

REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE

Gateway Sixth Form College

April 1994

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

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The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a statutory duty to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements to assess the quality of provision in the further education sector. It discharges the duty in part through its inspectorate, which inspects and reports on each college in the sector every four years. The Council's inspectorate also assesses and reports on a national basis on specific curriculum areas and advises the Council's quality assessment committee.

College inspections involve both full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have specialist knowledge and experience in the areas they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member from outside the world of education and a nominated member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are described in the Council Circular 93/28. In the course of inspecting colleges, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also summarise their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses using a five-point scale. The descriptors for the grades are:

- *grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- *grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- *grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- *grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- *grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths*

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 25/94

GATEWAY SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

EAST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected August 1993 - January 1994

Summary

Gateway Sixth Form College provides a wide range of GCE A level and GCSE courses for students mainly in the 16 to 19 age range. GNVQs at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels are being developed to supplement the few vocational diplomas currently on offer. The college has close links with local schools and community colleges. Governors are strongly committed to the college and active in its support. The college is successfully managed: key features are the consultative styles of working and clear lines of communication with staff. Students benefit from effective teaching and strong tutorial support, and achieve generally satisfactory results in external examinations. Academic work is well researched, although the number of books in the library is limited and information technology facilities are still developing. The college should address the inadequacies of the management information system. It should also continue to strengthen its quality assurance procedures, improve examination performance in a few subjects, up-date equipment, increase the level of learning support and develop strategies for the teaching of inter-personal skills.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	2
Governance and management	2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Social sciences	2	Mathematics	2
Psychology	2	Technology	3
English	2	Science	3
History	3	Computing	3
Economics & business studies	2		

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INTRODUCTION

1 Gateway Sixth Form College, Leicester, was inspected in three stages between 24 August 1993 and 28 January 1994. Twenty days were used to inspect enrolment, induction and specialist subject areas. A total of 90 learning sessions were observed. In January, a team of six inspectors spent a further 28 inspector days in the college to inspect aspects of cross-college provision. Discussions were held with staff, students, college governors, representatives of local schools, the Leicestershire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the local community. Inspectors' assessments were set against the targets which the college had established for itself in its mission statement, strategic plan and other policy and planning documents.

2 The inspection was carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines set out in Council Circular 93/28. The framework describes a four-year inspection cycle. When this cycle becomes fully established, colleges will have the opportunity to respond to the findings of earlier inspection visits before their quadrennial inspection and the subsequent published report. As the inspection of Gateway College occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response was not available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Gateway Sixth Form College in Leicestershire, previously a technical grammar school, was established as a sixth form college in 1976. It operates from one main site in the centre of Leicester with playing fields three miles away at Blackbird Road. The main site is surrounded by the buildings of De Montfort University. There is little private housing in the immediate vicinity. Students are recruited from some 45 different secondary schools in Leicestershire and other counties. The number of 16 year olds in Leicestershire has fallen for the last seven years but it is set to rise again in the years up to 1999. In 1993, 68.8 per cent of students in Leicestershire remained in full-time education after the age of 16, 13.6 per cent of them entering sixth form colleges. In the city of Leicester the equivalent figure was 65.3 per cent, with 21.8 per cent going to sixth form colleges.

4 The college achieved its target for growth in 1993. At the time of the inspection, 915 students were enrolled at the college. Of these, 788 were full-time students and 127 were part-time students attending day or evening vocational courses. Eighty-one per cent of students were in the age range 16-19 (figure 1) and 52 per cent were from ethnic minority groups. There was a full-time equivalent staff of 63 teachers and 18 support staff: 60 teachers and seven support staff had full-time posts (figure 2). The college is organised into five curriculum sections and six pastoral divisions. The senior management team comprises the principal and three vice-principals.

5 Leicester has a population of approximately 270,000. It is known as the city of 1,001 trades. The traditional industries are hosiery, knitwear, footwear, an allied machine tool industry, general engineering, plastics

and printing. Many of these have been under threat from the recession and cheap imports, but are re-emerging with new technology and innovations in design. Service industries are springing up at a rapid rate and a number of organisations have re-located from London. The unemployment rate for Leicester is nearly 15 per cent. For the county of Leicestershire it is approximately 8 per cent. Within the city, 28.5 per cent of the population are from ethnic minority backgrounds, mainly of Asian origin.

6 The college's mission is to strive for excellence in everything it does. Its aims include a continuing commitment to provide the special care necessary to meet the needs of each individual student; open access and equality of opportunity; the maintenance of high standards; provision of an orderly, caring and happy pluralist environment; encouragement of self-discipline and respect for other people's opinions; development of an understanding of the ways of life in a multi-cultural society, and further development of community links.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college is one of five further education sector colleges in the city of Leicester. There are two other sixth form colleges and two general further education colleges within a radius of just over one mile. Within the county of Leicestershire there are five general further education institutions and a sixth form college. The city contains schools with a mix of 11-16 and 11-18 age groups and the county also has 14-18 schools.

