

Hereford Sixth Form College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION
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.

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 024 7686 3000
Fax 024 7686 3100
Website www.fefc.ac.uk*

© FEFC 1999 You may photocopy this report and use extracts in promotional or other material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings are not misrepresented.

Contents

Paragraph

Summary

Context

The college and its mission	1
The inspection	6

Curriculum areas

Mathematics	9
Biology	14
English	19
Psychology	25
History and archaeology	32

Cross-college provision

Support for students	40
General resources	46
Quality assurance	53
Governance	59
Management	69
Conclusions	77

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 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	10	53	30	7	–
Cross-college provision	14	54	23	7	2

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*
Sample size: 104 college inspections

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 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which 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

Hereford Sixth Form College

West Midlands Region

Inspected September 1999

Hereford Sixth Form College opened in 1973. For the inspection, the college produced a self-assessment report which was comprehensive and clearly presented. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the report but considered that the college had taken insufficient account of weaknesses in the measurement of retention. Inspectors' judgements were based on more up-to-date data on students' retention than had been available when the college wrote its self-assessment report.

The college offers courses at intermediate and advanced level in four of the 10 programme areas funded by the FEFC. Provision in two of the FEFC's programme areas was inspected and five grades were awarded. Aspects of cross-college provision were also inspected. Students' achievements are outstanding in several areas and teaching is often lively. Inspectors judged a high proportion of lessons to be good or outstanding. Teachers work well together. Arrangements for assessing the quality of teaching work well. Academic leadership is good and the college is effectively managed. There are clear links between strategic objectives and operating statements. Communications are good. Governors monitor the college's educational provision and the students' achievements closely. There has been

a significant improvement in the college's quality assurance process since the last inspection. Students receive good support. The college should: extend the use of IT in the curriculum; reverse the decline in students' retention rates on a significant number of courses; improve the quality of social areas for students; continue to expand library and study facilities; strengthen systems for giving students additional support in numeracy and literacy; review clerking arrangements; make better use of service standards and action plans to remedy weaknesses in provision.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Mathematics	2	Support for students	2
Biology	2	General resources	3
English	2	Quality assurance	2
Psychology	2	Governance	2
History and archaeology	3	Management	2

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Hereford Sixth Form College was established in 1973 as part of the reorganisation of secondary education in and around the city of Hereford. It shares a campus with Herefordshire College of Technology and Herefordshire College of Art and Design. The buildings have been significantly extended and refurbished over the last 26 years.

2 Hereford is a cathedral city which provides a cultural and business centre for the Marches area. The population of over 165,000 is expected to grow by 7% in the next 10 years; 58% of people live in rural areas. The unemployment rate is low.

3 In addition to the three colleges in Hereford, full-time 16- to 19- year-old students attend Holme Lacy College (a member of the Pershore Group of Colleges), schools with sixth forms in Ross, Ledbury, Leominster and Kington and the independent Hereford Cathedral School. Hereford Sixth Form College students comprise one-third of the total of full-time 16- to 19- year-old students in the county. Over 60% of general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) students in Herefordshire are based at the college. The college has strong links with nine local partner schools.

4 In September 1999, there were 1,104 students at the college, the great majority of whom were following GCE A level and GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses. Fifty-one were on general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) courses and 29 were studying for the BTEC national diploma in sport science. Approximately 70% of students progress to higher education. The college employs 76 teaching and 26 support staff. The senior management team comprises the principal, two deputy principals, the finance, management information service, and estate managers, and four senior tutors. A deputy principal manages the curriculum with the help of 10 heads of curriculum areas. The student support and

guidance system is managed by a deputy principal and the four senior tutors.

5 In drawing up its mission, the college took into account its location, the scope of its accommodation and the range of its curriculum. The mission states that the college will:

- provide a high-quality academic education to GCE A level standard for full-time students
- provide a high level of pastoral care to support and guide individual students
- support and promote a programme of recreational and social activities for its students
- involve parents in the academic and personal progress of students and in their decisions regarding higher education and/or employment
- enhance the education provided through the links which students and staff have with the local, national and international communities and local business.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected during the week beginning 27 September 1999. Before the inspection started, inspectors reviewed the college's self-assessment report and considered information about the college held by other directorates of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Inspectors were able to use data on students' achievements produced by the FEFC and based on returns of the college's individualised student record (ISR). The college submitted its own data for 1998-99, which were checked against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The data on students' achievements were largely accurate. The FEFC inspection was carried out by nine inspectors and an auditor for a total of 43 working days. Inspectors observed 56 lessons, evaluated students' work and examined college documents. Meetings were held with college governors, managers, and other college staff and students.

Context

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the 56 lessons inspected, 85% were judged to be good or outstanding and 4% were judged to be less than satisfactory, compared with national averages for 1998-99 of 65% and 6%, respectively.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE AS/A level	16	25	4	0	0	45
GCSE	1	6	2	2	0	11
Total (No.)	17	31	6	2	0	56
Total (%)	30	55	11	4	0	100
National average all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

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

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Hereford Sixth Form College	14.2	90
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

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

Curriculum Areas

Mathematics

Grade 2

9 The inspection covered GCSE and GCE A level mathematics. Inspectors observed 12 lessons. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses it identified. They found some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good quality of most teaching
- outstanding achievements of students in external examinations
- good support for students
- high retention rate on GCSE courses
- emphasis on the development of students' basic skills
- rapidly increasing competence and confidence of the students

Weaknesses

- failure of some teaching to take account of students' differing abilities
- inadequate schemes of work
- a decline in students' retention rates

10 The mathematics department runs modular GCE A level and GCSE courses successfully. GCSE courses are offered over one year, and there is an intensive eight-week GCSE resit course. All students admitted to the college who do not have a grade C or above are required to take the GCSE course. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, the curriculum is organised flexibly. There are four GCE A level syllabuses and students can choose from a range of modules to make up their course. Students have a 'taster' period and are able to change modules part way through their course. A one-year GCE A level course is also available for 'fast-track' students. The mathematics

teachers frequently discuss teaching methods and share resources. Scheduled staff meetings are held but the minutes for these are not recorded effectively.

