

**The
Bournemouth
and Poole
College of
Further
Education**

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1998-99**

**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 1997-98, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	60	29	2	-
Cross-college provision	18	54	24	4	-

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*
Sample size: 108 college inspections

Student Achievements

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

- as expected completions, which is the number of initial enrolments on qualifications where the student expected to complete the qualification in a given 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 the students have completed as expected (or are continuing with the prospect of late completion). 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 shown.

Summary

The Bournemouth and Poole College of Further Education *South West Region*

Inspected November 1998

The Bournemouth and Poole College of Further Education is a large general further education college with two main centres in Bournemouth and Poole and five other centres in the local area. Since the previous inspection, the college has increased its range of provision, particularly for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for students wishing to study art and design, media studies, performing arts, management and professional courses. Self-assessment has become an established feature of the college's quality assurance system. The self-assessment process involved contributions from governors and staff at all levels. The self-assessment report was approved by the quality committee of the corporation before it was submitted to the FEFC.

The college offers courses in all the programme areas funded by the FEFC. Provision in six of these programme areas was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. Communication between managers and staff is good and senior managers provide effective leadership. Governors are closely involved in strategic planning and are well supported by

efficient clerking. Management information is reliable. The college is currently in a good financial position. Students benefit from sound advice and guidance and full-time students receive good tutorial support. Teaching space is used efficiently and there is good provision of computers, libraries and communal facilities. Students' achievements are good in some subjects, but in others retention rates and pass rates are poor. The profile of lesson observation grades awarded by inspectors was similar to the previous inspection, but slightly lower than the average for the sector. The college should improve: low levels of retention; weaknesses in teaching and learning in some subjects; poor achievements by students on some courses; weaknesses in quality assurance reports; the management of some curriculum areas; and poor wheelchair access to parts of the college.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science	4	Support for students	2
Construction	4	General resources	2
Business, administration, management and professional studies	3	Quality assurance	3
Hospitality and catering	2	Governance	2
Health and social care and childcare	2	Management	2
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3		

The College and its Mission

1 The Bournemouth and Poole College of Further Education was formed in 1977 from the merger of Bournemouth College of Technology and Poole Technical College. The college serves a large area of Dorset and Hampshire, operating from two large centres and five smaller centres in Bournemouth and Poole. It also runs courses at a number of outreach centres. A wide range of programmes is offered in all the programme areas funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and includes extensive provision for adults. In several programme areas courses range from pre-foundation to degree level. The college is an associate centre of Bournemouth University and has close links with other establishments of higher education in adjacent counties. It is also a major provider of New Deal training and programmes sponsored by Dorset Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). There are strong links with employers and community agencies. These links have led to a number of partnerships designed to attract more people to take courses that will improve their knowledge and skills. The courses often rely on the use of computer-based learning materials. The college has a long history of international work and has developed this into several collaborative ventures.

2 The local economy depends heavily on leisure and tourism. In Dorset, the distribution, hotel and catering industries employ over 61,000 people. These sectors account for 27% of local employment and for 17% of the local gross domestic product. Public administration and education provide 28% of employment opportunities, financial services 17% and manufacturing 16%. Several companies specialising in financial services have their national headquarters in Bournemouth and Poole. Average earnings in Dorset are well below the national average. Approximately 90% of workplaces within Dorset employ less than 25 people. Throughout the county there is a mix of relatively prosperous areas and pockets of social

and economic deprivation. In September 1998, the unemployment rate in the Bournemouth area was 4.9% and in the Poole area, 2.4%. These figures compare with 3.4% in the south-west region and a national rate of 4.7%.

3 Since the last inspection in 1994, enrolments have increased from approximately 16,100 to over 25,000. In 1997-98, 4,015 full-time and 11,080 part-time students enrolled on college courses. Over 75% of pupils in Dorset take up places on courses in post-16 education; there is strong competition between schools and colleges to attract 16 to 19 year olds. At the time of the inspection the college employed the full-time equivalent of 282 teachers, 114 staff who directly support learning, and 252 other support staff.

4 The college's mission is to enable individuals and organisations to realise their potential. To achieve this aim the college is committed: to provide excellent opportunities for learning; to innovate in its planning and teaching; to appeal to and recruit from all sections of the community; and to promote the habit of lifelong learning. The college policy of continuous improvement in the quality of provision is based on target-setting and self-assessment.

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected in November 1998. Inspectors had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. The college's data on students' achievements for 1998 were checked by inspectors against primary sources, for example, class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. Data for 1996 and 1997 were taken from the FEFC's individualised student record (ISR). The college was notified of the sample of work to be inspected two months before the inspection. Sixteen inspectors and an auditor spent a total of 56 days in the college.

Context

Inspectors observed 108 lessons. They also examined samples of students' work and a variety of college documents. There were discussions with governors, managers, staff and students.

6 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile

for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the lessons inspected, 60% were judged to be good or outstanding and 13% were rated as less than satisfactory. This is a less favourable profile than the average figures of 65% and 6%, respectively, for all colleges inspected in 1997-98.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level and GCSE	2	4	1	2	0	9
GNVQ	4	5	5	2	0	16
NVQ	5	14	10	4	0	33
Other vocational	3	19	8	1	0	31
Other	1	8	5	5	0	19
Total (No.)	15	50	29	14	0	108
Total (%)	14	46	27	13	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

7 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
The Bournemouth and Poole College of Further Education	12.7	78
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

Curriculum Areas

Science

Grade 4

8 The inspection covered: courses in biology, chemistry, physics and science for the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE); courses in biology, human biology, chemistry, environmental science, and physics for the general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level); the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) advanced; and the science component of the access to higher education course. Twelve lessons were observed. Inspectors concluded that the college's self-assessment of science overstated the strengths and understated the weaknesses, particularly with regard to students' achievements.

Key strengths

- good GCSE chemistry and physics pass rates
- good technician support for practical work

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates and retention rates on many courses
- many teachers' low expectations of their students
- the inadequate range of teaching styles
- poor attendance rates
- some poor health and safety practice
- ineffective academic leadership of the science provision

9 The college offers: a range of science subjects at GCSE; one-year and two-year courses at GCE A level; GNVQ advanced; and an access to higher education course. GCSE and GCE A level sciences are available at the Bournemouth and Poole centres. GNVQ advanced science and access to higher education are only available at Bournemouth.