8 The majority of students are within the 16-19 age range which is the college's main target group. Over 95 per cent of full-time students study courses within a wide range of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education (GCE) advanced level subjects. There are 30 GCSE and 25 GCE A level subjects, including religious education at both levels. The remainder of full-time students study for intermediate vocational diplomas. Currently, the range of vocational diplomas is limited but there are plans to offer General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) qualifications at intermediate and advanced levels over the next two years. In addition, the college is planning a GNVQ qualification in business at foundation level which will have additional language and learning support. An acceleration of curriculum development work is required if these plans are to come to fruition within the intended timescale. Full-time enrolments by curriculum area are shown in figure 3; total enrolments by level of study in figure 4.

9 The college has started to recruit students from traditionally under-represented sections of the population. The women's access course in information technology (IT) is being operated in conjunction with De Montfort University and a limited part-time adult programme has been introduced. There are plans for further development of adult access courses and part-time vocational courses. Currently no provision exists for open learning at the college.

10 Staff at the college are aware of, and respond, to the government's aims and policies for further education. The college management is particularly responsive to the policies of the FEFC. The college has embarked on the construction of its own students' charter. A working party has been formed and staff and students have been consulted. Good progress has been made and the college is completing the final draft for submission to the governing body for approval.

11 The college has excellent links with, and is well regarded by, local schools and community colleges. A series of visits, events and collaborative working, including the establishing of link courses, have helped to increase the intake from feeder schools. The college works closely with community colleges on schedule 2 funding applications. Despite intense competition for post-16 students in the city, there are some good links with local further education colleges, and close collaboration, including some sharing of personnel, with a neighbouring sixth form college. The college also co-operates with the Leicester Adult Education College in running some evening vocational classes. Higher education links have been formed to provide 'taster' experiences for students. The college is involved in a project with the Leicester University School of Education to encourage ethnic minority students to enter teaching. De Montfort University is developing links on access courses and a 'compact' arrangement for student progression. The college participates in a limited number of exchanges and work experience placements in Europe.

12 Valuable contacts with industry have been established through work experience, compacts and project work, but there is scope for greater involvement with industry. Advisory groups have been formed in business studies, care, art, design and technology. There are good working relationships with the TEC and the college is responsive to TEC initiatives.

13 Although ground floor rooms are accessible to those in wheelchairs, the college site is generally unsuitable for people with impaired mobility. The college has developed facilities for students with sensory disabilities, and negotiations are underway to develop support for partially-sighted students. Approximately 16 per cent of full-time students receive special learning support.

14 Students are sent a letter inviting them to take part in a weekly act of collective worship. The college has a multi-faith centre for students and staff which is open for worship throughout the day. The facility is particularly well used by Muslim students from the college and from the neighbouring De Montfort University.

15 An equal opportunities policy and associated codes of practice are in place and an equal opportunities team is helping to raise awareness of key issues. Staff are being encouraged, as part of staff development, to look at equal opportunities within the curriculum. As yet, specific programmes of action for equal opportunities are limited, and it remains for the college to address staffing issues related to the implementation of its policy.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

16 The college governors are drawn from a variety of backgrounds. They make a significant contribution to the successful operation of the college at strategic level. There are eight members of the board with professional and business experience. The other members are the principal, three members co-opted from the college, a parent, and staff and student representatives. There is no representative from the TEC on the board. The board receives information on examination results and student destinations but has not yet formally considered indicators for monitoring the college's progress in meeting its aims.

17 The college provides the board and its subcommittees with good administrative support and this ensures an efficient use of members' time. Papers are provided well in advance of meetings. The board and its subcommittees are appropriately involved in the strategic planning cycle, in monitoring financial matters and in the development of a variety of college policies, including the policy on equal opportunities. Board members are satisfied with the level of information supplied by the college. The student member is offered a separate briefing prior to meetings to enable her to participate fully in the deliberations of the board.

18 The strategic plan is a comprehensive operational document. It contains the college's mission statement and its underpinning aims. The college's overall aims are reviewed annually together with development plans and objectives for each subject or curriculum area. Subject staff are consulted on the development plans and in consequence these have their general support. Each subject development plan is accompanied by a financial plan setting out the likely costs. The college gathers comprehensive market intelligence and there are detailed analyses of market needs. Courses are revised and replaced as required. Enrolment targets are set within the strategic plan. Student destinations and rates of progression into higher and further education are monitored closely.

19 There are good lines of communication within the management structure. Regular meetings and weekly briefing sheets also help to keep staff well informed. The principal involves himself in a wide range of meetings and this serves to emphasise the consultative style of management. The senior management team meets weekly. The college management team consists of the principal, the three vice-principals and the five curriculum section leaders. Its meetings are efficiently conducted, and task groups reporting to the team are used effectively to develop particular projects. The membership of the college management team ensures that good communications are maintained between senior managers and section leaders, and through section leaders the subject co-ordinators. Section team meetings are particularly effective where there are clearly identified issues on which the views of lecturers are sought. The grouping of subjects within sections provides opportunities for the sharing of ideas and developments across the curriculum.