11 As recognised in the self-assessment report, the majority of the teaching is good. Most teachers use a range of appropriate teaching methods. They give clear instructions on how to solve problems and pay careful attention to developing students' basic skills. They question the students effectively. Teachers check regularly to ensure students are learning effectively and give them individual support outside the classroom if necessary. Students appreciate the level of support they receive from the teachers. Teachers on GCE A level courses encourage the students to use graphical calculators. Increasingly, students are using information technology (IT) in order to extend their skills and understanding. Teachers place appropriate emphasis on the importance of good examination technique. In a GCSE lesson, the teacher demonstrated the use of flow charts to solve algebraic equations. The students were able to go on and solve more complicated problems quickly and they did so with enthusiasm and confidence. In a well-structured GCE A level lesson, the students were using double angle formulae equations. The teacher captured the students' interest by showing how these equations were relevant to real life situations. In a minority of lessons the teacher talked too much and did not take account of the differing abilities of the students. Schemes of work are too brief and insufficiently detailed. The quality of some handouts is poor. Teachers set homework regularly and mark it constructively, clearly indicating where students need to make improvements. They test students frequently to monitor their progress.

12 The quality of students' work is good. Students speak enthusiastically about their studies. Attendance rates at lessons are high. Students' notes are well ordered and are a useful aid for revision. As identified in the self-

Curriculum Areas

assessment report, students' achievements are outstanding and have been for the past three years. In 1999, 72% of students entered for GCSE mathematics gained a grade C or higher. This proportion is well above the national average of 43% for sixth form colleges. Many of the students who were entered for GCSE mathematics already had a very low grade in this examination. Of the 70 students taking the eight week resit course, 67% gained a grade C. The students' GCE A level results are consistently above the national average. In 1999, 97% of students achieved grades A to E and 77% achieved grades A to C. Retention rates on the GCSE course have improved substantially in the past three years, and in 1999 they were well above the national average. Retention rates on GCE A level courses have fallen although some students who left the course early were successful at GCE AS. Value-added data indicate that students are achieving higher GCE A level and GCSE grades than those predicted for them. Students are

encouraged to enter national mathematics competitions and many of them are successful in these. Last year, 42 students progressed to degree courses in mathematics or closely related subjects.

13 All teachers have a degree in mathematics and are teacher trained. Two are assistant examiners for an awarding body. The specialist mathematics rooms contain some attractive display materials which are used to aid teaching. Some rooms are small and overcrowded. Students are supplied with up-to-date text books and there is a plentiful supply of photocopied resources. Each room contains a networked computer.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in mathematics, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE	2	Number of starters	77	127	177
		Retention (%)	64	82	92
		Achievement (%)*	53	77	72
GCE A level	3	Number of starters	91	107	82
		Retention (%)	90	96	74
		Achievement (%)	96	98	97

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*grade A to C

Curriculum Areas

Biology

Grade 2

14 Inspectors observed 10 lessons including those in biology and human biology at GCE A level, and biology at GCSE level. Inspectors agreed with the key strengths and weaknesses listed in the self-assessment report. They found a few strengths and some weaknesses which the college had not identified. The supplementary self-assessment report is comprehensive and well structured.

Key strengths

- good teaching
- careful preparation of students for external examinations
- well-conducted practical investigations by students
- above national average pass rates for GCE A level biology and human biology
- effective use of value-added data to monitor the extent of students' achievements
- good communication and co-operative working between teachers
- students' success in progressing to higher education

Weaknesses

- insufficient opportunities for students to develop the skill of working on their own
- insufficiently demanding lessons for some students
- little use of IT in teaching and learning
- GCSE biology results below the national average
- low retention rate on GCE A level human biology course

15 The biology department is a part of the science curriculum area. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. In lessons, they make clear links with previous work and examination requirements. Students are well motivated and work purposefully. Teachers use equipment effectively during demonstrations and give clear instructions when briefing students on their practical work. Students carry out practical investigations competently and in a safe manner. They also work effectively in groups when required to do so. These strengths in teaching and learning were identified in the self-assessment report. The working relationship between staff and students is good and the majority of students clearly enjoy their studies. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that, in general, teachers do not give the students enough opportunity to develop the skills of working effectively on their own. A high percentage of students progress to university to study degree courses in biology or related subjects.

16 Teachers make insufficient use of computers as a teaching aid, but they use other teaching aids effectively. In a GCE A level biology lesson, the teacher developed a diagram of the heart on a whiteboard from answers to questions directed to individual students. They strengthened their understanding of the workings of the heart by carrying out a simple dissection. The teacher urged the students to carry this out carefully to ensure that they did not destroy the important features of the heart. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that, in some lessons, teachers failed to take account of the differing abilities of the students. They gave the class work which some students found too easy but others found too difficult and they needed additional help.

17 The self-assessment report highlights the students' achievements at GCE A level in biology and human biology. In both subjects, pass rates for grades A to E and A to C are above the

Curriculum Areas

national average for sixth form colleges. The retention rate on the biology course is also above the national average, but on the human biology course it is well below it. The proportion of students who gain grade C or above in GCSE biology is below the national average. The department recognised these weaknesses in its subsidiary self-assessment report and teachers are working to rectify them. Staff make good use of value-added data to assess the extent of students' achievements through a comparison of their predicted examination grades with their actual grades.

