

Kingston Maurward College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1998-99**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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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

Kingston Maurward College

South West Region

Inspected February 1999

Kingston Maurward College is the major provider of further education land-based courses for Dorset. The college offers courses in agriculture, horticulture, animal care, equine studies, countryside management, outdoor recreation and leisure, computing and business studies. The college's first self-assessment report was prepared specifically for the inspection. The corporation effectively evaluated its own performance. Most staff contributed to the initial stages of the self-assessment process. However, some of them were not adequately involved in the development of the final report. Assessments of most areas are brief and insufficiently evaluative. In the curriculum areas, there is limited reference to the quality of teaching and learning and students' achievements. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report, but judged that insufficient weighting had been given to some significant weaknesses and that some strengths were overstated.

The inspection covered provision in agriculture and countryside management, animal care and horticulture. The college has productive links with employers, schools and the local community. Corporation business is carried out efficiently and relationships between senior managers and governors are effective. Financial

management is good. Teaching and learning in most practical lessons are effective. Retention rates are generally high and there are good levels of achievement in some areas. Students receive good informal support from their teachers. Learning is supported by a wide range of specialist equipment and resources. The estate and buildings are well maintained. The college should address: below average and declining pass rates on some courses; significant weaknesses in quality assurance; the poor co-ordination of student support services and variation in the quality of tutorial support; the lack of effective performance targets; inadequate monitoring and analysis of students' performance; weaknesses in strategic planning; weaknesses in aspects of curriculum planning and management; and inadequate support for students who have difficulty with literacy and numeracy.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Agriculture and countryside management	2	Support for students	3
Horticulture	3	General resources	2
Animal care	3	Quality assurance	4
		Governance	2
		Management	3

The College and its Mission

1 Kingston Maurward College was established in 1949 as the Dorset Farm Institute to serve the education and training needs of the farming community in Dorset. In recent years it has diversified considerably and now offers programmes across the spectrum of land-based industries as well as business, secretarial and computing courses. There are further education courses extending from foundation to national certificate and diploma level, and some higher education courses run in association with Bournemouth University. The college has strong links with employers and is keen to meet their needs for further education and training. It runs many courses specifically designed for local employers, often in collaboration with other training providers.

2 The college is on a single site in a rural setting 2 miles east of the county town of Dorchester. The college's 760 acre estate includes farmland, 35 acres of classical eighteenth-century parkland and a grade I listed Georgian mansion. The estate is a major resource for education and training. The grade II* listed Edwardian gardens have been restored by students and include a croquet lawn, rose garden, herbaceous borders, walled demonstration garden and a large display of perennials including the national collection of penstemons and salvias. There is a horticultural unit with extensive glasshouses, an equine unit with a newly built indoor arena, a unit for small animal care and an agricultural engineering unit. The woodland and parkland provide students with good opportunities to learn about countryside, outdoor recreation and leisure management. The college farm operates as a commercial enterprise as well as providing opportunities for teaching and learning. A wide range of farm activities take place, involving pigs, sheep, dairy and beef cattle, and arable crops.

3 Dorset is a mainly rural, sparsely populated, county with a population of 679,000,

48% of whom live in the few large centres of population situated along the coast. Public transport links to some parts of the county are poor. In

1998-99, 40% of the students enrolled at the college came from the rural towns and villages of Dorset; 50% were from the densely populated areas of Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch. The economy of rural Dorset is still based mainly on agriculture. Rural businesses provide one of the largest sources of employment in the county. They include farms, riding stables, garden centres, golf courses, woodland and conservation activities. The main industries in Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch are financial services, tourism and hi-tech engineering. Although there are some small pockets of rural deprivation, unemployment in Dorset is low, at 3.5%. Approximately 5% of the population are between 16 and 19 years of age. Of these around 80% continue in further education.

4 In November 1998, the college had over 1,652 enrolments. Of these, 1,295 were part-time students aged 19 or over and 357 were full-time students, most of whom were aged 16 to 18. Part-time student numbers have doubled since 1993. The majority of students were on courses leading to vocational and professional qualifications. The college competes for students with some rural secondary schools which offer land-based courses. The nearest further education colleges are Weymouth College (10 miles), Yeovil College (20 miles) and Bournemouth and Poole College of Further Education (30 miles). The college has developed joint funding bids with several other agricultural colleges in the south-west and with Dorset Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). In August 1998, the college employed 122 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 71 full-time equivalents were support staff. The college is organised in seven curriculum areas: agriculture, animal care, horticulture, horse management, countryside management, outdoor recreation and leisure, business and computing

Context

studies. Its mission is to 'provide high-quality courses, services and facilities in a welcoming and supportive environment'.

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected during the week beginning 8 February 1999. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other divisions of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Inspectors used data on students' achievements drawn from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1996 and 1997. The college submitted its own data on students' achievements for 1998. These data proved to

be generally reliable when checked against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies.

