services. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that some students have been placed on GCE A level courses inappropriately. For example, one student who had not obtained grade C or above in any GCSE science subjects was taking three GCE A level science subjects.

33 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that individual students receive good support. Full-time students have their support needs identified through diagnostic testing during induction. The college uses external assessors to ensure that students with support needs are identified early. Students referred for additional learning support do not always attend learning support sessions. Teachers do not regularly monitor students' attendance at these sessions. Teachers determine targets for students on the basis of their performance in the GCSE. Students' progress towards reaching these targets is monitored rigorously. Subject specialists provide students with good subject-specific learning support. Students' attendance at, and punctuality for, lessons are carefully monitored. Reasons for non-attendance are checked systematically. Students who do not arrive on time for lessons have to explain why they are late. The attendance rate in lessons observed during the inspection was well above national averages.

34 Full-time students have two half-hour tutorial sessions each week. A comprehensive tutorial programme is implemented during these periods and this is used across the college. It covers careers education and guidance, development of records of achievement and personal development topics. Advanced level students have one weekly session in which they record their progress in key skills. In general, tutorial provision is weak. In some less effective

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tutorials, large groups were timetabled in inadequate accommodation, too much content was crammed into the time available and tutors failed to use opportunities to promote discussion. Some tutors themselves showed little interest in, or enthusiasm for, the tutorial programme and had received no training to help them carry it out.

35 As the self-assessment report acknowledges, support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent. These students' specific support needs are identified as part of the admissions process. There are effective arrangements to ensure they are met. The learning support team has developed an extensive network of contacts with special schools, hospital schools and specialised support agencies. Staff receive training and support to help them meet the needs of students with particular learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents speak highly of the effectiveness of the support given to their sons or daughters. The college has given good support to one student who had been unable to attend school for two years because of illness. This student has now achieved a GNVQ at intermediate level and is now studying for GCE A level qualifications. A student with a very poor school attendance record has achieved a 100% attendance record in college.

36 Students receive effective guidance from careers officers and college tutors to help them choose appropriate higher education courses. A good range of prospectuses and information on courses is available. The college organises events that provide opportunities for students to discuss courses with admissions tutors from higher education institutions. Students are also encouraged to attend university open days and conferences. They receive good help and assistance in completing Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) forms. The college has compact arrangements with two local higher education providers that enable students who meet minimum grade

requirements to progress to higher education. Three-quarters of advanced level students progressed to higher education in 1998-99.

37 The college offers an excellent curriculum enrichment programme. Students are able to take part in a range of activities including: sports; subject-based short courses; drama; music; theatre visits; leisure interests; the Duke of Edinburgh's scheme; community work; mock interviews and work-shadowing. All students have the opportunity to take part in work experience or work-shadowing. After their work experience and work-shadowing, students write lively reports on how these activities have helped them to decide on their future careers.

General Resources

Grade 2

38 Inspectors agreed with the strengths stated in the self-assessment report but considered some of the weaknesses to be overstated. They found additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-maintained buildings
- good teaching accommodation
- good access for wheelchair users
- good use of displays in teaching and communal areas

Weaknesses

- insufficiently large teaching rooms for some group sizes
- insufficient private study spaces

39 The college is located in pleasant surroundings on a single site. Separate buildings are connected by covered walkways and the site has been enhanced to provide seating and social areas for students. The main building has been supplemented with a mobile unit of six classrooms and a new two-storey

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teaching block. The building of a new, purpose-built performing arts centre is expected to be completed by the end of the year. The college uses accommodation of community organisations for its courses for adults. This accommodation is subject to a thorough initial assessment and annual review to ensure it provides a safe learning environment. The increased demands on accommodation resulting from increased student numbers have been addressed through improved room utilisation, remodelling of existing accommodation and a new building programme. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the college manages its use of accommodation well. The proportion of rooms in use at any one time is high, and all the targets specified in the accommodation strategy have been met.