10 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there is a considerable variation in the quality of science teaching. In the best lessons students are well motivated and produce satisfactory work. Some GCE A level students display good practical skills and work well on their own; others make well-informed contributions in class. In some practical lessons, students are given clear task sheets with stimulating questions that test their understanding. There is good support from technician staff. Some teaching is supported by well-written learning materials; a selection is being transferred to the college intranet. In environmental science, recent articles in newspapers and magazines are collated into booklets which are loaned to students. In the poorer lessons an inadequate range of teaching styles prevents the needs of individual students being met. In some lessons students were inattentive, particularly in the later stages of the lesson. Some teachers have low expectations of their students. Lessons were often interrupted by the late arrival of students, who were then not challenged by teachers to explain their lateness. In some biology lessons, too many notes are copied from the board. In some practical lessons work is carried out with insufficient regard for health and safety; for example staff do not follow college safety rules that require students to wear safety glasses and access in laboratories is obstructed by students' bags.

11 Students' achievements in science are generally poor. The self-assessment report identified low achievement in some subjects, but understated the extent. The GCE A level and GNVQ science results have been consistently poor for the last three years. For example, in 1997 pass rates in all GCE A level science subjects were below the average for all colleges in the sector; in some subjects they were significantly below. The pass rate for the two-year course in human biology was 36% below the national figure. There was little

Curriculum Areas

improvement in the overall results in 1998. Poor retention is also given insufficient emphasis in the self-assessment report. For example, in 1997 all two-year GCE A level courses were at least 20% below national figures. On the GNVQ advanced course only two of the nine students who started the two-year course in 1996 completed the programme in 1998. Pass rates and retention on GCSE courses are satisfactory. In 1997, pass rates for chemistry and physics were above the average for all colleges. Attendance at the lessons observed by inspectors was poor at 71%. In two lessons just over half the students were present.

12 The quality of students' written work is uneven. The best work is clearly written and well presented, graphs are plotted accurately and appropriate conclusions are drawn. The poorest work is characterised by poor spelling, untidy presentations and badly constructed graphs. Most students do not use computers to wordprocess their assignments.

13 The academic leadership of science is poor. Science teaching takes place in four of the college schools. Good practice in teaching is not recognised and fostered; poor practice is usually

not identified. There is inadequate curriculum management structure and organisation among science teachers. Teaching is insufficiently co-ordinated across schools, subjects and sites. Neither the self-assessment report, nor year-end course reviews, provide an overview of students' achievements in science. No targets have been set to encourage systematic improvement of those achievements.

14 Science teaching staff are generally well qualified and many have participated in recent staff development activities. Of the science teachers, 65% are part time. They often do not attend meetings and are sometimes unaware of work that has been covered by colleagues. In one class the teacher had to ask students which topics had been covered. The self-assessment report recognised that accommodation for science teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory. The best accommodation provides a bright, modern learning environment and appropriate posters are displayed to generate interest. The poorer laboratories are dreary, with bare walls and faded notices. Science equipment levels are adequate, but some laboratories lack a computer.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in science, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE science, all subjects	2	Expected completions	*	224	210
		Retention (%)	*	80	67
		Achievement (%)	*	62	79
GCE A level biology	3	Expected completions	107	60	57
		Retention (%)	58	67	61
		Achievement (%)	44	45	37
GCE A level human biology	3	Expected completions	140	132	129
		Retention (%)	71	61	67
		Achievement (%)	33	33	32
GCE A level chemistry	3	Expected completions	67	50	75
		Retention (%)	52	52	68
		Achievement (%)	54	46	39
GCE A level physics	3	Expected completions	47	47	48
		Retention (%)	68	64	63
		Achievement (%)	63	43	50

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*data not available

Curriculum Areas

Construction

Grade 4

15 Inspectors observed 23 lessons in construction, building and furniture crafts on courses that lead to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2 and 3 and to some higher technician qualifications. Inspection findings confirmed some strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report. However, the report contained insufficient quantitative data to support some judgements, and weaknesses in students' achievements were understated.

Key strengths

- a broad range of courses
- some good teaching in lessons in the workshops
- extensive and realistic training and assessment facilities

Weaknesses

- some poorly planned lessons
- poor pass rates on some courses
- deteriorating retention rates on many courses
- unsatisfactory carpentry and joinery workshops
- unsatisfactory curriculum management

16 Teaching and learning in some lessons is effective. These lessons are well planned and involve students in appropriate activities. Questions are helpfully used to check students' understanding of the work and handouts are of a high quality. Many lessons are not well planned. In these lessons teaching methods and learning materials do not meet the needs of students. Some lessons in the workshops are good, but in many of them overcrowding inhibits learning. Some tutors rely too heavily on worksheets. Students use them to work on their own but have difficulty understanding the

technical language used. Few craft students have opportunities to develop skills in information technology (IT).

17 Students are provided with good opportunities to study at times which suit their personal circumstances; they can start their programmes at any time of the year. The wide range of courses on offer provides good vocational opportunities for adults and for school-leavers, especially those with a history of poor achievement at school. Staff and students are involved in some innovative activities that benefit the community. For example, in partnership with the local police they are developing a building that houses the Dorset Interactive Safety Education Centre. Local construction employers and other companies provide funding for the project. Students working on the project gain valuable site experience.

18 Students are generally well mannered and proud of their achievements. In workshops they work well, both on their own and in teams. Attendance in the lessons observed was good at 83%. A number of craft students, who were previously excluded from school, have made significant progress. Most students produce satisfactory work. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that some students' practical work in bricklaying, painting and decorating is of a high standard. A significant number of students' files and log books are poorly maintained and reveal poor note-taking skills. Teachers' marking of assignments often fails to correct errors or indicate how improvements could be achieved. Pass rates on some courses are unsatisfactory. For example, in 1998 pass rates on NVQ levels 1 and 2 in construction crafts were 41% and 49%, respectively. The GNVQ intermediate pass rate in 1998 was poor at 19%. On many courses pass rates fell between 1997 and 1998. Retention rates are also unsatisfactory on some courses; rates fell significantly between 1997 and 1998 on NVQ level 2 construction craft courses.

Curriculum Areas

19 The practical facilities for painting, decorating and electrical installation provide realistic working environments. However, carpentry and joinery facilities are unsatisfactory. Several workshops lack sufficient storage areas. Some are untidy, poorly maintained and do not provide sufficient training and assessment facilities. There are potential safety hazards. Some hand tools are also poorly maintained. The self-assessment report failed to identify the poor quality of the learning resource areas situated near workshops. Noise, dust, paint fumes and uncomfortable seating inhibit study. There is a wide range of written learning materials for most curriculum areas. The materials produced by tutors range from excellent to poor. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement in the self-assessment report that teaching staff have appropriate qualifications and experience.