6 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. The inspection was carried out by seven inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 32 days. Inspectors observed 36 lessons and examined students' work and college documentation. Meetings were held with governors, managers, college staff and students. Of the lessons inspected, 58% were judged to be good or outstanding. This figure is below the average of 65% for all lessons observed by inspectors during 1997-98.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
Lessons (No.)	7	14	14	1	0	36
Total (%)	19	39	39	3	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*

7 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 (%)
Kingston Maurward College	11.8	83
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

Agriculture and Countryside Management

Grade 2

8 Twelve lessons were observed. Although inspectors agreed with the college's overall assessment, the self-assessment report did not identify many of the specific strengths and weaknesses found during the inspection.

Key strengths

- a good range of courses
- well-planned and varied practical activities
- good retention and pass rates on most courses
- most students continuing their studies or progressing to employment
- effective use of specialist accommodation and resources to provide real work experiences for students

Weaknesses

- some poor classroom management
- some inadequate monitoring and recording of students' progress
- weaknesses in course management

9 The college offers a good range of courses in agriculture and countryside management, a strength not identified in the self-assessment report. There are opportunities for full-time students to progress through first diploma to national certificate and diploma courses. The differing abilities and experience of students, however, are not always taken into account. It is college policy that all advanced level students are enrolled on the one-year national certificate course before progressing to year two of the national diploma, although the national diploma may be more appropriate in some cases. Part-time students also have a wide choice of

courses. Subjects range from lambing and sheep shearing to hedge laying and caravan park maintenance. There are strong links with industry. Local employers provide valuable support for teaching through the provision of off-site facilities for practical project work, visits and work experience. However, there is little consultation with employers in planning the curriculum.

10 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that students experience a wide range of learning activities during practicals, theory classes and off-site visits. Teachers demonstrate thorough knowledge of current commercial practice and students are given the opportunity to make contributions which draw on their own work experience. In theory classes, teachers made frequent reference to the practical applications of what was being learned and examples were well chosen. In one lesson on diseases affecting cattle, the teacher made good use of the sudden death of a cow on the college farm to discuss the action that should be taken. In less effective lessons, teachers failed to provide an appropriate introduction to the work, or concluding summaries on what should have been learned were rushed or missing altogether. Some schemes of work were not linked to the overall development of the course. Links to other elements of work were not made clear. In planning some lessons teachers also failed to consider adequately how students of differing ability were to be taught.

11 Practical teaching is a strength. Practical sessions are well organised. Equipment and tools are readily available. Students respect the technical expertise of teachers who make frequent and effective reference to commercial practice. Students are often prepared for their practical work by the teacher demonstrating the activity. In a lesson on machine maintenance, the teacher used the example of a damaged lawnmower engine to underline the importance of following correct procedures when changing

Curriculum Areas

oil. Students are given clear instructions on how to proceed before they work on their own or in small groups. Teachers closely scrutinise the work and provide advice and support when needed. In a few classes, weaknesses in the organisation and management of practical activities led to students not being fully occupied.

12 As recognised in the self-assessment report, good use is made of the college estate to ensure that teaching and learning is carried out in realistic work conditions. Students are required to take part in a rota of well-organised routine duties on the college farm or in the animal units and these enable them to gain direct experience of farm working practices. All students also complete a programme of work experience in local industry. Teachers demand professional standards of working. Most of them set appropriate standards for assignments and assessment. The guidance given to students on how they might improve their work, however, is sometimes not specific enough to be helpful. The written comments in reports are often too brief to enable the course team to monitor effectively the overall progress of each student. Arrangements for students to meet their teachers individually to discuss progress are not always satisfactory. For many students, these meetings are too infrequent and the records of the discussion are generally inadequate. There are also weaknesses in the recording and development of key skills. The self-assessment report did not identify these weaknesses.

13 Most students develop appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding. Practical work is carried out carefully and with due regard for safety. A high proportion of students successfully complete their programme of study; 90% of full-time students and 87% of part-time students enrolled on national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses, complete their studies. On most full-time courses, the pass rates for those who complete their course of

study are above the national average and pass rates for the national diploma in agriculture and rural studies have been consistently good for the past three years. Results on the college's NVQ level 2 and 3 courses in estate maintenance, livestock production and agriculture and commercial horticulture have been more variable, fluctuating between 41% and 84% in recent years. Many students progress to other further education courses at the college or to employment.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in agriculture and countryside management, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
First diploma (agriculture and rural studies)	2	Expected completions	23	25	28
		Retention (%)	96	96	89
		Achievement (%)	81	83	80
National certificate (agriculture and countryside and related studies)	3	Expected completions	61	56	46
		Retention (%)	74	82	94
		Achievement (%)	84	87	77
National diploma (agriculture and rural studies)	3	Expected completions	28	40	24
		Retention (%)	86	83	88
		Achievement (%)	95	88	90
NVQ one year (estate maintenance, livestock production, agriculture and commercial horticulture)	2/3	Expected completions	28	43	54
		Retention (%)	76	90	87
		Achievement (%)	96	81	84

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

Curriculum Areas

Horticulture

Grade 3

14 Eleven lessons were observed. Although inspectors agreed with some aspects of the college's self-assessment, they considered that the college had omitted many of the specific strengths and weaknesses subsequently identified during the inspection.

