

# **The Isle of Wight College**

**REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
1998-99**

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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## Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1997-98, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	60	29	2	-
Cross-college provision	18	54	24	4	-

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*  
Sample size: 108 college inspections

## Student Achievements

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

- as expected completions, which is the number of initial enrolments on qualifications where the student expected to complete the qualification in a given year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which the students have completed as expected (or are continuing with the prospect of late completion). For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not shown.

# Summary

## The Isle of Wight College

### South East Region

#### Inspected February 1999

The Isle of Wight College is a general further education college serving the island's population of 125,000. Before the inspection, under the leadership of a new principal, and with the help of the FEFC, the college had started to address the serious financial and accommodation difficulties which it faces. The college produced a self-assessment report before the inspection which covered all aspects of the college's operations. The document was not explicitly referenced to Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment* but it was evident that the circular's statements on quality had informed judgements. The report displayed a candour that indicated a serious commitment to organisational change and improvement. Strengths and weaknesses were clearly outlined, particularly in the cross-college sections of the report, and judgements were cross-referenced to evidence. The quality of these judgements was undermined by a lack of reliable data against which to measure performance. The college action plan outlined a comprehensive agenda for change, but items were not prioritised. The desire for rapid and wholesale improvement overtook the need to decide what could realistically be achieved in a given timescale, and resulted in an action plan that was overambitious. Many staff contributed to the development of the self-assessment report, but a

subsequent management reorganisation left some staff feeling no ownership of the section of report for which they had acquired responsibility.

The college updated its cross-college action plan before the inspection, and demonstrated that some steps had already been taken to effect change. It also revised its judgements about some of the curriculum grades. In four cases, the college proposed that the grades should be revised downwards. In the event, inspectors agreed with three of the college's revised curriculum grades, and two of its cross-college grades. The grades awarded by inspectors were generally lower than those awarded by the college. The college has started to address critical strategic issues. Most teaching is of a satisfactory standard, but too little is good or outstanding. The college should now act rapidly to: resolve the dilemma over its premises; address serious issues of governance; address its worsening financial status; use the data from its management information systems to set performance targets for students' retention and achievements; revise its tutorial policy to ensure that absence is addressed effectively; develop its quality assurance mechanisms; build on existing good practice in key skills teaching; and ensure that the implementation of policy is properly monitored and evaluated, paying particular attention to issues that involve equality of opportunity and health and safety.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science, mathematics and computing	4	Support for students	3
Engineering	4	General resources	4
Business	3	Quality assurance	4
Hospitality and catering	3	Governance	4
Health and care	3	Management	4
Basic education	3		

# Context

## The College and its Mission

1 The Isle of Wight College is the only further education college on the island. Students are recruited almost entirely from the island, although the college enrolls some 80 students from the mainland on to higher education programmes and 100 students from overseas, mainly from the Far East. The college was established in 1951 to provide courses in construction and engineering. The main site is on the outskirts of Newport, the island's county town, which has a population of 25,157. A variety of land-based courses are provided at Holliers Farm in Bathingbourne, 8 miles away. In addition, the college provides a small amount of teaching in outreach centres situated in different parts of the island.

2 The school system in the Isle of Wight consists of first, middle and high schools. There are five high schools of which two are within 3 miles of the college. Links with the schools have faltered in recent years as a result of competition for students, but the college is now seeking to improve relationships. Of the 16 year olds on the island, 80% progress to some form of education or training. The college has well-established links with Wight Training and Enterprise, the TEC.

3 Although the Isle of Wight comes under the administration of the Government Office of the South East, the main features of the island economy distinguish it from most other areas in the region. It has one of the lowest gross domestic products per head of population in the United Kingdom. It is a low skill economy, with little manufacturing industry and high dependence on tourism. Unemployment is high; the rate of 11% hides seasonal fluctuations. Part-time working is increasing and is concentrated in distribution, hospitality, caring and other service sectors.

4 The college offers courses in all of the programme areas funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The most

extensive provision is in hotel and catering, business and health and community care. Of the students enrolled on vocational programmes, equal numbers follow intermediate and advanced programmes. Fewer students follow foundation level courses. In July 1998, the college had 1,816 full-time students, most of whom were between 16 and 18 years of age, and 5,624 part-time students. It employed 255 full-time equivalent permanent staff, of whom 102 were support staff not directly involved in teaching. In addition to its FEFC-funded provision, the college offers higher education courses; students on these courses account for 6% of the student body. It has contracts with the local education authority (LEA) to provide adult education on the island, and with the Home Office to provide education in the island's three prisons.

5 The college's mission statement is, 'to develop the full potential of each member of the college community through viable and high-quality education and training'. Its vision statement is, 'To see the college established as the pre-eminent provider of post-16 education and training on the Isle of Wight'. The college's major aims are:

- to change its emphasis from growth in student numbers to improvement in the quality of its services
- to make the curriculum as effective as possible within available resources
- to build on its past success in meeting the needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- to consolidate its quality assurance system
- to develop the staff to meet its objectives.

## The Inspection

6 The college was inspected in February 1999. The inspection team had previously studied the college's self-assessment report and reviewed information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Data on

# Context

students' achievements from the individualised students record (ISR) for 1995-96 and 1996-97 were used, together with the college's own data for 1997-98. A sample of data for students who completed their studies in the summer term of 1998 was checked by inspectors against primary sources, for example, registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. Much of these data were found to be flawed and were rechecked and where necessary amended during the inspection. The college agreed that the number of inaccuracies in its data had been reduced but not necessarily eliminated by this process. The college was notified of the sample of provision to be inspected about two months before the

inspection. The inspection was carried out by nine inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 48 days. Inspectors observed 75 lessons, and examined students' work and college documents. Meetings were held with governors, managers, staff and students.

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the lessons inspected, 43% were judged to be good or outstanding, and 8% were less than satisfactory. This profile compares with 65% and 6%, respectively, for all lessons observed by inspectors during 1997-98.

## Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level and GCSE	0	2	5	0	0	7
GNVQ	0	3	6	2	0	11
NVQ	0	9	8	0	0	17
Other vocational	1	1	6	3	0	11
Other*	1	15	12	1	0	29
Total (No)	2	30	37	6	0	75
Total (%)	3	40	49	8	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

\*includes basic education, higher education and access to higher education courses

# Context

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98.

## Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
The Isle of Wight College	9.5	79
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*



# Curriculum Areas

## Science, Mathematics and Computing

### Grade 4

**9 Inspectors observed 13 lessons in biology, chemistry, environmental science, mathematics, physics, information technology (IT), key skills and sports studies. They agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report, but identified several significant weaknesses that had either been underestimated or overlooked.**

#### Key strengths

- effective use of practical work
- retention and achievement rates above the national average on vocational IT courses
- good resources for teaching IT

#### Weaknesses

- the failure of a significant number of lessons to make appropriate demands on students
- the failure to integrate work on key skills with the vocational IT curriculum
- very poor retention and achievement rates for students on general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) courses
- achievements below the national average on general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) courses
- inadequate procedures for risk assessment
- poor IT resources for sciences and mathematics

10 The college offers courses at GCE A level in mathematics and a range of sciences. GCSE courses in chemistry, human biology, computing, physics and mathematics are available and

students without GCSE grade C or above in mathematics are required to follow the GCSE course. Pre-access and access to higher education courses in science are also offered, as well as a range of vocational courses that includes: general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) and national vocational qualification (NVQ) in IT; and BTEC national courses in computing, software engineering and science (sports).

11 Most lessons are adequately planned and materials of good quality are used for teaching and assessment. Teaching staff are well qualified. They have degrees and teaching certificates and many have assessor qualifications. There is an effective balance of theory and practical work in science subjects. Practical work formed an integral part of all computing and IT lessons that were inspected. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that this aspect of teaching and learning was a strength. Schemes of work are produced for all courses, but some are merely lists of topics which have limited use to staff and cannot be of help to students. Some lessons are brisk and positive. However, in many lessons opportunities for learning are reduced by teaching that develops at too slow a pace and makes insufficient demands on students. These points were not noted in the self-assessment report. Key skills assignments in the application of number are not integrated with the vocational courses in IT. The self-assessment did not acknowledge this weakness. Attendance at lessons is good. Very few students were late to the lessons that were inspected.

12 Student retention and achievement rates in GNVQ IT, NVQ IT and BTEC national courses have been at or above the national average for the sector for the last three years. By contrast, the rates of student retention and achievement in some GCE A level courses are poor. Retention on advanced level courses in chemistry, human biology, environmental science, mathematics and physics have been below the national

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average for further education colleges for the past three years. Students' achievements in GCE A level sciences and mathematics declined in the period from 1996 to 1998. There were no passes in advanced level mathematics in 1996 and the pass rates in both 1997 and 1998 were well below the average for the sector. In 1998, advanced level science and mathematics courses averaged a pass rate of 27%; retention rates were below 50%. These advanced level statistics reflect a particularly poor performance. GCSE science and mathematics courses had retention and achievement rates at or around the national average for further education colleges in 1996 and 1997. However, students' achievements for GCSE courses in computing, mathematics and human biology declined to well below the national average in 1998. The self-assessment report recognised poor retention and achievement on these courses as weaknesses. Achievements on IT courses were much better than on science courses.

13 The standard of students' work and the assessments set by staff are sound and were recognised as strengths in the college's self-assessment report. Reports from external

verifiers and examination board moderators confirm this judgement. Student project work and individual investigations in the access to higher education biology course, advanced level chemistry course and the advanced GNVQ in IT were positive and interesting. However, much of the marked work offered no helpful comments that might serve as constructive feedback to the students.

14 Facilities for teaching IT are good. There are enough modern networked computers in the classrooms to allow each student access during lessons. There is insufficient specialist software for students of science and mathematics. Students are not adequately prepared for timetabled study in the resource base and thus fail to make the best use of their opportunities. The risk assessments required by Control of Substances Hazardous to Health regulations have not been undertaken for activities carried out in the science laboratories. An inventory of equipment has only just been started. Specialist books in the college library are often out of date, and there are few books in areas of popular interest among many students, for example genetics, microbiology or biotechnology.

# Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
C&G 7261 use of IT	1	Expected completions	126	322	152
		Retention (%)	64	62	96
		Achievement (%)	86	51	98
GCSE sciences, mathematics and computing	2	Expected completions	324	359	291
		Retention (%)	66	72	69
		Achievement (%)	45	47	34
GNVQ intermediate science and IT	2	Expected completions	*	21	20
		Retention (%)	*	80	90
		Achievement (%)	*	94	44
NVQ IT	2	Expected completions	*	116	276
		Retention (%)	*	69	40
		Achievement (%)	*	87	98
GCE A level sciences, mathematics and computing	3	Expected completions	69	79	99
		Retention (%)	47	45	45
		Achievement (%)	54	64	28
GNVQ advanced science and IT	3	Expected completions	50	55	51
		Retention (%)	68	58	71
		Achievement (%)	79	90	78

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

\*figures not available

# Curriculum Areas

## Engineering

### Grade 4

**15 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in the areas of mechanical, motor vehicle and electronic engineering, and agreed with the judgements contained in the self-assessment report. Positive action was being taken to remedy some of the weaknesses identified in the report.**

#### Key strengths

- outstanding pass and retention rates in the higher national certificate in mechanical engineering
- well-defined safety procedures

#### Weaknesses

- poor rates of retention and achievement on many courses
- the failure of a significant number of lessons to motivate students
- the lack of appropriate variety of teaching methods
- too high a ratio of part-time to full-time staff
- inadequate specialist equipment

16 The division of technology was formed following reorganisation in 1998. It consists of the specialist areas of mechanical, motor vehicle, electronic and construction engineering. The inspection covered the first three of these areas. A good range of full-time and part-time courses is offered from level 1 craft to higher national diploma. All courses lead to recognised qualifications. In addition, full-cost courses designed to meet the needs of local industry are run by a partnership company, Multiskills, that employs college lecturers. The college has good links with three local firms which provide over 80% of the enrolled engineering students. These firms make a significant contribution to the

development of the curriculum through their contribution to boards of study meetings.

17 Schemes of work were available for most courses but varied widely in style and quality. Some were very detailed and could be used as lesson plans but others were brief, sometimes consisting of only a single line. Progress is being made towards standardising schemes of work throughout the division. There was some good teaching which was well planned and used an appropriate variety of teaching methods. In other lessons there was an excessive use of the whiteboard for note-taking. In some lessons the teachers lacked enthusiasm, and the slow pace of their teaching caused students to lose interest. These weaknesses were recognised in the self-assessment report. Practical sessions in workshops and laboratories were well organised and enjoyed by students who worked enthusiastically at their allocated tasks. Safety procedures were rigorously adhered to in the workshops. Before being allowed to use a particular area or piece of equipment, all students are required to sign against a list of safety requirements confirming that they have read and understood them. There is good college provision for resource-based learning which has recently become a requirement for all full-time courses. Students were pleased to be able to take advantage of this method of learning where they work on their own using resources designed for the purpose. Full-time motor vehicle students have the advantage of work experience as an integral part of their programme. This opportunity was not available on other full-time courses.

