

# **Epping Forest College**

**REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
1998-99**

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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*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

## Epping Forest College

### *Eastern Region*

#### **Inspected November 1998**

Epping Forest College is a tertiary college situated in south-west Essex. The inspection took place shortly after significant changes to the management structure had occurred. The college produced an informative and comprehensive self-assessment report. It included action plans to address weaknesses. Self-assessment is well organised and effective. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements made in the report. Most of the weaknesses found by inspectors were included in the college's self-assessment report but their significance was often understated. Inspectors were unable to place reliance on the ISR data relating to students' achievements for 1996-97.

The college offers provision in all 10 of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. Six programme areas were inspected together with aspects of cross-college provision. Most teaching is good and students experience a wide range of learning activities. Students' achievements are high in most areas. Support for students is comprehensive and managed effectively; pre-entry advice and guidance are particularly well organised. There are good arrangements to inform parents of students' progress. Governors bring a range of skills and experience to the

corporation; they closely monitor financial performance. College managers are open, and supportive of staff. Course management is good. There is a good range of resources which are used effectively on most courses. The college should address: the lack of systematic monitoring and review of college policies; the weaknesses in its quality assurance framework; some poor tutorial provision; the implementation of staff review, training and development policies; the poor punctuality by some students; the integration of key skills with teaching and learning; the falling retention and achievement rates on some courses; and the poor reliability of management information.

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cross-college provision</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Mathematics and science	3	Support for students	2
Engineering	2	General resources	3
Business studies	2	Quality assurance	3
Health and social care	2	Governance	2
Art, design and media	2	Management	3
Modern languages including EFL	2		

## The College and its Mission

1 Epping Forest College was established in 1989 as a tertiary college following the reorganisation of post-16 education in Epping, Loughton, and Waltham Abbey. Over 60% of the college's full-time students are from the north London boroughs. There are seven other further education sector colleges and two sixth form colleges situated within a 10-mile radius. The college occupies an open, pleasant single site.

2 In the West Essex administrative area, which includes Epping, Harlow and Loughton, there are 22 secondary schools of which 12 have sixth forms. The college draws its full-time students from over 50 schools from Epping Forest district and the London boroughs, principally Waltham Forest and Redbridge. In Essex, the percentage of 16 year olds continuing in full-time education has increased significantly from 57% in 1990 to 70% in 1997. In Epping Forest district the participation rate is 68%.

3 In the 1991 census, the population of Essex was recorded at just over 1.5 million, including 116,027 resident in the Epping Forest district. Minority ethnic groups make up 3% of the population. It is predicted that by the year 2015 there will be an increase of almost 40% in those aged under 20 living in Essex. The Epping Forest district has good road and rail links with the nearby M25 and London Underground, providing easy access to London. Employment locally is mainly in small to medium-sized companies in retail, light engineering and leisure industries. In October 1996, the unemployment rate in Epping Forest district was 4.9%.

4 The college offers a wide range of general and vocational programmes. The majority of provision is at intermediate and advanced level. Thirty-seven subjects are offered at general certificate of education advanced/advanced supplementary level (GCE A/AS level), 26 at general certificate of secondary education

(GCSE), and vocational courses are offered in all 10 of the FEFC programme areas. The college's vocational provision includes general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels in most areas; BTEC first, national and higher national certificates in engineering, business studies, and early childhood studies; national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2 and 3; and a range of evening courses in most curriculum areas.

5 The college provides youth and adult training on contract from the Essex Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and London East TEC. It has links with the University of Hertfordshire and London University for access students to progress to higher education.

6 In July 1998, the college had 8,109 students, of whom 2,567 were full time. Of the students enrolled, 28% are aged 16 to 18. People of minority ethnic origin make up 20% of full-time, and 5% of part-time students. The college has achieved its target funding units in each of the three years to 1997. It employs 323 full-time equivalent staff of whom 50% are in teaching posts. The college's curriculum is delivered through three faculties: arts, media and engineering; business; and general education. The college's senior management team comprises the principal, deputy principal, director of estates and corporate services, the three heads of faculty, and the heads, respectively, of student services, human resource and training, finance, information services, marketing and business development, and quality assurance.

7 The college's mission is 'to provide opportunities in education and training to the local community'.

# Context

## The Inspection

8 The college was inspected during the week beginning 16 November 1998. In planning and carrying out the inspection, the team used the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other divisions of the FEFC. The college submitted data on students' achievements for the three years 1996 to 1998. Inspectors checked these data against the individualised student record (ISR) and primary sources of evidence, such as registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The college was unable to establish a direct link between the information derived by the FEFC from the ISR and the college's records of students' achievements for some qualifications in 1996-97. Other data were reliable.

The inspection was carried out by 13 inspectors and an auditor working for 57 days. Inspectors evaluated the extent of consultation which the college has with external bodies such as the Essex TEC, and local employers. The team observed 96 lessons and tutorials, examined students' work and college documents, and held meetings with governors, managers, staff and students.

9 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 4% less than satisfactory. This compares with 65% and 6%, respectively, for all colleges inspected during 1997-98.

### Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	2	15	9	0	0	26
GCSE	0	4	7	0	0	11
GNVQ	3	13	10	3	0	29
NVQ	0	2	2	0	0	4
Other vocational	1	9	5	1	0	16
Other	4	5	1	0	0	10
Total (No)	10	48	34	4	0	96
Total (%)	10	50	36	4	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*

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10 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 (%)
Epping Forest College	11.3	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

## Mathematics and Science

### Grade 3

**11 Inspectors observed 26 lessons in mathematics and sciences. Inspectors agreed with many of the findings in the self-assessment report, although some strengths were overstated and some weaknesses were not identified.**

#### Key strengths

- effectively managed lessons
- comprehensive subject reviews
- good retention and achievements on GCSE programmes

#### Weaknesses

- the needs of some students are not fully met by the curriculum
- lack of systematic arrangements for monitoring and recording students' progress
- an insufficient range of teaching methods and learning activities
- lack of effective links with external organisations
- low level of staff development and professional activity
- some deficiencies in equipment to support learning

12 Effective curriculum organisation supports a good range of mathematics and sciences at GCSE and GCE A/AS level. Courses are well administered. However, the needs of some students are not met fully. For example, students at foundation level are not able to take a preparatory course in mathematics before progressing to the GCSE course. There are no vocational courses in science. The self-assessment report did not comment on the comprehensive subject reviews which include detailed analyses of achievements and a critical

appraisal of the curriculum and action plans. Action plans lack targets and measures of success and there is insufficient monitoring of the implementation of actions to redress weaknesses.