Key strengths

- much effective teaching
- strong links with industry
- effective use of specialist resources and information technology (IT)
- good levels of progression to further study and related employment

Weaknesses

- teachers' failure, in a minority of lessons, to meet the needs of all students
- lack of detailed feedback to help students improve their written work
- declining pass rates on full-time national certificate and national diploma courses
- insufficient analysis of students' achievements

15 As noted in the self-assessment report, provision in horticulture meets the needs of a wide range of part-time and full-time students, including those who have not participated in further education for some years. Full-time courses provide training in amenity horticulture for school-leavers. Part-time programmes provide education and training opportunities for students with pre-course experience and specialist interests. Courses include NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in subjects such as sports turf maintenance, decorative horticulture and hard landscaping, Royal Horticultural Society certificates and diplomas, and short courses on

topics ranging from organic horticulture to garden machinery. Employers provide valuable work experience and specialist facilities for full-time students. Training and assessment for those employed in the land-based industries is carried out in their place of work by college staff from the Kingston Maurward training unit.

16 Inspectors agreed with the college that there is much effective teaching. The extensive estate facilities are used for many practical activities which enrich students' learning. The grade II* listed formal gardens provide students with experience of plant border design and management, topiary and pond maintenance. Sports turf students benefit from learning opportunities that range from croquet lawn to sports field and golf turf maintenance. Most practical classes are well planned to build students' confidence and to develop their skills gradually. Teachers draw on their wide experience in providing effective illustrations for students. They make frequent reference to well-chosen examples of work on the college estate and in the college's horticulture unit to help explain topics. Good use is made of students' prior experience. Learning objectives are clearly specified and tutors develop effective links between theoretical and practical work. Less effective lessons often suffer from poor planning. In some theory lessons which combine students from different courses, groups are too large to enable all students to express their ideas and contribute to discussion. The level of the work is sometimes inappropriate. There is not enough constructive verbal and written feedback to help students improve their written work. In some practical lessons valuable time is lost whilst the teacher assesses individual students' work; often, for example, the rest of the class are not given enough worthwhile activities to keep them occupied.

17 Horticulture students make good use of IT in their courses. IT teaching is well organised and appropriate, and work in IT is well integrated with the work students are doing in other lessons. Practical work in IT rooms is

Curriculum Areas

supported by good-quality learning materials which provide effective help for students when they are working on their own. Students studying horticulture are introduced to the design methods used in industry. In one lesson, students used computer software to produce a playground plan.

18 Pass rates on full-time national certificate and diploma courses have declined significantly over the last three years, from 93% to 60% on the national certificate and from 91% to 77% on the national diploma. Results on the full-time first diploma course have been variable, declining from 93% in 1996 to 70% in 1997, before improving to 91% in 1998. Retention rates vary from year to year. Most are above the national average. Retention rates have risen from 75% in 1997 to 91% in 1998 on the Royal Horticultural Society general certificate but dropped from 100% to 78% during the same period on the first diploma course. Students produce some good assignment and project

work. Practical work is of an appropriate standard. Rates of progression to further study and relevant employment are good. Overall, however, there is insufficient analysis of retention and achievement rates and standards of marking and record-keeping are not consistent. The college's self-assessment report recognised some, but not all, of the weaknesses in students' achievements noted by inspectors.

19 The staff have appropriate industrial and commercial experience and show a good level of technical expertise. They maintain effective links with industry. There is a good range of specialist equipment. Glasshouses contain a wide variety of well-labelled plant collections ranging from tropical bananas to alpine plants. A large multi-span polythene tunnel provides a place for landscape students to work in wet weather on fencing and brickwork. The walled garden contains a wide variety of bedding plants, hedges, fruit and vegetables. The college grounds and gardens are open to the public.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
First diploma	2	Expected completions	16	10	14
		Retention (%)	87	100	78
		Achievement (%)	93	70	91
NVQ	2	Expected completions	64	39	51
		Retention (%)	86	87	84
		Achievement (%)	55	88	84
National certificate	3	Expected completions	37	*	24
		Retention (%)	78	*	83
		Achievement (%)	93	*	60
National diploma	3	Expected completions	24	20	15
		Retention (%)	96	65	87
		Achievement (%)	91	*	77
Royal Horticultural Society general certificate	3	Expected completions	20	28	43
		Retention (%)	85	75	91
		Achievement (%)	82	67	51

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

*data not available

Curriculum Areas

Animal Care

Grade 3

20 Inspectors observed 13 lessons.

Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. However, a number of strengths identified in the report were over emphasised and some key weaknesses, particularly in students' achievements, were understated.

Key strengths

- good course documentation
- some effective teaching
- well-planned assignments related to students' experiences
- some good specialist resources

Weaknesses

- insufficient opportunity for students to develop practical skills in some areas
- the failure of some teaching to meet the needs of all students
- inadequate monitoring of work experience
- declining pass rates on full-time advanced level courses
- insufficient analysis of students' achievements

21 There has been considerable development of animal care provision since the last inspection. Part-time courses for employed students lead to national certificate and NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in animal care and animal welfare and management. There are full-time first diploma, national certificate and diploma courses. Progression routes are not always clear and appropriate. There is not always sufficient clarity about the level of course most suitable for the individual student. Some students, for example, take first-year courses

which do not match their career aspirations or abilities. There are few opportunities for full-time students to gain practical qualifications in addition to their main qualification. These weaknesses were not recognised in the self-assessment report.

