

Fareham College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
2000-01**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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

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Contents

Paragraph

Summary

Context

The college and its mission	1
The inspection	5

Curriculum areas

Science	8
Engineering	13
Hair and beauty	19
Art, design and the performing arts	24
English	29
Basic skills	34

Cross-college provision

Support for students	40
General resources	46
Quality assurance	55
Governance	61
Management	68
Conclusions	76

College statistics

Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1999-2000, are shown in the following table.

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

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

Sample size: 112 college inspections

Note: percentages subject to rounding

Student Achievements

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

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1996, would appear in the results for 1997-98 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not included.

Summary

Fareham College

South East Region

Inspected January 2001

Fareham College is a tertiary college located on the outskirts of Fareham in South Hampshire. The self-assessment report was prepared as part of the college's regular quality assurance process. The report was comprehensive and a useful basis for planning and conducting the inspection. Employment opportunities in the area have traditionally been dependent on defence industries. Compared with most other parts of the county the unemployment rate is high. The college makes provision in all programme areas funded by the FEFC. Six programme areas were inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision.

Since the last inspection, the college has experienced an extensive reorganisation that has included the introduction of a new management structure and changes to staff contracts and deployment practices. As part of the college's drive to widen participation in further education, a successful business development centre has been created. The college offers additional courses at premises

away from the main site in the town centre and local schools. Student achievement rates in many areas of the curriculum are at, or above, national averages. Retention rates are below national averages and, in most cases, have declined since the previous inspection. Support for students is good. Governors are effective; they have a challenging but supportive relationship with senior managers. Managers run the college effectively. The management style is open and consultative. The implementation of some planned improvements has been slow. Although the quality assurance system is comprehensive there has been insufficient evidence of measurable results. Management information is unreliable. There is a well-managed learning centre but, although IT provision has improved since the previous inspection, at times insufficient computers are available to students. The accommodation is good and well maintained, but the rate of space utilisation is low. The college should improve: the standard of teaching and learning in some areas; retention rates; student achievement rates in some areas; target-setting and monitoring; tutorial provision; and the effectiveness of course review and evaluation.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science	3	Support for students	2
Engineering	3	General resources	3
Hair and beauty	1	Quality assurance	3
Art, design and the performing arts	3	Governance	2
English	3	Management	3
Basic skills	2		

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Fareham College was formed in 1984 as part of the Hampshire Local Education Authority's (LEA's) arrangements for post-16 education. In addition to a sixth form college in Gosport and a school sixth form in Alverstoke, there are a large number of private training providers in the area. The college provides most of its programmes on the main site. It also runs adult education centres in the town centre and at schools in Fareham and Petersfield.

2 The population of Hampshire is in excess of 1.26 million. An increasing proportion of residents are over 35. Within the locality, unemployment rates are well above the Hampshire average. At 73.5%, participation rates in full-time education for 16 year olds are relatively low for the county. Traditionally, employment opportunities in the area have been dependent on defence-related industries but they declined in the early 1990s. There has been a significant recovery in recent years, notably within the information technology (IT) and computer-related industries. Overall, employment opportunities in the county are dominated by the service sector; manufacturing industry employs only 14% of the workforce. The Borough of Fareham is seeking to attract major telecommunications providers into the area.

3 As a medium-sized tertiary college, the college provides full-time education and training opportunities for 16 to 19 year olds and makes extensive provision for full-time and part-time adult students. At the time of the inspection, there were approximately 1,600 full-time students and 9,500 part-time students in the college. Although most of those enrolling are over 19, the majority of full-time students are aged 16 to 19. The college has close partnerships with a variety of local agencies. Some franchising arrangements which support its strategies to widen participation in further education are of particular significance. These

arrangements account for 15% of college provision. The mission of the college is 'the promotion of excellence in learning for the whole of its community'. By removing barriers to access, the college aims to attract students 'irrespective of their age, ability, gender, ethnic background or socio-economic circumstances'. It seeks to provide 'a safe and stimulating environment' in which students can learn effectively. The college is committed to helping individuals to succeed. It aims to build a strong and relevant skills base in the local economy.

4 The college offers courses in all programme areas funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). There is a balance between academic and vocational provision. It offers an adult non-vocational education programme. A small number of higher education programmes, particularly in engineering and business studies, provide important progression routes for some students. The college is divided into six academic schools. Heads of school are assisted by programme managers who have responsibility for programme areas and all associated work. The lifelong learning manager manages part-time adult education opportunities.

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected during January 2001. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and considered information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used data on students' achievements drawn from the college's own individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1998 to 1999. The college submitted its own data on students' achievements for 2000, which were checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately 12 weeks before the

Context

inspection. The inspection was carried out by 11 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 50 days.

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

for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000. Of the lessons inspected, 69% were rated good or outstanding. This profile is above the national average for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	3	17	8	0	0	28
GCSE	0	4	2	1	0	7
GNVQ	2	3	3	0	0	8
NVQ	6	7	0	0	0	13
Other vocational	0	5	4	3	0	12
Other	3	6	4	0	0	13
Total (No.)	14	42	21	4	0	81
Total (%)	17	52	26	5	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000 (%)	17	45	31	6	0	100

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

Note: percentages subject to rounding

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

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Fareham College	10.3	77
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000	10.3	76

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

Curriculum Areas

Science

Grade 3

8 Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with the strengths in the self-assessment report, but considered that some key weaknesses had been understated or omitted.

Key strengths

- good achievement in general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) sciences
- effective practical work
- effective technical support
- spacious, modern accommodation

Weaknesses

- a poor level of retention
- some inappropriate teaching methods
- insufficient use of IT in GCE A level and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) courses
- unsatisfactory review of courses

9 The college offers GCE A level and GCE advanced subsidiary (AS) courses in biology, human biology, chemistry, geology and physics, and GCSE courses in four separate science subjects. These programmes are mainly for full-time students who are 16 to 18 years old. There is also a programme of part-time evening classes. The range of science courses, with the exception of geology, has not increased in the last few years and there has been no growth in student numbers following the introduction of the requirements set out in the Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE's) publication, *Qualifying for Success: Post-16 curriculum reform*. The science teams have recently been reorganised and the changes are beginning to have a positive effect. For example, individual roles and responsibilities are now clearer and team minutes are regularly

kept. However, the course review process at team level is not sufficiently thorough. The analysis of retention and achievement data is often incomplete and the evaluation of weaknesses does not always lead to subsequent action plans. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

10 Much of the teaching is good, as noted in the self-assessment report. In most practical lessons, students concentrated on their work and were given appropriate tasks. In a well-organised practical test, students undertook a range of tasks with good humour, enthusiasm and success. They were confident in their technique, safe in their procedures and aware that the external examination would be a similar experience. In another lesson, students used a variety of interesting and engaging working models to develop their understanding of the human eye. However, in some lessons, the atmosphere was dull and students were bored. In some theory lessons, there were inappropriate teaching methods. Long periods of note-taking, or prolonged presentation from teachers, left students unresponsive. Students reported that assignments are marked and returned promptly. However, the standard of marking is uneven. While most work is returned with helpful comments and grammatical corrections, some is merely ticked or graded and gives no helpful feedback for students.