20 Management of the construction programme area is unsatisfactory. Changes in the management structure have left some staff without a clear understanding of their role. Plans for the development of the construction provision are underdeveloped. There is not enough sharing of good practice between course teams. Records of students' progress are extensive and well maintained. The quality of tutors' course files is uneven; in some cases, it is clear that the procedures for quality assurance have not been applied with sufficient rigour. Statistics on students' retention rates, pass rates and destinations are kept, but course teams do not use this information to set performance targets or undertake in-depth reviews of students' achievements.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in construction, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
NVQ construction crafts	1	Expected completions	200	176	143
		Retention (%)	70	78	77
		Achievement (%)	61	63	41
NVQ construction crafts	2	Expected completions	294	371	287
		Retention (%)	63	60	54
		Achievement (%)	41	60	49
GNVQ intermediate construction and the built environment	2	Expected completions	20	17	21
		Retention (%)	60	88	76
		Achievement (%)	33	40	19
Electrical installation intermediate level work	2	Expected completions	67	26	80
		Retention (%)	94	96	88
		Achievement (%)	76	48	49
NVQ construction crafts	3	Expected completions	83	56	65
		Retention (%)	89	86	95
		Achievement (%)	70	72	58
GNVQ advanced construction and the built environment	3	Expected completions	*	62	30
		Retention (%)	*	60	57
		Achievement (%)	*	72	71

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Business, Administration, Management and Professional Studies

Grade 3

21 Inspectors observed 24 lessons covering a wide range of business, administration, management and professional courses. GCE A level provision was not inspected. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the frank and evaluative self-assessment report. However, insufficient judgements were made on teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- good pass rates on many management and professional courses
- the effective development and assessment of practical business skills
- the integration of key skills on vocational courses
- beneficial links with employers
- access to computer-based learning of high quality

Weaknesses

- the failure of some teaching to meet the needs of all students
- an inadequate range of teaching methods in some lessons
- low pass rates on NVQ and GNVQ courses
- some unsatisfactory retention rates
- poor punctuality and attendance in some lessons

22 The provision in business covers a wide range of vocational areas and is offered through full-time, part-time and flexible modes of attendance. The self-assessment report recognised the benefits to the college from the

close links that have been established with employers. Some innovative programmes are provided for local companies, for example, civil aviation, engineering, computing and financial services firms. Students benefit from work experience, which often includes opportunities for assessment in the workplace. Links with industry help to ensure the commercial relevance of courses and assignments, and can lead to career opportunities for students. Students are able to have their prior experience accredited. Such experience then counts towards the assessment of their course.

23 Courses are generally well managed and the majority of course files are well maintained and comprehensive. Communication between course teams was recognised as a weakness in the self-assessment report. A more extensive schedule of meetings has improved communication and encouraged teams to share expertise and learning resources. Course teams work effectively to ensure proper standards of internal verification and to comply with college procedures for self-assessment and action-planning.

24 Several lessons observed by inspectors were inspiring. Many practical activities are effectively developed and assessed in the administration training centre. The teaching of key skills is well integrated with vocational programmes. However, the self-assessment report overstates the quality of teaching and learning. Sometimes there are ineffective attempts to encourage students to concentrate on their work and contribute to class discussion. In some classes the learning materials or the teachers' vocabulary are too complex. In others the teaching makes insufficient demands on students. In certain classrooms the layout fails to ensure that all students have the opportunity to give their full attention to the teaching. In several classes attendance and punctuality is poor.

25 Students regularly achieve good pass rates on some professional and vocational courses.

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For example, in 1998 the pass rate on the diploma in practice management of the Association of Medical Secretaries, Practice Managers and Receptionists was 100%, and on the certificate in personnel practice it was 91%. Students on the access to higher education course consistently achieve good pass rates. In 1998, all students passed and entered higher education. Inspectors did not agree with the self-assessment judgement that results on the certificate in marketing programme are a strength. High retention has been a consistent feature of management and professional courses, for example for the certificate of the National Examining Board for Supervisory Management and the financial planning certificate. The pass rate for GNVQ advanced students was above the average for all colleges in 1996 and 1997, but fell to 62% in 1998. The retention rate on the GNVQ intermediate course has consistently matched national averages for the sector, but pass rates have regularly been well below the average.

26 Overall pass rates for NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 in business subjects were close to the average for all colleges for 1996 and 1997. In accounting, the pass rate for the NVQ level 3 full award improved from 32% in 1996 to 50% in 1998, and the retention rate remained high. However, in 1998, few students completed level

4 in accounting and the pass rate was low. Pass rates on NVQ level 2 administration programmes have fluctuated significantly, falling from 57% in 1996 to 38% in 1997, before rising to 71% in 1998. Advanced courses in wordprocessing have high retention rates, but the pass rate declined from 60% in 1996 to 50% in 1998. Some students' portfolios are of a high standard and relevant to their employers' work. Some students have won national prizes from awarding and professional bodies. Most business students gain suitable employment, progress in further education or enter higher education.

27 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that staff have commercial and industrial experience that is relevant to their teaching. Much learning takes place in specialist accommodation which simulates a business environment. Facilities for work-related assessment in a realistic environment have recently been provided. Provision in the learning resource centres and most specialist business IT rooms is outstanding. Students make good use of their unrestricted access to the internet and to the commercial software and interactive learning materials that are available on the college network. There is a substantial range of up-to-date books and periodicals.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in business, administration, management and professional studies, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
NVQ in business administration, accounting, supervisory management, training and development, and customer service	1, 2 and 3	Expected completions	418	384	559
		Retention (%)	78	77	86
		Achievement (%)	57	55	59
GNVQ intermediate business	2	Expected completions	83	66	71
		Retention (%)	75	76	73
		Achievement (%)	53	62	51
GNVQ advanced, national diplomas and national certificates in business	3	Expected completions	156	189	167
		Retention (%)	73	61	69
		Achievement (%)	83	88	62
Professional courses including personnel, marketing, financial planning purchasing and supply, management, and supervision	3, 4 and 5	Expected completions	449	434	587
		Retention (%)	97	87	76
		Achievement (%)	54	47	49
NVQ in management	4 and 5	Expected completions	114	169	24
		Retention (%)	94	88	100
		Achievement (%)	56	51	50

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Hospitality and Catering

Grade 2

28 Inspectors observed 14 lessons covering NVQ and GNVQ provision. They agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report, although the report did not include some strengths and weaknesses that were identified by inspectors.

