

# Dearne Valley College

**REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
1997-98**

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL**

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## College statistics

## Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision, curriculum areas and lesson observations, for colleges inspected during 1996-97, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	59	30	2	–
Cross-college provision	18	51	27	4	–
Lesson observations	19	42	31	7	1

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report.* Grades were awarded using the guidelines in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*.  
Sample size: 122 college inspections

## Retention and Pass Rates

Where data on students' achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in two ways:

- as a retention rate, which is the proportion of students who completed a course in relation to the number enrolled on 1 November in the first year of the course
- as a pass rate, which is the proportion of students which passed examinations in relation to the number entered. Pass rates for GCE A level are quoted for grades A to E unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for GCSE courses are quoted for grade C or above unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for vocational and professional awards are for successful completion of the full award.

# Summary

## Dearne Valley College

### *Yorkshire and Humberside Region*

#### Inspected January 1998

Dearne Valley College is a general further education college in South Yorkshire. Self-assessment is a well-established feature of the college's quality assurance procedures. The self-assessment report was detailed and drew on appropriate evidence. Inspectors agreed with many of the college's judgements about the strengths and weaknesses of its provision but found additional weaknesses which were not identified in the report. Inspectors agreed with the grades awarded by the college in more than half the areas inspected.

The college provides courses in all 10 of the FEFC's programme areas. Provision in four of these areas was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. The college has played a significant part in the economic regeneration of the Dearne Valley area. It has increased its enrolments substantially over recent years. Standards of teaching are generally good except on some construction courses. Some retention and achievement rates are poor. Support for students is outstanding. The college has excellent accommodation including a new building of particularly high quality. The quality assurance system is comprehensive. Opportunities provided for staff development are good. Governors bring a broad

range of expertise to the work of the governing body and monitor the financial performance of the college closely. Senior managers employ an open and effective management style. The management structure is understood by staff, and communications are good. Teachers and managers are fully involved in the strategic planning processes. Links with the local community are extensive and productive. The college should: improve retention and achievement rates; improve the evaluative nature of programme reports; address some aspects of the operation of the governing body and its committees; extend the use of performance targets; and ensure managers make better use of the computerised management information system.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Construction	3	Support for students	1
Business and management studies	2	General resources	1
Hospitality and catering	1	Quality assurance	2
Health and social care	2	Governance	2
		Management	2

## The College and its Mission

1 The college had its origins as a mechanics institute. In 1976, it became Rockingham College of Further Education. In 1996, it was renamed Dearne Valley College and was largely relocated to a new £7.5 million building on the 47 acre Manvers Park Site near the town of Wath-upon-Dearne in South Yorkshire. The relocation was part of the regeneration plan for the Dearne Valley and was funded by the Dearne Valley Partnership City Challenge, together with the European Regional Development Fund, the University of Sheffield and the college. The main college site is midway between the towns of Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster in an area which includes six enterprise zones. The college has two other sites: the Rockingham Centre, in the centre of Wath, which provides for catering and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; the Barnsley Road Site, to the west of Wath, which provides construction, motor vehicle and fabrication and welding programmes. Courses are also provided in local schools and community venues. Most students are recruited from the communities in the Dearne Valley. There are three further education colleges and one sixth form college within 10 miles of Wath, and four schools for pupils aged 11 to 18 within four miles.

2 The college offers provision in all 10 of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) programme areas. Courses include those leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at intermediate and advanced levels in six curriculum areas, a large number leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and other vocational qualifications, and courses designed to provide access to further and higher education. Some courses lead to general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) qualifications. Others are provided in

partnership with the University of Sheffield. Fifty per cent of the college's students are enrolled on intermediate level courses and 19 per cent on advanced level courses.

3 The Dearne Valley has suffered from acute economic deprivation over the past 15 years following the closure of steelworks and mines. The high rate of unemployment is now declining, as new industries develop. Nevertheless, at the time of the inspection it was 10.2 per cent compared with a national rate of 4.9 per cent. Male unemployment, much of which is long term, is 13.7 per cent. The proportion of the population from minority ethnic backgrounds is small; 1.5 per cent in the local recruitment area. Thirty-six per cent of the pupils aged 16 in the Rotherham Local Education Authority achieved five or more GCSE subjects at grade C or above in 1996. This is 8.5 per cent below the national average for that year.

4 Student numbers increased from 5,934 in 1995-96 to 7,457 in 1996-97. By January 1998 the college had enrolled 4,358 students, of whom 1,018 were full time. Seventy-four per cent of these students are aged 19 years and over. The college's annual target for funding units has increased from 105,367 units in 1993-94 to 229,522 units in 1997-98. These targets have always been substantially exceeded. The college employs 178 full-time equivalent staff of whom 63 are permanent teachers and 26 are employed to teach on a part-time basis. Six senior managers, including the principal, vice-principal and the senior curriculum manager, comprise the senior management team. There are 13 curriculum sections, each with a section leader. Provision in six of these sections was inspected.

5 The college has formed productive partnerships with a number of organisations. For example, a partnership with the seven other colleges in South Yorkshire has resulted in a successful bid for competitiveness funds to assist companies to make greater use of information

# Context

technology (IT). Funding from the local training and enterprise council (TEC) has supported work-based learning and the college has trained over 100 modern apprentices. The college won a National Beacon Award for widening participation in 1997. It is accredited to the ISO 9002 quality standard and is an Investor in People.