11 Student retention rates are below, or well below, the national average for the sector. The rate is declining in most subjects. In 2000, fewer than half of those enrolled on courses in GCSE sciences, and GCE A level human biology, chemistry and physics gained the qualification. This low level of retention is identified in the self-assessment report but action-planning does not sufficiently address this serious weakness. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the report that, for those students who remain, achievements are good and, in most cases, above national averages. In 2000, all those

Curriculum Areas

entered for the examination in GCE A level geology gained the qualification. Attendance at science classes is good and written work is generally of a high standard.

12 There are sufficient laboratories; they are spacious and provide a good working environment. These strengths were noted in the self-assessment report. There is no access to the first floor laboratories for students with physical disabilities. The laboratories are well serviced by a team of qualified and effective technicians. One technician is a science 'facilitator' who assists some GCE AS groups; another is the information and learning technology 'champion' for the programme area and is a part-time evening class tutor. There is

sufficient equipment for practical work. Safe working procedures are followed and hazardous substances are effectively stored. Risk analyses for the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) are carried out regularly and assessment sheets accompany all practical equipment. There is, however, little evidence of IT as a feature of science teaching and no computers were used in science lesson during the inspection. Work on key skills has not been fully integrated with the courses. The library contains a large selection of science books. However, some of these are old and of little use to students. There is a good selection of science periodicals in the library but few CD-ROMs.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE science	2	Number of starters	66	69	41
		Retention (%)	79	70	49
		Achievement (%)	29	52	45
GCE A level biology	3	Number of starters	*	39	39
		Retention (%)	*	46	56
		Achievement (%)	*	88	90
GCE A level human biology	3	Number of starters	33	*	33
		Retention (%)	70	*	33
		Achievement (%)	32	*	82
GCE A level chemistry	3	Number of starters	37	25	33
		Retention (%)	68	40	45
		Achievement (%)	80	50	87
GCE A level geology	3	Number of starters	14	10	8
		Retention (%)	79	80	62
		Achievement (%)	80	88	100
GCE A level physics	3	Number of starters	47	48	51
		Retention (%)	79	62	49
		Achievement (%)	89	93	70

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

*data may not be reliable

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 3

13 Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with the strengths and weaknesses that had been identified by the college in the self-assessment report but noted that some strengths and weaknesses had not been identified.

Key strengths

- good teaching in most practical lessons
- well-managed courses
- well-devised assignments
- good access to learning support
- a good range of provision

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some programmes
- poor achievement in vehicle maintenance
- a lack of appropriate teaching methods in classroom-based lessons
- some outdated motor vehicles and associated equipment
- insufficient progress in introducing information learning technology into the teaching

14 Inspectors agreed that the college offers a comprehensive range of engineering programmes. The school of engineering has helped to develop partnerships with other local colleges and has good working relationships with a variety of local employers. There are good opportunities for students to progress from intermediate to higher level programmes. However, as identified in the self-assessment report, for the past three years recruitment to some courses has been declining. The curriculum is well managed. Programme handbooks are effective and course meetings are well recorded. Course reviews include the setting of new targets for rates of enrolment,

retention and achievement. Timetabling problems identified in the self-assessment report, which were allowing too long a period between one lesson and the next, have been rectified.

15 Teaching in most practical lessons is good. The use of a wide and appropriate range of resources maintains students' interest and helps them to learn. However, as noted in the self-assessment report, the introduction of information and learning technology into the teaching has been slow. In effective lessons, teachers provide positive encouragement and use skilful questioning to check that students understand difficult concepts. In an advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) in engineering lesson on the tracking and recording of key skills, students were given clear guidance on the sources of evidence that they would need and how they related to the record sheet supplied by the validating body. Teachers used analogies of familiar everyday situations to illustrate and help students to understand various concepts. In a few lessons teachers did not make sure that students were learning and failed to make use of available resources. During a lesson investigating the measurement of direct current, the teacher talked about the use of a moving coil meter to determine the magnitude of voltage and current. However, the teacher's inappropriate methods, excessive emphasis on note-taking and failure to use the available practical resources to demonstrate the concepts prevented students from appreciating the effect of introducing a meter in an electrical circuit.

16 Students receive helpful feedback on their assignments which include appropriate opportunities for the development of key skills. Assessments progressively build on students' knowledge and give them confidence to undertake more demanding tasks. Specialist learning support teachers are available for those students requiring additional help. Assignments are well designed and conform to a common

Curriculum Areas

approach, a strength not recognised in the self-assessment report. One demanding assignment related to the purchase of redundant equipment for a local steam railway. Students were asked to make various calculations and conclude whether or not the purchase was appropriate. The design of assignments was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report.

17 Over the past three years, student rates of retention and achievement have fluctuated. In 2000, both rates on the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) advanced in engineering were well above national averages for the sector. By contrast, in 2000 fewer than half those enrolled on national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2 vehicle maintenance completed the course; no candidates achieved the qualification in 1999 and only 13% did so in 2000. In their practical work, most students demonstrated appropriate levels of skill and knowledge; their standard of work is high.

18 Many engineering resources are of industrial standard. There is a new

computerised numeric controlled welding facility. Spacious accommodation includes sufficient classrooms and laboratories. Workshops have recently been reorganised and information and learning technology facilities improved. The high standard of finish to and cleanliness of the facilities creates a good working environment. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that there are insufficient up-to-date motor vehicles and diagnostic equipment. There is a well-resourced library with a good bookstock, journals, CD-ROMs and several copies of the most frequently used texts. Teachers are well qualified and have a good range of specialist skills and professional qualifications. Where appropriate, teaching staff have achieved the training and development lead body assessor awards. Some staff have recently brought their industrial experience up to date. Teachers and students are well supported by technicians.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
BTEC first certificate engineering	2	Number of starters	30	37	38
		Retention (%)	67	65	84
		Achievement (%)	50	65	72
NVQ vehicle maintenance	2	Number of starters	31	20	20
		Retention (%)	68	65	40
		Achievement (%)	78	0	13
C&G 2280 mechanical production competences	2	Number of starters	18	19	14
		Retention (%)	100	74	86
		Achievement (%)	100	93	82
C&G 4351 computer-aided draughting and design	2	Number of starters	66	60	55
		Retention (%)	76	85	80
		Achievement (%)	78	73	68
BTEC national certificate engineering	3	Number of starters	72	65	54
		Retention (%)	94	74	57
		Achievement (%)	73	96	93
GNVQ advanced engineering	3	Number of starters	34	28	27
		Retention (%)	38	50	81
		Achievement (%)	80	100	73

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

Curriculum Areas

Hair and Beauty

Grade 1

19 Inspectors observed 12 lessons and one tutorial. They agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses which had been identified by the college and noted further strengths.