40 Teaching areas are constantly being refurbished to take account of changes in the curriculum. The college's accommodation is particularly good and includes new buildings and refurbished rooms with carpets, soft furnishings and suspended ceilings with modern fluorescent lighting. Remaining areas are more functional. Even the most basic of teaching rooms are turned into a stimulating learning environment through effective use of wall displays. Many rooms, however, are not large enough for the classes using them with the result that the students are cramped. These rooms are unsuitable for some group activities, such as debate or discussion, or for learning tasks requiring plenty of space. Some IT rooms lack effective ventilation and are stuffy. Corridors and circulation areas are brightly decorated with effective wall displays but the congestion in them at certain times during the day can cause particular problems for wheelchair users. As stated in the college's self-assessment report, the buildings are generally well maintained and in good condition. Day-to-day requests for maintenance are quickly dealt with and a comprehensive planned preventative maintenance programme is prepared annually to address potential maintenance problems.

Internal and external decoration are good. Some toilet areas for students are not adequately maintained.

41 The college has been effective in improving access for wheelchair users, and 96% of the accommodation is now accessible. Recent improvements include ramps to facilitate access to buildings and shelving in the library has been lowered. These improvements are recognised as strengths in the college's self-assessment report. Signage around the college is good. Great attention is paid to health and safety issues and external audits indicate continuously improving standards of safety. An effective hazard reporting system is in place and a helpful health and safety booklet is issued to students during induction. The college has taken effective steps to ensure that its premises are secure. For example, there are security patrols on the main site in the evening and security is also monitored through a closed-circuit television system.

42 Inspectors agreed that the college library is well stocked with a range of books, journals, and CD-ROMs. Library staff have been successful in obtaining an increased budget and liaising with subject teachers in order to update library stock to take account of the introduction of curriculum 2000. In their responses to questionnaires, full-time students express satisfaction with the library provision. Library accommodation is crowded at times and there are insufficient private study spaces. Although the library is now open for longer periods, it is not necessarily open at times to suit students on evening courses. Facilities for private study for students are poor throughout the college. There is one small workroom allocated for this purpose. Some students study in the canteen during its quieter periods.

43 As part of its information learning technology strategy, the college has increased and improved computing resources in response to the substantial growth in the number of enrolments on IT courses, and students' needs

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for key skills tuition. In addition to six specialist computer rooms equipped to industry standard, the college has modern computers in its library and learning support base that students may use at any time. In 1999, the college acknowledged that students did not have sufficient access to IT resources. It has now increased the number of workstations available to students. Machines for administrative purposes were all replaced in 1999. Some departments are equipped with computer workstations, but the college recognises the need to ensure that all departments are. As stated in the self-assessment report, the college has been slow to develop its intranet. This was only introduced in September 2000 and to date it has not been much used for the dissemination of teaching and learning materials.

44 The college refectory provides an appropriate range of snacks, meals and drinks. It is well used at lunchtimes but becomes overcrowded and strewn with litter. The college has adapted tables for wheelchair users but they still find access to the tables difficult. Student common room facilities are underdeveloped. The college does not have extensive sport facilities. It has, however, arranged for students to use some sports facilities in the area and provides transport to take them to these.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

45 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report about quality assurance but considered that some strengths had been overstated. They identified an additional weakness.

Key strengths

- well-defined quality procedures
- good use of findings from lesson observations in the staff appraisal and self-assessment processes

- well-presented self-assessment report containing clear evidence to support judgements
- well-planned staff development
- careful analysis of examination results

Weaknesses

- inadequate arrangements for sharing good practice
- inadequate arrangements for collecting feedback from students
- no specification of service standards for some cross-college areas

46 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that quality assurance procedures are clearly defined and well understood by staff. Arrangements for producing self-assessment reports are well established. Quality assurance procedures have been refined and standardised across the college to rectify weaknesses identified during the last inspection. The college's quality assurance policy has recently been amended to take account of the work of two new committees, a standards and quality committee of governors and a quality validation committee. A teaching and learning committee made up of members of staff has carried out surveys of the different ways in which students learn. Teachers use the findings from the surveys when planning learning tasks for their students. The committee has been less successful in disseminating good practice in teaching and learning. For example, in one subject handbook there is particularly good advice to teachers on learning techniques which has not been shared across subject areas.

47 Reviews of subject and cross-college areas are carried out and these lead to reports that have a common format. Managers carry out quality assurance of the review process and provide subject and area heads with feedback on the usefulness of the reports. Action plans arising from the reports and the self-assessment process to which they contribute, are reviewed

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in March and again at the end of the quality assurance cycle. New or outstanding issues are carried forward from one cycle to the next. When drawing up these reports and the college's self-assessment report, staff compare students' achievements and performance with national averages. They collect value-added data, by comparing the GCE A level grades the students finally obtain, with the GCSE grades they held on entry to the college. However, less progress has been made in setting realistic targets for students' performance in subject areas, an issue identified in the self-assessment report. A quality validation committee samples self-assessment reports and validates grades awarded. Action plans from subject and cross-college areas identify people responsible for carrying out action and the timescale in which it must be completed. There is little evaluation of the extent to which students benefit from the action carried out. As the self-assessment report recognises, there are still cross-college areas where service standards have not been defined.