22 Inspectors agreed with the judgement made in the self-assessment report that the documentation used by course teams is detailed and comprehensive. Most teaching is supported by schemes of work and there is a wide and appropriate range of assessments. Assignments, case studies, and practical and written tests are generally well matched to the aims of the programmes being studied. The students' personal action plans form the main element of the records of achievement. However, not all records contain a sufficiently detailed identification of students' strengths and weaknesses. After completing their assignments, students are not always given enough advice on how they might improve their work in the future. There is insufficient analysis of students' achievements to enable staff to identify possible improvements in the delivery of the courses concerned. The self-assessment report did not refer to these weaknesses.

23 Most lessons are well prepared and well organised. In the best theory classes, teachers discuss work undertaken earlier with students to check their understanding and develop aspects of the topic clearly and logically. In one lesson, the showing of a video was followed by a questionnaire to check that students had grasped the main points and to help develop their knowledge and understanding. In some lessons where large groups of students from different courses were brought together, the work was not demanding enough for the more able students. In some lessons, teachers failed to present material in a sufficiently varied or interesting manner and a minority of students lost interest. Links between theory and practice are clear. Teachers use their own experience of industry, and the experience of their students, to good effect. In a lesson on animal medicines

Curriculum Areas

and regulations, for example, the teacher made good use of a mature student's knowledge of work in this area, gained before joining the course. Practical lessons are well structured. The college estate is well used by teachers to support learning. Students benefit from demonstrations of care skills relating to large animals and close supervision of their work. There is an appropriate emphasis on health and safety. Students on animal care courses do not have access within the college itself to a sufficient variety or quantity of small animals such as cats and dogs. This restricts the opportunities they have to practise their skills, a weakness which was not acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

24 As the self-assessment report stated, the staff have close personal links with employers. Good use is made of off-site locations for practical work and visits. There are regular visits from specialists, to demonstrate specific skills, and all full-time students undertake work experience as part of their studies. Employers play little part in developing courses beyond providing opportunities for work experience. The industrial liaison group has not met for some time. There are significant weaknesses in the college's arrangements for supervising and assessing students' experience during work

placements. Apart from an initial health and safety check of the premises, staff do not visit students on work placements unless a problem arises. There is little monitoring to ensure that students are engaged in appropriate activities.

25 Most students produce work of an acceptable standard. Full-time students generally demonstrate a satisfactory level of understanding and knowledge, but some have gaps in their knowledge of small animal care. Part-time students show a good understanding of the industry, often based on considerable experience gained outside the college. The attendance rates for most classes inspected were good. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that retention rates on some courses have been high. Over the last three years, retention rates on the national certificate have been above the national average. However, retention rates on the first diploma have declined from 94% in 1996, to a level below the national average in 1998. The self-assessment report understated the weak performance on some courses. There are low pass rates on the national certificate and diploma courses. Pass rates on the national diploma course have declined from 100% in 1996 to 50% in 1998, and those on the national certificate course have dropped from 94% in 1996 to 71% in 1998.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
First diploma	2	Expected completions	32	29	47
		Retention (%)	94	67	70
		Achievement (%)	90	88	91
National certificate	3	Expected completions	16	32	36
		Retention (%)	100	97	92
		Achievement (%)	94	90	71
National diploma	3	Expected completions	14	11	16
		Retention (%)	71	82	81
		Achievement (%)	100	89	50

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

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 3

26 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report but considered that a number of significant weaknesses were understated.

Key strengths

- good personal support for many students
- effective induction arrangements
- extensive promotion of the learning opportunities offered by the college
- successful links with schools
- good vocational careers guidance for students

Weaknesses

- inadequate co-ordination of student support
- the placing of some students on courses which are inappropriate
- underdeveloped procedures for learning support
- considerable variety in the quality of tutorial support
- a fragmented approach to general careers education

27 Although students receive much good support from staff, management of the different aspects of student support is insufficiently well co-ordinated to ensure a consistent level of service for all students. There is no college-wide strategy for student support. These significant weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

28 Inspectors agreed with the statement made in the self-assessment report that the college successfully promotes its courses to the local community. Publicity material is attractive and informative. Good use is made of the college

estate. The farm, gardens and animal park are open to the public and attract large numbers of visitors. Information days provide opportunities for potential students to visit or phone the college to discuss their specific requirements. There are effective links with local schools. In 1998, over 600 school pupils attended a programme of five 'taster' days. Special schools are encouraged to use the college's resources and facilities. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities regularly visit the college to sample activities such as tractor driving and working with animals.