Key strengths

- high-quality teaching in the kitchens and restaurants
- good pass rates
- a wide range of courses
- good opportunities for work experience
- the effective development of students' technical and social skills
- a good range of books and periodicals on hospitality and catering

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory retention rates on a number of courses
- inadequate schemes of work
- poor teaching in a few practical lessons

29 The schools of catering operations and hospitality, leisure and tourism are responsible for the management of the hospitality and catering provision. Staff and managers from both schools work closely together. Inspectors agreed with the college that there is a wide and appropriate range of hospitality and catering programmes that meet the needs of both students and industry. Programmes include full-time and part-time NVQ provision in professional cookery, bakery and food service, and GNVQs at advanced and intermediate level. The hotel and catering international management certificate is available through a day-release programme. Short courses are offered in food hygiene, wine and spirits and innkeeping. There are customised programmes

for industry. A group of London restaurants is provided with an assessment service in their workplaces.

30 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there is a good standard of teaching in the college restaurants and restaurant kitchens. Teachers are particularly effective at providing tuition of a high quality within a realistic commercial environment. However, the operation of the restaurant kitchens is not supported by appropriate documentation, for example job descriptions and dish specifications. Most teachers use an appropriate range of teaching methods. They provide effective individual support to students in lessons and make good use of questioning to check students' learning. The range of dishes prepared by students for the college restaurants reflects a good balance between modern and traditional culinary practices. A strength which is recognised in the self-assessment report is the significant programme of work experience provided for students. Those on the NVQ level 3 professional cookery programmes can spend six months in catering establishments in the United Kingdom, France and Malta. GNVQ advanced students spend three months on work experience. Many course schemes of work for both practical and theory lessons lack necessary detail. For example, there is little reference to NVQ and GNVQ units and elements. In some practical lessons there is insufficient guidance and instruction to students. Food service theory often focuses on practices no longer common in the catering industry. There are no IT lessons for craft catering students.

31 Pass rates on hospitality and catering programmes are good. Over the past three years most pass rates have been above the national average for general further education colleges. Some results are outstanding. For example, in 1998 the NVQ food service two-year programme pass rate was 20% above the national average. Results for bakery and NVQ level 3 kitchen and larder one-year programmes

Curriculum Areas

were also very good. Pass rates for GNVQ, both at intermediate and advanced, although above the national average, have declined between 1997 and 1998. The decline at the intermediate level was significant, falling by over 20%. The self-assessment report recognised that retention of students is an issue. With the exception of bakery and craft level 3 courses, the percentage of students who leave other courses early is above the national average for similar courses in general further education colleges. Of those students whose destinations are known, most progress to other courses in further and higher education or to employment. Most students have good technical and social skills, a strength which was also noted at the previous inspection. They work well in teams in the restaurants and kitchens. Students from the college are successful in catering competitions. In 1997, students from the college won the prestigious *toque d'or* award, a leading national competition for catering students sponsored by a major food manufacturer. In 1996 and 1998, college students were the runners up in this competition.

32 Teachers have the appropriate trade qualifications and relevant industrial experience in the areas in which they teach. Many have vocational assessor awards. Equipment is mostly good and to the standard found in industry. But none of the college restaurants have a modern billing system and front office software is no longer up to date. The specialist accommodation for hospitality and catering courses is good and includes production, training, larder and pastry kitchens, a coffee shop, brasserie and a restaurant. Parts of some kitchens and the male changing room are in poor condition. There is a good range of periodicals, videos and books on hospitality and catering available in the library. Library staff provide helpful leaflets on the services that they can provide for the different hospitality and catering courses. A useful press cuttings service on hospitality and catering topics is available to students.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in hospitality and catering, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
NVQ catering and hospitality (serving food and drink - restaurant) two-year programmes	1 and 2	Expected completions	68	40	44
		Retention (%)	88	56	50
		Achievement (%)	87	91	90
NVQ catering and hospitality (food preparation and cooking) one-year programmes	1, 2 and 3	Expected completions	130	128	119
		Retention (%)	75	69	72
		Achievement (%)	78	89	86
NVQ catering and hospitality (food preparation and cooking) two-year programmes	1, 2 and 3	Expected completions	63	69	48
		Retention (%)	61	49	60
		Achievement (%)	92	83	83
NVQ catering and hospitality (kitchen and larder) one-year programme	1, 2 and 3	Expected completions	7	22	16
		Retention (%)	100	91	94
		Achievement (%)	57	100	100
GNVQ intermediate hospitality and catering	2	Expected completions	16	11	12
		Retention (%)	81	64	67
		Achievement (%)	69	86	63
GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering	3	Expected completions	29	40	44
		Retention (%)	70	53	55
		Achievement (%)	57	81	71

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care and Childcare

Grade 2

33 The inspection covered the provision of childcare, health, social care and counselling courses. Twenty-five lessons were observed. Inspectors confirmed most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. Some strengths and weaknesses that relate to curriculum organisation and management and teaching and learning were not identified in the report.

Key strengths

- a wide range of courses and modes of study
- good teaching effectively linking theory to current practice
- the effective management of work experience
- good pass rates on childcare courses

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GNVQ courses
- insufficient planning and teaching of key skills
- unsuitable accommodation for counselling courses

34 Child, health, social care and counselling provision is managed within two college schools and delivered on three sites. There is good communication between the schools and effective co-ordination of work placements for full-time students. A wide range of provision is offered from foundation to advanced level courses. An attempt has been made to increase the number of male students on care courses by producing a video using males as positive role models. These strengths are recognised in the self-assessment report. Courses and NVQ workshops are well planned. Course handbooks provide clear guidance to students on course

content, and on learning and assessment methods. The self-assessment report does not recognise that schemes of work for many courses are underdeveloped. Most do not identify opportunities to develop key skills and some are restricted to lists of topics.

35 Teaching is good in most lessons and some outstanding practice was observed. There are regular checks to confirm that students are understanding the work. Experienced and professionally qualified staff use an appropriate variety of teaching methods which provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and skills. In the better lessons teachers relate theory to current vocational practice and they also demonstrate how learning can be applied to managing activity in the workplace. For example, in one class students had to manage an activity with young children using play dough. The students clearly applied their understanding of child development, health and safety and equal opportunities to this session. In many lessons students were encouraged to draw on their own experiences. Students' ideas and opinions are challenged constructively, enabling them to see the link between complex concepts and practices that are common in the workplace.

36 Learning is reinforced through well-planned assignments set in the workplace. Students on health and care courses are provided with a clear schedule of assignments. Close collaboration between college staff and assessors ensures that NVQ students' progress is carefully monitored. Work experience is thoroughly planned, well managed, and well integrated with all programmes of study. Students are able to relate what they learn in the college to the development of skills in the workplace. For example, a first-year student on work experience demonstrated a good level of interpersonal skills when talking with elderly residents. However, teachers do not make full use of opportunities to develop key skills in lessons. The self-assessment report recognised

Curriculum Areas

most of the strengths in teaching and learning, but did not identify this weakness.