18 Examination successes and student retention rates vary widely. As stated in the self-assessment report, the overall performance in higher national certificate courses is good. The higher national certificate in mechanical engineering had pass and retention rates of 100% in both 1996 and 1997. In 1998, for a class of 10 students, both the pass and retention rates were 90%. However, the pass rate in

# Curriculum Areas

advanced vocational courses declined from 100% in 1996 to 24% in 1998. Level 1 City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) courses have also shown a steady reduction in pass rates from 58% in 1996 to 36% in 1998. In level 2 C&G courses, the pass rate increased from 56% in 1997 to 78% in 1998. This increase was mainly due to a significant improvement in achievement for the NVQ level 2 course in mechanical manufacture from 14% to 91%, although there was a corresponding reduction in the retention rate. Students' written work was satisfactory overall but in a number of assignments, students had not followed the written guidance provided by teachers; consequently a significant number failed to meet the required standard and were referred. Items manufactured during workshop classes were of a high standard.

19 The staff are well qualified to teach the courses but, as was indicated in the self-assessment report, they lack recent industrial experience. This shortcoming is currently being addressed through a programme of staff development in co-operation with a major local firm. The high ratio of part-time to full-time staff impedes effective course development and creates difficulty in making adequate substitutions when full-time staff are absent. The college has a newly built multiskills centre, but some of the equipment, particularly the workshop machinery, is old and unreliable. One electronics laboratory has recently been refurbished and is well equipped. Welding resources have recently been updated to meet the requirements of some courses. The library has a good range of relevant books.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
C&G	12	Expected completions	50	79	83
		Retention (%)	50	77	71
		Achievement (%)	58	41	36
BTEC first diploma	2	Expected completions	7	5	7
		Retention (%)	78	57	88
		Achievement (%)	43	20	71
C&G	2/3	Expected completions	123	102	91
		Retention (%)	80	71	61
		Achievement (%)	41	56	78
BTEC national certificate and national diploma	3	Expected completions	16	28	21
		Retention (%)	55	64	75
		Achievement (%)	100	58	24
BTEC higher national certificate	4	Expected completions	17	15	15
		Retention (%)	94	83	75
		Achievement (%)	88	100	73

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Business

### Grade 3

**20 Inspectors observed 13 lessons in business, administration, accounting, public services and management. They agreed with many of the findings of the detailed self-assessment report. However, the report did not identify all the weaknesses in teaching and learning and some strengths were overstated.**

#### Key strengths

- encouragement for students to organise and manage their own work
- good access to IT facilities
- good teaching on professional courses
- good achievements on supervisory studies courses

#### Weaknesses

- some poorly planned lessons
- a failure to provide differentiated teaching for students on the modular programme
- poor retention on some programmes
- inappropriate work experience placements

21 The college provides a wide range of opportunities for students and offers programmes from foundation to postgraduate level. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that this range of provision is a strength. Enrolments on both FEFC-funded and non-FEFC funded full-time and part-time courses have declined over the past three years as a result of schools in the area offering GNVQ programmes. The growth in the division therefore has been largely in higher education. The college offers a modularised curriculum and office skills workshops so that learners may join a programme at any point during the year.

22 Most teaching programmes are well planned. All programmes had schemes of work but some were simply a list of topics. Students are encouraged to be responsible for their own work; staff give them good support. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that this aspect of teaching and learning was a strength. Some teaching is good. Lessons are well structured. There is an appropriate variety of learning activities that gain a full response from students. Effective use is made of their own experience, especially on part-time professional courses. In one lesson students examined the roles of personnel within their own organisation and identified the lines of communication. They then produced their own information flow charts in preparation for further theoretical work. Internal verification systems are well developed and comprehensive. They are effective in identifying the additional work students need to undertake in order to achieve the competencies required by their course.

23 There was also some poor teaching. Some lessons focused too narrowly on workbooks and past examination papers. In the poorer lessons, very little attention was paid to planning or appropriate teaching methods. Students were sometimes engaged on one activity for a full three-hour lesson. Teachers sat at the front of the classroom and did not check that students were understanding the work. In other lessons, poor use was made of visual aids. Overhead transparencies contained very small print and were difficult to read. Whiteboards were not always used effectively. Too much information was written on the board and students were not able to raise queries or to work their way through the given examples. Teachers were not always able to deal with different levels of ability among students within the one class and, as a result, in some classes insufficient demands were made on students. Work experience placements were not always appropriate for the programme that students were following, and on some placements students were not adequately

# Curriculum Areas

monitored. Inspectors agreed with the college that the documentation and recording of students' progress is a strength and that the feedback given to students on their assignments is constructive. External verifiers' reports support these judgements. However, the standard of marking is erratic; spelling and grammatical errors are not always identified.

24 The college self-assessment report identified strengths and weaknesses in students' achievement and retention. Examples of good achievement include: the certificate in management of the National Examining Board for Supervisory Studies; the National Examining Board for Supervisory Studies introduction award at certificate level; GNVQ business at intermediate level; and the higher national

certificate in business. These programmes also have good retention rates. There are poor examination results on the NVQ level 3 accounting and NVQ level 2 administration courses. Poor retention is an issue on a number of programmes including NVQ level 2 accounting at 34%, NVQ level 3 accounting at 50%, NVQ level 3 administration at 49% and NVQ level 2 administration at 32%.

25 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that IT facilities within the division are good and that all students have adequate access to IT. Most students have developed good IT skills. The library is well resourced for the range of programmes within the division. Staff are well qualified.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate business	2	Expected completions	20	12	13
		Retention (%)	75	83	85
		Achievement (%)	67	70	73
NVQ administration	2/3	Expected completions	85	107	119
		Retention (%)	60	69	55
		Achievement (%)	76	56	69
NVQ accounting	2/3	Expected completions	130	147	80
		Retention (%)	64	84	68
		Achievement (%)	70	51	60
GNVQ advanced business	3	Expected completions	40	33	15
		Retention (%)	60	70	67
		Achievement (%)	88	91	40
Higher national certificate business	4	Expected completions	23	28	32
		Retention (%)	61	64	63
		Achievement (%)	93	100	96
Management programmes aggregated	**	Expected completions	51	61	104*
		Retention (%)	84	92	79
		Achievement (%)	97	89	69

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

\*includes short courses delivered outside the college, hence increase in student numbers, but drop in retention and achievement

\*\*courses of mixed levels

# Curriculum Areas

## Hospitality and Catering

### Grade 3

**26 Inspectors observed 12 lessons, covering the range of the provision in hospitality and catering. They agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- a good range of provision
- clear, helpful information to prospective students
- a good standard of practical work
- well-managed provision for key skills

#### Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievements on some courses
- failure by some teachers to consolidate and reinforce students' learning
- some insufficiently demanding lessons
- poor specialist equipment

27 The food and hospitality section offers a wide range of day and evening classes and a variety of modes of attendance. These features were identified in the self-assessment report as strengths. Inspectors agreed. A particular innovation has been the development of the 'scholarship' scheme whereby some students can elect to attend from Wednesday to Sunday. The students are paid an allowance each week with contributions generated from additional turnover by the restaurant. Students have opportunities to participate in many extra-curricular activities, to undertake work experience at prestigious events and to enter national competitions. Clear, helpful information is given to prospective students. Recently, there have been considerable improvements in the management of the section, although the unreliability of some data and the absence of college-wide procedures reduce the effectiveness of planning.