29 Applications are handled efficiently. Interviews usually take place soon after application. Many students receive sound, impartial advice and guidance prior to entry, but some interviewers direct students towards courses without fully exploring the alternatives which are open to them. The failure to take account of students' prior learning or experience sometimes results in students taking courses that are not suitable. Some students, for example, are advised to progress from a first diploma to a national certificate rather than to a national diploma which may be more appropriate. The outcomes of interviews are not always recorded carefully. Decisions are not fully explained. The self-assessment report did not identify these weaknesses.

30 Effective induction programmes ensure that students become familiar with the college and its facilities and help them to settle into college life rapidly. Personal tutors play an important role in the life of most full-time students, providing students with a high level of personal support and helpful informal assistance. However, not all students receive the same level of support. There is a wide range of tutorial practice across the college. Tutorials are more effective in some areas than others. College guidelines fail to specify clearly what should be included in tutorial programmes and the amount of time dedicated to tutorial work varies from course to course. Some tutorial

Cross-college Provision

records are not detailed enough. Little is recorded of discussions about students' performance, the advice given by tutors, and the action points agreed with students. These weaknesses are not identified in the self-assessment report. The college acknowledges that it has not yet determined the level of tutorial support it should provide for part-time students.

31 Inspectors could not agree with the college's assessment that learning support is a strength. The college lacks systematic procedures for identifying the needs of all students and ensuring that they receive appropriate learning support. Students are assessed during induction to establish whether they need extra help with their basic skills. Although some students are given individual assistance, many students with identified needs are unable to receive learning support because their timetables are already full.

32 Staff provide students with effective vocational careers guidance for specific occupational areas. Substantial programmes of work experience introduce students to the reality of working in their chosen specialist area though, on some courses, there is inadequate monitoring of this experience to ensure that it is relevant to the curriculum. The approach to general careers education is fragmented. Course teams are left to determine their own level of careers education and few have established effective programmes. Some courses include general careers education elements but these are not available to all students. Some students who wish to apply to higher education do not receive enough help from teachers to enable them to do so successfully. The self-assessment report acknowledged these weaknesses in general careers education and guidance.

33 Students who need financial and personal assistance in order to study are helped by the college's financial and welfare support services. However, some students are not clear about

what help is available and from where it can be obtained. The college wardens, who live on the campus and have responsibility for the welfare of residential students, provide counselling support. Counselling is also available from outside agencies. The college makes no provision for childcare for students' children. There is a students' committee, comprising representatives from all full-time courses. It meets each week to organise sporting and social activities. There is a good range of sporting activities, but there are few other clubs or societies for students to join.

General Resources

Grade 2

34 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Some weaknesses identified by inspectors were not acknowledged in the report.

Key strengths

- effectively maintained buildings and attractive grounds
- well-decorated and appropriately furnished teaching rooms
- a good restaurant
- good work spaces for staff
- extensive use of the estate for income generation

Weaknesses

- lack of an up-to-date accommodation strategy
- inadequacies in the learning centre's equipment and accommodation
- poor access to some areas for people with restricted mobility

35 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college's estate of 760 acres is a

Cross-college Provision

most attractive environment in which to study. There is a wide range of habitats on the estate including woodland, ponds, hedges, streams, well-kept grade II* listed formal gardens, well-managed parklands and a lake. The estate is a valuable resource that is widely used by students for practicals, work experience assignments and for recreation. It is also used to generate income. The college encourages the public, schools and other organisations to use its facilities. There is a farm and visitor centre, and nature trails around the lake and woodland areas. The farm is used to demonstrate the practical and commercial aspects of farming. The main campus is centred around Kingston Maurward house, a grade I listed Georgian building, parts of which are used for conferences and wedding receptions. The college has over 100 buildings, which vary greatly in age, size and quality. Most are modern or are conversions of older buildings. They are in good condition and suited to their purpose. A few buildings, notably some temporary classrooms and the hostels for students, are of a poorer standard.

36 The college does not have an up-to-date accommodation strategy, a weakness not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The college's accommodation plan dates from 1994. Plans to update it in 1996 and 1997 were not carried through. Instead, accommodation development priorities are decided on an annual basis and form part of the yearly premises maintenance schedule. The condition of the estate's buildings is assessed once a year and the findings inform the annual maintenance schedule. The self-assessment report judged building maintenance to be good and inspectors agreed.

37 Improvements made to the accommodation in recent years were identified as a strength and inspectors agreed with this judgement. The college provides a pleasant working environment for staff and students. Kingston Maurward house is the administrative centre for the college. It accommodates the

reception area, staff offices, meeting and committee rooms and some teaching accommodation. Neighbouring buildings contain classrooms, the learning centre, student hostels and the restaurant. Practical units with adjacent classrooms are located in separate buildings, most of which are within walking distance of Kingston Maurward house. Most units have self-service refreshment facilities for students and staff. The majority of classrooms are well decorated and equipped with screens, overhead projectors, blinds and boards. They are clean, tidy and well furnished. A few have video equipment. Some rooms are underused. The college has begun to monitor room usage to address this weakness.