37 Most students who complete their courses achieve their qualification. Pass rates on childcare courses are well above national averages for all colleges. Retention rates on childcare and counselling courses are good. Most pass rates and retention rates on GNVQ courses are below national averages, although the retention rate on the intermediate course improved in 1997 and is now close to the national average. Students' oral, written and practical work shows that most achieve appropriate levels of knowledge and practical skills. Students in workplace settings demonstrated the ability to apply the knowledge and skills learned in college. Most students' written work is of an appropriate standard. Careful marking helps students to identify how

to improve their work. GNVQ and NVQ portfolios are well organised. Evidence of vocational achievements are clearly referenced, but achievements in key skills are not. These strengths and weaknesses are not clearly identified in the college's self-assessment report.

38 Most specialist accommodation is fit for its purpose, although health and social care rooms are overcrowded at times. Some of the accommodation for counselling courses is unsuitable. There is appropriate equipment, but some rooms lack sufficient storage space. A good range of current text books is supplemented by assignment packs for specific topics. Useful task sheets for NVQ level 2 childcare enable students to work at a pace which suits them. On some programmes IT is effectively used to enable students to work on their own.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in health and social care and childcare, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Intermediate certificate in childcare and education	2	Expected completions	36	38	37
		Retention (%)	83	97	81
		Achievement (%)	90	70	93
Counselling intermediate	2	Expected completions	65	90	69
		Retention (%)	95	93	87
		Achievement (%)	81	87	90
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	Expected completions	56	28	33
		Retention (%)	78	82	73
		Achievement (%)	54	52	54
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education advanced diploma in nursery nursing	3	Expected completions	*	23	36
		Retention (%)	*	87	86
		Achievement (%)	*	85	87
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	Expected completions	*	76	54
		Retention (%)	*	67	65
		Achievement (%)	*	84	71

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Grade 3

39 The inspection covered programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Inspectors observed 10 lessons. In the self-assessment report, the college included some of the strengths identified by inspectors, but did not acknowledge some weaknesses.

Key strengths

- the commitment to widening participation
- the effective use of work experience to develop social and vocational skills
- a good range of extra-curricular activities
- the good progression of students to employment and further education

Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory initial assessments and individual learning plans
- insufficient attention in lessons to the learning needs of individuals
- insufficient emphasis on the development of skills for life
- the failure of some teaching to extend students' knowledge and skills

40 The college is committed to widening participation. It has been successful in increasing the numbers of students from under-represented groups, including: people with mental health difficulties; adults with complex learning difficulties; and young people who have not achieved formal qualifications at school. Good links with schools are acknowledged in the college's self-assessment report.

41 Courses are designed to provide students with access to some national qualifications and to prepare them for work or additional training. They may choose from a range of vocational provision. Some may achieve qualifications and others gain experience in vocational areas which are appropriate to their interests and abilities. All students have an entitlement to extra-curricular leisure activities which enables them to learn new skills which may be relevant to their future lives. Almost all students have a period of work experience which is well planned and well managed. Training is also provided to help students who need to travel to their work placement. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment that work experience is a strength.

42 The initial assessment of students' learning needs is not sufficiently thorough. As a result precise individual learning goals are not set. Goals are not described in achievable and measurable steps. Students' progress is reviewed during the course at regular tutorials and termly reviews. However, the reviews are not always matched to the individual's skills which were identified at the initial assessment. Tutorials are intended to take account of the vocational and academic progress of students as well as their social and personal development. In some cases monitoring is not sufficiently precise; for example, some students were observed repeating work for which they had previously gained accreditation.

43 A high standard of teaching and learning was not maintained throughout many of the lessons. In the better lessons students were involved in producing satisfactory work either individually, in pairs, or working together as a whole group. But teachers in many lessons failed to take account of differing levels of ability and did not specify what should be achieved by the end of the lesson. Some lessons were dominated by the requirements of external accreditation. Students did not always

Curriculum Areas

understand the relevance of the work in class. In other lessons, insufficient demands were made on the more capable students and some work for the less competent students was unsuitable.

44 Pastoral care and links to carers and parents are good. The self-assessment report identified communication between parents and the college as a weakness, but there have been recent improvements. Many students progress to employment or further education. In 1997, 21% of those who completed their programmes progressed to paid or voluntary employment and 25% went on to full-time education or training. The college recently held a formal presentation evening to celebrate the students' achievements.

45 Students elect representatives to the college student council. At regular council meetings

they raise issues about, for example, resources, and contribute to decisions on what action should be taken. They report the outcomes back to their peers.

46 In most classes learning support assistants provide support to teaching staff. In some lessons there are team teaching arrangements. Although learning support assistants receive good training they are often poorly managed in the classroom. The college has developed a new scheme for planning and teaching the curriculum that takes account of situations where students with learning difficulties have progressed to vocational classes. The scheme enables staff who teach students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to maintain a link with the students' vocational tutors.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

47 The self-assessment report is comprehensive. Inspectors' judgements were similar to those made by the college.

Key strengths

- effective pre-entry advice and guidance
- comprehensive induction programmes for full-time students
- good tutorial support and learning support for full-time students
- well-regarded counselling, welfare and financial advice
- good careers education and guidance
- a well-supported and active students union

Weaknesses

- insufficient provision of learning support for many part-time students
- some insufficiently structured approaches to tutoring
- a lack of clarity about the tutorial entitlement of part-time students
- insufficient childcare support

48 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that the college offers accessible and effective pre-entry advice and guidance services. Publicity material and newsletters are attractive and informative. There are well-publicised open evenings and roadshows for potential students and their parents. Links with schools are effective. When they are invited to do so, college staff attend careers and information events at local schools. School pupils attend college 'taster' days to sample courses and experience college life. Links with other education providers, voluntary organisations and social services are well established. Most students are interviewed soon after they apply

to the college. In a few cases applicants have to wait too long for an interview. The college has introduced new central admissions procedures to accelerate the response to all applicants.

49 Students benefit from a good introduction to the college when they start their courses. All full-time students attend an induction event to make them aware of support services. As identified in the self-assessment report, not all part-time students benefit from a thorough induction. Nearly all students receive a copy of a useful and informative students' handbook which includes a copy of the charter. The student council contributes to an annual review of the charter.