20 The formal management structure, underpinned by strong informal networks, has met its objectives of improving communications, developing a stronger planning process and increasing staff awareness of resource issues. It is recognised that the structure is not fully effective in supporting some new curriculum developments, such as GNVQ, which require planning across the college. There is a commitment to review the present structure in the light of curricular and timetabling issues. A number of curriculum developments are seen as innovative, interesting and challenging, and subject co-ordinators are generally well supported by their subject teams in undertaking the required development work. The co-operation of all staff is enabling the curriculum to move forward to meet the needs identified in the college's annual needs analysis.

21 Although the management information system effectively meets some routine monitoring needs, its functions are limited. It is unable to provide unit costs across the college and cannot readily meet all the internal and external demands for information. On occasions, statistical data have to be calculated manually. The software currently in use and the staffing of the management information system are under review.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

22 Much of the college's marketing and publicity is efficiently concentrated on fifteen 11-16 feeder schools. Course publicity is perceived to be professional and honest. The data acquired from school applications, together with information on students' subsequent destinations, are used to inform future provision and marketing. Staff of the four feeder schools visited by the inspection team expressed appreciation of the relationship they enjoyed with the college. Each school has a link person and contacts between the schools and the college, include attendance at careers events, open days, staff visits, the Gateway Newsletter to schools, letters detailing destinations of past pupils, 'taster' days for potential students at the college, and link courses. A range of collaborative projects includes the city challenge partnership with Fulhurst School and the centre for the study of comprehensive schools project on progression with Rushey Mead School.

23 The procedures for dealing with applications, selection and enrolment of students were generally effective. There were some minor difficulties in dealing with payments of accounts during enrolment. Considerable information and guidance are offered to students and parents at open evenings, interviews and induction to ensure that students are on programmes which match their achievements and future aims. A meeting with potential students and their parents in June provides an opportunity for briefings and for the distribution of an information pack. Letters to parents are produced in English and Gujarati. The information pack sent to all students contains an options questionnaire and personal action-plan proforma which enable students to prepare for discussion with their tutor at enrolment. Almost all students arrive for enrolment with the correct documentation properly completed, which enables the tutors to use their

time effectively and the students to receive good advice based on their previous achievements. Students are satisfied with the information and guidance they receive and particularly welcome the opportunity to visit the college on open days. As a part of the familiarisation process, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities meet with the foundation course tutor while still at their school, and they are able to recognise, and be recognised by, a member of the college staff on arrival for enrolment. Opportunities for the accreditation of prior learning are limited by the nature of the curriculum offered. It is anticipated that accreditation will become a more important factor as a result of the planned modularisation of provision. In most areas, students were able to transfer between subjects within the first six weeks of term after consultation with their tutor.

24 There are no professionally qualified counselling staff and there is limited training of staff for tutorial responsibilities. However, tutorial support and guidance, personal counselling and careers education are generally effective. In addition to a short daily contact with the tutor during registration, a regular tutorial period is provided for all students in groups of approximately 17. There are some compulsory tutorial modules; otherwise, tutors have freedom to use periods as they think fit. Well-prepared materials on a wide range of topics are available from the library and tutors make good use of these. Completion of records of achievement provides opportunities for staff and students to review progress. Tutorials are monitored by the pastoral team leaders who meet weekly with their teams. Tutors follow students through their whole programme in the college over one, two or three years. Subject tutors refer poor work to personal tutors and, if necessary, a contract is agreed with students and their parents.

25 The college monitors attendance effectively. If absence is persistent, parents are involved and students are required to sign themselves in and out of the college. A student contract is being prepared to replace the present description of students' rights and responsibilities contained in the prospectus. At between 5 per cent and 7 per cent, the proportion of students not completing their courses is low.

26 Learning support is developing rapidly. This year, for the first time, an initial diagnostic assessment devised by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) has been used to test literacy and numeracy. The results of the tests indicate that 25 per cent of full-time students would benefit from additional help in these areas and that a significant number also require assistance with language. Over 120 students currently receive support, 27 of whom are students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A team of five staff and a learning support co-ordinator offer a range of activities which are effective in assisting students whose first language is not English. Although there are plans to develop a self-access resource centre, there are limited facilities at present to support those students who wish to continue to improve their language skills outside timetabled sessions. Where needs are identified, the mathematics

department offers additional support on numeracy through an appointment system. Given the extension of its vocational curriculum and the increasing student demand for support in developing numeracy skills, the college should review its provisions for mathematics across the curriculum.

27 A careers policy has yet to be formalised, but the college has an agreement with the careers service and students are well supported by the careers programme. Guidance for students wishing to progress to higher education is of high quality. There is an effective higher education link programme operating through the city cluster of schools and colleges which gives students the opportunity to sample higher education classes at three universities. At the time of the inspection second-year GCE A level students had made their selection of university and were aware of the points score they required for entry.