48 The college seeks and acts on feedback from students on the quality of their experience. Student representatives in tutorial groups raise general issues with staff in quarterly meetings. There are no effective arrangements during the academic year for obtaining feedback from students on the quality of their learning experiences. A standard college questionnaire and one used by subject teams are given to students at the end of the year. Students' responses are summarised, analysed and compared with those of previous years. Students are not provided with feedback on responses to questionnaires and are not informed of any action taken on them. The college set up two focus groups to look at ways of improving methods for collecting students' views. Their work was not evaluated and no action has been taken. Although students are provided with a copy of the college charter they are unaware of its significance and do not know how to make a formal complaint.

49 Arrangements for identifying and meeting the training needs of staff are good. Subject teams identify training needs as part of the annual planning cycle. The training needs of individual staff are identified through the college's staff appraisal system. The college has a staff development plan. This specifies targets for staff development. The college has recently been re-accredited as an Investor in People. The college has a well-established procedure for lesson observations. Findings from the observations are taken into account during staff appraisal interviews. In 1999, the practice of grading lessons was introduced. In the last 18 months, 129 lessons have been observed and 90% were graded 2 or above. During the inspection, the inspectors observed 49 lessons and 74% were graded 2 or above. The college recognises the need to have a systematic process for validating lesson grades. At the time of the last inspection in 1997, only 59% of lessons were graded 2 or above. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Only 4% were graded less than satisfactory compared with 10% in 1997.

50 The self-assessment report drew upon findings from the college's quality assurance processes. It was detailed and comprehensive. Strengths and weaknesses are clearly identified. A small number of the statements describing what the college considered to be its strengths, related to practices that were in no way exceptional. Judgements were supported by clear evidence. The action plan for rectifying weaknesses was linked appropriately to the college's strategic plan. Inspectors agreed with all the grades for the curriculum areas and with the grades for four out of the five cross-college areas of provision. The grade they awarded for one area of cross-college provision was lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

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Governance

Grade 3

51 Inspectors agreed with some strengths in the self-assessment report. They considered that other strengths had been over-emphasised. They found some important weaknesses the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- effective use of the broad range of governors' skills
- firm commitment of governors to helping the college succeed
- systematic programme of training for governors

Weaknesses

- inadequate oversight of the college's strategic plan by governors
- governors' failure to identify their information needs to enable them to monitor academic performance
- insufficient monitoring of policy by governors

52 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

53 The corporation has 20 members. There is one vacancy. As identified in the self-assessment report, governors have a broad range of expertise that has been used effectively to help the college. Governors have skills and experience in the areas of education, training, project development, finance, personnel, legal and community issues. They submit an annual declaration of eligibility for membership. Governors are highly committed to helping the

college succeed. The corporation has set a target of 80% attendance at corporation meetings, which has been achieved. Governors also attend a range of college social events and regular lunchtime meetings with students and staff. They have few formal links with college departments.

54 New governors are offered a thorough induction to the college and their responsibilities. A systematic training programme is based upon careful analysis of governors' training needs. The governing body has adopted a range of criteria by which it judges the effectiveness of its performance. These contain some quantifiable targets. They do not include reference to key aspects of governance such as oversight of academic performance and clerking arrangements. Governors have little involvement in the production of the self-assessment report for governance.

55 Governors have established a clear mission for the college. They have set firm aims for its strategic direction. These are to ensure that students are highly successful and that the college widens participation. The college's mission is reflected in the strategic plan and governors drew this up in close collaboration with college managers. They are, however, not sufficiently involved in the oversight of the implementation of this plan. They do not determine the annual priorities effectively or monitor their implementation. Until recently, the corporation did not identify whether the previous year's objectives had been met. Annual priorities are approved each year in a lengthy corporation meeting. There is little discussion of key issues. Governors receive regular reports on a wide range of issues from the principal. They do not, however, receive regular reports on the extent to which objectives are being met. They have acknowledged this weakness and the finance and general purposes committee has recently amended its terms of reference in order that it may monitor the

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fulfilment of the college's objectives. Governors do not monitor the implementation of most policies. They place too much reliance on college management to undertake this on their behalf but do not receive formal reports on the effectiveness of the policies. This weakness was identified at the last inspection and has not been addressed. There are arrangements for governors to carry out the appraisal of senior postholders. Governors do not, however, question senior postholders sufficiently about their effectiveness in helping the college fulfil its strategic objectives.