28 Students' attendance on some courses is low. Teachers monitor attendance but are prevented from taking firm action by the policy of confidentiality that underpins the college's tutorial system. The advanced GNVQ programme is barely viable. There are only four students in the second year of the course which reduces the opportunity for interaction between students as well as the range of teaching strategies. Briefs for GNVQ assignment are well presented, and incorporate appropriate key skills activities. The assignments for the foundation and intermediate courses are imaginative. Key skills work is well managed, with dedicated staff responsible for each aspect. On a number of full-time courses, students receive key skills tuition for three hours each week. In a number of the lessons observed, staff either made incorrect assumptions about students' existing knowledge and skills, or failed to help them to consolidate prior learning. The self-assessment report acknowledged these weaknesses. In some lessons the teaching proceeded too slowly and failed to make sufficient demands upon the students. In one practical catering lesson a student with a learning difficulty would have benefited from some additional structured learning support.

29 The college has developed a busy and realistic working environment within the restaurant and production kitchen which provides good opportunities for student assessments. Catering production classes have students who are studying at differing levels, so that level 3 students frequently assume a supervisory role. The section has not adopted the college's policy for internal verification, but operates its own procedure which is well documented.

30 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that students' achievements in a number of areas are poor. Over a three-year period GNVQ hospitality and catering achievements have varied widely, from 11% at intermediate and 17% at advanced level in



# Curriculum Areas

1997, to 62% at both levels in 1998. These results are below the national average for the sector. Students' achievements on NVQ courses are good. Results for the NVQ in food preparation and cooking are well above the national average. Teachers mark students' written work effectively and provide helpful comments. In some instances, formal assessment front sheets and feedback sheets were not used. Some students have well-developed IT skills and use them effectively in the presentation of their written work. NVQ portfolios are satisfactorily managed and supported by appropriate documentation for monitoring students' progress. In practical catering sessions students worked to a good standard with due consideration given in most

instances to issues of hygiene and health and safety. However, some students did not wear the appropriate protective uniform or suitable footwear.

31 The quality of accommodation varies widely. Specialist kitchens are poorly laid out. Large-scale equipment does not meet modern standards, and some small-scale equipment is worn out. The restaurant, on the other hand, is well decorated and well furnished. Teachers are appropriately qualified, with the majority holding a teaching qualification and assessor awards. A number of people recently appointed to the staff have good industrial experience. Students have access to modern computers and the library is appropriately stocked.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ hospitality and catering	1	Expected completions	*	25	74
		Retention (%)	*	100	93
		Achievement (%)	*	52	42
NVQ food preparation	1	Expected completions	24	27	32
		Retention (%)	62	85	87
		Achievement (%)	87	83	96
GNVQ intermediate hospitality and catering	2	Expected completions	*	10	39
		Retention (%)	*	90	95
		Achievement (%)	*	11	62
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	Expected completions	75	96	105
		Retention (%)	55	67	60
		Achievement (%)	80	91	79
NVQ food preparation and cooking	3	Expected completions	17	10	24
		Retention (%)	47	90	79
		Achievement (%)	62	88	89
GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering	3	Expected completions	17	9	17
		Retention (%)	47	67	47
		Achievement (%)	88	17	62

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

\*course did not run

# Curriculum Areas

## Health and Care

### Grade 3

**32 Inspectors observed 11 lessons on health and social care programmes which included group tutorial sessions and practical and theoretical teaching. The college had compiled a detailed self-assessment report on the curriculum area. Inspectors agreed with some of the college's judgements, but concluded that the quality of some teaching was overstated and that some weaknesses had been omitted.**

#### Key strengths

- provision that offers good opportunities for progression
- outstanding pass rates on childcare courses
- good professional qualifications of the staff
- students' written work of a high standard
- some well-managed work experience

#### Weaknesses

- missed opportunities to teach key skills
- poor retention on some courses
- many schemes of work and lesson plans not available
- insufficient recent practical experience among staff
- insufficient specialist resources

33 The college offers a comprehensive range of qualifications for full-time students which includes GNVQ at foundation and intermediate levels and an advanced course which started in 1998. Childcare courses include the diploma in nursery nursing of the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education, the certificate in childcare and education, and the BTEC national diploma in childhood studies. Other BTEC national diplomas in health studies and caring

services are to be discontinued in 1999. Part-time courses lead to higher national certificates in caring services and childhood studies. In addition, NVQs in childcare and care are available at levels 2 and 3. Counselling skills, first aid, and the qualifications of the Institute of Welfare Studies are offered as additional qualifications to large numbers of students.

34 Most teaching was satisfactory. There were examples of well-planned lessons. Some opportunities to encourage learning were missed, especially in key skills work. Topics were often presented in unimaginative ways using photocopied pages from books as aids to discussion. Some lessons gave students good opportunities to be involved fully in the work. For example, second-year BTEC students who had researched the history of education in Britain, made group presentations to their peers providing background information on gender, ethnicity and government proposals for reform. They then evaluated each other's performance. Other lessons took the form of long lectures that required extensive note-taking or copying from the board. In at least half the lessons teachers did not share the planned learning outcomes with students, and were unable to check how effective their teaching had been. The self-assessment report cited the use of 'diverse teaching methods' as a strength. Inspectors did not agree. Work experience is offered to all full-time students except those on the GNVQ foundation course. On some courses, particularly those in childcare, work experience is used to assess practical caring skills. Not all courses used this opportunity to assess students' attitudes to and empathy with client groups. Some rely inappropriately on written assignments as proof of students' ability to work in the care industries.

35 Students on many courses produce written assignments of a high standard. Verifiers' reports support the college's view that work is of a good standard. Awarding body reports are generally positive and the issues they raise are addressed in course team meetings. Teachers'

# Curriculum Areas

marking of work is helpful. Not all students produce assignments using IT, and spelling and punctuation are not always corrected. Students are very positive about their teachers, but less so about the books and resources available to them. The library stock is inadequate. Some books, particularly on childcare, are only available on short-term loan, which has made studying and homework difficult for some students. Teachers try to compensate by providing books that are available in the classroom, but this is not a satisfactory solution to insufficient resources.

36 Achievements on some care courses at the college are above national averages for the sector. The diploma in nursery nursing awarded by the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education has maintained high rates for retention and achievement. Achievement is lower on BTEC diplomas and retention figures are in decline. NVQ achievements are poor. The college has recognised this weakness and is exploring ways to improve the delivery and assessment of NVQs at all levels. Short course achievements are good. Many of these courses provide additional qualifications for full-time students, for example first aid and counselling skills. Some courses lead to certificates awarded by the college.