28 The college is good at consulting students about the issues affecting them. Discussions are taking place with the student committee about improved social facilities for students which may also, indirectly, relieve pressures on library space.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

29 Of the 90 teaching sessions inspected, 50 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed the weaknesses and in a further 42 per cent the strengths and weaknesses were evenly balanced. The strongest areas of work were social sciences, mathematics, and economics and business studies.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
A/AS level	3	22	18	1	0	44
GCSE	1	7	11	0	0	19
Vocational diploma	0	4	0	0	0	4
Other	0	7	8	8	0	23
Totals	4	40	37	9	0	90

30 Lesson preparation was thorough and learning activities were generally well planned and well structured. There was a strong team approach to the development of programmes of study and a consistent format for schemes of work. Teaching methods were varied. Often, as in the use of enterprise activities within business studies and the practical experiments within mathematics, they were also imaginative. In most sessions, there was a balance between the input of information and the development of understanding and practical skills. There were also examples of weaker teaching. In a number of technology sessions the pace was too fast for some students to consolidate their learning. On occasion, teachers of computing failed to provide the practical work which would

have helped to reinforce students' understanding of computer science theory. In some history, English and science lessons there was too much reliance on lengthy formal inputs from the teacher.

31 Staff were enthusiastic and committed. The good relations with students helped to create an atmosphere conducive to learning. Students were appreciative of the extensive opportunities for individual subject tutorials. However, some subject specialist teachers paid insufficient attention to students with learning difficulties, slower learners, and students who were experiencing difficulties with English as a second language. The levels of learning support available in the classroom were not always adequate.

32 Students are provided with clear study guidelines or course handbooks. Learning resource material is well structured. There are some good self-study materials, particularly in science, which enable students to study at their own pace and to develop greater independence as learners. IT support is well used, but staff should ensure that the development of self-study materials keeps pace with the software in use.

33 The progress of students is closely monitored and the college keeps comprehensive records. Record of achievement proforma are used by students and subject teachers to record detailed comments including agreed action plans. These are reviewed by pastoral tutors and divisional heads before being placed in the students' personal file for future reference.

34 Methods of assessment are appropriate. Students' work is marked and returned on time. In the majority of areas, schemes of work and syllabuses are suitably matched to students' levels of competence. The conceptual demands of the chosen syllabuses for economics are, at times, too challenging for some of the students enrolled on the course.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

35 Students appeared well motivated. In class, they generally achieved satisfactory standards and, at times, these standards were high. Final-year sociology students demonstrated a high degree of maturity in their presentational skills; GCE A level business studies students' production projects were of a high standard; and some of the investigative reports in A level mathematics also reached high standards. Practical activities in technology and science were completed competently and with due regard for safety. In computing, many students quickly developed the necessary practical skills and the knowledge to work with a minimum of supervision. In most courses, the standards achieved were in line with the range of students' abilities and academic progress was generally consistent with course aims and objectives. In a few instances, students failed to do themselves justice because of the limited experience of writing in English. Class teachers did not always take the opportunities which were available to encourage and support the development of writing skills.

36 There is an appropriate cross-college strategy for developing the IT skills of all students, but the application of these skills is not adequately

reinforced by teachers in the curriculum areas. A small but growing number of students are taking the opportunity to develop their skills through self-study programmes which lead to formal accreditation. In the last academic year, 36 students completed the Royal Society of Arts computer literacy and IT programme. In a number of courses, suitable opportunities are provided for students to undertake group activities and develop their oral communication skills, but the college has no common strategy for the development of inter-personal skills

37 Examination results at GCSE have shown an overall improvement over the last three years and are now in line with national average pass rates. In 1993, the overall percentage of passes at grades A-C was 51.4 per cent compared with a national average of 51.3 per cent. Results in art, computing, geography and religious studies were at least 10 per cent above the national A-C pass rate. In biology, chemistry and economics, results were below national averages by more than 30 per cent.

38 In 1991, the college's overall GCE A level pass rate, grades A-E, was 75.2 per cent. The overall pass rate for 1993 was 78.8 per cent compared to a national average of 79.8 per cent. Results in art, computing, English literature, German, music and religious studies were above the national average pass rate. In biology, results were 20 per cent below.

39 The college analyses its external examination performances in terms of the results which students achieve nationally. It also monitors any value added by comparing students' achievements on exit from GCE A level courses with their entry qualifications. In 1993, the value-added analysis indicated that students studying art, computing, economics, English, German, psychology, sociology and religious studies achieved better results than would normally be expected from their previous academic performance. In biology and mathematics students underachieved.

40 Student destination statistics are collected and analysed. The results of the 1993 analysis are shown below.

Students' destinations	Per cent
Higher education	36.8
Further education	23.0
Employment	25.9
Youth training, other training and unemployment	14.3

QUALITY ASSURANCE

41 Quality assurance procedures continue to evolve in line with the policy laid down in the strategic plan, which includes the setting of objectives for quality planning, specific development, implementation dates, control management, monitoring and evaluation, and resource implications. The aim is to develop systems based on existing good practice and recognised models of quality assurance. Some procedures are already in place and are contributing to the achievement of quality and high

standards. Others have yet be implemented. All staff have had the opportunity to contribute to the development of these procedures so that they have a sense of involvement in what is being done. The college intends to produce a quality assurance manual describing aims, policy, and practice. To signal the priority being given to quality assurance the college has named this academic year, 'Quality Year'. Major quality assurance initiatives include: the introduction of a quality management committee; the development of a set of performance indicators; application for Investors in People status; implementation of the Charter for Further Education; and curriculum-led staff development.