56 Governors have recently begun to scrutinise the academic performance of the college. They have established a standards and quality committee with clear and suitable terms of reference. It has given detailed consideration to important issues including entry criteria for students. It has not yet determined what information it needs to review the college's academic performance effectively. The information it has received is not sufficiently clear or accurate and it does not enable governors to identify trends or areas of concern easily. Governors ascertain the extent to which the college has met the targets they have set for student achievement and retention rates and they set appropriate targets for the future. One governor sits on the college's validation committee that scrutinises a sample of self-assessment reports from across the college. The corporation receives information from this committee and approves the final college self-assessment report.

57 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the corporation has an appropriate committee structure. The search committee has effectively advised the corporation on the changes needed as a result of modification to the instrument and articles of governance. It has implemented the Nolan recommendations on governor appointments. There are no external co-optees on this committee. A skills audit has recently been

undertaken. Its results were presented to the search committee in May 2000 and used effectively in the recruitment of new members. The finance and general purposes committee reviews the college's financial position at its termly meetings. In general, the audit committee operates satisfactorily, but it does not carry out a systematic review of the extent to which outstanding recommendations made in internal and external audit reports, have been implemented. Some business enacted by committees has not been subject to formal corporation approval.

58 Following a critical review of governance by the college's internal auditors in May 2000, the corporation has updated its standing orders, code of conduct, content of the register of interests, amended its appointments process and approved a fraud policy. The corporation normally meets termly. Corporation minutes are not made available to governors until the following corporation meeting. The minutes are available to the public in the college library.

Management

Grade 2

59 Inspectors agreed with the majority of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but found that a few strengths were overstated.

Key strengths

- well-established annual planning cycle
- effective links with external partners
- clear allocation of responsibilities and good communications
- success in meeting or exceeding growth targets

Weaknesses

- failure to meet targets for students' retention on advanced level courses

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- underdeveloped use of management information

60 Strategic and operational planning are well established and linked to quality assurance processes, as described in the self-assessment report. Findings from mid-year reviews of the college's performance are taken into account during the planning process for the following year. Staff teams are fully involved in the planning process. There are clear links between divisional plans and the overall college plan. Staff are clear about the college mission and annual objectives. Operating statements specify who has responsibility for carrying action out, timescales within which action must be completed and measures for checking its effectiveness. The college has achieved considerable growth of units and students, both full-time students aged 16 to 18 and adults.

61 The college structure is clear and well understood by students and staff. Communication and consultation processes are effective. There are weekly briefings and bulletins as well as formal committees and working groups. Agendas and minutes for the senior management team and college management group meetings are posted on staff noticeboards. Courses for adults and provision in centres away from the college are managed separately from provision for 16 to 19 year olds. Resource allocation is clear and well understood. All staff have access to electronic mail but its usage is patchy.

62 The college works well with local partners and external groups such as the Wirral Learning Partnership. The college has been successful in widening participation. European Social Fund funding contributed to the college development of approximately 12 centres in disadvantaged parts of Birkenhead. At the time of inspection, 600 students were enrolled on courses in these centres. The college is involved in the Merseyside colleges' non-schedule 2 pilot project. It has developed its GNVQ provision at

all levels in response to the needs of students. Vocational provision includes childcare courses developed in response to requests from partner schools.

63 The self-assessment report recognises that a main issue facing the college is poor retention rates on advanced courses. The revised strategy for improving students' retention has not proved effective to any significant extent. Data for the last academic year indicate that retention rates at levels 1 and 2 for 16 to 19 year olds are above national averages. The retention rates, however, on level 3 courses, especially GCE A level, are significantly below the national average for sixth form colleges. The strategy for improving students' retention rates in 2000-01 involves the setting of demanding but realistic retention targets for individual subjects. Procedures for monitoring students' attendance are effective.