6 The college's mission statement has five key commitments: to provide opportunities and encouragement to the individual student; to maximise students' access to these opportunities; to participate in community development; to work in partnership with local industry; and to ensure high quality. Major objectives for 1997-98 include unitisation of the curriculum, key skills development, improving information systems, site rationalisation, reducing staffing costs, and the increase in non-FEFC income.

## The Inspection

7 Inspection took place during one week in January 1998. Inspectors had previously scrutinised the college's self-assessment report and information on the college held by other divisions of the FEFC. The college submitted data on students' achievements for the three years 1995 to 1997. Nine inspectors spent 25 days in the college and two auditors spent a further five days each. Meetings were held with governors, managers, other college staff,

students and with representatives of the Rotherham Chamber of Commerce TEC, the local education authority, Lifetime Careers and the Dearne Valley Partnership. Inspectors observed lessons, and examined samples of students' work and a variety of college documents.

8 Of the 42 lessons inspected, 69 per cent were judged to be good or outstanding and 5 per cent less than satisfactory. This grade profile compares favourably with the average for all colleges inspected in 1996-97, according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected was 72 per cent, compared with the sector average of 77 per cent for 1996-97, according to the chief inspector's annual report. The average level of attendance, at nine students to a class, was less than the average of 10.8 recorded in the same report. The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected.

### Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
NVQ levels 1 and 2	8	9	4	1	0	22
Other advanced	2	6	4	0	0	12
Other	1	3	3	1	0	8
Total	11	18	11	2	0	42

# Curriculum Areas

## Construction

### Grade 3

**9 The inspection covered construction craft courses leading to NVQs at level 2. The courses are provided at the college's Barnsley Road Site. Ten lessons were observed. Although inspectors confirmed many of the strengths and weaknesses included in the college's self-assessment report, they identified additional weaknesses and considered that some strengths were overstated.**

#### Key strengths

- productive workshop sessions
- effective support for students with few academic qualifications
- good off-the-job training to support a local employer's modern apprenticeship scheme
- comprehensive course files
- some training and assessment facilities providing realistic working environments

#### Weaknesses

- some poorly-maintained resources and overcrowded workshops
- some inappropriate teaching methods
- inadequate statistics on students' achievements
- some poor pass rates
- too few teachers qualified at the higher level and insufficient staff development to remedy this
- inadequate development of students' key skills

10 The college has effective links with local schools and provides valuable vocational opportunities for local students, some of whom were previously excluded from school, or

achieved few academic qualifications. With appropriate support from their college teachers, most of these students made good progress. The college has responded well to the needs of a major construction company by providing appropriate off-the-job training for modern apprentices. However, the overall range of construction courses is narrow. There is insufficient analysis of labour market information in order to identify opportunities to widen the range of courses. Courses are organised in a way which allows students to study at times which suit their personal circumstances. Course files and individual students' records are well kept but overall statistics on students' retention rates, pass rates and destinations are not sufficiently comprehensive. During the inspection, the college was unable to provide completion or pass rates for courses ending in 1995 or 1997. Course teams do not analyse achievement rates systematically or set targets for improving them. The college's self-assessment report acknowledges some of these weaknesses.

11 Only half the lessons inspected were judged to be good or better. Few lesson plans recorded the teaching strategies and materials to be used and some lessons in the construction centre were not well managed. Some learning tasks did not match the requirements of all the students. Inspectors disagreed with the college's view that students' key skills were being developed effectively. For example, few students had developed sufficient skills in IT.

12 Students are well mannered and proud of their achievements. In workshops they work well, both on their own and in teams. They generally produce work of a satisfactory standard. Standards of practical work in bricklaying are often high. Some students' files and log books are, however, poorly maintained and indicate that the students have poor note-taking skills. Teachers' marking of assignment work sometimes fails to indicate clearly the errors in the work or ways of



# Curriculum Areas

improving it. Pass rates on some courses are poor, for example in tiling work. Inspectors confirmed the college's claim that some apparently poor retention rates are the result of students leaving their courses to take up employment.

13 Teachers hold basic teaching qualifications and are industrially experienced. However, they do not possess higher level technical qualifications. This hinders the development of higher level courses. This weakness is not being addressed through staff development. Some training and assessment facilities provide effective learning environments which simulate real working situations. Others are inadequate and some are potentially unsafe. Some workshops are overcrowded, for example the joinery and bricklaying workshops; some are untidy and poorly maintained. Classrooms generally lack natural light and are poorly ventilated. There are some excellent displays related to the construction industry and an extensive range of text-based learning materials in the construction resource centres. While generally of good quality, some are outdated and a few contain spelling and typing errors. On the Barnsley Road Site library facilities are poor and students have insufficient access to computers.

The college has recognised many of these weaknesses and is planning new accommodation for construction courses on the Manvers Park Site.