18 Staff in the biology team work well together and communication between them is very good. The provision is well managed. The team meets weekly to review and improve its work. Since the last inspection, the department has reduced the number of external examination syllabuses it offers. Teaching accommodation for biology has been creatively extended and refurbished. A third laboratory and classroom have been added recently. The laboratories and preparation room are well equipped and have specialist equipment appropriate to the level of the courses offered.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in biology, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE biology	2	Number of starters	25	17	34
		Retention (%)	78	71	85
		Achievement (%)	28	33	35
GCE A level biology	3	Number of starters	91	112	92
		Retention (%)	85	88	80
		Achievement (%)	88	100	95
GCE A level human biology	3	Number of starters	*	24	15
		Retention (%)	*	87	59
		Achievement (%)	*	100	87

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*course not offered

Curriculum Areas

English

Grade 2

19 Inspectors observed 13 lessons on courses in GCE A level English language, language and literature, literature, and GCSE English language. The department's self-assessment was thorough. Inspectors agreed with the strengths the department had identified but considered that a few of the weaknesses were understated. They found a small number of additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- lively teaching
- well-planned and carefully organised courses
- students' high levels of achievement on all examination courses
- high standards of students' written and oral work
- the range of opportunities for students to enrich their programme

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on GCE A level courses in 1999
- some overcrowding in classrooms

20 Schemes of work are well planned. Lesson preparation is thorough. Teaching is lively. Teachers present work imaginatively. Learning methods are appropriate and suitably varied and excite the students' interest. Students work together in pairs and in small groups, engage in debate, and make presentations.

21 Students are provided with imaginatively designed and carefully structured learning materials which they find of considerable interest. For example, in a GCE A level English language lesson, students worked on materials about the popularity of boys' and girls' names at various times in this century, in order to

establish trends and fashions in the naming of children. In another successful lesson, students used learning materials about word formation and explored the contemporary use of 'kebab' as a verb. Students respond to their teachers' infectious enthusiasm for literature by participating willingly in exciting debates and giving lively presentations. Students have a range of opportunities to enrich their studies through visits to theatres and conferences. Recent trips include visits backstage at Stratford and to productions of *King Lear* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Teachers willingly support students who require extra help. They mark written work accurately and give the students constructive advice and criticism. Students' progress is carefully monitored. In a small number of instances, usually involving large classes, teachers failed to make sure that all the students were fully involved in relevant activities and that the lesson was holding their interest.

22 Examination results are excellent. Pass rates in GCE A level English language and English language and literature for the last three years have been at, or close to, 100%. In 1999, the proportion of students achieving GCE A level at grades A to C was 70% in language and language and literature, and 76% in literature. In GCSE English language, the proportions of students gaining grade C or above were 60% in 1997, 59% in 1998, and 75% in 1999. These proportions are well above the national average for sixth form colleges and are clearly identified as a strength in the college's self-assessment report. In 1999, the students' GCE A level results were good but, as the department's own self-assessment report acknowledges, the student retention rate was much lower. Between 1997 and 1999, the retention rates on the two-year GCE A level courses in English literature and language and literature were 74% and 67%, respectively. These rates are well below the national average, and in actual terms they show that 39 students out of 118 on the

Curriculum Areas

courses failed to complete their studies. Students' written and oral work is very good. Students write with accuracy and express ideas and present arguments clearly. They are encouraged to engage in creative writing and a magazine of their work is published. Students' attendance and punctuality during the inspection were good.

23 Management of the curriculum area and of courses is good. As the self-assessment report indicates, teachers work well in teams developing course material and effective schemes of work. Staff communicate well with each other and there is much sharing of good practice. Teachers are effectively deployed across GCE A level courses. There is, however, a marked contrast in size between the large first-year groups in language, and language and literature, and the much smaller groups in the second year.

24 Teachers are well qualified. Three teachers are full time and four are part time. There is a suite of English classrooms which is well furnished and pleasantly decorated with students' work, up-to-date posters and study aids. There is some overcrowding in classrooms. This is particularly the case with large first-year GCE A level and GCSE groups. Television and video recorders are available in all classrooms. IT stations have been established in two classrooms but most students use the college's central IT facility.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in English, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE English	2	Number of starters	41	89	76
		Retention (%)	73	82	86
		Achievement (%)	60	59	75
GCE A level English Literature	3	Number of starters	33	31	42
		Retention (%)	85	90	74
		Achievement (%)	96	100	100
GCE A level English language (includes some English language and literature)	3	Number of starters	100	110	47
		Retention (%)	98	87	78
		Achievement (%)	99	99	100
GCE A level English language and literature	3	Number of starters	*	*	81
		Retention (%)	*	*	67
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*results in English language and literature were not separately identified

Curriculum Areas

Psychology

Grade 2

25 Inspectors observed 10 lessons. They agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses stated in the college's self-assessment report. They considered some of the strengths, however, to be no more than normal practice. Inspectors also found some strengths and weaknesses which were not mentioned in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- wide range of learning experiences in lessons
- effective use of resources in lessons
- good support for students
- well above average GCE A level and GCSE results
- good-quality written work
- good teamwork by teachers
- rooms with good display materials and strong subject identity

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on GCSE and GCE A level courses
- inadequate recording of formal meetings
- little use of IT

26 Teachers provide their students with appropriate learning activities and they encourage them to develop and express their views in class and contribute to arguments in discussion. This good classroom practice is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Students' group work is well managed. Students are given clearly specified tasks and good use is made of ideas which students put forward. For example, in one GCE A level lesson, groups of students were asked to discuss some controversial research. By drawing on ideas raised in discussion, the students were

able to formulate ethical guidelines for researchers. Teachers used overhead projectors and video players effectively in many lessons.

27 Students receive helpful course handbooks outlining clearly what the courses require of them. Teachers support students well, not only through reviews of their progress, but in their willingness to offer advice whenever it is required. Students appreciate the help they receive. As indicated in the self-assessment report, students' work is marked carefully, and good advice is offered in the form of written comments on most work. On some work, however, there is insufficient helpful comment of this kind.