64 The college recognises the need to issue management information reports more frequently and to make them more easily available and more user friendly. The college is attempting to improve its use of data produced by the management information system. Inspectors found data sampled to be largely accurate and staff have confidence in their reliability. Reports on enrolments and retention are produced on a quarterly basis.

65 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. While the college has incurred operating deficits in 1997-98 and 1998-99, the July 2000 management accounts report an operating surplus of £195,000 for 1999-2000. Overall, the college is financially sound having income and expenditure reserves of £795,000 and cash balances of £375,000 as at 31 July 1999. Management accounts, in an appropriate format, are prepared monthly for review by the senior management team and members of the finance and general purposes committee. The corporation receives separate financial reports

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each term. While strategic financial targets have been determined, actual performance against strategic targets is not reported. The financial regulations are updated annually and include a fraud and irregularity policy and response plan. The college's internal auditors reported that in 1998-99 the internal control system was sound. The college submitted its financial statements and student record returns for 1998-99 in accordance with FEFC deadlines.

66 There is a three-year cycle for monitoring the effectiveness of college policies. Health and safety procedures receive careful attention. The self-assessment overstates strengths relating to the promotion of equal opportunities. The college has a policy on equal opportunities. A working group meets each term and produces an action plan for promoting equal opportunities. The college collects data on students' gender, ethnicity and disabilities but does little with this information. Action has been taken to make the college's policy on equal opportunities better known. For example, the policy is now given greater prominence in the students' handbook. Course reviews cover the promotion of equal opportunities. Staff are encouraged to take account of issues arising from examiners' reports, such as those relating to the performance of female students in certain subjects and male students in others. The college acknowledges that further work is needed at subject team level to ensure the equal opportunities policy is implemented effectively. In some lessons, teachers missed opportunities to challenge gender stereotyping on the part of the students and launch a discussion about equal opportunities. There has been little staff development training on equal opportunities in the last two years, except for that relating to the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

carrying out the inspection. It was developed through a comprehensive process involving all staff. The self-assessment process is an integral part of the college's quality assurance system. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college. Inspectors agreed with all but one of the grades in the self-assessment report.

68 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.

Conclusions

67 The college's self-assessment report provided an effective basis for planning and

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 2000)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	0
16-18 years	53
19-24 years	6
25+ years	40
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 2000)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation) and entry level	20
Level 2 (intermediate)	36
Level 3 (advanced)	41
Level 4/5 (higher)	0
Level not specified	0
Non-schedule 2	3
Total	100

Source: college data

Note: FEFC-funded students only

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 2000)

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	286	537	31
Agriculture	0	28	1
Business	79	236	12
Hotel and catering	35	33	3
Health and community care	97	65	6
Art and design	94	94	7
Humanities	532	447	36
Basic education	10	105	4
Total	1,133	1,545	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1998-99 ISR data, the college recruited 26% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 2000)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	63	9	1	73
Supporting direct learning contact	11	1	0	12
Other support	20	2	0	22
Total	94	12	1	107

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1998	1999	2000
Income	£2,928,000	£3,102,000	£3,615,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£17.11	£16.81	£16.89
Payroll as a proportion of income	80%	79%	74%
Achievement of funding target	106%	100%	*
Diversity of income	9%	11%	10%
Operating surplus	£-90,000	£-136,000	£28,000

Sources: Income – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

ALF – Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999), college (2000)

Payroll – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Achievement of funding target – college (1998, 1999 and 2000)

Diversity of income – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Operating surplus – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

*data not available

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000
1	Number of starters	80	28	87	35	113	199
	Retention (%)	75	66	82	62	69	65
	Achievement (%)	33	57	83	23	43	69
2	Number of starters	636	752	911	249	290	346
	Retention (%)	83	82	86	74	67	81
	Achievement (%)	94	93	92	68	67	83
3	Number of starters	978	1,012	926	22	69	58
	Retention (%)	76	63	64	74	62	57
	Achievement (%)	88	89	80	95	72	69
4 or 5	Number of starters	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Retention (%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Achievement (%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Short courses	Number of starters	79	35	47	169	336	260
	Retention (%)	98	96	93	88	89	89
	Achievement (%)	25	91	53*	46	56	73
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	14	0	0	0	0	0
	Retention (%)	78	0	0	0	0	0
	Achievement (%)	93	0	0	0	0	0

Source: college

*data may not be reliable

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