## Examples of students' achievements in construction, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Brickwork NVQ level 2	Retention (%)	*	75	*
	Pass rate (%)	*	75	*
Carpentry and joinery NVQ level 2	Retention (%)	*	80	*
	Pass rate (%)	*	70	*
Painting and decorating NVQ level 2	Retention (%)	*	84	*
	Pass rate (%)	*	69	*
Wall and floor tiling NVQ level 2	Retention (%)	*	89	*
	Pass rate (%)	*	63	*

Source: college data

\*college unable to provide reliable data

# Curriculum Areas

## Business and Management Studies

### Grade 2

**14 The inspection of business and management studies covered GNVQ, higher national certificate, GCSE and GCE A level programmes in business, together with Institute for Supervision and Management courses offered at levels 2 to 5. Eleven lessons were observed. The self-assessment report is a composite report for the areas of business studies, management, administration and IT. Inspectors agreed with most of its conclusions. However, some of the strengths attributed to the programme area as a whole, for example, the 'substantial contribution' of work experience to programmes, are not applicable to all the curriculum areas.**

#### Key strengths

- generally successful teaching
- effective development of key skills
- detailed and constructive marking of students' work on GNVQ programmes
- outstanding pass rates on GNVQ programmes
- high-quality specialist accommodation and resources

#### Weaknesses

- some poor levels of attendance and punctuality
- unsatisfactory achievement rates on GCE A level courses and some management programmes
- insufficient work experience on GNVQ programmes

15 Programme manuals for business courses show that course teams plan and review their courses carefully and hold regular, minuted team meetings. Internal verification systems are

effective and are commended by external verifiers. Some schemes of work include details of the teaching strategies to be employed. Others, however, focus largely on the subjects to be covered and fail to indicate the teaching methods. Course handbooks are available for some, but not all, courses. The proportion of students on the GNVQ courses who undertake work experience is small and employers have made little contribution to the curriculum. The self-assessment report identified the second of these weaknesses but not the first.

16 The majority of lessons were judged to be good or better. In these lessons good relationships between teachers and students and sound class management enhanced the learning process. Students were often encouraged to draw on their own experiences at work to tackle problems or evaluate different business systems. In a minority of lessons insufficient emphasis was given to applying knowledge and understanding to different business contexts. As the self-assessment report notes, the development of key skills on GNVQ programmes is effective. Teachers used appropriate methods to meet the different abilities of individual students. The quality of marking was good; typically, teachers' comments were detailed and provided constructive pointers for improvement. Some lessons had poor levels of attendance. The average attendance rate in the lessons observed was only 67 per cent. In one part-time evening class over 40 per cent of those attending arrived late.

17 Pass rates on the majority of courses were good in 1997. For example, they were above national averages on GCSE business and accounts courses and outstanding at 100 and 92 per cent, respectively, on GNVQ intermediate and advanced level courses. They were also good on higher national certificate and Institute of Health Services Management courses. On a few courses, such as those leading to GCE A level qualifications, they were below national averages. Students' portfolio work is often well

# Curriculum Areas

organised, and demonstrates their research skills and their ability to use IT. This strength is recognised in the self-assessment report. Management assignments draw appropriately on issues arising from students' work roles and responsibilities.

18 All business and management courses are taught at the Manvers Park Site. Classroom accommodation is of a high standard although the GNVQ base rooms have little business-related work on display. Management staff make good use of computer-generated presentation slides. Although students on full-time programmes are not supplied with textbooks, they comment favourably on the quality and wide range of learning resources available, including learning packages prepared by course tutors and ready access to the Internet. Many teaching staff on business and management courses are part time and there are difficulties in securing their attendance at section team meetings. Nearly all the teachers possess relevant professional and teaching qualifications.

## Examples of students' achievements in business and management studies, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ intermediate business	Retention (%)	+	+	50
	Pass rate (%)	+	+	100
GNVQ advanced business	Retention (%)	+	100	86
	Pass rate (%)	+	80	92
Institute for Supervision and Management (certificate and diploma courses)	Retention (%)	90	81	69
	Pass rate (%)	77	59	71

Source: college data  
+courses not offered

# Curriculum Areas

## Hospitality and Catering

### Grade 1

**19 The inspection covered NVQ provision in hospitality and catering. Ten lessons were inspected. In most cases, inspectors agreed with the college's assessment of its strengths. Some strengths identified by inspectors were not mentioned in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- well-planned programmes
- learning and assessment which takes place in realistic working environments
- effective deployment of teachers
- extensive specialist resources
- high standards of food hygiene and safety in food production areas
- rigorous and fair assessment procedures
- effective use of tutorials to review students' progress and plan action
- successful inclusion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in mainstream courses

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient time to review the quality of practical work
- inadequate development of key skills

20 The section offers courses leading to NVQs in hospitality and catering. Most enrolments are at the foundation and intermediate levels. As the self-assessment report states, commercially-operated kitchens and refectories provide students with a range of realistic work experiences during which they gain practical skills. The curriculum has been split into units so that students can enrol at any time. Courses are well planned to meet the assessment requirements of awarding bodies. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

successfully join mainstream courses. Learning materials and styles of teaching have been specially adapted to enable these students to progress successfully. Links with European colleges are being explored and there are opportunities for students to gain work experience in France. The quality of teaching and the content of programmes are regularly evaluated, but there are insufficient data on retention and achievement rates for courses that enrol throughout the year. The data requested by inspectors had to be collected and validated during the inspection.