50 Inspectors found much effective tutorial practice for both full-time and part-time students. The college is committed to inclusive learning and is part of a national project which has influenced its approach to tutoring. Students feel well supported by their tutors. The role of tutor is clearly defined. A comprehensive tutors' handbook contains helpful material to encourage a wide range of tutorial activities. Records of achievement or progress files are widely used, but in a few curriculum areas tutorial activity is insufficiently structured. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, there has been insufficient monitoring of tutorial provision. The role of lead tutor has recently been established to improve monitoring and to act as a link between tutors and central student services. The tutorial entitlement of full-time students is clearly established, but what part-time students can expect from their personal tutors is not made sufficiently clear by the college.

51 The college assesses all full-time students at entry to establish whether they need extra help during their studies. Most of those who need such help receive it. Only a few part-time students are given an initial assessment. In 1998, a pilot initial assessment of a few part-time students identified a considerable need for extra support for some groups of part-time

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students. The college has met these needs, but it recognised in the self-assessment report that other groups of part-time students would also benefit from additional help. Well-publicised study advice centres at both main sites provide a good range of extra support for students, including help with written work, numeracy and IT. Many students with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported by staff who work with them in their lessons. Helpful guides support teachers who have deaf, visually impaired and dyslexic students in their teaching groups.

52 Counselling, and welfare and financial advice are accessible and well publicised. Students and staff speak well of these services. There are good links with outside agencies which enable referrals for specialist assistance to be made quickly. The college has an active full-time chaplain. Funding can be available from the college to support students experiencing financial hardship. The college makes some provision for childcare, but it is small relative to the size of the college.

53 Students have good access to careers guidance from their teachers and from careers service staff. Careers staff are available at most sites at well-publicised times during the week. Students can book an interview or attend drop-in sessions at the two main sites on two or three days each week. Last year there was a significant increase in the number of careers education sessions provided for groups of students. Some teaching schools held whole day events presenting the opportunities that can be available to students when they leave the college.

54 The self-assessment report comments on the active and well-organised students' union. The college supports the union by providing funding for full-time and part-time liaison officers. The enthusiasm of these officers is reflected in growing membership, an active executive and a wide range of activities. A range of optional activities is available to

students on Wednesday afternoons, but some students are unable to take part as they have to attend lessons. Students benefit from a well-established system of course representatives who comprise a student council. This body meets regularly to discuss issues raised by student groups. Both elected union officers and student representatives receive training to help them to fulfil their roles.

General Resources

Grade 2

55 Inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the rather brief self-assessment but identified others which had not been included.

Key strengths

- well-managed, well-maintained and efficiently utilised accommodation
- a clear, comprehensive accommodation strategy
- the good quality of the library and learning resource centres
- good access for students to computers
- the wide range of catering and communal facilities

Weaknesses

- the inaccessibility of some specialist areas for students with disabilities
- a minority of teaching rooms of poor quality
- a lack of sporting and recreational facilities

56 There are two main college sites four and a half miles apart, North Road in Poole and Lansdowne in Bournemouth, and five other sites in the local area. Lansdowne comprises: a substantial Edwardian building; a large block built in the 1950s; converted Victorian houses; and some temporary buildings. The main North

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Road building was purpose-built on a spacious site in the 1950s. Almost all classrooms are appropriate for the lessons held in them. Most are furnished to a good standard. Teaching resources, for example overhead projectors, whiteboards and video equipment, are readily available. The self-assessment report does not acknowledge that a few general classrooms, for example those used for counselling classes, do not provide a congenial environment or are not fit for their purpose.

57 Accommodation is well managed and is used effectively. The college's accommodation strategy is based on detailed analysis. Costed proposals are linked to college objectives. An annual planned maintenance programme results in well-maintained buildings and suitably decorated classrooms and specialist facilities. A helpdesk provides efficient responses to security matters and emergency maintenance. External and internal signs are clear.

58 Students have good access to IT. The provision of computers and software to support teaching and learning is effectively managed. The college is planning the replacement of the 9% of its computers which are outdated. Over 130 computers in open access centres can be booked for individual work. Computers in classrooms can also be used if spaces are free. Students were satisfied with their access to, and the reliability of, the equipment. Every student can have an electronic mail address and a subsidised internet account; access is available from most networked machines. Effective development of learning materials for the college's network is led by a specialist member of staff, assisted by four teachers. These strengths in IT are noted in the self-assessment report.

59 The college's library and learning resource centres are well organised, pleasant environments which are conducive to learning. They contain an adequate number of study spaces. Good links between the library and some curriculum areas have led to the provision

of some well-resourced areas. There is a particularly good stock of business studies books and study packs, but the science collection is too small and is less well used. In all, there are over 2,450 study packs related to specific subjects and a good range of CD-ROMs. Out-of-date stock is removed annually. There is an adequate budget for materials for the library and learning resource centre.

60 The self-assessment report omits to mention that the age of the buildings and the layout of some sites make access difficult for students with disabilities. A minority of teaching rooms are inaccessible for wheelchair users. As many of these rooms are general classrooms, timetables are adjusted to accommodate the needs of these students. They cannot, however, reach some specialist resources, for example hairdressing and beauty therapy, and find access to science, construction and catering classes difficult. A consultant's report on access for people with sensory and physical disabilities is being used to inform the annual programme of site improvements. Applicants with disabilities are put in contact with a member of staff before they enrol, so that they can receive specific guidance related to their needs. There is also clear guidance in the college's disability statement and in a detailed leaflet on site access.

61 There are student restaurants at North Road and Lansdowne and cafeterias at the Constitution Hill and Princes sites. The North Road restaurant is spacious, although there is some congestion at peak times. It is open in the evenings. The Lansdowne restaurant is in a building of poor quality, although the interior is satisfactory. At the various sites there are a good number of coffee shops and areas with vending machines and seats. Staff are provided with cafeterias and common rooms. Most staff workrooms are large enough and suitably furnished. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment that the college offers insufficient on-site resources for sporting

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and other extra-curricular activities. Where activities are offered the take-up is low. Some off-site provision is made for leisure activities, for example swimming and team games such as football.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

62 Although the college made many realistic judgements about its arrangements for quality assurance, inspectors identified some weaknesses which were not mentioned in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- a comprehensive framework for quality assurance
- thorough self-assessment procedures
- effective procedures to gather and consider students' views
- appropriate arrangements to identify and meet staff development needs

Weaknesses

- insufficient impact of quality assurance on students' achievements
- inconsistent use of targets and performance indicators by programme teams
- lack of action to improve teaching and learning following classroom observation

63 A well-established quality assurance system covering all curriculum and support areas has existed since 1992. It was modified in 1997 when self-assessment became a central feature of the system. Inspectors confirmed the judgement in the self-assessment report on the strength of the college's commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement. However, despite the commitment some curriculum areas have not yet shown

improvements in their performance.