Key strengths

- all teaching good or outstanding
- effective learning packages
- excellent achievement rates
- the good standards of students' practical work
- flexible arrangements for teaching the curriculum
- strong curriculum organisation and management
- good specialist resources

Weaknesses

- inappropriate rooms for theory classes

20 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the organisation and management of hair and beauty is strong. The curriculum offer is well structured to take account of students' needs. There are regular, effective meetings of staff at course and programme area level to discuss progress and recommend improvements. Managers are piloting a number of initiatives, including the mentoring of part-time staff by full-time members. To improve quality assurance procedures, operational planning, course reviews and action planning as part of the self-assessment process are to be merged. Teachers set clear targets and monitor students weekly. Documentation to support the curriculum is good. The integration of key skills training within coursework is well planned, carefully and systematically recorded and monitored.

Students' progress is carefully reviewed and individual action plans include appropriate targets. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the college's self-assessment that there are flexible arrangements for teaching the curriculum which is responsive to students' needs. For example, a number of students were able to negotiate individual timetables if they had learning difficulties, or parental responsibilities or wanted a different mix of modules.

21 Inspectors agreed with the college that the standard of teaching and learning is high. All the lessons observed were judged to be good or outstanding. Lessons are well planned and effectively taught. Students are well supported by learning packages and CD-ROMs devised in the college, a strength additional to those recorded by the college. There are good links between theory and its practical application. Practical lessons reflect realistic working practices. An appropriate range of teaching and learning styles was used in most lessons. All teachers stated objectives at the beginning and re-emphasised them during the lesson. When demonstrating techniques, staff give clear, precise commentaries. Teachers use effective question-and-answer techniques to confirm that students are understanding the work, they succeed in eliciting the key points. Issues of health and safety are discussed in all lessons and are emphasised in practical classes. Support for students is good. A number of students with learning difficulties have a support tutor allocated to their groups. Learning packages have been adapted and colour coded to assist students who are dyslexic.

22 Inspectors agreed with the college that retention rates are at, or above, national averages for the sector and that achievement rates are excellent, exceeding national averages in most courses. Achievement rates on NVQ beauty therapy courses have improved over the last three years and all candidates achieved the NVQ level 3 in hairdressing in 1998 and 2000.

Curriculum Areas

Achievement rates on short courses for beauty therapy have continued to be well above the national average. Students' practical work is of a good standard and conforms to commercial practices. Many students display skills more advanced than would be expected, and a number of students complete their courses early. There is an atmosphere of professionalism in the salons. Students have good communication skills. Assignment work and portfolios are well presented and contain well-judged levels of detail. Students speak with enthusiasm and knowledge about their courses and their learning. Target-setting is a strong feature of the section. Targets are agreed with students during tutorials and practical sessions. Achievement levels are closely monitored. Students have the opportunity to extend their studies by visits to trade shows and competitions, work experience, visits from manufacturers and by taking up opportunities on modular courses.

23 Salons are spacious and well maintained and have a good supply of modern, industrial standard equipment. There are three hairdressing and three beauty salons served by a central reception area, a dispensary and a laundry. Staff rooms are within the building allocated to hairdressing and beauty. Computers are available in salons and staff rooms. Room utilisation and the occupancy rate are good for the area. A large increase in courses offered in beauty therapy has led to problems over the allocation of space. Inspectors agreed that some theory lessons are timetabled in inappropriate rooms and some practical beauty therapy lessons are timetabled in a hairdressing salon. Equipment has to be moved in and out of the salon depending on whether the lesson is for hairdressing or beauty students. Staff are well qualified in their specialist area and many have recent industrial experience.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
NVQ beauty therapy	2	Number of starters	78	54	123
		Retention (%)	78	63	77
		Achievement (%)	85	89	96
NVQ hairdressing	2	Number of starters	166	121	96
		Retention (%)	*	64	64
		Achievement (%)	*	76	63
Beauty therapy short courses	2	Number of starters	34	27	33
		Retention (%)	97	89	91
		Achievement (%)	91	83	90
NVQ beauty therapy	3	Number of starters	269	237	249
		Retention (%)	81	80	86
		Achievement (%)	87	94	93
NVQ hairdressing	3	Number of starters	14	26	10
		Retention (%)	64	96	60
		Achievement (%)	100	83	100
Beauty therapy short courses	3	Number of starters	100	30	65
		Retention (%)	80	87	82
		Achievement (%)	88	84	89

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

*data may not be reliable

Curriculum Areas

Art, Design and the Performing Arts

Grade 3

24 Inspectors observed 21 lessons. They agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but considered that insufficient emphasis had been given to weaknesses in teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- a good standard of student work in visual art and design
- good progression to higher education
- effective staff teamwork
- good accommodation in visual art and design

Weaknesses

- a poor retention rate on some courses
- inappropriate teaching for some first-year and one-year groups
- poor integration of IT with the curriculum

25 There is an appropriate range of courses in art, design and performing arts, although, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report, numbers in GCSE and GCE A level art and design have significantly decreased over the past three years. The school of creative arts has recently been restructured and staff responsibilities have been realigned to ensure a more equitable distribution of work. These changes have helped teams to work more closely together, to ensure that students' progress is more effectively monitored, and to contribute to developments through formal and informal meetings. The area is well managed. GNVQ students have benefited from a modified induction programme which has led to a better match between students' abilities and course requirements.

26 Inspectors considered that the college's assessment of the standard of teaching and learning was overgenerous. During the inspection, the proportion of good and outstanding lessons was below the national average for the sector. In particular, insufficient attention has been given to the development of a range of teaching, learning and assessment policies for students on some first-year and one-year programmes. In a GCE AS drawing and painting class, students were asked to paint shellfish, conveying emotion in their use of colour and application of paint. As they had not previously had the opportunity to discuss their feelings on the subject matter, the results were superficial and a number of students were confused. When it became clear that their interest was flagging, the teacher resorted to telling students what to do. Many first-year and one-year students were uncertain about their progress on the course. They reported that they would have appreciated earlier, more systematic and detailed individual feedback. Some teaching was imaginative and thoughtful. During an art history lesson, the teacher skilfully questioned students and probed their understanding, encouraging them to evaluate critically examples of artists' work. As a consequence, students demonstrated a refined appreciation of paintings. In some performing arts lessons, students were allowed to adopt roles which possessed little depth. However, the teaching of singing is outstanding.