37 Staff have a good range of experience and qualifications. Some have masters degrees and most hold teaching qualifications. However, most staff could benefit from the opportunity to update their practical skills. The college trains its own internal verifiers and many staff are working toward these awards. There is little specialist equipment for care teaching. Teaching areas are shared with other divisions, and are unsuitable for a variety of learning activities. Displays of students' work brighten up some otherwise dull teaching spaces. Some teaching took place in inappropriate areas. For example, a science laboratory was the base for a discussion group, and adult classes took place in cramped conditions.

# Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Health and social care short courses including first-aid courses	1	Expected completions	893	572	591
		Retention (%)	96	89	97
		Achievement (%)	89	94	95
GNVQ foundation	1	Expected completions	11	13	*
		Retention (%)	55	85	*
		Achievement (%)	50	91	*
GNVQ intermediate	2	Expected completions	25	22	12
		Retention (%)	80	73	83
		Achievement (%)	75	81	70
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education national diploma in nursery nursing	3	Expected completions	37	37	31
		Retention (%)	81	92	91
		Achievement (%)	96	100	90
National diploma in social care	3	Expected completions	16	16	18
		Retention (%)	63	88	55
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100
National diploma in health studies	3	Expected completions	17	21	18
		Retention (%)	71	81	66
		Achievement (%)	92	88	100
NVQ childcare and early years	3	Expected completions	**	14	23
		Retention (%)	**	93	91
		Achievement (%)	**	64	19

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

\*course did not run

\*\*data not available

# Curriculum Areas

## Basic Education

### Grade 3

**38 Inspectors observed 14 lessons in adult basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties. The self-assessment report was appropriately detailed and comprehensive. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses that were identified by the college. However, they judged that some weaknesses in curriculum organisation had not been identified, that the impact of inadequate resources had been underestimated, and that the strengths of teaching and learning had been overstated.**

#### Key strengths

- good achievement by many students
- careful planning and preparation of activities
- progression of basic education students to higher level courses
- the efforts of experienced teachers to provide high-quality education
- innovative provision for young people needing to be reintroduced to education

#### Weaknesses

- some courses inappropriate to the needs of students with learning difficulties
- inadequate individual learning programmes
- a lack of specialist equipment
- insufficient progression opportunities for students with learning difficulties

39 Provision for students on basic education courses and for students with learning difficulties is located within the division of community studies, where there have been several changes in management over the last year. Currently, there are 220 basic education students, and over 140 students with learning

difficulties. The number of basic education students has increased after a period of decline. Two full-time basic education courses are available. Part-time classes take place at various times of the day, and are offered in community settings as well as within the college. There are full-time courses for school-leavers and adults with learning difficulties as well as a part-time programme which takes place in the college and elsewhere on the island. An imaginative programme has been developed for young people who need a reintroduction to education following periods of physical or mental illness, social or emotional difficulties. Inspectors agreed that the range of this provision is a strength. Some aspects of the design of provision for students with learning difficulties inhibit learning and progression. For example, the GNVQ foundation health and social care does not meet students' needs, and the usefulness of the skills for work course is reduced, as the students have already spent several years in each others' company, attending the same school. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

40 Teaching is always at least satisfactory, and sometimes good. In the lessons observed, the activities undertaken had been carefully planned. The best lessons enabled students to learn skills which will improve the quality of their lives. For example, students on the full-time basic education course were carrying out a substantial piece of work for which they had used books, the internet and CD-ROMs. They were extending their literacy skills, learning how to study and becoming confident as users of technology of which they had no prior experience. In a demanding lesson, students with learning difficulties sampled a range of Indian foods. They were widening their experience of different foods, while learning to make real choices. However, in many lessons the emphasis was on completing tasks, or on meeting the requirements of accreditation, rather than on achieving learning outcomes

# Curriculum Areas

which would be of long-term benefit to students. The strengths of teaching and learning were identified in the self-assessment report but were overstated.

41 Most students on adult basic education courses improve their skills and gain in confidence as a result of their studies. Those who enter for awards usually achieve them. Teachers meticulously maintain evidence of the achievements of the units and elements of awards gained by students with learning difficulties. Students' files are carefully organised. However, this documentation does not provide a clear picture of students' overall progress. Students do not have effective individual learning plans, which makes it difficult to judge whether they are gaining the skills which would be of most benefit to them. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Progression from the programme for young people who need a reintroduction to education is outstanding, with 89% of last year's students going on to higher education, further education or employment. Although basic education students often progress to higher level courses, there are too few opportunities for students with learning difficulties to do so.

42 A team of experienced staff strives to provide high-quality education. Despite their efforts, the three classrooms used solely by adult basic education students and students with learning difficulties are of poor quality as learning environments. There is not enough suitable equipment for students to be able to benefit fully from some lessons. Teachers rely on paper-based activities when practical exercises would be more appropriate. These weaknesses were identified in the self-assessment report, but their full impact on teaching and learning was underestimated.

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 3

**43 The college's self-assessment report concluded that provision is good. Inspectors disagreed with this judgement and considered that insufficient weighting had been given to weaknesses. Some of these weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- well-organised student services
- good welfare provision
- high level of personal support for students
- an effective health education programme

#### Weaknesses

- ineffective strategies for dealing with student absences
- confusion amongst staff about their tutorial role
- inconsistent application of some policies
- low take-up of learning support

44 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that its recruitment processes for full-time students are weak. Formal relationships with the high schools have recently been strengthened but are still inadequate. The attractive prospectus of full-time courses is the first one to be issued. There are college websites on the internet. Students have contributed promotional items for the local media. There is a marketing strategy but no procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of marketing activities. The college is attempting to standardise its publicity materials. The number of college open days has been increased. Each day is planned to appeal to a particular group of potential students as defined by age, preferred mode of attendance and

vocational interest. Students appreciate the 'taster' days and summer induction days that are offered by some divisions.

45 Structures for advice and guidance have been centralised, enabling key staff to begin to improve shortcomings in the enrolment of students to appropriate courses. New admissions procedures are intended to ensure that potential students receive impartial advice. Procedures have been strengthened following review. Enrolment arrangements include initial interviews, careers guidance and induction activities for both full-time and part-time students. Any student may take an open college library unit which acts as an effective library induction. There are adequate induction arrangements for full-time students who join courses late. Most students have received the college charter and student handbook.