13 In mathematics and sciences, schemes of work are detailed but provide no guidance on teaching methods or learning activities. Lesson plans have clear aims and objectives though they are not stated to students. Most teaching is clear, purposeful and at an appropriate level. Teachers promote productive working relationships, and most students worked purposefully in lessons. The organisation and content of students' note files are sound and students make appropriate use of mathematical and scientific notation. Students' attendance at lessons is good. In science, there is an appropriate balance of practical work and theory. Practical lessons are well managed and support students understanding of theoretical principles. For example, students worked safely and systematically in a GCE A level biology practical lesson to investigate the activity of diastase on starch at differing pHs. The experimental results led to a discussion by the class which was effectively managed by the teacher. Students understood the theory and handled the experimental techniques competently.

14 In about half of the lessons, the work lacked pace and teachers failed to vary their teaching methods sufficiently to take account of students' learning needs or to maintain their interest. In a few lessons, teachers made poor use of questions to promote students' understanding. For some students on GCSE courses the work does not take into account their prior levels of attainment. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. Teachers use a restricted range of teaching methods in mathematics lessons. For example, there was no group work or discussion, or use of an overhead projector. Inspectors agreed with the college that students make insufficient

# Curriculum Areas

use of information technology (IT) facilities to support their work, particularly during science practicals but also in mathematics. Project work is well organised and appropriately assessed. GCE A level project work and GCSE coursework is well supported by notes of guidance for students. Well-defined marking schemes enable teachers to assess students' work consistently. Insufficient attention is given to the development of students' key skills. There are few resources which students can use to study on their own. Students' opportunities to undertake research are limited to project work and insufficient attention is given to communications and working with others. Little attempt is made to link project work to commerce or industry. There are few external links and students do not visit industry or attend lectures from outside speakers.

15 Teachers have appropriate academic and teaching qualifications but little experience of industry. There has been little staff development in recent years. This was not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. There is a small range of materials such as graphical calculators to support learning in mathematics and a lack of experimental equipment for science. An extensive stock of text books is available to students.

16 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that retention and pass rates on most GCSE programmes are above the national average. However, pass rates for GCSE biology are poor. GCE A level results in mathematics and sciences are about the national average. Pass rates for GCE A levels in chemistry and physics are well below the national averages.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE mathematics	2	Expected completions	380	447	325
		Retention (%)	80	79	78
		Achievement (%)	65	57	55
GCSE sciences	2	Expected completions	107	98	101
		Retention (%)	89	70	80
		Achievement (%)	49	39	37
GCE A level mathematics	3	Expected completions	*	*	106
		Retention (%)	*	*	60
		Achievement (%)	*	*	78
GCE A level sciences	3	Expected completions	*	*	272
		Retention (%)	*	*	67
		Achievement (%)	*	*	63

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

\*ISR data not reliable

# Curriculum Areas

## Engineering

### Grade 2

**17 The inspection covered provision in electrical and electronic engineering, mechanical engineering and motor vehicle studies. Twenty lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements of the self-assessment report and found some additional strengths and weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- broad range of engineering programmes
- supportive teaching for individual students
- good retention rates
- well-planned and appropriate work experience for full-time students
- high quality of the work of the industrial training unit
- modern and well-equipped electrical installation facility

#### Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on craft courses
- slow development of students' key skills on part-time courses
- poor environment in the motor vehicle and mechanical workshops

18 Inspectors agreed that the school of engineering provides a broad range of engineering courses. The provision includes craft, technician and higher technician courses. There is a wide range of courses for full-time and day-release students with good progression opportunities. The school also runs GCE A level courses in electronics, and design and technology. The college's industrial training unit is based on the main site, and provides NVQ qualifications delivered and assessed on company premises at times which fit in with company shift patterns. Comprehensive and

effective quality and assessment procedures have been implemented. The self-assessment report identified the breadth of work of the unit as a strength, and inspectors agreed.

19 Most teaching is well organised, especially for practical work. However, some schemes of work are insufficiently detailed. Teachers review students' progress and offer individual students advice and explanation, when necessary. For example, in a mathematics lesson, students completed a range of engineering related examples involving mathematical equations of increasing complexity with the help and close guidance of the teacher. Engineering students benefit from the numeracy and literacy support which is provided, often in the classroom, and which is frequently related to engineering applications. Full-time students are encouraged to attend GCSE mathematics and English lessons to improve previously attained grades. A substantial minority of these students gain a grade C or above in mathematics and/or English. Students on most full-time courses undertake a period of well-planned and appropriate work experience. Placements are with a wide range of companies and usually take account of students' career aspirations. These strengths had not been identified by the college. In day-release courses the development of students' key skills has been slow despite appropriate timetabling and the availability of suitable support materials. This weakness was not identified by the college.

20 Most students are well motivated. Students' assignment work was usually good. The assignments completed by day-release students make frequent references to workplace applications. The style of assignment presentation varies from handwritten to well-presented desktop-published material. On the GCE A level design and technology course, the presentation of students' work, aided by some excellent graphical work, is often visually stimulating. Inspectors agreed with the college that retention rates on all courses are good.

# Curriculum Areas

Craft course retention rates have been above 80% over the last three years and technician courses have been just below 80%. Pass rates on craft courses over the last three years have been poor, although there was a slight improvement in the overall pass rate between 1995-96 and 1997-98. This weakness was not identified by the college. Retention and pass rates are high on the industrial training unit programmes.