27 As recognised in the self-assessment report, rates of retention and attendance give cause for concern. The retention rate on most courses is at, or below, national averages, and has been declining for the past three years on GCSE, GCE A level and GNVQ intermediate courses in art and design and in GNVQ advanced performing arts. Attendance and punctuality in the performing arts are poor. Over the last three years, the overall achievement rate fluctuated around the national average. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment that progression to higher

Curriculum Areas

education is good. In 2000, all foundation studies students and 95% of GNVQ advanced art and design students gained places in higher education. Much student work is of a high standard. The drawing skills and colour work on the foundation and GNVQ second-year courses are vibrant and exciting. In a GCE AS music class, students ably interpreted complicated, syncopated rhythms in a George Gershwin number. In the visual arts, students' sketch and photography workbooks show a lively and imaginative approach.

28 IT is not adequately integrated within the curriculum and, as noted in the self-assessment, access to these facilities is inadequate. Some students are not scheduled to learn IT skills until the second term of the academic year. Inspectors agreed with the assessment that staff are well qualified and enthusiastic. Many

regularly exhibit or perform, bringing this up-to-date professional experience to their teaching programmes. Accommodation is well planned and there is a coherent strategy for the use of rooms and facilities. However, the use of the gymnasium as a teaching area for the performing arts is unsatisfactory. Performing arts staff have been raising funds outside the college which has allowed them to augment facilities and purchase new equipment. In the visual arts, courses and subject disciplines are conveniently grouped together. This has improved communication between teachers and has led to sharing of good practice and some work. However, staff and students from the visual and performing arts do not collaborate on joint assignments.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in art, and design and the performing arts, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE art and design (fine art and photography)	2	Number of starters	58	60	48
		Retention (%)	67	77	58
		Achievement (%)	70	52	68
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	Number of starters	22	23	25
		Retention (%)	67	83	64
		Achievement (%)	79	74	75
GCE A level art and design (fine art, design technology and photography)	3	Number of starters	149	99	91
		Retention (%)	75	65	57
		Achievement (%)	78	95	83
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	Number of starters	36	45	40
		Retention (%)	64	47	73
		Achievement (%)	89	90	82
National diploma for foundation studies in art and design	3	Number of starters	23	22	30
		Retention (%)	78	86	93
		Achievement (%)	100	100	93
GNVQ advanced performing arts	3	Number of starters	9	14	20
		Retention (%)	89	64	45
		Achievement (%)	100	67	78

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

Curriculum Areas

English

Grade 3

29 Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered some strengths identified by the college to be no more than normal practice. They found some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good GCE A level results in English literature and English language
- a good stock of imaginative teaching materials
- good support of students

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates
- a falling rate of recruitment of students
- weak organisation of level 1 provision

30 The programme area incorporates GCE A/AS level syllabuses in English and communication studies, GCSE English and a certificate of achievement in English for those students struggling with GCSE. Over the past three years, recruitment to level 3 courses in English has declined by 26%. This decline is not recognised in the self-assessment report. Preparation for the requirements set out in the Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE's) publication, *Qualifying for Success: Post-16 curriculum reform* has been thorough, although there are some examples of students being programmed inappropriately to take two level 3 English courses. Management of the programme area is effective and communications with the head of school are good. Full-time and part-time staff work well together and meetings are effective. There are schemes of work, but lesson plans are insufficiently detailed. Targets for retention and

achievement are set for each course and course reviews are well established. Arrangements for level 1 students working towards a certificate of achievement in English are ineffective, a weakness identified in the self-assessment. Poor timetabling has resulted in the closure of some sets and an excessive amount of time spent on re-arrangements. Liaison with local schools is good.

31 The proportion of good and outstanding lessons observed during the inspection was similar to the national average for the sector. The most effective lessons were challenging and used a range of appropriate teaching methods. In a GCE AS English language and literature class the teacher closely analysed several well-chosen passages to identify the rhetorical devices being employed. An election speech and a contemporary funeral address were broken into small units. Each unit was read aloud by individual students and the pieces then analysed by the whole class. The persuasive techniques at work were then compared with the rhetorical devices employed by Shakespeare in Mark Anthony's funeral speech from *Julius Caesar*. In less effective lessons, students spent too much time copying notes and became inattentive. In one GCSE group, students were asked to answer questions on the poem *Dulce et Decorum est* by Wilfred Owen. After a very general discussion, the teacher wrote a lengthy synopsis on the board which the students were asked to copy. The poem was not read aloud and in subsequent discussion students' contributions were not developed or refined. Appropriate homework assignments are regularly set and marking is often suitably detailed, sensitive and informative. There are many examples of staff offering extra support for students, a point recognised in the self-assessment report. Much help is given in the preparation of coursework and an additional class has been provided for a large GCE AS group, some of whose members were struggling to study effectively at level 3.

Curriculum Areas

32 Retention rates on almost all courses are below, or well below, the national average for the sector. The rate in GCSE English has been particularly weak with over 40% of students leaving the course in each of the past three years. Some poor retention levels are acknowledged in the self-assessment report but the action plan fails to identify sufficiently thorough strategies for addressing this weakness, such as analysing students' reasons for leaving the course. For those students who remain and take the external examination, achievement rates in the English have been at, or above, national averages for three years. The proportion of students achieving A to E grades in GCE A level English language has been high for the last two years. Students are required to wordprocess certain assignments. The standard of students' written work and their attainment in coursework is generally good.

33 As indicated in the self-assessment report, staff are committed to the development of specialist resources. An excellent stock of relevant and up-to-date source materials, much of it produced by course teams, contributes significantly to making the lessons interesting. Staff are appropriately qualified. Most have undertaken joint review sessions and have had lessons observed and assessed by the college quality assurance team. There is a good quantity of English texts and magazines in the library and of videotapes in the English resources base. Regular liaison between teaching staff and the librarian helps to keep the library stock relevant and up to date. Most accommodation is well lit and well heated and, although the long corridors leading to the area are drab and uninviting, there are attractive displays in all teaching rooms. There is no wheelchair access to rooms used for English teaching.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE English	2	Number of starters	226	162	160
		Retention (%)	59	57	58
		Achievement (%)	50	57	54
GCE A level English literature	3	Number of starters	35	50	41
		Retention (%)	89	66	76
		Achievement (%)	100	97	87
GCE A level English language	3	Number of starters	*	74	67
		Retention (%)	*	73	61
		Achievement (%)	*	96	95
GCE A level English language and literature	3	Number of starters	*	36	43
		Retention (%)	*	81	56
		Achievement (%)	*	68	78

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

*data may not be reliable

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills

Grade 2

34 Inspectors observed 12 lessons across the range of literacy and numeracy provision below level 2. While inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report, they considered that it was not sufficiently comprehensive.