46 The provision of learning support is well organised. Accurate records are kept which note outcomes. Assessments, which have been devised in the college, are used to screen all full-time students on entry to discover whether they require further training in basic skills. Part-time students are screened at the request of their tutors; the number of such requests has increased over the last three years. The college recognises that there are weaknesses in checking on the number of students who subsequently attend for learning support. Of 183 students identified in September 1998, only 30% are receiving help through the central support service. Most of the rest are receiving support within their programme areas, and are still on their courses. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the lack of support for students on part-time courses and in outreach centres is a weakness. Additional screening is provided for students identified as having specific learning difficulties. There is some support for students with disabilities, but the college recognises that its provision for students with sensory impairments is limited. Arrangements exist for the accreditation of prior

# Cross-college Provision

experience and learning, but they are not always effective. Very few students apply for accreditation.

47 Much of the support for students is effectively managed through student services. However, evaluation procedures are not yet fully established. The tutorial policy entitles students to individual tutorials which are provided for full-time and day-release courses and for many evening classes. The policy is applied inconsistently and practice is varied, with some students receiving more tutorial support than their entitlement. The additional hours are well used for action-planning, portfolio building and assisting students who have joined late. Action plans are uneven in quality. They range from bland general statements to detailed agendas for action which, if followed, should help students to improve their performance. The college's code of confidentiality associated with the tutorial system could conflict with its duty of care for students in that information about their absences is withheld from parents. It has also led to confusion amongst staff about the scope and precise responsibilities of their tutorial role, and reduced their ability to monitor absences effectively. Nevertheless, most students are positive about the high level of personal support which they receive from their tutors.

48 The college recognises that little use is made of value-added data and records of achievement. A college policy which outlines the arrangements for key skills, contains a mixture of discrete and curriculum-based provision. However, this policy is not implemented consistently. The college identifies its welfare section as a strength. Inspectors agreed with this judgement. The section draws upon an extensive network of outside agencies and local charities. There is a counselling service that is available for four days each week; there is no provision on Fridays nor for evening students. The college works in partnership with the health authority to provide an effective promotion unit for health education and has

secured funding to work with the authority on a specific project that promotes healthy living.

49 The college, in partnership with V.T. Southern Careers, provides an effective careers service and access to careers education and information. Specialist staff are available for those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Students are briefed on opportunities in higher education and are helped to make applications to universities.

50 The college has an active students' association. The president represents the student body on the academic board, the governing body and the health and safety committee. There is scope for this role to be further developed.

## General Resources

### Grade 4

**51 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. However, some improvements cited in the report do not yet constitute strengths and some weaknesses were given insufficient consideration.**

#### Key strengths

- clear and widely understood IT policy
- modern, business standard IT equipment for students
- improved range of facilities in the learning resources centre
- building refurbishments, especially in central areas

#### Weaknesses

- little structural work to address weaknesses identified by the first inspection
- slow progress in remedying faults in the condition of the accommodation
- underused classroom space



# Cross-college Provision

- inappropriate accommodation strategy
- cramped working spaces for staff
- lack of assets register or formal inventories
- no policy for equipment replacement

52 The college operates on two sites: the main campus close to Newport town centre and the base for land-based studies at Holliers Farm in Bathingbourne. Buildings on the main campus, constructed between the 1950s and 1980s, are mainly flat-roofed and of one or two storeys; there is some mobile accommodation. Provision includes a good gymnasium, and a well-equipped fitness centre. There is a privately-run crèche on the campus. The college uses sports pitches and a swimming pool 1.5 miles away.

53 Inspectors agreed that the new multiskills workshop, the safer location for the ceramics provision and increased space for learning resources represent improvements, although the multiskills centre is underused. The pursuit of planning permission to build a new college on a fresh site has consumed much time and money, resulting in prolonged neglect of the fabric of the present buildings, their maintenance and redecoration. Structural shortcomings cited in the first inspection have worsened. The state of mobile classrooms makes them unacceptable as learning environments. The self-assessment report acknowledged significant weaknesses but underestimates the extent and seriousness of the problems. Some essential work has been undertaken recently to comply with health and safety regulations but much remains to be done. The college commissioned a conditional survey and costed maintenance plan in 1997. The work highlighted in the report as necessary has barely started because of the continued expectation of a new building. The existing accommodation strategy is inadequate and the college is endeavouring to produce a revised strategy with the help of the FEFC. Planning permission for the new building was refused in July 1998.

54 The college acknowledged in its self-assessment report that its classroom space and the multiskills area are substantially underused. A recent utilisation survey suggests a level of only 25% usage. Some rooms are used inappropriately. Timetabling is not undertaken centrally. Many staff workrooms are cramped and cluttered, and some technician preparation spaces are barely adequate. A staff common room is underused. There is a large student common room. Students are dissatisfied with the provision and costs in the student refectory.

55 In the learning resources centre, there are approximately 25,000 texts, 4,000 videos, four televideos, a video-conferencing facility, 166 CD-ROMs, over 1,000 business and other annual reports, and more than 270 journals. Usage and book issues are well monitored and inspectors agreed this is a strength. The storage areas for texts are barely adequate, and there is little room for movement between the rows of shelves. There are insufficient work spaces, and the area is cramped. The learning resources budget is £23.27 per full-time equivalent student, of which only £5.12 is spent on books. Although there is a learning resources centre user group to advise on acquisitions, better links are required with curriculum areas at the programme planning stage. This shortcoming was acknowledged in the self-assessment report. There are no library facilities at Holliers Farm.

56 The total of 370 modern computers only just meets the needs of the current number of students. Only 45 of these machines, including seven linked to the internet, are on open access for students, although there are other, less up-to-date machines available. Mondays and Tuesdays are very busy and students need to book in advance to ensure access to a computer. Access is easier on other days. Students can sometimes use machines in the resource-based learning centre. The quality of the computers is a strength. Virtually all staff workrooms have a computer linked to the college network. The college has an IT policy which is appropriately

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monitored. The policy includes centralised purchasing and procedures for replacing outdated IT equipment. There are no inventories of other equipment, nor an assets register, and no capital replacement policy. These findings are included in the self-assessment report.

57 Most blocks on the main site have ramps for students with restricted mobility, but there is inadequate access to the upper floors. Access inside the buildings is sometimes difficult. For example, the space in the learning resources centre is inadequate for wheelchair users. Some doors are stiff and hard to open. Access to the mobile classrooms is often difficult. The college recognises further work is needed and plans are in hand. External signage is poor.

58 The college has a health and safety policy dating from 1997. Accidents are recorded and monitored. A health and safety committee meets regularly. Recently, minutes of the committee have been sent to the academic board, and there is now a three-monthly report to governors on health and safety. There is little discussion of health and safety issues in board meetings, and any decisions made have not recently been recorded. The policy requires regular risk assessments to be conducted, but none has been carried out since 1996. Heads of divisions have been charged with the task, but without being given a deadline. The college has enough trained first aiders. There are some security measures including an effective intruder alarm.