42 Membership of the quality management committee consists of the college management team, subject co-ordinators and heads of division. The committee has achieved its first objective to develop an overall quality plan through the piloting of a quality check-list in each of the subject areas. These check-lists identify quality indicators and provide a methodology for the analysis of quality in terms of curriculum and delivery processes. Some subject groups have completed their quality check-lists and are monitoring progress in relation to them; others have yet to complete this stage.

43 The college aims to establish a set of valid and reliable indicators to measure performance in all aspects of college activity. Those currently in use include customer satisfaction, recruitment, destinations, levels of attendance, withdrawal rates, group size, examination results, added-value analysis and course costs per student.

44 Each year there is a review of progress towards delivery of the operational development plan and course-completion data including examination results and withdrawal rates. In December 1993, subject co-ordinators produced review and evaluation reports for their subject areas. Two subject areas are piloting procedures for student review and evaluation using suitably constructed questionnaires.

45 The staff-development programme supports the quality objectives identified in the college's strategic and operating plans. It has been targeted towards curriculum development and other new initiatives. The proposed appraisal system has the potential to provide a good balance of staff-development activities to meet both individual and institutional needs. Staff are sometimes required to evaluate their staff-development experience but this is not always the case. In 1993, the Leicester Training and Enterprise Council agreed to sponsor the college in its aim to be recognised as an Investor in People. Advice on the implementation of the Investors in People process is being provided by an external consultant and it is planned to start development by autumn 1994. All members of the staff have been briefed on this. The next step is to involve them in workshop activity related to quality and the dissemination of good practice.

RESOURCES

46 The college's unit of resource for 1992-93 was £2,819 per weighted full-time equivalent student which compared with a median of £2,647 for sixth-form colleges nationally. Figures 5 and 6 provide summaries of the college's estimated income and expenditure for 1993-94. Following incorporation, the college has abandoned the system of allocating funds on a historical basis and moved to fully-costed development planning. Plans are prepared by subject co-ordinators in conjunction with section leaders. Costings are presented under specified heads. Expenditure is monitored by the vice-principal responsible for finance. Staff at all levels are familiar with the new procedures which appear to be working satisfactorily. The college is also beginning to calculate unit costings for the major areas of its course provision as a guide to financial planning.

Staffing

47 The college has a sufficient number of teachers. They are well qualified for the subjects they teach and are appropriately deployed. Relatively few of the staff have an industrial or commercial background and this will become a more significant issue as the college develops its vocational portfolio. Most of the teaching staff are in the 30-50 age group. There are approximately 31 per cent more male than female teachers and women are under represented at senior level. Only four of the 60 full-time teachers are from ethnic minorities despite the high proportion of students from the Asian community. Two of these, however, are in positions of responsibility: one for pastoral care, the other for industrial and community links. A well-planned induction programme is available for full-time and part-time staff who are new appointments to the college. Support staff work flexibly and provide a good level of support throughout the college. The exceptions are in the science and design areas where technicians and administrative staff are too few for the work being undertaken.

Accommodation

48 Overall, there is a good range of accommodation which includes some spacious rooms and workshop areas. Corridors and other circulation areas are bright, attractively decorated and maintained in a clean condition. There is a rolling programme for the refurbishment of rooms and some rooms, such as those for music, theatre studies and IT, provide a well-furnished and stimulating learning environment. Most rooms have relevant wall displays and the base rooms frequently have specialist book collections which are available for loan. There is a good-size lecture theatre. Some under-used areas have been effectively converted to provide pleasant teaching or tutorial rooms. Rooms which remain to be refurbished are generally clean and tidy but frequently drab. A number of teaching rooms can only be reached by passing through other rooms. Some large rooms have dividers which add to the flexibility of the accommodation. Furniture in most of the rooms is adequate for purpose and generally well arranged to facilitate classroom activities.

49 The design building has an appropriate range of spacious workshop and other practical areas but these do not offer sufficient flexibility to support a modern multi-skills and multi-media curriculum. The use of this accommodation has been reviewed and the conversion of the ground floor of the building to a more open arrangement will begin this summer. The science building has a good range of generally spacious specialist laboratories but most need refurbishing. A rolling programme of refurbishment began this year with the upgrading of the biology laboratory. This is now an attractive well-furnished facility which includes a seminar room. Subject to funding, the intention is to refurbish at least one of the science laboratories to the same high standard each year. The roof-top huts on the main building are nearly 50 years old and are in a poor state of repair. Internal redecorating and the provision of heating has improved them but they have a limited life and the college is considering the results of a feasibility study for their removal and the provision of alternative accommodation.

50 Student recreation facilities are located in the hall, away from the main building. There are a number of quiet rooms but the accommodation has an uninviting appearance and is small for the number of students. Facilities are limited. Students' views are currently being canvassed on plans for refurbishing the building.

51 Overall, there is a satisfactory balance of specialist and general accommodation. The accommodation is generally well managed. Nevertheless, a recent survey has identified areas of under-utilisation, particularly of the hall and the gymnasium. The college estimates that it can accommodate its projected growth to 1,000 students with more efficient utilisation of existing space. The refectory is adequate but depressing in appearance. Access for students with physical disabilities is poor: ramps are restricted to the ground floors, there are no lifts, and multiple levels on the site make wheelchair access difficult.