38 The learning centre comprises the library, computing facilities, some of which are available on an open access basis to students, and the learning support unit. Inspectors did not agree with the college's identification of this facility as a strength. Students value the help they receive from librarians. However, the stock of books and other learning resources is inadequate in some curriculum areas. There is little formal liaison between teachers and library staff. Students working in groups occupy most of the study space and students who wish to work on their own find the noise from these groups a distraction. Sometimes there is a shortage of study spaces. There are 26 computers for teaching IT and key skills to full-time students. There are a further 12 computers available to students on an open-access basis but few vocational course timetables enable students to use the computers when they are available. There are eight networked multimedia computers which students can book for up to two hours during library opening hours. These machines are well used but not always available. There is one small, sparsely equipped general laboratory in the learning centre. It does not provide a suitable environment for students to enjoy the study of science. Most of the 60 computers for business IT courses are on the second floor of Kingston Maurward house.

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39 Social facilities for students are appropriate for a residential college. The restaurant provides a good service throughout the day. There are sufficient common rooms, though some are poorly furnished. A comfortable bar, snooker room and well-equipped gym are available to students in the evening. There are sports pitches and tennis courts. The quality of student hostels varies. Most rooms are small and sparsely furnished. Each hostel has basic self-catering facilities. There are no childcare facilities on site. Staff work areas are good. Each office has a computer. The self-assessment report acknowledged that access for staff and students with restricted mobility is inadequate in some parts of the estate. The library, the hostels and the top floors of Kingston Maurward house are not accessible to wheelchair users.

Quality Assurance

Grade 4

40 The inspection team was unable to agree with the college's assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of quality assurance. Several strengths were claimed in areas where inspection evidence revealed weaknesses. Inspectors considered that some weaknesses were given insufficient emphasis.

Key strengths

- well-established quality system manuals
- thorough analysis and dissemination of student survey findings
- effective staff appraisal
- staff development linked to strategic planning priorities

Weaknesses

- poor compliance with quality systems
- insufficiently rigorous course reviews and action plans

- the lack of a quality assurance framework for support services
- course teams' failure to analyse trends in students' achievements
- inadequate quality assurance for off-site collaborative provision
- a failure to monitor formally the implementation of the college charter
- key staff insufficiently involved in the self-assessment process
- shortcomings in some aspects of internal verification

41 The college's quality arrangements are set out in two quality manuals, Kingston Maurward systems for FEFC-funded provision and Kingston Maurward training for provision funded by the TEC. The quality assurance process is well established and used by most teams. However, compliance is poor. Documents are not always completed properly. Some procedures and forms are too brief to promote a useful response. The college's self-assessment report acknowledged these weaknesses.

42 There is an established annual cycle of programme reviews and action-planning by teams. Except for some short part-time training courses, all on-site courses are subject to review. There have been no course reviews for the college's small range of off-site collaborative provision. Quality assurance visits to collaborative providers have just been reintroduced after being suspended for the past two years. Most reviews of college courses are not comprehensive. There is no rigorous analysis of students' performance or trends in achievement over consecutive years. Few reviews identify the actions required to generate improvement. There are few references to teaching and learning, or to tutorials, and employers' views are seldom included. College targets for retention and achievement are approved by the corporation board. Course

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targets for enrolment, retention and achievement have been discussed with some staff, but not yet adopted by course teams. Curriculum inspectors noted that internal verification practices were inconsistent. There is no cross-college verification group. These weaknesses were not included in the self-assessment report.

43 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the results of the annual survey of students' opinions are thoroughly analysed, considered by the academic board and areas of weakness earmarked for action. Weaknesses in staff punctuality for lessons and the time taken for return of marked work were identified and acted upon. The end-of-course questionnaires provided for some part-time students are also carefully analysed. Most students are aware of their right to question aspects of their course or college experience. Some, however, consider they do not receive satisfactory feedback on the issues they raise. There is a formal complaints procedure, which is seldom used. All students receive a copy of the students charter. The performance targets contained in the charter are too imprecise for progress in achieving them to be easily measured, and progress is not monitored, as the self-assessment report acknowledged. An annual report on the operation of the charter is to be introduced as part of the self-assessment action plan.

44 Inspectors could not agree with the college's judgement that Kingston Maurward systems provides significant quality assurance for cross-college support areas. There is no overall quality assurance framework for support areas. There are no service standards against which performance can be measured and no requirement to review formally and report on the quality of support area services. Student surveys indicate dissatisfaction with aspects of support services which affect residential students. Some areas, such as the library, are independently responsive to the demands of customers and modify their practices in order to improve services.

45 The self-assessment report produced for the inspection was discussed by the board of governors. The section on governance involved all members of the board and was steered by the board's self-assessment working party. Staff awareness of the self-assessment process was raised during the staff development week. Most staff were involved in carrying out initial assessments of their section's strengths and weaknesses measured against the quality statement in Council Circular 97/12. Grades were subsequently moderated by the senior management team. Some key staff did not see the developing drafts of the report. The sections of the report vary in thoroughness. Most curriculum sections contain little evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and of students' achievements. Lesson observations contributed to the judgements in some areas but the grades awarded to lessons within the college were significantly higher than those subsequently awarded by inspectors. Off-site collaborative provision was not included in the self-assessment.