28 Students enjoy their studies. They often produce written work which reflects a high degree of effort and their interest in the subject. They also make confident and valuable contributions in many classes. Staff and students work very well together and there is a good-humoured friendly atmosphere in lessons. These strengths are insufficiently recognised in the self-assessment report. The proportion of students who gained grade C or above in GCSE psychology is well above the national average for sixth form colleges; in 1999, this proportion reached 100%. Results at GCE A level have regularly exceeded the national average for sixth form colleges. Value-added information indicates that students consistently achieve higher grades than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE results. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the low retention rates on the GCE A level and GCSE courses have been a cause of concern in the college for several years. In 1998, the retention rate on the GCE A level course was 81% but it fell to 72% in 1999.

29 The staff ask students for their opinions on the quality of their courses. An action plan was drawn up to address improvements students suggested. Details of the action taken in response to the students' views were, however, not recorded well. Staff make use of

Curriculum Areas

value-added information sensitively and effectively to set students grades to aim for in their examinations.

30 The management of courses is efficient. Teachers are well qualified and have a wealth of experience both in teaching and examining the subject. The members of the department work well as a team, with the more experienced members providing valuable support to their colleagues. Ideas and resources are shared successfully. Key issues are often addressed through informal discussions which are not recorded, rather than through formal meetings which are properly minuted. Meetings of subject staff are minuted but the minutes are perfunctory and do not show that staff are making a sustained effort to deal with issues identified in the self-assessment report or implement the action plan for improvement of provision. The self-assessment report acknowledges that there has been inadequate liaison with staff in partner schools. Some information prepared for prospective students contains too much unhelpful technical language.

31 The teaching accommodation consists of a group of four mobile classrooms. The department uses display material well in rooms to establish a strong subject identity and a pleasant learning environment. The rooms are large enough for all groups to work in them effectively. The library is well stocked with books, but some have not been borrowed for several years. The self-assessment report acknowledges that the use of IT on courses is underdeveloped. Many students do not use wordprocessors regularly, and insufficient use is made of software packages and CD-ROMs.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in psychology, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE	2	Number of starters	25	31	39
		Retention (%)	76	68	77
		Achievement (%)	79	*	100
GCE A/AS level	3	Number of starters	**	17	9
		Retention (%)	**	76	100
		Achievement (%)	**	62	67
GCE A level	3	Number of starters	125	145	141
		Retention (%)	80	81	72
		Achievement (%)	85	95	90

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*error in ISR (21 completed; 20 passed)

**course did not run

Curriculum Areas

History and Archaeology

Grade 3

32 Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering GCE A level and GCSE courses in history and archaeology. The strengths and weaknesses they found were broadly the same as those given in the self-assessment report. However, inspectors found some additional strengths and weaknesses in student retention and achievement rates.

Key strengths

- well-planned lessons with clear aims
- much lively and varied teaching
- a broad range of enrichment activities
- effective use of fieldwork experience by teachers in lessons
- some excellent individual studies
- an extensive department library

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped use of IT
- little opportunity for students to work in groups or pairs or make individual presentations
- below sixth form college average results in GCE A level history
- incomplete schemes of work

33 The college offers a wide range of GCE A level courses in this area. Students can choose to study medieval, early modern, modern or modern world history, as well as archaeology. GCSE archaeology is available as a free-standing course, and the subject can also be taken by GCE A level archaeology students during the first year of their course.

34 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that lessons are well planned and have clear aims. In lessons, teachers impart information to the students through formal but lively presentations which command the students' attention and interest.

Teachers vary their methods of presentation appropriately. In some instances, teachers made excellent and skilful use of questions to check the students' understanding and to challenge them to think and formulate their ideas clearly. Humour is used well. Students enjoy their studies. They respect their teachers as enthusiasts for their subjects and see them as knowledgeable, authoritative, and approachable. In lessons, teachers draw expertly on local and contemporary material to add colour and relevance. For example, in one lesson discussion on present-day law and order issues helped students to consider and understand repression in early nineteenth-century England. Teachers make good use of learning aids such as photographic slides, video films, specimens and artefacts. For example, in an archaeology lesson, students handled flint tools in order to assess their sharpness and effectiveness. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that there was insufficient variety of learning activities. Students do not work in pairs or groups, and they are not given opportunities to develop communication skills by making presentations to the class. There is also an underdeveloped use of IT, and this is also acknowledged in the college's self-assessment report. All new students receive a course handbook. Whilst this contains much useful information, it is incomplete and unattractively presented.

35 Students' learning experience on courses is enriched through visits to sites of local archaeological and historical interest as well as to the county record office and museum. Students also visit parliament and are encouraged to attend lectures provided by organisations such as the Historical Association. Through their own involvement in local fieldwork and studies, teachers also provide opportunities for students to take part in local events, including archaeological surveys. Inspectors considered these opportunities were a strength of the provision that was not identified in the self-assessment report.

Curriculum Areas

36 Most students are responsive in lessons, answering and asking questions. In the main, teachers mark students' written work helpfully. In some instances, however, teachers fail to correct spelling, punctuation and grammar. Some teachers take longer than others to return marked work to the students. There is also some confusing diversity of practice in the use of grades and marks. The written work seen during the inspection was of a good standard across the range of assignments. Many students submit an individual study as part of their GCE A level assessment. This provides them with an excellent context for developing research skills and for producing extended writing on a topic they find interesting. Some students' local studies are sufficiently good to be published. Assessment of this coursework carried out by students choosing this option counts towards their GCE A level grades.

37 Examination pass rates in GCE A level history are a little below the national average for sixth form colleges. They also fall below the college's own average for GCE A level. Value-added data indicate, however, that in most years students achieve the grades predicted for them. Of those who started a two-year GCE A level course in history in 1997 only 72% completed it, and this proportion is 10% below

the sector average. In 1998-99, student attendance rates on GCE A level courses was good, at 89%.