Comparison of college data and FEFC benchmarking data based on the returns of ISRs shows that the college was below national benchmarks for retention for general further education colleges for level 1, 2 and 3 qualifications in both 1996 and 1997. It was generally above pass rate benchmarks for students aged over 19, but below the national figures for 16 to 18 year olds taking level 3 qualifications. Between 1996 and 1997, the overall trend for both retention and pass rates showed a slight improvement.

64 The college produced its first self-assessment report in 1997. All staff contributed to a thorough process of assessment that also incorporated the views of students and employers. Observation of lessons by heads of school or teachers also formed part of the self-assessment process. However, the outcomes of lesson observations have not been centrally analysed, nor used to help to devise programmes of staff development that might improve the quality of teaching. Teaching and support teams carried out their self-assessment at a series of meetings, using set agendas and standard documentation. They identified strengths and weaknesses, and produced evidence and action plans. Team reports were internally validated and edited and then collated to form the college self-assessment report. Before the inspection, the college produced a useful update to the self-assessment report submitted to the FEFC in June 1998. A new self-assessment report covering the 1997-98 academic year was completed just before the inspection. It provided good evidence of the increasing maturity of the college's self-assessment process.

65 Systems to review and evaluate courses and support services are well established. All college staff are members of at least one quality assurance team. Throughout the year each team is required to keep a quality file which contains a standard set of contents. Most files

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are comprehensive, but a few are incomplete. At the end of each year, programme and support service teams produce reviews to a standard format. Clear guidelines indicate what should be covered. Programme teams must take into account students' opinions, the views of external verifiers and performance indicators for enrolments, pass rates and retention rates. The best reviews are thorough. They analyse and evaluate the reasons for low achievement, and propose action to improve the quality of the provision. Other reviews are insufficiently detailed or critical. Performance measures are not used consistently by programme teams. Measurable targets are missing from some reviews. Action plans vary in level of detail. In some the goals are vague and timescales are not included.

66 Two committees of the academic board play a central role in procedures for quality assurance. The curriculum quality committee monitors retention and students' achievements. It receives the reviews produced by programme teams and looks in detail at courses where poor achievements have been identified. In these cases an action plan is drawn up and its implementation supervised by the committee. The educational development committee rigorously scrutinises applications to run new courses. It also monitors the revalidation of existing provision. The committees have established several task groups to address key issues such as retention, and to improve the quality of learning support, personal tutoring and records of achievement. The new subcommittees and task groups are giving impetus to the college's drive to seek to improve the quality of provision and to address poor retention and students' achievements.

67 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that there are effective procedures for gathering the views of students and external clients on the quality of the college's courses and services. Student questionnaires provide much useful information. Students are represented on

most programme review teams. Employers' views are also collected through questionnaires. The college charter and student handbook are integral parts of the quality system. Students are familiar with the charter and aware of their entitlements and of their right to make complaints.

68 A well-organised staff development programme meets both college objectives and the needs of individuals. Staff evaluation of development activities enables the staff development manager to monitor the quality, relevance and impact of the training. All staff are appraised on a regular basis. They find the system supportive. The college first committed itself to the aim of becoming an Investor in People in 1994. The self-assessment report acknowledged that progress towards the award has been slow. A revised target date for completion has been set for April 1999.

Governance

Grade 2

69 Inspectors and the audit service agreed with the majority of strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. However, the college gave insufficient weight to weaknesses in the monitoring of students' achievements.

Key strengths

- the close involvement of governors in strategic planning
- effective financial monitoring
- good clerking arrangements
- a complete register of interests
- a clear set of standing orders

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring and analysis of students' achievements

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- failure fully to develop measures to monitor the corporation's own performance

70 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. 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.

71 Governors have a wide range of business expertise. They are highly committed and many have a long-standing involvement with the college. At the time of the inspection there were no vacancies. In response to the previous inspection report a suitable succession policy has been established. The corporation has an active search committee and seeks nominations for new governors through both advertisement and recommendation. Prospective governors are invited for an interview as part of the selection process. A skills audit of existing governors ensures that the expertise of new governors complements that of existing members.

72 Governors make a positive contribution to the strategic planning process. They meet the executive and other senior staff to review the college mission and to agree the main strategic aims of the college. The strategic plan is then drafted by the executive and approved by the corporation following full discussion. The corporate aims expressed in the strategic plan clearly reflect the college's mission. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that governors do not monitor some outcomes of the plan in sufficient detail. Governors do not receive a formal mid-year report that would enable them at that stage to review progress against targets in the strategic plan.

73 There is insufficient monitoring of students' achievements by governors. All governors are

invited to informal meetings with the principal to receive some data on achievements. The full board also receives the annual college report which includes pass rates for some courses, but does not show results for individual GCE A level subjects. Governors have recently established a quality committee to improve their monitoring and review of student retention and achievement data. The self-assessment report also notes that some governors have difficulty in finding the time to making regular visits to the college and that many do not attend external training events. Presentations by college staff at board meetings have recently been introduced to improve governors' knowledge of curriculum issues and to keep them more up to date with national developments in further education.

74 Governors have a clear understanding of the distinction between governance and management; they work effectively with senior managers. There is frequent formal and informal contact between the chair and the principal. In addition, governors have informal meetings with senior staff. Topics covered at these meetings include self-assessment, the college mission and strategic planning. There are clear standing orders governing the conduct of meetings and a code of conduct. An up-to-date register of interests has been completed by all governors and by those college staff who have significant financial responsibilities. The corporation reviewed its performance as part of the self-assessment process, but it has not yet developed a range of performance indicators against which to monitor its own performance.

75 There is an appropriate range of corporation committees and working groups. These cover finance and general purposes, audit, quality, the remuneration of senior postholders, estates and nomination of prospective governors. The committees operate effectively, have terms of reference which clearly identify responsibilities, and report appropriately to the corporation. The college's financial health is effectively monitored by the

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finance and general purposes committee which receives monthly financial reports from college managers. The audit committee closely monitors the plans and reports of the internal and external auditors.

76 Good clerking arrangements contribute to the effectiveness of the corporation and its committees. The self-assessment report acknowledged the high quality of papers received by governors. Draft minutes, providing a clear record of proceedings, are available soon after meetings. Minutes are sufficiently detailed and decisions are clearly recorded. Corporation minutes, excepting confidential items, are available for public inspection. Attendance at both corporation and committee meetings is good and is closely monitored by the clerk.

Management

Grade 2

77 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college in its self-assessment report. Since the report was prepared some weaknesses have been addressed.