Key strengths

- a commitment to basic skills as part of a strategy to widen participation
- good teaching and study support from staff
- effective monitoring of students

Weaknesses

- insufficient co-ordination of work in basic skills across college
- some inadequate accommodation and resources

35 Basic skills provision at the college falls into three categories. There is discrete provision for adult learners and specific groups, such as adults with mild learning difficulties or mental health problems. This provision is run by the action for learning section of the business development centre and, additionally, through partnership arrangements at other premises in Fareham and Petersfield. Secondly, a transition course offers a full-time vocational programme to students with learning difficulties and to those who have refused to attend previously as pupils at school. Thirdly, there is basic and key skills support for students on mainstream courses. The college sees the teaching of basic skills courses as a key strand of its strategy for widening participation in further education. It collaborates with local organisations, such as the probation service and a drugs rehabilitation centre, and is developing family literacy and numeracy programmes in conjunction with the LEA.

36 Learning support for full-time students is good. All full-time students have a screening devised by the college for literacy and numeracy. In some curriculum areas, basic skills are integrated with vocational courses, but in others there are separate classes for communications or application of number. These classes are organised by staff running learning services, who are also responsible for additional learning support in literacy and numeracy. The college has some schemes for bringing together the various elements of the teaching of basic skills, for example through the internal verification of Wordpower which is used in some curriculum areas. However, as the self-assessment report acknowledges, there is no co-ordinated approach to the management of the various components of basic skills teaching across the college. In the discrete provision, the course review process is underdeveloped. Quality assurance processes have been hindered by the predominance of part-time teachers, who are not involved in the course review process and do not have course or subject leadership roles. This weakness is not acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

37 Planning for learning in the discrete provision and on the transition courses is good. Students are effectively monitored. There is comprehensive documentation of students' studies including individual learning plans, progress reviews and records of achievement. Group activities are designed to challenge each student at an appropriate level. Most teaching and study support are good. In the most effective lessons, students concentrate on tasks that are motivating and develop independent learning skills. In one communications lesson on the transition course, students were challenged to work out the criteria for effective written instructions by following sets of instructions written for a variety of activities, such as juggling and origami, with which they were unfamiliar. In less effective lessons, inappropriate methods and resources were

Curriculum Areas

used. The choice of tasks, and the way in which they were introduced to students, caused additional barriers to their learning. Students' work is sensitively marked and written comments acknowledge strengths and boost self-esteem. Teachers also give constructive and specific guidance to help students to improve.

38 While the feedback from students on their experience of lessons suggests that they value what they have gained, data on retention and achievement levels are less satisfactory. National comparisons in this area are unreliable. However, there are examples across the basic skills provision of fewer than half of those entered for level 1 qualifications gaining the award. Successful achievement in Numberpower is particularly low; in 2000, just over half those entered gained the qualification, an improvement on 1999 when only 5% of those completing qualified. This area of weakness is not mentioned in the self-assessment report.

39 Dedicated rooms for basic skills are good and contain a wide range of learning resources in a variety of media, including information and learning technology, a strength indicated in the self-assessment. Other accommodation used for basic skills teaching offers students less predictable access to learning materials and information and learning technology. Some locations suffer from insufficient space, noise distractions or unsuitable learning facilities. The library has few resources to support students who wish to work on their basic skills independently. Volunteer tutors in the discrete provision take an introductory training course followed by the initial certificate in teaching basic skills. This qualification is also held by a significant proportion of the college's basic skills teachers. Few staff have further specialist qualifications for teaching basic skills.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
C&G 3750 in numeracy (Numberpower) stage 1 (short course)	1	Number of starters	28	†	16
		Retention (%)	64	†	75
		Achievement (%)	28	†	42
C&G 3750 in numeracy (Numberpower) stage 1 (one-year course)	1	Number of starters	69	73	78
		Retention (%)	51	*	63
		Achievement (%)	29	5	54
C&G 3793 in communication skills (Wordpower) stage 1 (one-year course)	1	Number of starters	16	59	16
		Retention (%)	31	76	62
		Achievement (%)	80	40	50
C&G 3793 in communication skills (Wordpower) foundation (short course)	1	Number of starters	32	15	18
		Retention (%)	66	73	83
		Achievement (%)	5	82	60
Achievement tests in literacy, levels 1, 2 and 3 (short course)	1	Number of starters	†	65	97
		Retention (%)	†	77	73
		Achievement (%)	†	75	70

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

*data may not be reliable

†course not running

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

40 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but found one additional weakness.

Key strengths

- effective pre-course arrangements
- good action-planning
- well-developed learning support
- good support for students with financial difficulties
- well-developed provision of careers education

Weaknesses

- the uneven quality of tutorial provision
- inadequate research into departure of early leavers

41 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that it publishes a well-designed range of course information. The college maintains close links with 11 local schools and runs several events to attract potential students. The guidance and enrolment of full-time students is well managed. All potential students are interviewed within 10 days of application. Interviews are thorough and students leave with an action plan signed by the both the student and interviewer. Inspectors agreed with the college that this initial agreement is the beginning of a well-defined process that places action-planning at the heart of student support. All full-time students meet with a course tutor immediately after enrolment to review their initial action plan and, for the following fortnight, are encouraged to keep their learning programme under review. The system for referring students who have concerns to the advice and guidance manager works well. Induction is well planned and well evaluated.

42 Some aspects of the tutorial system are effective. All full-time students are allocated two tutorial periods each week, one for group work and the other for individual reviews. As identified in the self-assessment report, support for part-time students is less structured. Arrangements are the responsibility of individual teachers or course teams. A well-written tutorial handbook is regularly reviewed and updated and tutors are appropriately trained. Two pastoral care managers have responsibility for tutors. Each manager is responsible for about 40 tutors and has difficulty maintaining regular contact with them. As a consequence the effectiveness of the tutoring process is not adequately monitored. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the college's self-assessment report that tutorials are of uneven quality. Full-time students have a minimum of two curriculum and four pastoral reviews with their tutor each year. Each of these results in an agreed action plan that contains specific and attainable targets. Although the college has been slow to develop value-added measures, plans to introduce target minimum grades next September are well advanced. Student attendance is carefully monitored. Parents of 16 to 18 year olds are sent at least one report each year and the parents evenings that follow are generally well attended.