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 4

**59 Since the last inspection the college has made slow progress in developing its quality assurance systems. Inspectors judged the self-assessment report overstated strengths and did not identify a number of weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- a clear quality assurance policy
- prompt actions in response to student concerns

#### Weaknesses

- actions arising from the last inspection report still outstanding
- insufficient interrogation of information on student enrolment, retention and achievement
- the poor quality of college data
- too few indicators and targets to measure performance
- no effective procedures for monitoring the implementation of policy
- the small impact of the scheme to observe teaching and learning

60 The self-assessment report acknowledged that a significant number of actions identified as necessary at the time of the previous inspection have yet to be taken. The college now has a clear quality assurance policy. This policy outlines a quality assurance system based on the review and evaluation of courses and the measurement of progress against benchmarks and performance indicators. However, course reviews do not consistently include an analysis of student examination and pass rates or consider retention rates. A significant number of courses have poor rates of retention and achievement. The college has yet to set targets and pursue effective strategies to address these issues, despite having undertaken, with support from the Further Education Development Agency, a major research project into poor retention. The lack of relevant college data and the unreliability of information that is available exacerbates the problem of analysis. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that the dearth of benchmarks or performance indicators to measure performance was a weakness in the college. The quality assurance committee had

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begun to address this situation at the time of inspection but standards and procedures have yet to be established. The college charter is prominently displayed throughout the college. The charter does not specify the standards of service students may expect, but students feel confident about referring problems to college staff. On most courses students are given opportunities to voice their concerns and this, they acknowledge, leads to improvement.

61 The college has made a commitment to improve its quality assurance system. The academic board was recently reconstituted to represent divisional and cross-college functions. The board is beginning to be recognised as an effective decision-making body and as the main vehicle for communication between the divisions and the governors. Six subcommittees of the academic board have been set up to oversee course approvals, quality assurance, health and safety, IT, human resource development and equal opportunities. The new quality assurance committee has a clear remit and at the time of the inspection had identified key areas requiring action by the college.

62 The college's strategic plan and the divisional self-assessment reports have been successfully combined to produce divisional operating statements. These identify actions to be taken within specified timescales. Following the recent changes to the management structure, divisional managers will now have greater responsibility for ensuring that these actions are carried forward. There are no effective procedures for monitoring the implementation of policies; compliance across the college with these policies is uneven. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that this was a weakness.

63 A team of 12 members of staff undertake observation of teaching throughout the college. Issues arising are relayed to the heads of division to inform their self-assessment report. Not all staff have benefited from observations, as the scheme has been temporarily suspended.

At present there is little evidence to suggest that observation leads to improvement. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Training needs identified through observation are passed to the head of human resource development to inform the college strategic plan. The grades of lessons awarded by the college are higher than those awarded by inspectors. The decline in lessons judged good or outstanding from 57% at the last inspection to 43% during the 1999 inspection, suggests that a more rigorous observation scheme with associated staff training may be needed.

64 Academic staff are encouraged to undertake a programme of accredited IT training to ensure they are able to support student learning with confidence. Training is offered at times to suit staff. Opportunities for sharing good practice learnt during staff development activities do not yet exist. The impact of staff development has not been sufficiently evaluated for its long-term effectiveness to be evident. Staff appraisal was reviewed and relaunched in 1997-98. At the time of the inspection 91% of academic staff and 76% of support staff had been appraised. A significant number of appraisals do not result in the identification of clear aims that are intended to lead to improvement. Part of the college's strategy on quality assurance is to achieve the Investor in People award. The target date has been extended to December 1999, but this may well be ambitious.

65 In 1998, the college produced its third annual self-assessment report. The process involves all staff and is seen by most staff as an effective mechanism for improving quality. The report was collated by a group of senior managers led by the head of quality and the head of human resources and validated by an external consultant. The report overestimates the college's strengths but presents an honest, detailed assessment of a significant number of its weaknesses. In many cases, action plans to

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address weaknesses list a number of tasks to be undertaken. However, a significant number of divisional action plans do not include objectives which have been established as college priorities.

## Governance

### Grade 4

**66 Governors produced a self-assessment of their activities for the second time for the inspection. The process was thorough. Inspectors agreed with many of the weaknesses that were identified, but considered that other weaknesses had been overlooked by governors. Some strengths were overstated.**

#### Key strengths

- a thorough process of self-assessment by governors
- allegiance of governors to the college

#### Weaknesses

- a failure to provide adequate strategic direction for the college
- poor monitoring of college performance and the lack of targets
- insufficiently rigorous consideration of financial matters
- reactive approach to strategic planning
- an inadequate concern with the quality of the curriculum
- poor attention to the monitoring and review of key policies

67 Governors have not effectively adjusted their role to meet the needs of an incorporated college. The corporation assessed its work for the second time in the preparation of its self-assessment report for the inspection. The second assessment was considerably more thorough than the first. The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its

assessment, the governance of the college is weak. The corporation does not substantially conduct its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It does not fulfil its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC. The corporation has not instituted and operated a system for frequently and regularly monitoring, reviewing and revising the college's operating statement and strategic plan, and has not fulfilled its responsibility for ensuring the future solvency of the institution and the safeguarding of assets. The corporation has not formally approved the annual budget for 1998-99. The financial position of the college is weak. These weaknesses were underestimated in the self-assessment report.

68 Many governors have been on the board for a long time. Some new appointments have been made in the last 12 months. Most governors are from the island, and regard the college as an important community asset. Inspectors did not receive curricula vitae of governors, but determined through meetings that they represented a broad range of interests, including the law, higher education, engineering and design and business.

69 There are 16 members of the corporation including the principal, two staff members and a student. There are seven independent members, two community representatives, two co-opted members and one TEC nominee. The process for the identification of potential governors has not had regard for the range of skills required, and the corporation has not performed a formal skills audit. The minutes of corporation meetings do not show that recent appointments have been made in accordance with the instrument of government. There is no formal induction for governors, and regular updating of governors has not been developed.

70 Appropriate committees have been established by the corporation, but terms of reference are not comprehensive for all committees. The clerk's other duties as a full-

# Cross-college Provision

time employee of the college do not allow sufficient time for effective clerking of all corporation business. The college has decided to change this arrangement. Agenda, papers and minutes are prepared and dispatched within appropriate timescales. Reports to committees do not clearly state their purpose, or outline the financial implications, or itemise the action that will subsequently be required. The standard of corporation minutes has improved recently; when decisions are reached, they are recorded. Copies of minutes are available in the library for staff and students.

71 Governors have not effectively overseen the college's strategic direction. This weakness was not recognised in the college's self-assessment report. There is little evidence of an informed debate by governors to determine priorities for the college and its managers. Although the governors have received and approved the strategic plan they have not established sufficiently clear targets against which its execution can be monitored.