Key strengths

- the effective management of change
- effective strategic and operational planning
- good links with local schools, community groups and external bodies
- good financial management
- detailed procedures for budget preparation and reporting
- reliable management information system
- well-managed support services

Weaknesses

- insufficient improvement of poor retention rates and students' achievements

- some ineffective management of the curriculum
- underdeveloped planning of marketing

78 The executive team consists of the principal, two vice-principals and the director of personnel and administration. They are strongly committed to widening participation in education and provide effective leadership. In recent years student numbers have risen significantly, FEFC funding unit targets have been met and staffing levels have been reduced. However, fully effective action has not yet been taken to improve low levels of student retention and unsatisfactory pass rates in some curriculum areas.

79 Since the appointment of the principal two years ago, the management structure has been revised. The new structure reduces management costs and delegates more responsibility to middle managers at head of school level. Throughout the reorganisation there was consultation with governors and staff. Although the total number of full-time teachers has been significantly reduced, staff morale has generally been retained. However, the increase in the proportion of part-time staff has led to some difficulties in the management and teaching of the curriculum. The new structure is clear and understood by most staff, but some heads of school are uncertain of their new responsibilities. The management of science is fragmented; as a consequence action has not been taken to address the poor achievements of students in this curriculum area.

80 Key support services, which include personnel, estates, libraries, learning resource centres, and teaching and support computer networks, are all well managed. The college's management information system provides a wide range of information about students; it can be directly accessed in the majority of teaching schools through standard reports at college, faculty, school and course levels. The

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information is regularly used to monitor performance at all levels in the college. Data entered by administrative staff are regularly scrutinised by teaching staff as a check on accuracy. The college is starting to use management information to support market research and curriculum development. Information in these standard reports and the data on students' achievements which were provided for the inspection were found to be reliable.

81 The strategic planning process involves extensive consultation with staff and external agencies. The resulting plan sets clear objectives for the curriculum and for the development of the college's human and physical resources. An executive summary is made available to all staff. An updated strategic plan and operating statement are approved annually by the corporation. Operational plans, produced by teaching schools, include targets for enrolment, retention and achievement. Inspectors agreed with the judgement that strategic and operational planning constituted an overall strength in the college. However, performance measures are not used consistently by curriculum managers.

82 Communication in the college is effective. There is a structured programme of meetings, a college newsletter and access to electronic mail for most staff. Executive meetings are held weekly. The college management team comprises the executive, faculty directors, heads of support departments and a representative of the heads of schools. Outcomes of its fortnightly meetings are disseminated by members to teaching and support staff. The quality of this communication is uneven. There are also monthly meetings involving the college management team and all middle managers.

83 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The college has maintained a strong financial position despite reductions in its average level of funding. The

executive team receives timely management accounts which are closely monitored. No 12-month rolling cashflow forecast is currently produced, but the college plans to introduce this for the financial management information provided to governors and the executive from November 1998. A qualified accountant manages the finance department which contains an appropriate number of qualified and experienced personnel. Budget holders receive clear and timely reports which assist them in managing their budgets effectively. Budgetary and other processes enable most teaching and other resources to be allocated efficiently and effectively. Financial regulations are clear, concise and updated regularly. The college's internal and external auditors have not identified any significant weaknesses in the college's systems of internal control.

84 The college is an active member of a wide range of projects in partnership with public, private and voluntary organisations. It works with local schools to develop collaborative projects and to provide advice and guidance to prospective students. Strategic objectives focus on extending the range of learning opportunities and increasing the diversity of provision. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that current marketing strategies are not sufficiently robust to pursue these objectives to full effect. The college has an appropriate range of policies which are reviewed on a regular basis. Inspectors confirmed the self-assessment judgement that the equal opportunities policy is not monitored thoroughly.

Conclusions

85 The college produced its first self-assessment report for the inspection. Since then it has produced an update to the first report and a second full report covering the 1997-98 academic year. The first self-assessment report, used by inspectors, was concise and evaluative, although in some curriculum areas it did not

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make full use of the information gained through an extensive programme of lesson observations. Actions linked to remedying each weakness identified the person responsible for taking the action and the timescale. The report followed a logical structure based on the college's 20 teaching schools. The report provided a good basis for planning the inspection. When carrying out the inspection some inspectors had to refer to several sections of the report to identify all of the relevant strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with most of the findings in the self-assessment report, but considered that key weaknesses relating to the quality of teaching and learning and students' achievements in some subject areas were not given sufficient weight. Half of the grades awarded by the college for the curriculum areas inspected were judged by inspectors to be overgenerous. Inspectors agreed with four of the five cross-college grades awarded by the college. Many weaknesses had been remedied by the time of the inspection.

86 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 (July 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	2
16-18 years	25
19-24 years	17
25+ years	56
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	23
Intermediate	38
Advanced	33
Higher education	5
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 1998)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	424	1,658	14
Agriculture	42	28	1
Construction	251	762	7
Engineering	288	539	5
Business	605	2,314	19
Hotel and catering	325	581	6
Health and community care	627	2,768	22
Art and design	515	325	6
Humanities	668	1,973	17
Basic education	270	132	3
Total	4,015	11,080	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 18% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	240	17	25	282
Supporting direct learning contact	91	13	10	114
Other support	220	26	6	252
Total	551	56	41	648

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£22,722,000	£25,059,000	£23,337,000
Average level of funding (ALF) Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£18.50	£17.32	£17.14*
Payroll as a proportion of income	74%	72%	62%
Achievement of funding target	98%	106%	101%
Diversity of income	33%	31%	33%
Operating surplus	-£2,256,000	-£721,000	£984,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998)

Payroll – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

*provisional data

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1995	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
1	Expected completions	204	702	1,001	439	882	1,081
	Retention (%)	78	71	77	81	71	78
	Achievement (%)	53	61	56	43	52	60
2	Expected completions	1,904	2,642	2,622	1,948	2,152	2,239
	Retention (%)	75	73	72	83	73	75
	Achievement (%)	65	59	67	59	67	65
3	Expected completions	–	2,571	2,423	–	2,284	2,373
	Retention (%)	–	61	63	–	76	73
	Achievement (%)	66	65	68	56	66	66
4 or 5	Expected completions	–	7	8	–	509	563
	Retention (%)	–	71	63	–	86	82
	Achievement (%)	63	20	50	50	57	60
Short courses	Expected completions	142	460	516	2,343	4,575	5,530
	Retention (%)	95	95	85	98	96	93
	Achievement (%)	40	43	71	59	62	71
Unknown/ unclassified	Expected completions	356	938	2,404	757	703	1,461
	Retention (%)	71	85	81	94	90	82
	Achievement (%)	46	41	66	61	55	64

Source: ISR

–ISR data not collected

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