43 Inspectors agreed with the college that learning support is good and held in high regard by students and staff. Students who are referred through the application process are interviewed on arrival. These include students with specific learning difficulties caused, for example, by visual or hearing impairments. All new full-time students are screened and assessed within three weeks of starting their courses. The take-up of learning support is high. Of those identified as possibly in need of extra support in 2000, 90% agreed to receive it. Part-time students with learning needs are encouraged to self-refer. All students in receipt of learning support have an appropriately detailed learning plan. The learning support

Cross-college Provision

centre has an adequate range of resources. Study tutors and assistants are appropriately qualified. Good links are developing between learning specialists and curriculum teams. However, the impact on the development of appropriate skills for teaching a wide ability range is yet to be felt. Students with specific learning difficulties are well supported in the classroom by specialist tutor assistants. Learning support is carefully monitored and evaluated. Retention and achievement levels for students who receive support are above the average for the college and the sector, but reasons for students leaving the college early have not been suitably researched.

44 The college offers a wide range of good well-managed student welfare and support services. However, because different services are located around the college, the provision as a whole lacks cohesion. A single centre, combining reception, information, careers guidance and advice on benefits is planned. A carefully monitored off-site counselling service offers support to students with personal and emotional problems. A number of good, well-attended, promotional events for careers and also health take place throughout the year. The career guidance manager works closely with the staff of the local careers service. Together they provide a comprehensive service that supports students when they need guidance on making their initial application to the college to the final interview as they are about to leave. The learning centre houses an excellent range of careers resources, including Internet links, careers software and higher education and job directories. This year, 60% of all Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) applications were sent electronically. Work experience is co-ordinated centrally on behalf of curriculum teams.

45 Welfare and financial support for students is good. Inspectors agreed with the college that all requests for support are dealt with quickly and sympathetically. Last year the college contributed £50,000 out of the £95,000 which was allocated for student awards, primarily to

students needing help with their travel expenses or with the costs of childcare. The college has two nurseries that can accommodate 50 children at any one time. Although only 20% of the places are made available for students with young children, the college provides additional support for childcare from its access fund. The college's student liaison officer supports student union activities to which the college contributes £1,500 a year.

General Resources

Grade 3

46 Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report. They also identified additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good learning facilities
- well-planned maintenance of the college premises
- improvements in IT provision since the last inspection

Weaknesses

- the poor availability of open access IT resources for students
- a low room utilisation rate
- inadequate access for people with restricted mobility

47 The college is located on a single site on the western edge of Fareham. It comprises 12 buildings constructed in the 1960s and 1970s which are linked by a central administration building that was built in 1984. To meet the requirements of its mission statement to promote learning for the whole community, the college has extended its activities beyond its main site. Adult education takes place in a former school in the centre of Fareham, owned by Hampshire County Council, and the college

Cross-college Provision

also has use of community education centres at secondary schools in Fareham and Petersfield. European funding has helped the college to establish the 'Choices' shop in a local area of regeneration and an IT bus. Staff of both shop and bus provide advice and guidance together with IT training for people who would not otherwise consider attending college.

48 Most general teaching accommodation is good. Classrooms are well maintained and well decorated. They are appropriately equipped and furnished. Programme areas are geographically clustered so that areas of the college have a clear curriculum identity. There are good staff workrooms and ready access to computers. There is a generously proportioned staff room. Specialist accommodation for hair and beauty, engineering and art and design is well equipped.

49 The maintenance of the premises is well managed although the age and design of the buildings has led to high maintenance costs. All work is carefully monitored and is part of a planned maintenance scheme which is based on a detailed condition survey. The scheme is reviewed on a regular basis. Work is scheduled against a projected annual allocation of £300,000. Arrangements for maintenance are flexible; some of the work is carried out in-house. At the time of inspection some areas of the college were in a poor state of external decorative repair. Work to improve these areas had been planned but then delayed by bad weather. The adult education centre in Fareham is in need of major repairs.

50 Space utilisation is low. This weakness which was also identified at the previous inspection, is recognised in the college's accommodation strategy but was not included in the self-assessment report. There is no centralised timetabling system and the college has not been effective in developing an overall strategy for rationalising the amount of space required by each curriculum area. Inspectors

noted that a high proportion of classrooms were not being used at the time of the inspection. Procedures for monitoring space utilisation are being developed and a computerised timetabling package is being piloted.

51 The library is located in the central administration area of the college. Staffing levels are good and two members of staff are qualified librarians. The library bookstock is average for a college of this size, but many of the texts are old. The stock of periodicals is good. The budget allocated is below the average for the sector. There is no structured liaison between the library staff and curriculum areas and no allocation of funds to subjects. As a result, the quality of resources varies significantly between curriculum areas. Some areas have a good, up-to-date bookstock while others, such as basic skills, have inadequate resources. An area in the library is set aside for the provision of learning support.

52 There is no access for those with restricted mobility to many areas of the college. This situation was not recognised as a weakness in the self-assessment report. The only lift in the college allows students to gain access to the library. There is some ramped access, and, where necessary, the college makes timetable changes to enable students who have restricted mobility to attend classes.

53 Inspectors agreed that the college has made significant investment in its computing resources since the last inspection. The college has undergone a major upgrade of its network system and is well equipped with networked computers, most of which are of a high specification. There is a ratio of approximately one computer to seven full-time students. An effective team provides technical support. Service standards have been set for support of IT services and staff speak highly of the support they receive. However, only 20 machines from 220 are available on an open access basis. Students are able to use a further 20 machines

Cross-college Provision

in an adjoining suite when they are not being used for teaching; all other computers are only available during taught lessons. Yet there are some IT teaching classrooms which are underused when computers remain unused for many hours a week. Some curriculum areas are not making use of computers as an integrated aspect of their teaching resources. There are plans to develop a college intranet.

54 Catering facilities at the college are good. There are several catering outlets available to students and staff. Students speak highly of the quality of the food and of the value for money of their purchases. Students have access to extensive sporting facilities including two indoor sports centres, a multi-gym and outdoor sports fields.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

55 Inspectors judged that some strengths in the college's self-assessment report were overstated. They agreed with the weaknesses and identified additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- a commitment to continuous improvement
- clear linkage of the quality assurance system to the self-assessment process
- an effective quality assurance committee
- a comprehensive internal verification system

Weaknesses

- slow progress in the application of quality assurance procedures since the previous inspection
- unsatisfactory course reviews
- the omission of franchised provision from the college's quality assurance system
- no appraisal of teachers

56 For almost half the time since the previous inspection while the college was going through a period of protracted reorganisation, there was not a quality assurance manager in post. As a consequence quality assurance processes have not moved forward to meet increasing demands, and, in particular, staff have not devised ways of retaining a greater proportion of the students who enrol at the college. The college has now through its actions renewed its commitment to improving standards. The college's quality assurance committee, chaired by the quality assurance manager, reports to the academic board about issues that relate to the improvement of the curriculum. The quality assurance committee is gradually beginning to develop a culture of assurance in the college. Its first report to the academic board in 1998 showed that although achievement rates, in many cases, were at, or above, benchmarks, retention was poor, or very poor, in many areas of the college. Although retention levels remain a significant weakness in many areas of provision, the college now has a retention strategy and staff awareness has been raised. The quality assurance committee also developed the current course review process and has established criteria for dealing with courses that are underperforming. The committee, together with the principal, annually reviews a sample of courses that have failed to meet these criteria.