21 Teaching schemes make clear the occupational standards which students are expected to reach. A good range of learning materials is maintained at the Rockingham Centre. Students comment favourably on the design and usefulness of these materials. Practical work is followed by review sessions. This strength is recognised in the self-assessment report. All students have scheduled tutorials. Their progress is regularly and thoroughly reviewed. Parents and employers are kept informed of students' progress as appropriate. All the lessons observed were judged to be good or outstanding. Students were enthusiastic and absorbed in their studies. They worked in designated teams and demonstrated commitment to work and to each other. Assessment is rigorous and used both formatively and summatively. On occasions the pressures of work and the need to complete tasks on time left insufficient time for reviewing the quality of the finished product and the student's overall performance. The section works closely with learning support staff who help students who have weaknesses in key skills. Some catering teachers have gained a qualification in basic skills which has helped them link the teaching of key skills more closely with the teaching of vocational work. This was done in response to the section's self-assessment report, which indicated that the teaching of key skills needed to be better integrated with the vocational work.

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22 Absences are thoroughly investigated. Retention rates and pass rates are good. Progression to advanced courses is limited by the national requirement that students need to be in relevant employment in order to gain NVQs at level 3. Standards of practical work are appropriate to the stage and level of the course. For example, second-year students work with greater speed and confidence and are capable of making more complicated decisions than first-year students. Students frequently provide the catering for the college's special functions, widening their repertoire of culinary skills.

23 The small team of tutors in catering studies works well together and most staff are versatile in the subjects and skills they offer. The kitchens and refectories on all three sites are well equipped and representative of industry standards. Equipment is well maintained and food production areas are immaculately cleaned.

## Examples of students' achievements in hospitality and catering, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
NVQ provision levels 1 and 2	Retention (%)	76	76	70
	Pass rate (%)	88	88	100

*Source: college data*

# Curriculum Areas

## Health and Social Care

### *Grade 2*

**24 The inspection covered a range of childcare, health and social care, and counselling courses. Eleven lessons were inspected. In most cases, inspectors agreed with the college's assessment of its strengths and weaknesses but identified some weaknesses which were not in the report.**

#### **Key strengths**

- well-prepared lessons
- good-quality learning aids
- effective planning and monitoring of work placements
- appropriate assessment procedures
- good pass rates on many courses
- attentive students who generally achieve good standards
- good specialist equipment, materials and accommodation

#### **Weaknesses**

- schemes of work which lack detail
- some over-long presentations involving insufficient checking of students' understanding
- insufficient development of key skills within the GNVQ advanced course
- some inadequate feedback to students on marked work
- poor retention and pass rates on the GNVQ advanced course in 1997

25 Courses are developed in response to local demands and are held at times which fit in with students' personal responsibilities. The college offers a wide range of full-time courses. Part-time courses in child studies include a popular course for classroom assistants. Recruitment is strong, and targets have been exceeded every year since incorporation. Some

schemes of work are lists of topics and do not identify teaching methods or necessary resources. On the care courses, students' efforts to manage their workload and time effectively are hindered by the absence of a schedule of assignments.

26 In most lessons, the variety of learning activities and the effective use of time enabled students to achieve the required learning objectives. A variety of appropriate learning aids was used; handouts were of a high standard. A significant minority of lessons, however, included long presentations during which students' understanding of the topic was not checked. Work placements for childcare students are well planned. Students are placed appropriately and visited frequently. They are encouraged to share their placement experiences with other students and to use their experience in their college work. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the work placements are a strength.

27 Most students develop appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding. They are provided with clear assignment briefs. Written feedback to students on their assignment work is of variable quality; not all students have the benefit of annotated feedback or the correction of grammatical and spelling errors. GNVQ advanced level students often do not take advantage of the opportunities provided for key skills development. The research skills of both first-year and second-year students are underdeveloped. Students' achievements in childcare courses are consistently at or above national norms. The first cohort of students on the level 4 course for classroom assistants achieved retention and achievement rates of 93 per cent. Pass rates on some courses such as the national diploma in childhood studies are consistently good, and the pass rates for GNVQ and NVQ intermediate courses show a significant improvement. However, on the GNVQ advanced course in health and social care, both pass rates and retention rates have

# Curriculum Areas

declined markedly. Many of the good pass rates were identified in the self-assessment report; poorer pass rates, however, were not identified as a weakness.

28 The range and quality of specialist equipment, computers and consumable materials are good. All students have ready access to a range of computer-based facilities. There are resource centres for each curriculum area. Classrooms assistants have access to the Internet. Childcare and GNVQ students do not make full use of the books available in the library or the programme resource areas. The accommodation is pleasant, comfortable and conducive to learning. Many areas have displays of students' work which illustrate positive learning environments for children. Both full-time and part-time students feel well supported. Full-time students have ready access to their personal tutor. Many part-time students have weekly tutorials. Many of these strengths were included in the college's self-assessment report.

## Examples of students' achievements in health and social care, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Intermediate level GNVQ and NVQ	Retention (%)	84	64	79
	Pass rate (%)	30	53	97
Advanced level GNVQ and national diploma courses	Retention (%)	71	80	69
	Pass rate (%)	97	90	85

*Source: college data*

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### *Grade 1*

**29 Inspection findings confirmed the strengths and weaknesses which the college identified in its self-assessment of this area of provision.**

#### **Key strengths**

- effective provision of information to potential students
- relevant and well-planned induction procedures
- varied and appropriate strategies for providing additional learning support
- accessible and effective support on personal issues
- the productive use made of a wide range of external agencies
- good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- effective tutorial processes

#### **Weaknesses**

- the low take-up of learning support by some students

30 The college provides a supportive and positive environment for its students, many of whom have not previously experienced educational success. Time spent supporting students is included in each teacher's contracted hours. Students speak highly of the individual help they receive from staff. The systems for supporting students are extensive, and encompass admissions, guidance, chaplaincy, careers advice, benefit rights and an active students' union. Reception staff are trained in customer care and provide effective initial advice. Students value the guidance provided by a professional counsellor, whose services are well advertised throughout the college. The counsellor has extensive links with external agencies. In cases of hardship, students can

apply for financial assistance provided by special college funds. Childcare for full-time and part-time students in the college's day nursery is highly regarded. The self-assessment report recognises the strengths in these aspects of provision.