21 The electrical installation workshop has recently been extended to include a resource centre, stores, and classroom. These provide a modern and well-equipped facility which was not recognised by the college as a strength. There is inadequate lighting in both the mechanical and motor vehicle workshops and both are in poor decorative order. The reception area and space for stores in the motor vehicle workshop are too small whilst the

adjacent teaching rooms are cluttered and untidy. Two classrooms, used for general purpose teaching, are drab and provide a poor learning environment for students. These weaknesses were not recognised by the college. Most workshop machines are old but are suitable for their purpose. Modern computer-aided design industrial-standard software is available but computer numerically controlled machines and computers and software to support electronic engineering are dated. Most motor vehicles are old but students work on modern vehicles and test equipment when on work experience. Some machines and equipment have been donated by local companies. Staff have appropriate qualifications and experience for the courses they teach. Technicians provide good support for teachers, including some part-time teaching staff.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Craft	2	Expected completions	316	*	329
		Retention (%)	85	*	82
		Achievement (%)	44	*	52
NVQs (industrial training unit)	2	Expected completions	534	*	104
		Retention (%)	98	*	89
		Achievement (%)	90	*	100
Other	2 and 3	Expected completions	+	*	70
		Retention (%)	+	*	96
		Achievement (%)	+	*	48
Technician	3	Expected completions	119	*	129
		Retention (%)	87	*	79
		Achievement (%)	70	*	77

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

\*ISR data not reliable

+course not running

# Curriculum Areas

## Business Studies

### Grade 2

**22 Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering business studies. Management and professional courses did not form part of the inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but they also considered that several strengths and weaknesses were understated.**

#### Key strengths

- much good teaching
- effective curriculum management
- good learning support
- the well-integrated work experience programme
- close contacts with parents
- good retention and achievement rates on most courses
- well-organised students' portfolios

#### Weaknesses

- failure to make students aware of lesson objectives
- little use of performance indicators
- students' late arrival at a number of lessons
- insufficient professional updating of staff
- some inappropriate learning materials

23 The college offers a broad range of business and professional courses which meets the needs of students and employers. Courses are well organised and effectively managed. Considerable attention is given to course planning. Regular course and school meetings have helped the successful introduction of the higher national certificate (HNC) in business studies. Not all teachers are able to contribute to course meetings as many are part time and

unable to attend. This issue was not identified in the college's self-assessment report. The annual course reviews provide an accurate assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of provision. The GNVQ advanced course team identified student retention as an issue, and has implemented an appropriate action plan. The small number of college performance indicators limits the usefulness of the annual course review process. The lack of performance indicators was not identified as an issue in the self-assessment report.

24 The quality of most teaching is good. In the majority of lessons students experienced a variety of appropriate activities which stimulated and encouraged their involvement. For example, in one GNVQ advanced lesson, the students made good use of information from the internet to present debates on the minimum wage and the European Union working time directive. Following the debate, which was recorded on video, students analysed their communication skills and with the teacher discussed ways in which they could improve them. The effective integration of key skills with learning was acknowledged in the college's self-assessment report. All courses include a period of well-planned work experience which is linked to learning activities in the college. Students are encouraged in lessons to draw on their own background knowledge and work experience. In some lessons, teachers used out-of-date learning materials and did not make sufficient use of examples from the local and regional economy to illustrate topics. In many lessons, students were not made aware of the learning objectives. This weakness was not identified by the college. The introduction of learning support in the classroom has coincided with improved retention and achievement rates on the GNVQ foundation course. In one lesson, with a class of 23 students, two teachers and a learning support assistant concentrated on developing students' numeracy and communication skills.

# Curriculum Areas

25 A significant number of teachers have little recent experience of the business sector. The self-assessment report understated the need for staff to update their commercial and industrial experience. Inspectors found no evidence of a strategy to update skills on a regular basis. Classrooms lacked a business ambience; few had appropriate wall displays. Most textbooks were out of date. The college acknowledges the lack of vocationally relevant teaching and learning materials.

26 Assignments are well designed and supported by clear guidelines. Students' written work is often of good quality. Portfolios on the GNVQ foundation, intermediate and advanced courses are well presented, and show that

students have acquired an appropriate range of skills. Students' work is marked with detailed and helpful comments and returned quickly. The college recognises that there are high pass rates for most courses. Pass rates on GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses are above the national average. The college acknowledges the declining pass and retention rates on the GNVQ advanced programme. The course team has identified retention as an issue for action. Inspectors agreed with the college that the close links established between teachers and parents had generally helped to raise retention across other courses. In a number of lessons, students arrived late and this adversely affected teaching and learning.

## **A summary of achievement and retention rates in business studies, 1996 to 1998**

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ foundation	1	Expected completions	24	*	18
		Retention (%)	86	*	78
		Achievement (%)	79	*	74
GNVQ intermediate	2	Expected completions	44	*	43
		Retention (%)	86	*	86
		Achievement (%)	82	*	76
GNVQ advanced	3	Expected completions	65	*	52
		Retention (%)	72	*	68
		Achievement (%)	64	*	44

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

\*ISR data not reliable

# Curriculum Areas

## Health and Social Care

### Grade 2

**27 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in health, social care, childcare and education. Inspectors broadly agreed with the college's clearly stated strengths in the self-assessment report. Weaknesses in retention and achievement were understated and inspectors identified some additional weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- good teaching and supportive student teacher relationships
- well-organised work experience
- equal opportunities issues addressed consistently through courses
- wide range of teaching equipment and learning materials
- retention and pass rates above national average on majority of courses
- effective planning and delivery of programmes

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient feedback to students on key skills
- failure to include learning objectives in some lesson planning
- falling retention and achievement rates on a few courses
- insufficient provision for adults
- underdeveloped use of performance indicators

28 The school offers a well-established programme of full-time courses, and is beginning to develop programmes for adult learners. The part-time diploma in nursery nursing commenced in 1996 and the school is planning to offer more NVQs. However, there is little provision for adults, particularly in health and social care. There is a strong team

approach to planning and this contributes to the effective delivery of programmes. The use of performance indicators and target-setting in course planning is at an early stage of development, a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report. Students make good use of a workshop which is well staffed by specialist tutors who are able to give support with vocational assignment work and the application of number.