46 Annual staff appraisal is well established. It covers all staff and has proved an effective means of identifying individual training needs, though it does not involve lesson observation. Staff development priorities are linked to strategic planning objectives. However, as the college acknowledges, there is insufficient evaluation of the benefit of training undertaken by staff. The college achieved the Investor in People award in 1996.

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Governance

Grade 2

47 Inspectors agreed with the assessment of the quality of governance. Some strengths and some weaknesses were, however, understated in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- close monitoring of financial performance and capital programmes
- efficient clerking and good-quality corporation and committee papers
- effective recruitment and induction of new governors
- a thorough and critical approach to self-assessment

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to detailed monitoring of the strategic plan
- systematic communication with staff and students at an early stage of development
- underdeveloped governor training

48 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. 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. Corporation meetings are scheduled one year in advance. A set of standing orders is in place. The quality of agendas and minutes is good. Detailed committee papers provide both specific and background information. Corporation and committee minutes are publicly available at the college reception. Items are treated as confidential when appropriate. The principal's personal assistant has acted as clerk to the

corporation and its committees for many years. There is a separate job description for her role as clerk. The governors recently gave detailed consideration to these arrangements and reconfirmed their support for them.

49 Governors bring a wide range of expertise to the corporation. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that they are highly committed to the successful development of the college. The search committee has effectively used a number of methods to identify potential governors. Recent new appointments were finalised after potential governors visited the college, observed corporation meetings and had discussions with senior staff. New governors undertook a comprehensive induction programme. Other training for governors is not well developed. There have been some training events for the whole corporation. However, most training is left to each individual's initiative.

50 Attendance at corporation and committee meetings is good. There are good working relations between governors and senior managers. The corporation receives minutes of academic board meetings and reports on applications, enrolments and retention. Each year it receives and debates information on students' achievements. At each meeting, the principal provides a useful report to the corporation. Governors have clear views on the college's priorities. They have debated and proposed amendments to the draft strategic plan. However, they have not paid enough attention to monitoring the achievement of the objectives in the strategic plan. Governors have also devoted insufficient time to consideration of key curriculum developments.

51 The self-assessment report acknowledged that communication between governors, staff and students could be improved. A system of link governors, established in 1997, enables governors with relevant expertise to link with appropriate curriculum or support areas. This has begun to improve the collective knowledge

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of the board and raise the profile of the corporation among staff. Corporation monitoring of the health and safety policy is effective. A governor sits on the college health and safety committee and the board receives regular reports. In contrast, the board does not monitor the college's equal opportunities policy.

52 An appropriate committee structure is in place. The business of governance is largely conducted through the audit and the policy and resources committees. These committees operate within their terms of reference. The policy and resources committee meets monthly and the presentation of clear financial management reports at each of the meetings enables members to monitor closely the college's financial position. All corporation members are invited to attend the committee and each month one or two of them do so. The audit committee also operates effectively, closely monitoring the college's control systems. The remuneration committee has advised the corporation on the salaries of senior postholders. Good succession planning has resulted in effective procedures to appoint the new principal. Arrangements for the appraisal of the current principal have not been sufficiently formal.

53 The corporation has adopted a governors' handbook. A register of interests has been completed by all governors and staff with significant financial responsibilities. The register is publicly available for inspection. Governors sign an annual declaration confirming their continued eligibility. The corporation has adopted a code of conduct for governors and staff. The corporation also has a 'whistleblowing' procedure which enables staff to raise any concerns whilst protecting their confidentiality. Governors make an annual check to ensure the business of the board is effectively managed. They have not yet established criteria to evaluate their own performance. Their approach to self-assessment is very thorough but self-assessment has not yet become a regular activity.

Management

Grade 3

54 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements included in the self-assessment report on management, but the report omitted reference to strengths and weaknesses in several key areas.

Key strengths

- effective relationships between senior managers and governors
- good financial reporting arrangements and financial management information
- good external links, promotional activities and profitable use of college facilities
- improved management information

Weaknesses

- weaknesses in curriculum and cross-college management
- lack of precision in strategic planning objectives and monitoring
- inadequate monitoring of some aspects of the college's performance
- underdeveloped use of targets and performance indicators at course level
- some less than effective communication

55 The strategic plan describes the aims and values of the college. Objectives are set in 10 areas considered to be critical to maintaining the growth and financial security of the college. The strategic plan is supported by an annual operating plan which contains targets in 16 areas of college activity. Many of these operational targets are not easily measured, nor are they explicitly linked to the 10 objectives in the strategic plan. Performance against targets is not systematically monitored by line managers and there is no routine reporting of progress to the senior management team. College-wide targets for retention and

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achievement are included in the strategic plan. Target-setting at course and subject level is only just being introduced. Significant work has yet to be done to develop further measures to meet the college's monitoring needs. Weaknesses in strategic planning, monitoring performance and target-setting are not reflected in the self-assessment report.