31 Printed information for potential students about college courses and services is clear and comprehensive. Students value the opportunities provided by open days to see the college before they enrol. The pro-active schools liaison team has named tutors linked with particular local schools. Enquiries and applications are followed up efficiently and applicants receive helpful guidance. Inspectors agreed with the college self-assessment that the enrolment and induction of full-time students is well planned. Course teams adapt the induction to suit their specific needs. Students are clear about the course requirements and are made familiar with the college and its facilities. They receive a range of relevant information including a student handbook, the student charter and the college's equal opportunities policy.

32 Arrangements for learning support are well organised. Full-time students are screened to identify learning needs in numeracy and literacy. Those identified as needing support receive a follow-up interview. The 'essential skills' team establishes a programme of work for each student and provides appropriate support. Whilst the majority of full-time students receive the screening, only a minority of part-time students opt for it. Although those receiving help express satisfaction with the support they receive, the take-up is low, at only 50 per cent of those screened. The college is aware of this and has introduced a range of alternative strategies to compensate for the low take-up of formal support. Teachers of some vocational subjects have been trained to provide support as part of their vocational teaching. In some areas the 'essential skills' teachers work alongside the vocational teachers. Overall, learning support is a strong feature of the college.



# Cross-college Provision

33 The college provides good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are well-established links with local special schools through which the need for specialist support can be identified early. The support students receive is underpinned by a disability statement. Such students often progress to mainstream courses. For example, a catering student who has co-ordination and speech difficulties, has achieved an NVQ level 1 and is presently studying at level 2. The college provides strong support for students with dyslexia, and for those with mental health difficulties or difficulties in communication. Makaton sign language support is used where appropriate. The college employs an educational psychologist part-time and has strong links with MIND, the mental health charity.

34 All students are allocated a personal tutor. Both full-time and part-time students have an entitlement to tutorial support which includes careers education, and education for health and safety issues. In addition to academic tutorial support, students are offered a programme of activities supporting personal and social education and tailored to supplement the content of the different vocational courses. Visiting speakers often contribute to this programme. Teachers have received training to enable them to review students' academic progress effectively and are provided with good supporting documentation. Good practice in tutoring has been disseminated in the college and performance indicators are used to inform staff and students of the standards expected and achieved.

35 Inspection findings confirmed the college's judgements on the strengths of its careers guidance. An external careers guidance organisation is contracted to provide advice to students. A careers adviser is attached to the college and spends an appropriate amount of time working in each section. The majority of sections include careers development in their

personal and social development programmes and provide work experience for students where appropriate. A successful careers convention involving employers and other education providers was held in 1997 and another is planned for 1998. The college resource centres hold a wide range of careers information.

## General Resources

### *Grade 1*

**36 Since the last inspection, the college has substantially relocated to brand new purpose-built and well-equipped premises. Inspectors concluded that the self-assessment report accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses in the college's general resources in almost every respect.**

#### **Key strengths**

- the new main building, which offers particularly high-quality accommodation
- spacious management and staff work rooms
- buildings which are well cleaned and maintained
- easy access for students with restricted mobility
- the quantity and quality of computers
- the increased number of study spaces

#### **Weaknesses**

- low room occupancy levels
- poor quality of accommodation at the Barnsley Road Site

37 With the exception of the Barnsley Road Site, the accommodation is of a high standard. The new accommodation at Manvers Park provides an attractive and well-furnished learning environment. This new complex, which recently won a prestigious architectural award, comprises three buildings, each with a central atrium, connected by a covered highway.

# Cross-college Provision

The complex has a number of innovative features, including a computer-controlled heating and ventilating system. There is a wide range of general classrooms of differing sizes; all are carpeted and have modern furniture and appropriate teaching aids. The technology centres on the Manvers Park Site and the Rockingham Centre also provide good-quality learning environments. Accommodation on the Barnsley Road Site, where about 10 per cent of students are based, is of poor quality. A leaking roof adversely affects activity in the main construction workshop. Classrooms there are drab and poorly ventilated. The college is planning to divest itself of this site within the next 12 months and move the provision to Manvers Park. The college employs its own cleaning staff and buildings are well cleaned and effectively maintained.