72 Governors have been insufficiently proactive in monitoring and reviewing the college's academic performance. They have not led by example in the setting of targets for performance and have been insufficiently demanding of senior managers when information which they requested has not been forthcoming. Very little attention has been paid in corporation meetings to academic matters and there is no indication that governors are informed about examination results or retention rates in sufficient detail to enable them to form an accurate overview. The academic board has recently been re-established and the governors now receive regular reports on academic matters. Specific governors now have links with divisions to improve their understanding of the curriculum and to improve communications between the board and the staff. It has not been clearly determined how these links should operate.

73 Governors inadequately monitor and review key policies. They have recently decided to reintroduce the practice of regularly considering health and safety reports at full board meetings. They do not exercise their responsibilities in relation to equal opportunities.

## Management

### Grade 4

**74 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report. Actions to address weaknesses are producing some improvements.**

#### Key strengths

- prompt action by the new principalship to address some key management issues
- clear communication to staff of the college's difficulties
- understanding among staff of the roles and responsibilities of key managers

#### Weaknesses

- weak financial management
- the poor financial position
- poor management information
- the legacy of failure to address key strategic issues
- the absence of a middle management structure
- inefficiencies in class sizes and course hours
- poorly-managed budget preparation and allocation
- little development of equal opportunities or health and safety management

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75 A new principal was appointed to the college in September 1998. Since then the college has started to address a number of significant management and financial issues. In late September 1998 the FEFC required the college to submit a recovery plan, to address its weak financial position. A draft was submitted in October 1998. At the time of the inspection, the college's efforts to gain a clear understanding of the scale and complexity of its financial difficulties were delaying the submission of a full plan, and associated financial forecasts.

76 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is weak. There are no qualified accountants at a senior level in the finance department. The budget preparation for the current financial year has been poorly managed. Consultation with budget managers has been inadequate, and the budget has yet to be finalised. The operation of the department does not lead to the production of clear, timely financial management information. A 12-month rolling cashflow forecast is not produced. Financial regulations have not been reviewed since 1994. They are not comprehensive, and do not encompass all college activities.

77 The college has lacked decisive leadership and effective management. Inadequate clarity of purpose and strategic direction damaged the college's capacity to cope with change. The self-assessment report did not cite these weaknesses. Firm leadership is now enabling progress to be made in responding to the college's difficulties, on which staff have been extensively and regularly briefed. Briefing meetings are supported by written statements. Staff welcome these new opportunities to understand the college's problems.

78 The previous inspection report identified a number of weaknesses in the management structure. A revised senior management structure, introduced in October 1998, has introduced greater clarity into management

arrangements. The principal, vice-principal and assistant principal constitute the principalship. The director of finance and administration, seven heads of division, the head of facilities and the personnel manager complete the senior management team of 13. The team deals with all key strategic and operational issues. It conducts its business regularly and efficiently. Minuted action points are helping to achieve the prompt resolution of issues. Heads of division are managed by the assistant principal for their curriculum role and by the vice-principal for cross-college roles. These reporting arrangements have the potential to work well.

79 The dual responsibility of heads of division places heavy demands on them, particularly as there is no consistent management structure within the divisions. This lack of appropriate middle management is to be addressed when college negotiations to revise the contracts and responsibilities of teachers have been completed. Monthly divisional meetings are well run and the clear minutes are regularly considered at meetings of the academic board. Staff comment positively about the responses they receive on items that have been raised.

80 The college's strategic planning has improved, though the academic board has not yet been involved in the process. The strategic plan was written to a clear timetable. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that staff were extensively consulted. Staff speak highly of their involvement, and are now able to see the developing links between this work and their contributions to the college's self-assessment report. The plan includes some market and environmental analysis but there is no rigorous use of market research. Progress reviews are already under way.

81 The college is developing a good range of working relationships with local organisations. For example, the principal and senior managers are involved at a strategic level with the Island Regeneration Partnership and the Isle of Wight TEC. Staff at many levels represent the college

# Cross-college Provision

on local business groups. Curriculum areas, for example hairdressing, catering, care, and the countryside, have developed good working links with employers. Relationships with universities are strengthening.

82 The college's management information systems were identified as a major weakness in the last inspection report. The self-assessment report recognised that little was done to improve these before the present inspection. The new principal, recognising that many of the college's difficulties stem from absent, inadequate or incorrect data, has placed a high priority on improving these systems. A well-considered plan for an effective student management information system is being implemented. A computerised course database, accessible to all divisional and management offices, is the first practical outcome, enabling speedy verification of data. Work is being undertaken for the first time since incorporation to determine course hours, identify inefficient group sizes and accurately forecast student units of activity. As part of its recovery plan the college is committed to exploring the use of financial modelling to assist in the construction of its budget and, consequently, to improve its poor average class size. There is, as yet, no discipline of setting targets and systematically pursuing them at any level within the organisation.

83 The college has made little progress in developing equal opportunities since the last inspection. The previous policy has fallen into abeyance, and a new, draft policy and associated implementation plan has recently been prepared for consideration by the academic board. Health and safety is not monitored effectively and the college is not meeting its obligations in this respect.

## Conclusions

84 The self-assessment report produced by the college was extensive and candid. It contained much useful information which was used as a

basis for planning and conducting the inspection. However, performance indicators were not rigorously applied, planned improvements were sometimes expressed as intentions, rather than as measurable targets and action plans did not establish priorities. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements made by the college, although even the college's revised grades were generally higher than those awarded by inspectors. Inspectors identified significant weaknesses in governance, general resources and quality assurance which were not identified in the self-assessment report. The collection of college data was not considered to be a sufficiently sound process as the basis for the overall summary of students' achievements for the annex of the report. Hence the information has been omitted.

85 Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of this report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

# College Statistics

## Student numbers by age (July 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	1
16-18 years	19
19-24 years	13
25+ years	65
Not known	2
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Level of study	%
Foundation	15
Intermediate	23
Advanced	23
Higher education	6
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	33
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	247	534	10
Agriculture	43	170	3
Construction	83	129	3
Engineering	133	296	6
Business	404	719	15
Hotel and catering	204	2,238	33
Health and community care	359	726	14
Art and design	133	144	4
Humanities	90	372	6
Basic education	120	296	6
Total	1,816	5,624	100

Source: college data

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 15% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

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

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	123	0	92*	215
Supporting direct learning contact	30	0	0	30
Other support	102	0	0	102
Total	255	0	92	347

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

\*including prison education staff



# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£8,526,000	£9,139,000	£9,515,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£15.33	£14.84	£15.13
Payroll as a proportion of income	76%	70%	71%
Achievement of funding target	123%	129%	100%
Diversity of income	35%	37%	38%
Operating surplus	-£231,000	£73,000	-£318,000

*Sources: Income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)*

*ALF – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998)*

*Payroll – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)*

*Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), college (1998)*

*Diversity of income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)*

*Operating surplus – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)*

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