Equipment/learning resources

52 The range and quantity of equipment is sufficient to meet the present needs of the curriculum. Most areas are well equipped and some, such as photography and geology are particularly well provided. However, some physics equipment and engineering machine tools are dated and there are no modern computer numerical control machines. The college has introduced a rolling programme for the replacement of equipment with funds to be earmarked annually.

53 Resources for IT are developing. They generally meet the existing needs of students but arrangements are not such as to encourage students to use of the equipment as fully as they might. A new room equipped with modern machines has recently been opened but its use is largely restricted to students taking the BTEC course. There is a separate room for A level and GCSE computer studies students which can be used by other students when machines are free. There is one open-access computer room and

another which is used for group work but which can also be booked by individuals. Self-study facilities in these rooms are well organised and a good range of printed material is provided. Overall, there is a good range of appropriate software including some 25 CD-ROMs. Specialist facilities, normally consisting of a single machine, are being used successfully in some subject areas, such as mathematics and geography. However, there is limited use made of IT for data recording in science laboratories and, with the exception of textiles, on design courses. The college has established an IT development group which advises the management team on the development of hardware and software, and associated staff development. The group has been effective in raising awareness, promoting discussion and persuading the college to purchase new equipment. Nevertheless, the college lacks an overall IT strategy which addresses issues of networking and the long-term development of computing resources.

54 The library stock of 12,000 volumes is small for the student population. The stock is supplemented by specialist collections in subject base rooms but the library has no record of these collections. The overall budget for books in the current year is under £7,000, which is low by national standards. In addition to the college library, there is access to the nearby De Montfort University library on payment of a small fee. Currently, some 250 students are on record as taking advantage of this facility.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

55 The college is making good progress towards achieving its strategic objectives. Important initiatives are underway on several fronts. The particular strengths of the college are:

- a highly-committed governing body, able to offer the college valuable expertise and experience
- a consultative style of management underpinned by good communications across the college
- the wide range of GCSE and GCE A level provision for 16-19 year old students
- strong links with local schools and community colleges
- strong tutorial support and effective teaching strategies
- good initial guidance and a well-planned induction for all students
- well-qualified, committed and experienced teaching staff
- good levels of equipment and learning resources in many areas
- a continuing programme of improvements to accommodation.

56 If the college is to maintain its high standard of provision, it should continue to address the following issues:

- curriculum development aimed at increasing the range of vocational provision
- the capacity of the management information system to respond effectively to the growing demand for information
- the development of individual learning support

-
- strategies for developing inter-personal skills across all areas of the curriculum
 - examination results in some subjects
 - the strengthening of quality assurance procedures
 - improvements to accommodation and the up-dating of equipment
 - the need to increase the library book stock
 - a policy for information technology access, networking and development.

FIGURES

1 Percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)

2 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)

3 Full-time enrolments by curriculum area (1993-94)

4 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)

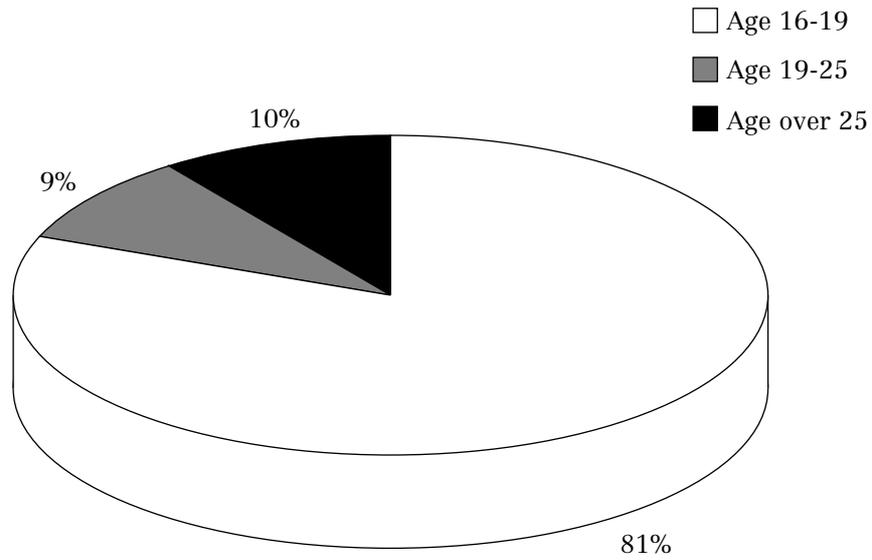
5 Estimated income (12 months to July 1994)