38 Students comment favourably on the quality of the social areas. These include a common room at Manvers Park, refectory facilities on all three sites and smoking areas adjacent to the refectories on two of the sites. Staff work rooms and management accommodation are spacious, have sufficient storage space and provide staff with a pleasant working environment, especially at Manvers Park. There is ample car parking space at the Manvers Park and Barnsley Road sites. At the Rockingham Centre there are free public car parking spaces close by. A college day nursery is housed in temporary hatted accommodation on the Barnsley Road Site. Internally it is pleasantly furnished and welcoming, but it is some distance from the main college operations. The college plans to relocate the nursery to Manvers Park. All teaching areas except some at the Barnsley Road Site are accessible to students with restricted mobility. Manvers Park has a modern multi-gym and exercise area. There is a small sports hall at the Barnsley Road Site but this is not up to the same high standard; it is drab and has inadequate changing facilities. The college has no outside sports facilities. Phase two of the college's

accommodation strategy includes plans to build a new sports centre with indoor and outdoor facilities at Manvers Park. The inspectorate did not agree with the college's self-assessment of its utilisation of space. Although utilisation figures produced by the college indicate improved occupancy, the average number of students actually present compared with seats available was below 35 per cent in the last survey.

39 Since the last inspection, the college has more than doubled the number of computers for students' use, from 137 to 350 workstations. This provides a favourable ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students of 1:6. Nearly all machines are modern, networked and equipped with up-to-date software including ready access to the Internet. Open access to IT facilities is available in the learning resource centres located at each college site. The self-assessment report notes that opening hours for the library and learning resource centre have been increased: they currently extend over 12 hours a day for four days a week on the Manvers Park Site. Curriculum resource areas have recently been established in all the main curriculum areas to enable students to study on their own at times to suit themselves. Overall, there is a good ratio of study spaces to full-time equivalent students of 1:7. The open learning workshop at the Rockingham Centre attracts people from the local community into the college, but no figures are available to show the number progressing from there to college courses. The catalogue for the new library is currently being computerised. At present no figures are available for the size of the total bookstock or the levels of book losses. The current annual financial allocation of £14 per full-time equivalent student is satisfactory. All staff have ready access to central reprographic and audiovisual facilities. There are photocopying facilities for staff and students at each main site.

# Cross-college Provision

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 2

**40 Inspection confirmed many of the strengths included in the self-assessment report but identified some important weaknesses which were not included.**

#### Key strengths

- a comprehensive quality assurance framework
- well-established procedures which are supported by staff and continually reviewed
- detailed arrangements for the review of academic programmes
- effective systems for internal verification
- staff appraisal and lesson observation schemes which promote professional development
- an outstanding staff development programme
- a well-established self-assessment process

#### Weaknesses

- failure of the framework to lead to sustained improvements in retention and achievement rates
- insufficiently evaluative analysis in programme reviews
- inadequate analysis of the results of student questionnaires at programme level

41 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college has a comprehensive and well-established quality assurance framework covering all college activities. Staff are knowledgeable and positive about the system, and find it helpful in carrying out their work. All programmes are subject to wide-ranging reviews and evaluation using standard documentation. Section leaders and the senior

management team monitor the reviews and action plans, and provide written responses. Students are represented at review meetings and their views are taken seriously. Some of the comments in the programme reviews are insufficiently evaluative; the self-assessment report did not record this weakness. The results of questionnaires issued to students are insufficiently analysed at programme level. Internal verification procedures are well developed and external verifiers' reports are considered carefully. A two-year cycle of reviews for all programmes has been recently established. Although it is too early to judge its effectiveness, the process has already proved valuable in disseminating good practice.

42 The college states in its self-assessment report that the quality assurance process ensures continuous improvement. Inspection findings did not support this claim in the key areas of students' achievements and retention rates, as evidenced by the three-year trends in the statistical annex to this report. In the sample of curriculum areas inspected, the use of performance targets and the collection and analysis of retention and achievement rates sometimes lacked rigour. The college requires a response from programme leaders if the college retention target of 80 per cent is not met. However, their responses rarely include an analysis of the possible causes of low retention or a proposed strategy for improvement. Programme teams compare students' achievements with national averages and with the previous year's results, but do not set specific targets for improvement.

43 There are appropriate quality assurance arrangements for college-wide services. A cross-college 'quality services team' co-ordinates the review of these services, making extensive use of staff and student questionnaires. When satisfaction ratings are less than 75 per cent, in-depth reviews are undertaken. The team monitors the working practices and service standards included in the quality manuals. The

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college charter, which is reviewed and updated annually, sets out the college's commitments to students clearly, and indicates where and how support and advice can be obtained. The degree to which the college meets its commitments in the charter is monitored. The charter explains how employers may obtain information about the college's programmes, but not the standards of service they may expect. There is no college-wide survey to establish employers' perceptions of the college.

44 The staff appraisal and lesson observation schemes assist the professional development of staff. All staff are appraised every two years, usually by their line manager. The appraisal is used to identify staff development needs and in alternate years these needs are established through a questionnaire. Staff may choose their appraiser and the focus for discussion in the appraisal; they report that they find the process supportive. Line managers observe the teaching of full-time teachers annually and part-time teachers every two years. They grade the lessons and follow up poor performance. Teachers who are new to the college are observed within six weeks of taking up their appointment.

45 As the college correctly states in its self-assessment report, opportunities for staff development are outstanding. All full-time staff have an entitlement to one and a half hours of staff development each week. Much of this takes place through a Wednesday afternoon programme of options. The programme reflects the needs of individuals and sections, and is linked to college priorities. Each term, staff draw up an individual training plan with their line managers, and evaluate the activities of the previous term. Attendance at appropriate college classes is free for all staff. Many staff have gained vocational qualifications. There are thorough procedures for disseminating the knowledge and skills gained through staff development, and for following up their use. Induction and mentoring for new staff are

effective. In some vocational areas there are insufficient opportunities for staff to take up industrial placements.