29 Inspectors agreed that the standard of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a variety of appropriate methods. Imaginative use is made of well-designed learning aids and materials. Good student teacher relationships encourage students to make frequent contributions to lessons, challenge the teacher, and admit to gaps in their knowledge. Lessons are well managed and this was particularly the case on foundation and intermediate level courses. For example, in one lesson childcare students worked enthusiastically in groups on projects about child safety, and the teacher encouraged the much quieter students to take specific responsibilities. Students develop their written and oral communication skills as an integral part of their learning. However, in some lessons teachers failed to make students sufficiently aware of the importance of learning these skills. Inspectors agreed that students develop appropriate key skills, though there is insufficient emphasis on key skills in vocational lessons. Some teachers do not give sufficient feedback to students on how well they have used key skills in their assignment work. Learning objectives are omitted from some lesson plans and frequently they are not shared with students. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

30 Inspectors agreed that well-organised and well-monitored work experience makes a significant contribution to students' learning. For example, course tutors assessed the overall performance and key skills of GNVQ students in

# Curriculum Areas

the workplace. Detailed records, including the feedback given, are discussed and agreed with students. Work experience is well linked to vocational units in class work. Equal opportunities issues were addressed thoroughly in the majority of observed lessons, a key strength not identified by the college. These issues often provide themes for lessons and discussion of them is consistently encouraged. Teachers point out to students shortcomings in the attention given to equal opportunities issues in their assignments.

31 Staff are professionally qualified and have appropriate industrial experience. They assiduously keep up to date with developments in their subject and students benefit from systematic briefings on relevant changes in the work environment. There is a good range of equipment and materials, and books and journals are widely available in workshops. Facilities and equipment in the first aid classes are excellent. These strengths were recognised in the self-assessment report.

32 The majority of courses inspected have retention and pass rates above the national average; pass rates on advanced courses are particularly high. The national diploma and certificate courses in childhood studies show pass rates consistently above 95% during the last three years. There are similar consistently high pass rates for the GNVQ advanced course. However, retention and pass rates have declined on a significant number of courses between 1996 and 1998. For example, retention rates on the GNVQ foundation course fell by 25% over these three years. However, pass rates have risen by 20% on the GNVQ intermediate course over this same period of time. These trends were identified in the college self-assessment report but their significance was understated.



# Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	Expected completions	17	*	12
		Retention (%)	82	*	58
		Achievement (%)	93	*	71
GNVQ foundation childcare and education	1	Expected completions	+	*	14
		Retention (%)	+	*	93
		Achievement (%)	+	*	69
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	Expected completions	33	*	19
		Retention (%)	82	*	84
		Achievement (%)	67	*	87
GNVQ intermediate childcare and education	2	Expected completions	+	*	16
		Retention (%)	+	*	56
		Achievement (%)	+	*	44
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	Expected completions	18	*	18
		Retention (%)	94	*	67
		Achievement (%)	94	*	83
GNVQ advanced childcare and education	3	Expected completions	41	*	39
		Retention (%)	93	*	90
		Achievement (%)	100	*	97

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

\*ISR data not reliable

+course not running

# Curriculum Areas

## Art, Design and Media

### Grade 2

**33 Inspectors observed 17 lessons. Inspectors broadly agreed with the college's assessment of its provision but identified a number of additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors considered that the college had given too much significance to some of the strengths that had been identified.**

#### Key strengths

- challenging and appropriately varied teaching
- students' good critical and research skills
- effective arrangements for reporting on students' progress
- good pass and progression rates on most courses
- well-managed programme of courses
- wide range of specialist equipment and accommodation

#### Weaknesses

- poor punctuality and attendance in some classes
- weaknesses in classroom management and group work
- low and declining retention on a few courses
- misplacement of some students on inappropriate courses

34 Inspectors agreed with the college that there is a good range of full-time courses at both advanced and intermediate levels, including specialist vocational diplomas in media and graphic design and a foundation course in art and design. Provision at foundation level is small and some students are placed inappropriately on intermediate courses. There is a suitable range of day and evening part-time

courses. Staff roles are clearly understood and communication systems work effectively. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that courses are well planned, well documented and well managed and provide students with coherent progression opportunities.

35 Most teaching is lively and varied. The teaching of theory to media students was particularly noteworthy. Teachers adjust their methods to meet the needs of students who have varying levels of prior attainment and experience. Staff promote a positive work ethic which helps students to develop research skills and the ability to work on their own. For example, graphic design students keep timesheets for projects which include their own independent study time as well as taught time. These records contribute to their final project assessment. There were a few examples of poor classroom management and/or the organisation of group work. In these cases, teachers relied too much on project briefs and failed to recognise the need for schemes of work and lesson plans. Teachers give priority to the development of essential skills such as visual research, drawing skills and creative exploration. In media studies, students acquire a good knowledge of critical language and learn how to construct a storyboard. All students are encouraged to criticise their own and others' work. Assignment briefs are comprehensive and include supporting material and references. Teachers use assessment requirements to indicate to students what they need to learn and provide reports to students on their work which include targets for improvement. Some assessments are set on students' project work in industry. The college recognised as a strength that reporting arrangements to parents are thorough and detailed reports are sent termly. In a few lessons, the late arrival of students had an adverse effect on teaching and learning.

36 Staff make good use of their industrial experience to inform their teaching. Graphic design students simulate working conditions,

# Curriculum Areas

and have four project briefs running at any one time. They also receive demands from clients and updates on their briefs to which they must respond. Key skills are successfully integrated with most vocational courses and have been successfully introduced into media GCSE and GCE A level programmes.

37 Staff are well qualified and experienced. Many hold masters degrees. There are good levels of technical support, particularly in media studies, and technicians work closely with students as well as staff. In art and design, there is insufficient technical support for the use of specialist computers. There is a wide range of specialist equipment and accommodation, including a spacious television studio, and editing suites. There are well-equipped three-dimensional and ceramics workshops, fashion, textiles and printmaking studios, darkrooms and a suite of rooms recently purchased for computers. Media courses are taught in two separate buildings. The library is well stocked with a specialist collection of art, design and media books and current periodicals. One of the library staff liaises with teachers over purchases.

38 The quality of most students' written work is good and some of the practical work is excellent. Pass rates on many courses are consistently good and above the national average. There have been pass rates at or close to 100% for GCE A level and advanced vocational diploma courses in art and media for the past three years. There are low and declining retention rates on some courses. As the self-assessment report identified, in more than half of the media courses retention rates are below the sector average. Retention rates for GCE A level art and graphic design, although better, are still well below college targets for the same period. There are good rates of progression to further and higher education courses.