57 The college's quality assurance system is clearly linked to the college's self-assessment process. Programme managers produce a three-part course review each year. The first part contains targets for course recruitment, retention and achievement. The second is a termly record of rates of student retention, and the third is an evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, together with an action plan intended to lead to improvement. Course reviews form the basis of each school's self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the college's assessment that there is not a thorough approach to the completion or filing of course reviews and that many of them are insufficiently self-critical.

Cross-college Provision

58 The college has operated a lesson observation programme for two years. A team of observers visits about 80 lessons each year. Grading does not sufficiently acknowledge national standards. The grades awarded for the lessons observed were significantly higher than those published in *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*, a point acknowledged in the college's self-assessment report. Grades were also generous when compared with inspectors' judgements. Although the college maintains close links with its franchise partners, including making visits and observing lessons, franchise partners are not included in the college's quality assurance system. The college did not identify this weakness in its self-assessment report. The college has a comprehensive internal verification system. It has clear guidance notes for internal verifiers and moderators and a checklist for good practice. The internal verification system is integrated with each school and programme area; the process works well. The college has established standards for most of its support functions. For some, there are service level agreements with quantifiable targets; for others, where quantifiable targets are difficult to set and measure, more general guidelines are used. Self-assessments are produced for all support activities which are then incorporated in the cross-college section of the self-assessment report.

59 Teaching staff have not been appraised for some time, a weakness acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The college had operated a biennial appraisal system but this became unwieldy and difficult to operate. It was replaced, as a temporary measure, by a joint review at which teachers discussed their progress and staff development needs with a manager. As a consequence of its recent re-accreditation as an Investor in People, the college is introducing a new appraisal system and has undertaken to appraise all teachers

before the end of the academic year 2000-01. All new staff receive induction to the college. Staff appointed within the last 18 months expressed satisfaction with the process. The staff development needs of most teachers and support staff are well met. The college maintains a record of all external staff development and an evaluation of its effectiveness.

60 The college publishes its commitment to its students, the community and employers in its charter. There is also a separate charter for full-time and part-time students. These outline in appropriate detail what students can expect from the college during their studies. The college monitors the views of its students by annually surveying a sample of full-time students. This survey is evaluated by the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA). There is no evidence of the results of this survey being used to achieve improvement in the college. Each academic school, and some services, also administer their own student surveys. The results of these are retained in each area. The college has a complaints procedure but does not keep a record of, or report on, the number or severity of complaints made. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report.

Governance

Grade 2

61 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the overall judgement in the self-assessment report, but identified an additional weakness.

Key strengths

- effective working relationships with senior managers
- effective arrangements for clerking
- open and effective conduct of public business
- the sound review of the performance of senior postholders

Cross-college Provision

Weaknesses

- a low rate of attendance at meetings and training sessions
- no published programme for the management of corporation business

62 Governors work effectively in partnership with senior managers. They carefully observe the distinction between governance and management and have been able to provide effective guidance at key times. This strength was recorded in the self-assessment report. A governors' working party has provided helpful support to senior managers which has resulted in the refinement of strategic objectives and clarification of the accountability of managers. Governors scrutinise information provided by managers and seek confirmation that actions are being implemented. During a recent meeting, governors contributed their own experiences to a lively debate on improving rates of student retention and made helpful recommendations. The corporation fulfils its responsibilities for the appraisal of senior managers. Performance reviews are thorough and clearly identify targets for improvement. These reviews are now linked directly to achievement of the college's strategic objectives.

63 The corporation has redetermined its membership at 20 following the introduction of the new instrument of government in August 1999. The determined membership comprises seven business governors, two staff governors, one student, one parent, two local authority nominees, three community nominees, three co-opted governors and the principal. The corporation currently has 14 members, many of whom are recent appointments to replace retiring or resigning governors. There were a number of resignations in the months preceding inspection owing to pressure of governors' other commitments which has led to difficulties in maintaining quoracy at meetings. Meetings have occasionally terminated early when

governors have had to leave, and therefore a few matters have not been attended to sufficiently promptly. The search committee is working effectively to try to fill the vacancies.

64 The corporation's clerk is the deputy principal of the college. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that she provides an efficient and effective service. Agenda, minutes and supporting papers prepared for the corporation and its committees are of a high standard. The corporation is aware of the potential conflict of interest resulting from the clerk being a senior manager at the college. As the deputy principal has overall responsibility for finance at the college, the corporation has recently appointed a deputy clerk to service the audit committee, with a view to extending this appointment to other aspects of the corporation's work.

65 The corporation has established six committees: employment policy and remuneration; audit; finance; search; student; and corporate strategy. The finance committee closely scrutinises the budget and management accounts and advises the corporation on financial matters. The audit committee monitors the work of the internal and external auditors effectively and prepares an annual report on its work for the corporation. The corporate strategy committee, comprising the other committee chairs, has responsibility for overseeing the strategic planning process, and reviewing levels of student retention and achievement. Governors have been assertive in seeking responses from managers about areas of concern, and in doing so have helped to sharpen the college's focus on issues in specific curriculum areas. The search committee operates effectively in reviewing all applications for membership of the corporation. Retiring members should they wish to remain on the board, are required to re-apply and be considered afresh for governor vacancies. Appointments are generally for a term of three years; three terms are regarded as the normal

Cross-college Provision

maximum. There is no published, annual programme of business to guide the work of the corporation and its committees. The strategic planning cycle has been revised, but there is no calendar to specify the nature, frequency and level of reporting to governors to assure them that the strategic direction they have set is being followed. There is a clear annual programme for the work of audit and search committees.

66 The corporation conducts its business in accordance with a clear set of standing orders. Collectively the code of conduct, code of ethics, standing orders and other corporation documents contained in the governors' handbook embody much good practice on the open conduct of business. Governors are also required annually to update the register of interests and reconfirm their eligibility to be governors. 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.

67 The corporation regularly assess its own effectiveness. Governors are required to complete an individual training and development plan which encourages them to identify their development needs and how they would like them addressed. A programme of training events, including an annual retreat, has been offered for the past two years. Events arranged have included contributions from staff, students and external consultants. As recognised in the self-assessment report, attendance has been disappointing at less than 50%.

Management

Grade 3

68 Inspectors and auditors broadly agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses and considered some strengths to be overstated.