46 As stated in the self-assessment report, the college has a well-established self-assessment process. Since the last FEFC inspection the college has carried out an annual self-assessment and used it to inform its strategic planning. The report produced for the inspection drew on separate reports involving staff from all levels within the college. The report is comprehensive. It draws on data on achievements and retention, internal and external verification reports and information from questionnaires. Some, but not all, curriculum areas drew evidence from lesson observation. The action plan which stems from the report relates both to strengths where further development is planned, and weaknesses which require remedial action. Because the report was published six months before the inspection, the college produced an update to highlight the progress it had made in the meantime.

## Governance

### *Grade 2*

**47 The governing body has established a quality assurance committee to help it with self-assessment and to keep governors in touch with curricular matters. In many respects, inspection confirmed the findings in the college's self-assessment report. However, some weaknesses identified by inspection were not identified in the report.**

#### **Key strengths**

- good use made of governors' expertise
- good clerking arrangements
- close monitoring of the financial performance of the college
- self-critical reviews of governors' own performance

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## Weaknesses

- inadequacies in some of the audit committee's operations
- insufficient involvement by governors in the strategic planning processes

48 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.

49 There are 17 members of the corporation, including five women. There are two staff governors and a co-opted local head teacher. There are currently three vacancies, including the student representative. The terms of office of 10 of the existing governors expire on 31 March 1998. A selection committee was established in October 1996, but has yet to meet. The college uses the broad range of governors' expertise effectively. This expertise includes accountancy, finance, construction and education; there is no governor with a legal background. Newly-appointed governors receive a comprehensive pack of information about the college and their role within it, and are mentored by an established governor. Training for governors largely comprises presentations from section leaders, linked to the strategic planning process. Attendance at last year's training sessions was poor. Their format and timing have been changed this year to encourage better attendance. Governors review their own performance against agreed standards. Governors show a close interest in the life of the college. Individual governors are formally linked to specific curriculum areas in order to encourage contact with students and staff. They recognise that, through pressure of work, some of these links have been less effective than they had hoped and have considered ways to improve them.

50 The corporation is supported by a number of committees, although its work is largely conducted through the finance and general purposes and the audit committees. The terms of reference for these two committees do not fully describe their roles and responsibilities. Management accounts are sent to members of the finance and general purposes committee every month. This committee meets every two months and reviews the accounts at each of its meetings. It also reviews the annual budget and the three-year financial forecasts. The audit committee has not fully met some of its responsibilities. For example, it has failed to hold an adequate number of meetings during the period under review and it has not advised the corporation on the college's internal control system. The audit committee minutes are not always forwarded to the corporation. These weaknesses, although recognised by the college, were not included in the self-assessment report.

51 The corporation meets approximately five times a year, with additional meetings as required. The clerk to the governors provides clear agendas and papers in good time for meetings, and ensures that the meetings are conducted efficiently. Attendance at both corporation and committee meetings is closely monitored by the clerk, who reminds the relevant governors if their attendance is poor. The corporation operates in an open manner. The register of interests, which is currently being updated, covers all governors, their close relatives, and members of the senior management team. It does not, however, cover other staff with significant financial responsibilities.

52 Inspectors agree with the self-assessment report which states that governors have a clear view of the mission of the college. The mission statement is reviewed annually. Governors have ensured that the college plays its full part in the regeneration of the local community. The strategic plan is presented to governors in a draft form at too late a stage for them to have

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a substantial influence on the main strategic objectives. The monitoring of the implementation of the plan by governors is not sufficiently rigorous.

## Management

### *Grade 2*

**53 The inspection team agrees with many of the strengths and weaknesses included in the self-assessment report but found a number of additional weaknesses.**

#### **Key strengths**

- open, friendly and effective management style
- strategic planning processes which fully involve teachers and managers
- well-constructed management structure understood by staff
- good communications both internally and externally
- extensive and productive links with the local community and others

#### **Weaknesses**

- underdeveloped use of targets and target-setting
- insufficient use of computerised management information reports by middle managers
- inadequate response to recommendations from internal auditors

54 The prevailing management style is open and friendly. Dialogue between managers and staff is encouraged. This is highly effective in maintaining a welcoming and efficient working environment. Each of the three college sites is managed on a day-to-day basis by one of the six senior managers. Inspectors agree with the self-assessment report's assessment that the management structure and lines of responsibility are clearly defined. The

proportion of the total budget allocated to staffing is high at 74 per cent and the college has a strategic objective to reduce this proportion to 67 per cent. Staff utilisation is carefully controlled.

55 Teachers and managers are fully involved in the strategic planning process. This is a well-established part of college life. The self-assessment report recognises that support staff could be more fully involved in the development of the plan. The plan is shared with interested parties outside the college. For example, comments made by the Rotherham Chamber of Commerce TEC have been acted upon. Staff in the curriculum areas contribute to the plan and their contributions are used as the basis for their annual operations. Regular reviews and objective-setting sessions are used to monitor the achievement of the aims set out in the strategic plan.

56 Policies are well documented, reviewed annually and supported by extensive documentation. For example, the equal opportunities policy is brief but many supporting papers assist with its implementation. There is an effective management committee structure, and terms of reference to support each committee. The membership of these committees, working parties and other cross-college groups involves a substantial proportion of the full-time staff. Staff are effectively involved in the running of the college. Internal lines of communication are good.