# Curriculum Areas

## A summary of achievement and retention rates in art, design and media, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE	2	Expected completions	75	*	42
		Retention (%)	64	*	67
		Achievement (%)	100	*	93
GNVQ intermediate	2	Expected completions	50	*	66
		Retention (%)	86	*	73
		Achievement (%)	93	*	75
GNVQ advanced	3	Expected completions	27	*	33
		Retention (%)	93	*	73
		Achievement (%)	96	*	100
GCE A level	3	Expected completions	147	*	171
		Retention (%)	77	*	71
		Achievement (%)	93	*	93
Advanced vocational	3	Expected completions	40	*	31
		Retention (%)	85	*	71
		Achievement (%)	97	*	100
Foundation art and design	3	Expected completions	35	*	29
		Retention (%)	89	*	79
		Achievement (%)	100	*	96

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

\*ISR data not reliable

# Curriculum Areas

## Modern Languages Including EFL

### Grade 2

**39 Inspectors observed 10 lessons covering modern foreign languages and English as a foreign language (EFL). Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- well-managed programme of courses
- much good teaching
- effective student support and guidance
- a good range of teaching equipment and materials
- effective communication with all staff
- high retention and pass rates on EFL and Open College courses

#### Weaknesses

- underdeveloped use of IT
- small range of business language courses
- significant decline in GCE A level pass rates in French and German

40 The college offers a wide range of courses in response to the needs of the local community. These include 28 Open College courses in six languages for adults and 16 to 19 year old students, courses in EFL, GCE A level and GCSE, and courses leading to Institute of Linguists awards. A large number of adults have benefited from the progression opportunities offered by these courses. There is a small range of customised short courses for the business community. Student numbers in EFL have declined in recent years and the college is seeking more effective ways of promoting its courses more widely in the community. The programme of courses is well managed, with a

co-ordinator for each language and one for Open College and EFL courses. Communication between managers and staff is effective and support for part-time teachers is good. Meetings are carefully minuted and clear memoranda are circulated.

41 Inspectors agreed with the college that the quality of teaching has many strengths. Students are well motivated. Teachers use a variety of well-prepared teaching materials, including videos, audio cassettes, articles from the internet and up-to-date textbooks. Students' oral and listening skills are well developed through role-play, work in pairs and groups, and teachers' effective use of questioning techniques. Students are actively encouraged to use the language they are learning in most lessons. GCE A level French and German students are able to practise their oral skills for one hour a week with foreign language assistants. In an Institute of Linguists diploma lesson, a group of adult students engaged in a lively debate in fluent German involving the German assistant about the merits of cycling. In another class, EFL students from 10 different countries practised rhythm and rhyme by singing, writing limericks and listening to a Noel Coward song. Students are well supported by teachers. Past EFL students had sent letters and cards to former teachers expressing gratitude for the support received. In a few lessons, teachers failed to vary learning activities enough and this had an adverse effect on the students' attitude to their studies. All courses have well-prepared schemes of work and lesson plans. Students' work is carefully assessed and their progress monitored through regular reports. The college recognises that students and staff have little access to IT to support teaching and learning.

42 Many staff attend courses to update their skills. A part-time German teacher attended a week's course at the Goethe Institute and a French teacher had spent a week in Paris on a Lingua course. A part-time Russian teacher is the author of a text book for a BBC Russian

# Curriculum Areas

course. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that specialist rooms are well equipped with television and video facilities and good-quality cassette players. The EFL room is particularly well equipped with modern furniture, attractive displays and a small well-used library. The language laboratory is well used by full-time but not by part-time students. Students have access to high-quality listening and viewing equipment in the learning centre in the main college library. The library has a comprehensive stock of books, newspapers, magazines, videos and audio-cassettes in all languages. Teachers are well qualified and six are native speakers of the language they teach.

43 Inspectors agreed that retention rates on Open College and EFL courses are high. Retention rates on GCE A level French courses are above the national average. Retention on GCE A level German courses was below the national average in 1996 but above it in 1997. Pass rates in GCE A level French and German have declined and are below the national average. Students produce written work of a high standard, and are regularly tested on grammatical structures and vocabulary.

## A summary of achievement and retention rates in modern languages including EFL, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
French ACSA (Open College Network)	1	Expected completions	66	*	63
		Retention (%)	71	*	67
		Achievement (%)	+	*	88
German ACSA (Open College Network)	1	Expected completions	31	*	14
		Retention (%)	55	*	100
		Achievement (%)	+	*	80
EFL first certificate in English	1	Expected completions	62	*	48
		Retention (%)	94	*	85
		Achievement (%)	81	*	78
EFL proficiency	3	Expected completions	29	*	16
		Retention (%)	100	*	100
		Achievement (%)	55	*	69
GCE A level French	3	Expected completions	30	*	27
		Retention (%)	83	*	81
		Achievement (%)	72	*	59
GCE A level German	3	Expected completions	12	*	14
		Retention (%)	75	*	79
		Achievement (%)	67	*	45

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

\*ISR data not reliable

+data not available

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 2

**44 The self-assessment report for support for students was comprehensive and evaluative. Areas for development had been identified clearly and inspectors agreed with the judgements made in the report.**

#### Key strengths

- informative pre-entry advice and guidance for full-time students
- the comprehensive and well-managed range of student support services
- effective careers guidance
- the quality and effectiveness of additional learning support

#### Weaknesses

- ineffective implementation and monitoring of tutorial support
- insufficient levels of support and guidance for some part-time students
- underdeveloped careers education for some full-time students

45 The college provides an effective range of advice and guidance for prospective full-time students. The informative prospectus contains clear instructions on how to apply for courses. There is good liaison with schools locally and in the surrounding London boroughs. The schools marketing manager visits over 50 schools and maintains good links with staff in the three partner schools. College open days are well regarded by students. The guidance and admissions unit provides an effective service. The college's self-assessment report acknowledged that there is insufficient advice and guidance for some part-time students.

46 There is a well-organised induction process for full-time students. Teachers are provided with a checklist which sets out a framework of

induction activity. There is also a set of guidelines for the induction of part-time students. Students valued the induction received and considered that it provided them with clear information on the college and course requirements. An informative student handbook and diary contains the charter, the equal opportunities policy and details of the college's services and facilities.