38 Departmental meetings have been infrequent and minutes are not always properly taken. Schemes of work are only partially complete. They do not cover the whole course. They lack detail and have no reference to the development and assessment of key skills. Teachers take the views of students seriously, and act to remedy concerns expressed in response to questionnaires and by members of course consultation groups. For example, students on one course now select their year 13 topics in discussion with their teacher.

39 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the staff of the department represent a strength. Teachers are experienced and well qualified. All are assistant examiners. They teach in a suite of three specialist rooms in modern accommodation. In the archaeology room, there are attractive displays including newspaper articles brought in by the students and items from the Internet. There is an impressive subject library. The department has invested significantly in sets of specialist GCE A level books which students find helpful and accessible.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in history and archaeology, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE archaeology	2	Number of starters	*	16	*
		Retention (%)	*	69	*
		Achievement (%)	*	100	*
GCE A level archaeology	3	Number of starters	22	17	16
		Retention (%)	86	82	81
		Achievement (%)	67	79	85
GCE A level history	3	Number of starters	77	98	77
		Retention (%)	88	89	72
		Achievement (%)	81	80	85

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*small numbers on the course

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

40 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths stated in the self-assessment report, but found some weaknesses which had not been identified.

Key strengths

- close monitoring of students' academic progress
- good arrangements for careers education and guidance
- impartial guidance for applicants to the college
- a wide range of personal support services

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped systems for additional support
- inadequate management of the college listening service

41 As the self-assessment report indicated, arrangements for the provision of information and impartial initial guidance are well managed and effective. The college has strong links with its partner schools. A senior manager agrees a programme with each school. Pupils who apply for courses are interviewed at the schools where possible. Prospective students receive informative and well-presented prospectuses and course leaflets. Clear but flexible entry requirements are well explained. These publications do not fully explain that additional support is available to students who require it. The disability statement uses inappropriate language. College 'taster' days and open evenings are well attended. On joining the college, students receive a further guidance interview with a tutor to confirm their choice of course. Students value these interviews highly. The opportunity for students to sample four GCE A level subjects is widely taken up. A carefully

planned induction week gives students an effective introduction to college facilities and support services. This year, new students found that the induction week had not helped them to feel at ease.

42 The tutorial system is a key part of students' experience of college life and it is identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. It is used effectively to monitor and manage the students' academic performance. A daily registration period is well attended. Unexplained absences are discussed with students soon after they occur as part of an effective reporting system. Progress reports are discussed with students in a carefully planned cycle of individual tutorial interviews. Areas for improvement are identified and recorded. There are clear arrangements for changing course. Tutors receive strong leadership and good support.

43 A study skills handbook is given to students, but had not been used by 85% of those who responded to the college questionnaire. There is no diagnostic assessment of students' support needs in numeracy. Students who have not obtained grade C in GCSE mathematics are required to take a GCSE mathematics course. In its self-assessment report, the college acknowledges as a weakness its failure to provide courses which are an alternative to GCSE mathematics for those students who need to improve their numeracy skills. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who have received support at their school are identified early in the admission process and receive additional help thereafter. There are good links with external agencies such as the sensory impairment support service. Some teaching staff have received dyslexia awareness training and, where appropriate, training in adapting their teaching to meet the needs of students with a specific disability. Individual plans for students who need additional support have been introduced recently. There is insufficient liaison between tutors and the staff of the support

Cross-college Provision

department. Monitoring of the effectiveness of the college's support services is underdeveloped. These weaknesses have been recognised and are being addressed by the college.

44 All full-time students follow a comprehensive careers education programme. This is concerned with students' progression to higher education. Carefully planned lessons and visits enable students to make well-informed choices of higher education courses. There are effective links between subject teachers, personal tutors and careers staff. The careers information centre is based in suitable accommodation and has good resources. The students' completion of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service forms is carefully monitored to ensure that students fill these in properly and appropriately. If it is recognised that a student would strengthen his or her application by undertaking some specific work experience, then this is promptly arranged with a suitable employer. Extra assistance is provided for those applying to the universities of Oxford or Cambridge and for courses where there is particularly keen competition to obtain a place. A revised programme of help for those seeking employment has been developed in partnership with Hereford and Worcester Careers Service, but it is too early to judge its effectiveness.

45 Students have easy access to a good range of support on personal issues. A student services receptionist is located centrally and provides an highly effective first point of contact for students seeking any kind of information and advice. An ecumenical chaplain offers personal support to all students. This service is widely understood and highly valued. It is supplemented by a 'listening service'. A small group of staff volunteers will listen to any student who has a personal issue and will refer her or him to others if necessary. Aspects of the management of this service are, however, unsatisfactory. For instance, no job description is provided for staff who offer the service, and the code of practice is not sufficiently

comprehensive. Students' experience of the service and their level of satisfaction is insufficiently monitored. Arrangements with outside agencies for the provision of specialist youth advisory and counselling services are effective and well known to students. An active student representative council facilitates good communication between students and college management. There is a substantial curriculum enrichment programme and this includes valuable opportunities for students to participate in music and drama performances. In addition, the college offers Young Enterprise, arts and sporting activities, and general studies. All students take an introductory course in IT.

General Resources

Grade 3

46 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They considered, however, that some of the strengths identified by the college were no more than normal practice. They found strengths and weaknesses not mentioned in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-maintained buildings
- imaginative adaptation of accommodation to meet changing needs
- efficient use of space
- attractive displays of students' work
- good provision and effective management of IT

Weaknesses

- poor accommodation for sports science
- inadequate external signing
- lack of access to parts of the college for students with physical disabilities
- insufficient library provision
- shortage of private study spaces
- insufficient and poor social accommodation for students

Cross-college Provision

47 The college is well maintained and welcoming. All the accommodation was built during the last 25 years. The attractive new student services centre houses most of the college's learning resource areas. The college owns unused playing fields about a mile away. It is planned to bring them back into use. Many corridors are enlivened by displays of students' work. As the self-assessment acknowledges, the college site lacks a clear identity, partly because it shares a campus with a neighbouring college. External signing is poor. There is no signposting to reception at the front of the building or to each building. As noted in the last inspection report, there is a shortage of car parking space.