57 A major effort has been made to unite the college's curriculum. The increase in flexibility that this allows has been supported by extensive curriculum monitoring and review procedures. The management of the curriculum is more difficult under these circumstances, particularly as there has been a substantial growth in student numbers over the last three years. Overall college targets for the achievement of units of activity are set and progress towards them is carefully monitored. However, the use of targets for student attendance, achievement

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and retention at section level is not effective. This weakness has not been recognised in the self-assessment report. Overarching performance indicators, such as the position of the college in the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) tables, indicate a decline in students' achievements since the last inspection. The college considers that its success in widening participation has contributed to this decline in students' achievements.

58 Recently the college successfully managed a project involving its major change in accommodation. This is considered as a flagship regeneration project by the Dearne Valley Partnership and by many local people. The college maintains a substantial number of effective links with external organisations. Effective partnerships have been established which have resulted in considerable benefit to the college and the community. The TEC reports that its survey of local business indicates that the college is well known and respected.

59 The college has upgraded its central computerised management information system. All buildings are now electronically linked and most middle managers have their own computer terminals. The users group for the computerised management information system includes middle managers and lecturers. Inspectors agree with the claim in the self-assessment report that this is promoting an improvement in the use of the system. The college has had difficulty in recording data on students' achievements but is now working on a user-friendly package to improve these reports. Middle managers are making insufficient use of the data available to manage their sections.

60 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The small finance team is adequate for the needs of the college and is led by a person with appropriate experience. Once established the budget is monitored by the senior management team using detailed, monthly management accounts.

These accounts do not include a rolling 12 month cashflow forecast. Delegated budget holders do not receive monthly monitoring reports. However, they are required to summarise expenditure incurred, and to forward this information to the finance department as a cross-check. The format of the 1997-98 budget document, as received by the finance and general purposes committee and presented to the corporation for approval, does not explain the assumptions made in its preparation.

61 The college's financial regulations have recently been updated and approved by the corporation. Financial forecasts and the financial statements for the year ended 31 July 1997 have been submitted to the FEFC on time. The 1996-97 external auditor's management letter concluded that the college's accounting systems and procedures were operating effectively. The college has established a timed action plan in respect of a number of recommendations made by its internal audit service. However, the plan has not been implemented because of disagreement over the relevance of the recommendations and their benefit to the college's systems of internal control. A significant proportion of the recommendations made in the FEFC's audit service's previous report have also not been implemented.

## Conclusions

62 The college's self-assessment arrangements are well established. The inspection team found that the self-assessment report provided a useful basis for planning and carrying out the inspection. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. Some of the statements of strengths focused on improvements in provision rather than the quality of the provision. In some areas, inspectors identified weaknesses which were not included in the report. In the curriculum areas inspected, the grade profile of lesson

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observations derived from internal inspection was significantly better than that derived from FEFC inspection. In some cases, the action plans were insufficiently specific. However, the update of the self-assessment report provided before the inspection shows that the process of self-assessment has been successful in effecting improvement.

63 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.

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# College Statistics

## Student numbers by age (January 1998)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	3
16-18 years	22
19-24 years	11
25+ years	63
Not known	1
Total	100

*Source: college data*

## Student numbers by level of study (January 1998)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	26
Intermediate	50
Advanced	19
Higher education	4
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	1
Total	100

*Source: college data*

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	44	169	5
Agriculture	0	20	0
Construction	144	57	5
Engineering	77	241	7
Business	143	580	17
Hotel and catering	242	158	9
Health and community care	166	329	11
Art and design	27	346	9
Humanities	175	1,419	37
Basic education	0	21	0
Total	1,018	3,340	100

*Source: college data*

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (January 1998)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	63	1	26	90
Supporting direct learning contact	10	5	0	15
Other support	64	9	0	73
Total	137	15	26	178

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

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£4,092,000	£4,134,000	£4,578,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£15.64	£15.53	£18.60
Payroll as a proportion of income	70%	78%	74%
Achievement of funding target	142%	134%	142%
Diversity of income	30%	21%	27%
Operating surplus	-£165,000	-£417,000	-£632,000

*Sources: Income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)*

*ALF – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), Funding Allocations 1996-97 (1996-97)*

*Payroll – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)*

*Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96)*

*Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)*

*Operating surplus – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)*

### Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	+	8	6
	Average point score per entry	+	2.4	3.7
	Position in tables	+	bottom third	middle third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	80	89	71
	Percentage achieving qualification	85%	90%	66%
	Position in tables	top third	top 10%	bottom third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	44	60
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	68%	48%
	Position in tables	*	middle third	bottom third

*Source: DfEE*

*Note: the majority of the college's students are 19 years of age or older*

*The achievements of these students are not covered in published DfEE performance tables*

*+1994-95 GCE A level results were not published*

*\*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available*

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends *(continued)*

### Students' achievements

		<i>1994-95</i>	<i>1995-96</i>	<i>1996-97</i>
Advanced academic	Pass %	71	66	46
	Retention %	100	71	78
Intermediate academic	Pass %	36	43	58
	Retention %	55	64	66
Advanced vocational	Pass %	74	70	69
	Retention %	91	88	87
Intermediate vocational	Pass %	37	63	63
	Retention %	63	82	69

*Source: college data*

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