47 Inspectors agreed with the college that a comprehensive range of advice and guidance services is offered to students. Support services cover initial guidance and admissions, counselling, careers, financial support and childcare; they are co-ordinated by a senior manager. Regular team meetings are held for all service areas including a termly meeting of middle managers. A thorough annual review process is used to evaluate the effectiveness of service provision and to identify areas for improvement. The team of five professionally qualified counsellors provides a high level of personal support for students and also delivers a programme of health education. There are good links with outside bodies, including Forest Health Care and the Essex Youth Service. The well-resourced nursery provides childcare support of high quality for 24 children aged two to five. The college provides a student support fund for students who do not qualify for funding from the access fund. There are clear guidelines for the level of allocation according to need. The college lacks an appeals procedure relating to financial support.

48 A comprehensive tutors' handbook sets out the college's requirements for tutorial support but, as the self-assessment report acknowledged, they are not fully implemented. Not all tutors keep regular records of tutorial activity. Although standard timetabled tutorial periods have been introduced there are few group tutorials in many curriculum areas. There is no curriculum to describe tutorial entitlement and little emphasis is given to students' personal and social development.

# Cross-college Provision

However, full-time students feel well supported and value their contact with personal tutors. They meet regularly with their tutors, usually on an individual basis. Part-time students are not always allocated a personal tutor but most speak highly of the support provided by their subject tutors.

49 Inspectors agreed with the college that learning support is effective in meeting the individual learning needs of students. These are identified through the applications procedures, at interviews, through basic skills assessments during induction and by tutors or students at any stage of a learning programme. The learning support unit provides appropriate support for individual students in well-resourced workshops. Learning support tutors also attend some lessons and work closely with vocational tutors. Record-keeping is sound and students' progress is monitored effectively. Most learning support tutors maintain good levels of contact with course tutors. Students clearly benefit from the high level of additional learning support.

50 Students receive effective careers guidance. A careers adviser has been seconded from Essex Careers and Business Partnership to co-ordinate the college's careers provision. Two additional careers advisers visit the college on a regular weekly basis. The college's careers facility is located within the library enabling students to have easy access to a wide range of up-to-date careers information. There is good take up of individual careers interviews and a high level of student satisfaction with the service provided. There is good specialist help available for students wishing to progress to higher education. Careers advisers work closely with designated tutors to monitor carefully students' applications. A comprehensive programme of careers education is available through the tutorial system. However, not all tutors provide their students with the opportunity to take full advantage of this programme. The college identified this weakness in its self-assessment report and is taking steps to address it.

## General Resources

### Grade 3

**51 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that a few of the weaknesses identified had been understated.**

#### Key strengths

- the pleasant and well-managed site
- well-equipped library
- good provision of IT equipment

#### Weaknesses

- inadequate strategy to maintain the current accommodation
- little access to IT on some parts of the site
- poor signposting around the site
- inadequate sport and recreational facilities

52 The college occupies a site of approximately 14 hectares near the centre of Debden. There are three main buildings separated by open grassland and light woodland, and a grade II listed building which is used mainly for examinations. Inspectors agreed that the standard of most teaching accommodation is good. A small number of rooms are in a poor condition. The majority of classrooms are clean, tidy and appropriately furnished with a good level of equipment. Students respect the college environment. During the inspection there was little evidence of vandalism or graffiti. Teachers have good access to audiovisual resources. Inspectors agreed that the lack of large classrooms presents timetabling problems when many of the classes of students are large.

53 The college plans to sell one of its main buildings and redevelop the remainder of the site. Consequently, it has curtailed its programme of maintenance and repairs on the



# Cross-college Provision

upper site. Planning consent for the redevelopment has been refused and the matter referred to a public enquiry. In the meantime, the college has no clear strategy for the maintenance of its accommodation should the planning appeal be unsuccessful. This weakness was not acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

54 Inspectors agreed with the college that library facilities for staff and students are a significant strength. A wide range of resources including videotape recordings, audio cassettes, CD-ROM databases, periodicals and over 33,000 books are housed in the library. The library holds a central record of the collections of specialist books, slides and other learning materials held by teaching teams in the faculties. There has been a significant increase in the number of study spaces available in the library but there is still a shortage of spaces at peak periods of demand. A team of professionally qualified librarians provide students with a good level of support. There are effective links between subject teachers and library staff, each of whom has a responsibility for specific curriculum areas. A team of learning advisers provide additional support to students in the library and in the adjacent open access IT centre which contains 32 up-to-date networked computers.

55 The college has developed a comprehensive information communication technology strategy in response to a recognised weakness in IT provision across the college. Investment in up-to-date equipment and software has increased significantly since the last inspection. Common college standards for hardware and software ensure compatibility across the college. Students have access to 350 modern, networked computers with appropriate software. There are insufficient machines and poor access for students in the two rooms set aside for individual study outside timetabled lessons. Each room contains only 20 machines. Access is dependent on timetabled classes, and the

availability of a learning adviser or technician to supervise the use of the room. Teaching and support staff enjoy good access to computer networks, with some exception in staff rooms in some curriculum areas, for example, modern foreign languages and sciences. Inspectors agreed that the college's range of IT equipment is a key strength.

56 The college makes good provision for students with particular requirements, especially those with physical disabilities. There are designated parking spaces for disabled drivers near each main building, and all teaching areas are accessible to wheelchair users, with the exception of the music curriculum area. The college has a policy of finding appropriate alternative rooms to ensure that students with restricted mobility can pursue their studies. This works effectively. The student common room is spacious and modern. Refectories in the upper and lower buildings provide a good standard of service. The college has recently invested in improved closed-circuit television to improve external security. Signposting around the site is poor. For example, the location of the main reception and information centre is confusing to students and visitors unfamiliar with the site. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report. Sports facilities on the site are limited to a small gymnasium. The college has no access to the sports hall on the main campus leased to the Debden Community Association. Little planned use is made of the adjacent playing field, and a number of sporting activities take place off-site. The college has recognised the need for improved sporting facilities in the accommodation strategy and self-assessment report.

# Cross-college Provision

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 3

**57 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but identified significant additional weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- clear and well-understood quality assurance arrangements at course level
- comprehensive and effective curriculum reviews
- good assessment and verification processes
- well-documented and careful monitoring of complaints

#### Weaknesses

- lack of an overall policy for monitoring quality assurance procedures
- underdeveloped use of performance indicators and targets
- failure to implement fully staff development and appraisal policies
- insufficiently rigorous monitoring of action plans

58 The college produced its first self-assessment report in preparation for the inspection and its development involved all staff. Strengths and weaknesses are clearly identified in the report, and grades were awarded to each section. An extensive body of evidence was assembled to support the report. A revised report was produced shortly before the inspection. The self-assessment report proved useful to the inspectors.