48 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that the college buildings are well maintained. Thorough attention is paid to running costs. Accommodation is efficiently used although inspectors noted overcrowding in some lessons. Most teaching rooms are in good condition and appropriately furnished. The principal staff room is of a satisfactory standard. A computerised database records information on the capacity and general condition of rooms, which assists efficient timetabling, and supports good maintenance. Rooms used for specific subjects or curriculum areas are grouped together to give them a specific curricular identity. There has been imaginative small-scale adaptation of existing accommodation to meet changing teaching and learning styles and cross-college needs. Liaison between teaching staff and premises managers is effective.

49 The corporation has recently approved a well-considered accommodation strategy which has clear priorities. As the self-assessment notes, the accommodation for sports science is unacceptable. The floor of the sports hall needs refurbishment, the changing room accommodation is inadequate and the decorative condition of this area is poor. A major development is planned to improve provision for sports science. It is intended that

additional classrooms will replace temporary accommodation, which is nearing the end of its useful life. Wheelchair users encounter difficulty in gaining access to the students' common room and the language laboratory. Other obstacles to them include several small flights of steps and persons with restricted mobility have to make lengthy detours to avoid them. The slope at one of the entrances to the Griffin Centre is too steep for wheelchair users and some exterior surfaces are worn and uneven.

50 Students' social accommodation is poor, as noted in the self-assessment report. The common room is overcrowded and it is not kept sufficiently clean and tidy. During break and lunch times, students crowd outside the buildings and in the corridors and open areas. In their responses to questionnaires, students make unfavourable comments on the social accommodation.

51 The library has improved since the last inspection. Some shelving has been renewed and library staffing has been increased. Opening times are appropriate to meet students' needs and include some evenings. The library is, however, too small. It is overcrowded at peak periods and there are too few study spaces. These difficulties are compounded by the general shortage of study spaces in the college and were noted in the self-assessment report. The library budget is low and inspectors reported shortages of books in English and little use of those in mathematics. Some additional library resources are held in departments, notably history. Within its significant limitations, the library is well managed and students are provided with good information on how it may be used. Rapid action has been taken to rectify some weaknesses in the library, most notably the shortage of sports science books. Library and teaching staff reported that liaison between them is good and a library users' group helps to ensure that students' views are well represented.

Cross-college Provision

52 The availability of computers to support teaching and learning is good. The ratio of computers to students is 1:8.5 and the software is of industry standard. The computer rooms are well arranged for teaching. All rooms are used by students for timetabled lessons and also on a 'drop-in' basis. The Internet is available on most machines and many students use electronic mail. Students' use of computers is well monitored. The reorganisation of the management of the IT network is working well. Staffing has been increased and student technicians assist with enquiries. The college has a clear policy for the replacement of IT equipment.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

53 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They found a few strengths and weaknesses which the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- well-managed review of the college's quality assurance arrangements
- common quality assurance framework for all aspects of the college's work
- good links between quality assurance and planning
- effective use of lesson observation as a means of quality assurance and identifying staff development needs
- good arrangements for obtaining the views of staff and students
- good staff development

Weaknesses

- insufficiently differentiated performance targets
- failure of subject teams to evaluate their work against clear standards of performance
- weak departmental action plans to improve retention rates

54 Initially the college was slow to take action on the significant weaknesses in quality assurance identified in the last inspection report. However, over the last 18 months there has been considerable progress in rectifying these weaknesses and a new quality assurance system has been established. The first cycle of quality assurance had only just been completed by the time of the inspection and some of the quality assurance arrangements were not yet fully effective. Despite this, there have been improvements in many aspects of the college's provision. The new quality assurance processes are closely linked to strategic planning and intended actions to remedy weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report are incorporated into annual plans. The operational plan for quality assurance gives the college a sound quality assurance framework for the forthcoming year. There are weaknesses, however, in the management and control of important documents. The status of many documents is not always clear.

55 The common framework covers all the key aspects of the college's work. The main elements are self-assessment and targets or standards for monitoring performance. Targets have been established for students' achievements and progress towards reaching these is reviewed regularly. When setting targets and analysing students' achievements, staff make good use of a widely adopted system whereby they can compare students' performance in the college with that in other comparable institutions. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that targets for students' retention are insufficiently differentiated to take account of particular circumstances relating to individual subjects. There are clear arrangements for monitoring the performance of subject and cross-college teams. The progress of these teams is recorded every three months. Actions to bring about improvements which have not been implemented are brought forward. In many instances, however, these proposed actions are inappropriate or so imprecise that staff cannot

Cross-college Provision

tell whether they have been carried out or not. Action plans to deal with retention are weak. Many subject areas have responded to a decline in retention by gathering information rather than taking more positive action. Some of the data used on retention were inaccurate. Cross-college teams have not evaluated the quality of their work against standards of performance as these are at an early stage of development.

56 As the self-assessment report identified, there is regular and effective consultation with students and their views are sought through questionnaires. Subject areas have used standard questionnaires for the last three years. Students' responses are analysed to identify trends and make comparison between different areas. Recently, these subject area questionnaires have been complemented by cross-college questionnaires. Areas of concern common across the whole college have been identified and improvements have been implemented. Questionnaires are used to find out whether students think that the college is honouring commitments made in the college charter. Over the last three years, the college has established effective arrangements to observe and grade lessons. Grading criteria have been agreed by staff. The judgements reached on the lessons observed are summarised and the main findings from lesson observations are collated for each subject and also for the whole college. Action has been taken to address weaknesses. There is close similarity between the grades awarded by the college and those awarded by inspectors.