6 Estimated expenditure (12 months to July 1994)

Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

Figure 1

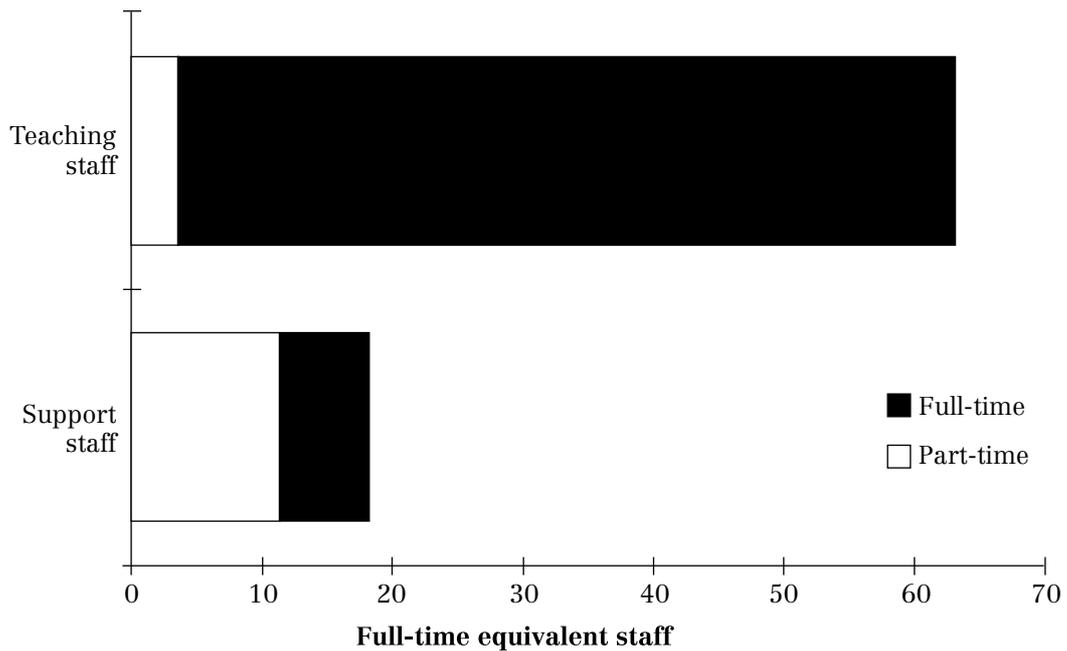
Gateway Sixth Form College: enrolments by age (1993-94)



Enrolments: 915

Figure 2

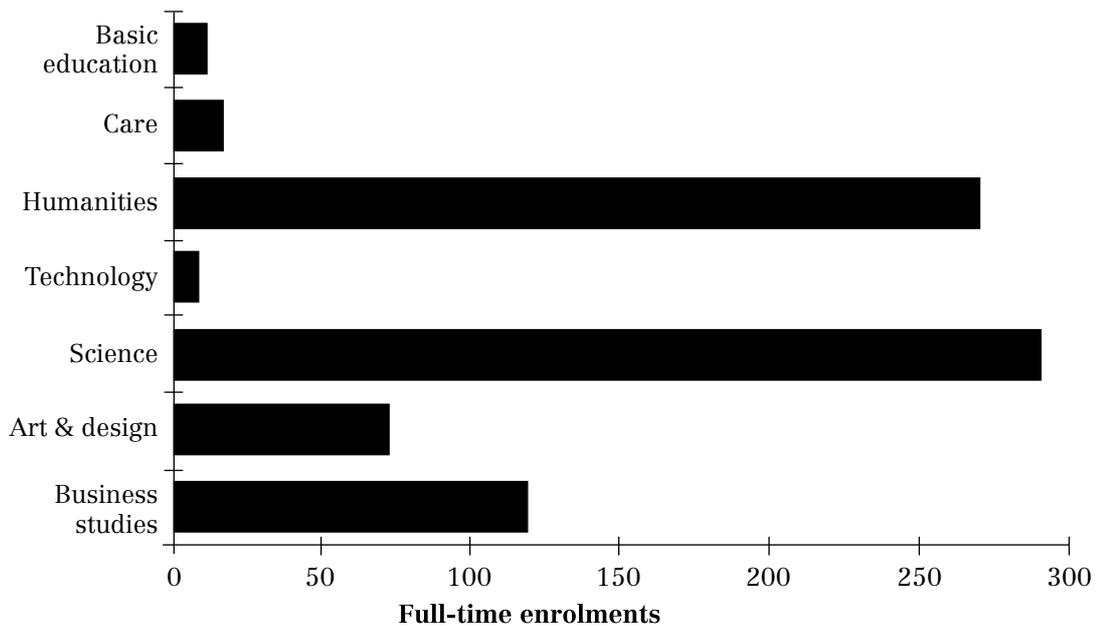
Gateway Sixth Form College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 81

Figure 3

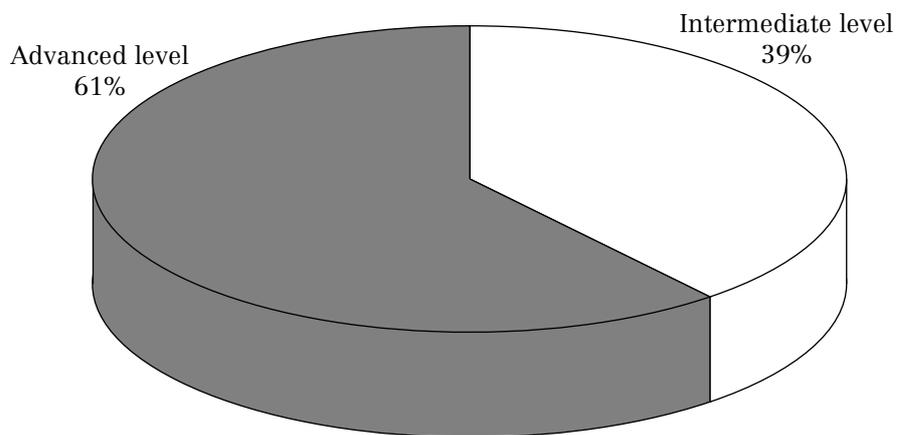
Gateway Sixth Form College: full-time enrolments by curriculum area (1993-94)