59 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the annual course and service review framework is effective. The quality assurance system benefits from a well-established and comprehensive quality

assurance handbook which explains clearly the annual review cycle at course level. The quality assurance process is understood by staff. The framework has been revised to take account of Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment* and led to effective evaluation at course and service level of strengths and weaknesses with accompanying action plans. However, action plans do not always identify the staff who are to be involved in their implementation or the procedures for monitoring their implementation. Many reviews of courses and students' services make effective use of well-developed systems for collecting and analysing students' perceptions. There is insufficient analysis and assessment of employers' views. Performance indicators and targets are not well developed and are not used to support many of the judgements made in the annual reviews. There was little evidence of performance being benchmarked against other similar colleges. The college has produced draft performance indicators for the current year, though these are not yet in full use. Annual course reviews inform the self-assessment reports produced at school and service level. Inspectors found that the evaluative clarity of the initial subject and course reports was not always reflected in the summaries produced at school and college level. These weaknesses were not identified in the college self-assessment report. Annual course reviews inform the annual operating statements but have taken insufficient account of college strategic objectives. While most staff understand their role in quality assurance at course level, few understand how this contributes to whole-college procedures. There is no overall policy for monitoring the implementation of quality assurance procedures against strategic objectives, and for reporting on their effectiveness to the senior management team and corporation members. This weakness was not recognised by the college.

# Cross-college Provision

60 The college industrial training unit delivers off-site programmes at full cost to employers. This unit has been awarded the ISO 9002 standard which provides an appropriate system for its quality assurance. There are regular reviews with employers of students' progress and the quality of the service provided by the industrial training unit. Course provision by the industrial training unit is not currently subject to the normal annual review process. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that there are effective assessment and verification procedures in place throughout the college.

61 The college charter is given to all students and is available in the college reception area. The charter is reviewed regularly. Inspectors agreed that students have a good understanding of their responsibilities, rights and entitlements. The standards of service which students can expect to receive are stated in the individual learning agreements which are issued to all students. Inspectors found that not all learning agreements or service standards have measurable performance targets and in many areas where they do exist the students are not informed. Inspectors agreed that there is consistent monitoring of complaints by the director of quality assurance who produces a quarterly report to the senior management team analysing the patterns of complaints and response times. The report is also discussed at the governor/student liaison committee.

62 The college recognises that appraisal and staff development has formerly been inadequately linked to strategic objectives, and that responsibilities for its operation have been unclear. A new draft staff development policy has been introduced which will embrace corporate and individual priorities. Faculty staff development plans, which vary considerably in their quality, are not yet successfully integrated with the college operational plan. The previous biannual staff appraisal scheme has been replaced by an annual review by line managers.

Many teachers were not appraised under the previous system. The college committed itself to gaining the Investor in People award in 1993, and plans to achieve the award in December 1999.

## Governance

### Grade 2

**63 Inspectors and auditors broadly agreed with the college's judgements on governance but identified some additional strengths and weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- wide range of expertise and experience in the corporation
- appropriate relationships between the corporation and senior managers
- effective servicing of corporation business
- frequent and regular monitoring of the college's financial performance

#### Weaknesses

- inappropriate delegation of the approval of financial forecasts
- insufficient systematic monitoring of the implementation of the strategic plan

64 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the corporation's own skills analysis that there is an appropriate range of expertise and experience in the corporation and a particular strength in financial skills. Members have sufficient knowledge to understand information provided by college managers. The search committee regularly reviews the current balance of the skills of members against the needs of the college and monitors the attendance of members at corporation meetings. There is no representation from minority ethnic communities, an issue raised during the previous inspection. Although there is no

# Cross-college Provision

student governor, the corporation has a liaison committee with students and this allows their views to be voiced. The induction for new members is adequate, although this was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Corporation members demonstrate a high level of commitment to the college and its long-term future. Corporation meetings are well attended.

65 Inspectors agreed with the college that the corporation is appropriately involved in the development of the strategic plan. The corporation prioritises discussion of the strategic direction of the college at its annual planning event. The principal and senior managers make regular presentations to the corporation and, most recently, faculty heads have provided members with a comprehensive profile of the college's curriculum. This provides governors with relevant information that assists their analysis of the college when planning its strategic direction. Regular reports on strategic issues are not presented in a consistent manner. During the year, there has been no specific monitoring of the progress made towards the achievement of objectives in the strategic plan. The corporation has started to address this recognised weakness. The corporation does not receive regular reports monitoring student performance against college targets.

66 The corporation has assessed its own performance at two special meetings which were facilitated by an external consultant. They have not led to indicators being formally adopted by the corporation to monitor its own performance. The chair undertakes the performance review of the principal and this is reported directly to the remuneration committee. There is an understanding, both in theory and practice, of the related roles of governance and management as shown by the terms of reference of committees. There are effective and productive relationships between the corporation and senior managers, as stated in the self-assessment report.

67 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.

68 Inspectors and auditors agreed that the corporation closely monitors the college's finances. The management accounts are considered at almost every corporation and finance and general purposes committee meeting. The corporation approved an annual budget in good time for the start of the financial year. The budget was not fully comprehensive in that it did not include a cashflow forecast or balance sheet and the corporation minuted a concern regarding this aspect. The lack of a written commentary limited governors' consideration of the 1998-99 to 2000-2001 financial forecast. For the past two years, the approval of the three-year financial forecast has been delegated to the finance and general purposes committee and subsequently presented to the corporation for information. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

69 The corporation has established an appropriate range of committees. The committee and corporation meeting cycle is determined at the start of the year. Committees have clear terms of reference and report their advice and recommendations to the corporation through the minutes of their meetings, and appropriate supporting papers. The audit committee has been poorly attended and on two occasions has not met for this reason.