57 There are appropriate arrangements for self-assessment. The self-assessment report identified the need for staff to be more evaluative in some areas. The college built on its arrangements for subject review to develop a self-assessment process for the 1998-99 report. Arrangements to gather evidence are effective. All teams are required to keep a file based on a standard content list; in most cases this file

provides a useful source of evidence. Team leaders used different methods to produce their reports. In most areas, they entered into full consultation with members of their team, but in a few areas some staff were not sufficiently involved in the consultation process. At subject level, there is an effective process for moderating self-assessment judgements and this involves a senior manager and the head of another subject area. A similar approach to moderation has been used for the cross-college areas but at present this is not fully established. A self-assessment review group, which includes a vice-principal from another sixth form college, carries out a final review of each section of the report. The group provided valuable feedback.

58 Staff development is well managed. There are effective procedures to identify the training needs of staff at different levels. As noted in the last inspection report, staff development priorities are closely related to strategic objectives. The appraisal process is clearly structured. In discussion with their appraisers, staff identify their individual targets and their training needs. Findings from lesson observations are used effectively in the reviews. There is a clear proforma which is used by individuals wishing to apply for funding to further their professional development. A group with wide representation across the college helps senior managers to monitor applications for funding and ensures that all staff development activities are carefully evaluated.

Governance

Grade 2

59 Inspectors and auditors agreed with many of the strengths outlined in the self-assessment report. They found a number of weaknesses, however, which need to be addressed.

Cross-college Provision

Key strengths

- effective monitoring of the quality of education provision
- comprehensive procedures to ensure openness and accountability
- governors' commitment to helping the college to succeed
- effective involvement of the corporation in the development of the strategic plan
- good arrangements for governors to appraise senior staff

Weaknesses

- inadequate arrangements for clerking some meetings
- lack of consistent monitoring of the college's financial position in 1999
- insufficient internal audit resources

60 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.

61 As recognised in the self-assessment report, governors have a wide range of professional and business backgrounds and community links. There is an appropriate balance in the number of male and female governors. The corporation has staff and student members. Individual governors are encouraged to take an interest in curriculum departments and there are arrangements linking them to these. A formal skills audit has been undertaken. The commitment of governors to the college is high, as demonstrated by governors' high attendance at corporation and most committee meetings. The audit committee, however, is less well attended.

62 Governors take a keen interest in the quality of education students receive at the college. They discuss and question senior managers on students' performance and teaching. Governors are provided with information on students' achievements, retention, attendance and value-added data and the results of the lesson observation programme. The principal provides a useful written report to governors, which includes a commentary on the quality of teaching and students' achievements. Governors discussed and approved the college targets for students' achievements and retention.

63 Governors effectively fulfil their role in determining the college's mission and strategic direction. In addition to its formal meetings, the corporation meets annually with college management to review and debate issues of strategic importance. The principal's reports keep the corporation informed about college activities. In committees, governors regularly discuss progress towards the achievement of strategic objectives.

64 The corporation has yet formally to determine its composition following the new instrument of government but has discussed this. A search committee with clearly defined terms of reference has been established although it has not needed to meet recently. A written appointment procedure is publicly available. New governors are provided with appropriate documentation on appointment. The corporation recognises the need to improve induction training. There is a development and training programme for governors and an annual governors' conference.

65 The corporation effectively reviews its own performance. Governors responded to a questionnaire as a part of their self-assessment. Action plans for improving the performance of the corporation have been developed and governors monitor their implementation. These action plans have led, for example, to an improvement in governors' attendance. There

Cross-college Provision

are good working relationships between governors and senior managers. The relationship between the corporation and principal has been defined and is included in the governance procedures. As recognised in the self-assessment report, thorough arrangements have been established for the governors' appraisal of senior postholders.

66 The corporation has an appropriate committee structure which it reviews annually. Formal reports of committees' business are routinely received by the corporation. Each committee has terms of reference which have been approved by the corporation. The role of clerk to the corporation is set out in a separate job description. Each of the corporation's committees is clerked by a member of staff who has responsibilities which relate to the committee's remit. No consideration has been given to establishing a clerking system involving clerks whose professional interests are totally independent of those of the committees they serve. Some meetings of the governing body and finance committee have not been attended by a clerk. Corporation agendas are issued in good time, with little use of tabled papers.

67 The corporation has established comprehensive procedures for openness and accountability. They include a statement on public access to information, a code of conduct and procedures for the appointment of governors, arrangements for dealing with 'whistleblowing', and information on how to make complaints about the corporation. Corporation minutes are available for public inspection. The corporation holds a well-attended annual general meeting for parents and publishes an annual report. The clerk to the corporation maintains a comprehensive register of interests which is updated annually and is available for public inspection.

68 The college's budget for 1998-99 was debated and approved by governors in good time. The corporation does not receive full

management accounts but relies on the advice of the finance committee on the college's financial position. During 1998-99, the finance committee did not meet for six months. The corporation has established clear financial targets, however, the latest financial forecast approved by the corporation does not meet these targets. The college's financial statements have been approved by the finance committee rather than the corporation. Governors have approved internal audit arrangements based on a low level of resources. This limits the assurance provided by internal audit work.