56 The senior management team, comprising the principal, vice-principal, finance director and academic director, meets weekly. There are good working relationships with governors. Team members work well together. Staff consider them to be approachable. Each member of the management team has responsibility for specific teaching, support or business functions. The self-assessment report noted that some staff considered communication a weakness. There are two full staff meetings each year, weekly departmental meetings and a termly staff newsletter. Inspectors found that staff are not always aware of the issues which affect them. Some express the wish to be more involved in decision-making in their area. Others would welcome more prompt and systematic communication of information on college issues. Recently, the main teaching department was reorganised. The role of the newly appointed team leaders, however, has not been clearly defined or effectively communicated to staff. In some areas, inadequate communication between teaching departments and support sections leads to inefficiency. For example, the library is not always aware of new courses.

57 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The finance department is headed by a qualified director of finance who is a member of the senior management team. The financial reporting system is integrated with the accounting system. The monthly management accounts are closely scrutinised by the senior management team and quickly distributed to all governors. The

information included in the management accounts is detailed and includes actual information on the college's income and expenditure, balance sheet and long-term cashflow. Variances between actual and budget expenditure are closely monitored and significant slippage identified early. Bank balances are monitored daily and the college invests surplus funds to good effect. The finance team provides appropriate support and advice to budget holders. Recently updated financial regulations are comprehensive and supported by detailed financial procedures.

58 The college's structure and systems for managing and monitoring its finances are much better developed than those for students' support, curriculum planning and quality assurance. There are inconsistencies across the college in, for example, the quality of tutoring, curriculum management and the monitoring of students' performance. Curriculum policy decisions on recruitment have led to some full-time students on animal care, agriculture and countryside management courses being recruited to inappropriate programmes. There are no routine procedures for visiting and monitoring students' progress during work experience activities. Procedures to check students' performance are not sufficiently rigorous. Teachers do not focus sufficiently on actions that will improve the students' experience. There is little evidence that quality assurance procedures have been effective in monitoring or raising academic standards. None of these significant weaknesses was identified in the self-assessment report.

59 The management information system is not referred to in the self-assessment report. It has the capacity to produce a wide range of useful reports on applications, enrolments, retention, achievements, students' destinations and examination entries. Most staff regard the system as informative and reliable. However, its ability to assist staff in day-to-day course management and inform decision-making is

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limited since computers in managers' offices are not yet linked to the system. The college has a policies and systems manual. The health and safety policy is effectively monitored by the health and safety committee and reports are provided for the corporation. The equal opportunities policy is not formally monitored.

60 The college has productive working relationships with local employers, schools, other further education providers and Dorset TEC. There has been little formal market research. Information to inform promotional activities is obtained through informal contacts made by staff with employers and external organisations. The college makes good and profitable use of its facilities for events and there is public access to the grounds.

Conclusions

61 Aspects of the self-assessment report provided a useful basis for carrying out the inspection but overall it was too brief and did not say enough about the quality of teaching and learning and students' achievements. The self-assessment of governance involved all corporation members in a thorough appraisal of their strengths and weaknesses. Some of the key strengths and weaknesses identified in the report were confirmed by the inspection team. Inspectors found that some strengths, particularly those related to students' achievements, were overstated. A number of key weaknesses, particularly those related to cross-college areas, were not identified in the self-assessment report. In all but two cases inspectors disagreed with the grades awarded by the college, considering its grades to be overgenerous.

62 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 (November 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	24
19-24 years	10
25+ years	65
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	14
Intermediate	45
Advanced	20
Higher education	1
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	20
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	0	367	22
Agriculture	266	589	52
Construction	12	22	2
Engineering	0	48	3
Business	34	211	15
Hotel and catering	45	26	4
Health and community care	0	9	1
Art and design	0	23	1
Total	357	1,295	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 4% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (August 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	31	0	10	41
Supporting direct learning contact	9	0	1	10
Other support	65	4	2	71
Total	105	4	13	122

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£3,846,000	£4,293,000	£4,187,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£19.38	£17.53	£16.94
Payroll as a proportion of income	56%	52%	51%
Achievement of funding target	94%	108%	104%
Diversity of income	51%	53%	53%
Operating surplus	-£39,000	£325,000	£168,000

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

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

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

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

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

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

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1995	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
1	Expected completions	159	40	58	137	178	17
	Retention (%)	96	95	95	98	93	94
	Achievement (%)	96	63	82	90	10	75
2	Expected completions	230	661	959	626	937	456
	Retention (%)	92	97	96	95	96	94
	Achievement (%)	89	93	90	90	66	87
3	Expected completions	*	51	37	*	216	316
	Retention (%)	*	90	88	*	88	82
	Achievement (%)	72	80	31	78	65	61
4 or 5	Expected completions	*	0	0	*	8	15
	Retention (%)	*	*	*	*	100	87
	Achievement (%)	*	*	*	*	88	62
Short courses	Expected completions	16	12	58	975	1,073	1,764
	Retention (%)	100	100	98	99	97	98
	Achievement (%)	75	100	23	69	71	62
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	14	20	14	28	57	52
	Retention (%)	100	90	86	96	96	81
	Achievement (%)	100	72	100	85	24	83

Source: ISR

*ISR data may not be reliable

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