Note: the college has 127 (17 full-time equivalent) part-time students.
Full-time enrolments: 788

Figure 4

Gateway Sixth Form College: enrolments by level of study (1993-94)



Enrolments: 915

Figure 5

Gateway Sixth Form College: estimated income (12 months to July 1994)

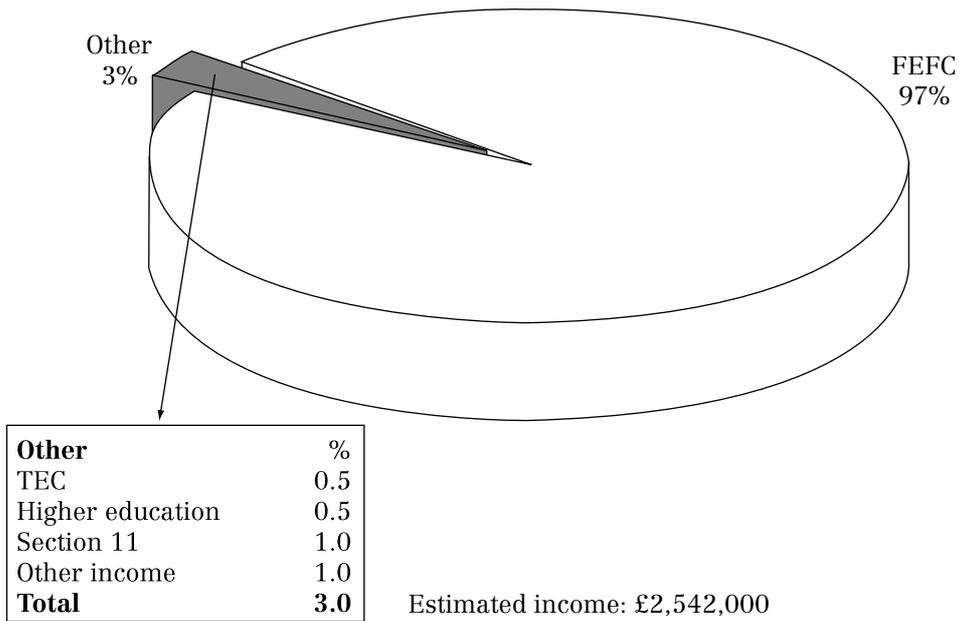
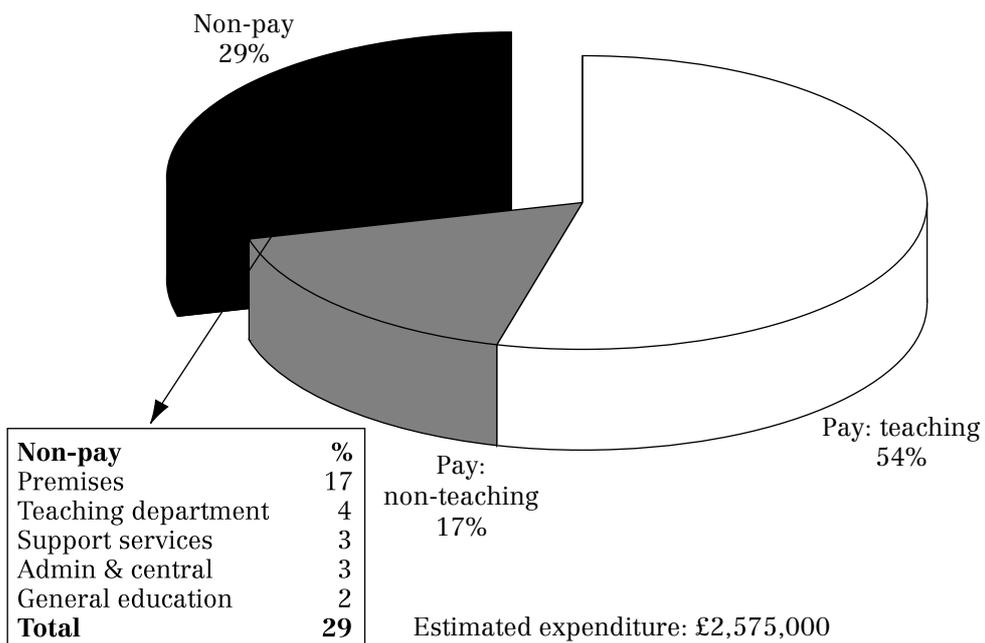


Figure 6

Gateway Sixth Form College: estimated expenditure (12 months to July 1994)



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