Management

Grade 2

69 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They found a few weaknesses which the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- effective management
- strong leadership
- a clear and well-supported mission
- clear links between strategic objectives, the operating statement and action plans
- comprehensive management accounts
- good internal communications
- strong links with external organisations

Weaknesses

- shortcomings in information, and lack of effective action on the decline in retention rates
- few staff with financial expertise
- insufficient attention to promoting understanding of equal opportunities
- lack of progress in developing IT across the curriculum

Cross-college Provision

70 The college has effective leadership. It achieves its aim of providing good-quality academic education for full-time GCE A level students. Teaching is good, and the level of many students' achievements is very high. Inspectors agreed with the strength recorded in the self-assessment report that in 1996, 1997 and 1998, GCE A level students achieved results better than their qualifications at entry had suggested. However, retention rates have declined and although they are not significantly low, the college has yet to find ways of improving them. Funding targets over the previous three years have been achieved and enrolments have grown. Funding per unit is low for a sixth form college. Staffing is adjusted annually to meet the different patterns of enrolments.

71 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college's mission is clear and relevant. There is strong support for the mission from governors, managers and staff and this was also identified as a strength at the previous inspection. Strategic objectives are reviewed annually by senior managers and the corporation. The operating plan is clearly laid out and appropriately detailed. It has close links to the strategic objectives and the action plans from self-assessment. The plan does not indicate the cost of proposed actions. There is regular monitoring of the plan by senior managers to ensure objectives are achieved.

72 As the self-assessment report states, the management structure encompasses all the main areas of college activity. Staff have clear lines of responsibility. Their detailed job descriptions are reviewed and updated on an annual basis. In its self-assessment report, the college recognises that the role of the heads of curriculum areas needs to be further developed to cover the promotion of cross-college initiatives such as making IT integral to the curriculum. At the time of the previous inspection, communications were a weakness but they are now effective. Staff appreciate the open and consultative style of senior

management. There is a weekly staff briefing and a daily bulletin. There is a wide-ranging and relevant programme of meetings that involves all members of staff. Meetings are held regularly and have set agendas. Minutes of meetings are circulated, although the quality of some are poor.

73 The college's wide-ranging, effective and productive links with external organisations were recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report. The Hereford and Worcester Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise considers the college is helpful and supportive. The college is an active member of the Herefordshire Education Business Partnership. Staff take a keen interest in local secondary education. As the self-assessment report indicates, the college does not carry out extensive market research in respect of its courses and services.

74 The management information system provides comprehensive information on students. Regular reports on students' achievements, retention, attendance at tutorials, value-added data and students' projected grades are supplied to teachers and senior managers. As the self-assessment report recognises, information provided for staff on retention gave a more positive picture than was the case. Most teachers consider that they receive sufficient and relevant information to do their work effectively.

75 The college has not given sufficiently high priority to raising staff and students' awareness and understanding of equal opportunities. The college recognised this weakness and revised its equal opportunities policy just before the inspection. The policy recognises the importance of non-discriminatory recruitment and appointment procedures and marketing materials. However, it does not make it clear how the college will gather information on the needs and views of those from groups under-represented at the college. There has been little training on equal opportunities. The

Cross-college Provision

college has some data on staff and students' opinions on equality of opportunity, but monitoring of the college's performance is underdeveloped. The college fulfils the requirements of sections 44 and 45 of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* by providing opportunities for worship of a Christian nature.

76 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. In general, financial forecasting has been accurate. Management accounts are comprehensive with cashflow forecasts to the end of the current and subsequent financial year. Financial regulations and procedures have been established and have recently been updated. The college employs a qualified and experienced accountant. In the last financial year, key finance staff have been unavoidably absent and there have been delays in the production of management accounts and reports to budget holders. The college anticipates increased revenue through a growth in funding units. It has, however, not drawn up robust contingency plans or options which cover ways of paying for the proposed development of the sports hall, should this growth not materialise.

Conclusions

77 The college's self-assessment report was comprehensive, mostly evaluative, and clearly presented. It formed a good basis for planning the inspection. It resulted from a well-planned self-assessment process. The judgements in the report were supported by a range of evidence, including course retention and achievement rates, and comparisons with national averages. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the report. They identified some additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors were able to take account of new figures on examination achievements and retention rates in 1999, which had not been

available when the college undertook its self-assessment. They agreed with the majority of the curriculum and cross-college grades.

78 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 (September 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	1
16-18 years	99
19-24 years	0
25+ years	0
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (September 1999)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation)	0
Level 2 (intermediate)	2
Level 3 (advanced)	98
Level 4/5 (higher education)	0
Non-schedule 2	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (September 1999)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	365	0	33
Business	66	0	6
Art and design	66	0	6
Humanities	607	0	55
Total	1,104	0	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 2% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (September 1999)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	61	1	0	62
Supporting direct learning contact	6	1	0	7
Other support	15	0	0	15
Total	82	2	0	84

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

College Statistics

Three Year Trends

Financial Data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£2,576,000	£2,527,000	£2,545,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£18.44	£16.57	£16.44
Payroll as a proportion of income	79%	77%	79%
Achievement of funding target	114%	105%	103%
Diversity of income	3%	3%	3%
Operating surplus	£49,000	£57,000	-£12,000

Sources: Income – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), audited financial statements (1998), college (1999)

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

Payroll – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), audited financial statements (1998), college (1999)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Diversity of income – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), audited financial statements (1998), college (1999)

Operating surplus – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), audited financial statements (1998), college (1999)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	0	0	405	0	0	0
	Retention (%)	n/a	n/a	98	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	78	n/a	n/a	n/a
2	Number of starters	354	451	474	0	0	0
	Retention (%)	73	83	81	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Achievement (%)	59	71	97	n/a	n/a	n/a
3	Number of starters	1,426	1,721	1,672	6	0	13
	Retention (%)	78	83	87	50	n/a	85
	Achievement (%)	92	89	94	n/a	n/a	n/a
4 or 5	Number of starters	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Retention (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Short courses	Number of starters	59	667	306	0	0	2
	Retention (%)	98	95	92	n/a	n/a	100
	Achievement (%)	90	68	94	n/a	n/a	100
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Retention (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: ISR

n/a not applicable

FEFC Inspection Report 03/00

**Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
Website www.fefc.ac.uk
© FEFC December 1999**