Key strengths

- an open and consultative management style
- an effective organisational structure
- good management of the curriculum
- an effective business development centre

Weaknesses

- insufficiently accurate management information
- insufficient rigour in advancing key developments
- some deficiencies in strategic planning
- the reluctance of a few areas of the college to embrace change

69 The college has been through a period of reorganisation and change since the previous inspection, including the appointment of a new principal. In order to secure efficiencies, a new management structure was introduced in September 2000, together with changes to staff contracts. Further amendments are being implemented. These changes, whilst necessary and well conceived, have taken a long time to implement which is partly due to the reluctance of some staff to accept the need for different ways of working, and partly to managers' unwillingness to move forward without consensus. Managers have taken care to consult and negotiate on all changes, but two proposals were not implemented when agreement could not be reached. In the self-assessment report, the college recognises the need to control expenditure on staffing. Control is being

Cross-college Provision

achieved through restructuring, and careful monitoring of teaching staff utilisation. There are still weaknesses in the monitoring of part-time lecturer hours, but the college anticipates that these will be resolved when the new contracts are introduced.

70 The management structure is clear. Responsibilities and accountabilities are well defined and widely understood. The senior management team comprises the principal, deputy principal, and three assistant principals who have responsibilities for business development, curriculum operation and curriculum and student services. Significant benefits are derived from the management of all academic schools by one assistant principal. For example, there is effective collaboration between heads of school. Support for heads of school has been strengthened by the recent appointment of programme managers. This new cadre of managers is effectively supported by a comprehensive induction and training programme. Managers operate in an open and consultative manner and communications are strengthened through a comprehensive cycle of meetings. There are regular newsletters and the principal holds monthly briefings for staff on current issues and specific topics affecting the college and the further education sector. Changes arising from the requirements set out in the Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE's) publication, *Qualifying for Success: Post-16 curriculum reform* have been carefully planned and are being monitored.

71 The current strategic plan is an update of the plan for the previous three years. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment that market research needs to be further developed in the formulation of the next plan. The operating plan shows how strategic aims will be implemented. The plan is ambitious but contains too many unrealistically broad objectives. Collaboration between senior managers and governors has reduced them to seven key objectives, each with a specific target.

For example, one aim is the implementation of the retention strategy, and the target is to improve the rate of retention across the college by at least 5% in 2001. This approach is not yet used at all levels in the college. Plans for curriculum areas vary, and do not as a matter of routine incorporate actions arising from self-assessment. The senior management team regularly reviews the college's achievement of its strategic aims.

72 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. Budgets presented to the finance committee and the corporation include a commentary on key assumptions and an analysis of risks. Management accounts are prepared monthly and on time, and are presented to each meeting of the corporation's finance committee and to each meeting of the corporation. Presentations of accounts include an income and expenditure account, a balance sheet, a 12-month rolling cashflow forecast and a useful commentary on the figures. The college has an experienced and qualified finance team.

73 Management information is unreliable. The system installed since the previous inspection is not yet operating effectively. Procedures for gathering and recording information about individual students are not thorough. Reports from the student database are not available for managers, and some decisions are still based on locally recorded information. The submission of the ISR to the FEFC has been consistently late. The college has taken action to improve the situation, including investment in appropriate software, but this weakness, which was recorded in the self-assessment report, persists.

74 The work of the business development centre has made a significant contribution to college objectives, increasing and extending sources of income and widening participation in further education. Curriculum schools work

Cross-college Provision

with the centre to deliver innovative provision. There is an extensive and effective programme of training for local industries. The college is a registered learning centre for University for Industry (Ufi). Franchised provision is effectively managed as part of the college's strategic approach to widening participation and the college's expectations of partners are clearly laid out in a comprehensive handbook.

75 There is a clear policy for equal opportunities accompanied by a policy on bullying and harassment. Health and safety issues are well managed. All staff have a health and safety handbook and appropriate training has been provided.

Conclusions

76 The college produced a comprehensive self-assessment report, covering all aspects of college provision. The report served as a useful basis for planning and conducting the inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses recognised in the

report. Some additional strengths and weaknesses were identified by inspectors. Although the college in its overall self-assessment recognised retention levels as an issue for the college, some programme areas gave insufficient emphasis to weaknesses in rates of retention among their students. Some curriculum areas in their contributions to the self-assessment report gave insufficient prominence to weaknesses in the standard of teaching and learning. Inspectors agreed with the grades awarded by the college in three of the curriculum areas. In the three other curriculum areas, the grades awarded by inspectors were one lower than those awarded by the college. In four of the cross-college areas, inspectors agreed with the grades awarded by the college but in the fifth, awarded a grade one lower than the college.

77 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 2000)

Age	%
Under 16	1
16-18 years	17
19-24 years	14
25+ years	66
Not known	2
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 2000)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation) and entry level	14
Level 2 (intermediate)	26
Level 3 (advanced)	18
Level 4/5 (higher)	1
Level not specified	22
Non-schedule 2	19
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision (%)
Science	438	1,026	13
Agriculture	13	23	0
Construction	20	73	1
Engineering	111	430	5
Business	171	940	10
Hotel and catering	124	1,790	17
Health and community care	266	3,209	31
Art and design	210	334	5
Humanities	252	1,382	15
Basic education	18	309	3
Total	1,623	9,516	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1998-99 ISR data, the college recruited 6% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	105	67	0	172
Supporting direct learning contact	68	10	0	78
Other support	73	0	0	73
Total	246	77	0	323

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1998	1999	2000
Income	£8,876,000	£9,252,000	£9,445,000*
Average level of funding (ALF)	£17.06	£16.78	£17.10
Payroll as a proportion of income	67%	67%	70%
Achievement of funding target	95%	99%	95%
Diversity of income	21%	22%	24%
Operating surplus	£157,000	£25,000	-£121,000

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

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

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

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1998-99 (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

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

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

*provisional data

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
1	Number of starters	223	561	311	1,196	1,391	1,245
	Retention (%)	68	72	73	70	70	74
	Achievement (%)	50	73	68	57	45	46
2	Number of starters	1,173	1,304	962	1,649	1,734	1,410
	Retention (%)	73	70	69	75	79	71
	Achievement (%)	44	73	78	54	59	63
3	Number of starters	1,564	1,933	1,578	1,603	1,553	1,325
	Retention (%)	81	75	66	74	79	70
	Achievement (%)	73	79	84	60	57	66
4 or 5	Number of starters	4	24	4	272	293	258
	Retention (%)	100	96	75	81	86	76
	Achievement (%)	50	83	100	79	58	82
Short courses	Number of starters	572	592	951	4,797	5,055	5,684
	Retention (%)	91	96	96	94	95	96
	Achievement (%)	75	89	80	88	84	90
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	308	261	1,368	1,188	392	563
	Retention (%)	77	79	89	74	84	81
	Achievement (%)	57	83	93	72	46	76

Source: ISR

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