70 The clerk is a college senior manager with responsibilities for estates and quality assurance. He clerks all the committees. The clerking duties and accountability to the corporation are outlined in the clerk's job description which has been approved by the corporation. Minutes and agenda of corporation

# Cross-college Provision

meetings are clear, timely and widely available. The corporation has adopted a register of interests and a code of conduct, though these do not encompass all areas of good practice. The corporation has not yet established a publicly available written appointment process. A set of standing orders and a 'whistleblowing' policy are under consideration.

## Management

### Grade 3

**71 Inspectors were unable to agree with the college's judgement about the overall quality of its management. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths but judged that the significance of some weaknesses was understated.**

#### Key strengths

- open and collaborative management style
- productive links with local schools and the community
- effective deployment and management of part-time staff
- high level financial advice and support for budget holders

#### Weaknesses

- lack of systematic monitoring and review of college policies
- underdeveloped use of management information
- insufficient analysis and use of market information
- lack of written commentary to support the three-year financial forecast

72 Inspectors agreed that recent fundamental changes to the management structure have contributed to more effective, open and collaborative management. All college services and faculties are now represented in the senior

management team. This has resulted in clearer decision-making, and better communications between managers and staff. Curriculum managers have enhanced roles but some need additional training in their new role.

Management roles and individual responsibilities are clearly defined. All staff have updated job descriptions. The college recognises that teams are working more effectively at all levels. Managers across teams have co-operated to solve problems and improve efficiency. For example, faculty heads have achieved greater consistency in the delivery of GCE A level courses across the college and have rationalised entry qualifications for courses at the same levels. Part-time teachers are effectively deployed and integrated with course teams. Many part-time staff attend course team meetings and consult with colleagues. The academic board has a sharper focus for its work, for example in its responsibility for redrafting the college curriculum policy. Focus groups address specific issues such as the integration and development of key skills.

73 Most staff are well informed about the college's priorities for development. These objectives, formulated through consultation with staff, are referred to frequently in planning meetings. Senior managers held seminars on the objectives, demonstrating how they are linked to operational plans. However, these college objectives are not linked specifically to the operational statements of the strategic plan. Faculty operational plans have been developed from course reviews and are also not linked systematically to the strategic plan.

74 The college has productive links with partner secondary schools, local businesses, local TECs and the community. Students from a local drama school use the college library. The college acknowledges the lack of systematic research into the needs of part-time students and potential markets for the future. The college action plan addresses the need to appoint a head of business development and to set up clear targets for its marketing function.

# Cross-college Provision

75 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. Monthly management accounts are produced which contain basic information. A rolling 12-month cashflow forecast is not included within the management accounts. Budget holders are well supported in their role. Weekly summaries of their budget position are supplied to them along with appropriate advice and support from the finance team. A detailed budget manual has been prepared and is available to all budget holders. The finance team is appropriately experienced and qualified and the head of finance is a member of the college's senior management team. Financial regulations are comprehensive and up to date. The three-year financial forecast presented to the finance and general purposes committee and the corporation was not supported by a written commentary. The college's annual internal audit report for 1997-98 identified weaknesses in the student records system which the college is addressing. The college's submission of audited financial statements in relation to 1996-97 was delayed as a result of difficulties in finalising the audit of the final funding unit claim.

76 Some college policies have not been systematically reviewed and updated, a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report. The policies for quality assurance have not been revised since they were approved by the corporation four years ago. Policies for the curriculum, target-setting and staff development were being finalised at the time of the inspection. The college has no formal committee or designated manager with a remit to monitor equal opportunities issues and report to the corporation.

77 Inspectors agreed with the college that systematic use of reliable management information is still underdeveloped. The college has consulted with staff on ways of improving the reliability of its management information. In the past, errors were made in entering data

for ISR. As a result, some data on students' achievements produced for the inspection were inaccurate. There are still discrepancies between data held in schools and those held in the college's management information systems.

## Conclusions

78 The college's self-assessment procedures are well organised and effective. The inspection team found the self-assessment report comprehensive and a useful basis for planning and undertaking the inspection. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements made in the report. Some additional strengths and weaknesses were noted by inspectors and some had been underestimated by the college. Where the overall judgements of inspectors differed from the college they were mostly lower. One of the grades awarded in the curriculum areas was better than the self-assessment and one was lower. In the cross-college areas two of the five grades awarded by inspectors were lower than in the self-assessment report.

79 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	0
16-18 years	28
19-24 years	10
25+ years	60
Not known	2
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Level of study	%
Foundation	22
Intermediate	28
Advanced	27
Higher education	2
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	21
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	485	566	13
Agriculture	10	31	1
Construction	8	104	1
Engineering	386	1,148	19
Business	501	663	14
Hotel and catering	78	462	7
Health and community care	134	401	7
Art and design	388	428	10
Humanities	504	1,369	23
Basic education	73	370	5
Total	2,567	5,542	100

Source: college data

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 22% 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	152	4	5	161
Supporting direct learning contact	61	2	1	64
Other support	95	2	1	98
Total	308	8	7	323

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

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£9,975,000	£10,199,000	£9,991,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£15.14	£15.89	£16.23
Payroll as a proportion of income	74%	73%	73%
Achievement of funding target	125%	114%	99%
Diversity of income	18%	18%	20%
Operating surplus	-£382,000	-£267,000	£124,000

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)

### 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	0	299	266*	0	1,269	1,214*
	Retention (%)	n/a	85	74*	n/a	86	85*
	Achievement (%)	n/a	45	72*	n/a	56	88*
2	Expected completions	21	2,519	1,499*	2	1,443	1,557*
	Retention (%)	100	83	79*	100	86	87*
	Achievement (%)	90	61	57*	50	53	85*
3	Expected completions	–	2,203	4,100*	–	1,104	756*
	Retention (%)	–	91	83*	–	86	84*
	Achievement (%)	0	64	77*	0	35	67*
4 or 5	Expected completions	–	4	5*	–	249	106*
	Retention (%)	–	75	100*	–	93	95*
	Achievement (%)	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	62	88*
Short courses	Expected completions	341	303	240*	2,807	3,068	2,520*
	Retention (%)	96	92	97*	97	89	90*
	Achievement (%)	35	35	92*	57	4	84*
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	0	144	706*	1	4,456	1,674*
	Retention (%)	n/a	91	91*	100	84	78*
	Achievement (%)	n/a	19	35*	0	14	38*

Source: ISR

–ISR data not collected

\*ISR data may not be reliable

n/a not applicable



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