

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Lewisham College

July 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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The Further Education Funding Council 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 every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses. The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 73/95

LEWISHAM COLLEGE

GREATER LONDON REGION

Inspected November 1994 – February 1995

Summary

Lewisham College in South East London offers an extensive range of vocational courses leading to national qualifications and a good range of subjects at GCE A level and GCSE. It has particularly wide provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and these courses are of outstanding quality. Governors understand their roles and responsibilities and have a firm commitment to the college. The college is well managed; the leadership is strong and imaginative. Staff have a clear sense of the mission of the college, and are involved in the strategic planning process. There are sound policies and procedures for quality assurance which are directly linked to strategic planning and the allocation of resources. Students receive good guidance and support. On many courses, there are problems of poor attendance and retention. The quality of teaching is generally good, but there are significant weaknesses in science and mathematics. Examination results in vocational courses are satisfactory. Results in GCSE examinations and some GCE A level subjects are poor. Staff are generally well qualified and effectively deployed. There is good investment in equipment, especially to support information technology. Some accommodation is poor and space is not used efficiently.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision		Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision		1
Governance and management		1
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		1
Quality assurance		2
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	2
	accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	4	Health and community care	3
Computing	2		
Construction	2	Art and design, including performing arts	2
Engineering	2	Humanities	3
Business and management	2	English for speakers of other languages	3
		Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	1
Hotel and catering	2		

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INTRODUCTION

1 Lewisham College was inspected during the autumn and spring terms of the teaching year 1994-95. The college's recruitment, enrolment and induction procedures were inspected in July and September 1994. In November 1994 and over a two-week period beginning 30 January 1995, nine full-time and seven part-time inspectors spent a total of 56 days on specialist subject inspections. The length of time spent was extended because of industrial action at the college. Three full-time and three part-time inspectors spent a further 26 days inspecting cross-college aspects in February 1995. Inspectors visited 227 classes involving 2,596 students and examined a broad range of students' work. They talked to students, governors, senior managers, heads of school and teaching and support staff. Meetings were also held with a representative of the South Thames Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), representatives from the local education authority (LEA), the local community, local schools, universities and employers. The inspectors also studied many documents about the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Lewisham College is a large and diverse general further education college, offering mainly vocational courses. It is based on four widely-dispersed sites. The main site and one other are in the London borough of Lewisham. Another is just over the border with the London borough of Greenwich and the fourth is over the border in the borough of Bromley. The population of the borough of Lewisham at the time of the 1991 census was 231,000, although in the area covered by the college sites the population was 266,100. It is an area of poverty and significant unemployment. Local employers, particularly in manufacturing, are declining in number. In October 1994, the local unemployment rate was about 16 per cent compared with 10 per cent for London as a whole. The figure for 16-19 year olds was 24 per cent. Deptford, close to the main site, is the most deprived part of the borough and has the highest level of youth unemployment in the country. Owner-occupation in the college area is below the average for London. Forty per cent of residents in Lewisham are in housing association accommodation or local authority housing. According to the 1991 census, nearly 24 per cent of families in the college's catchment area were one-parent families compared with 18 per cent for London as a whole. In social class and occupation, the composition of the population is similar to that of London as a whole. The main difference is in the lower proportion of managers and administrators and the higher proportion of those involved in secretarial and clerical occupations.

3 The proportion of Lewisham residents from black or minority ethnic groups is 22 per cent; slightly higher than the proportion in Greater London as a whole. The largest single minority group is black Caribbean, which together with other black groups makes up 14 per cent of the area's population. For children under 16, the proportion is 20 per cent. The

number of non-English speakers is lower than some other areas of London. Two per cent of the residents were born in Cyprus or in other European countries. About 10 per cent of residents speak a first language other than English.

4 Of the 10,006 students enrolled at the college on 1 November 1994, a high proportion (63 per cent) were part time. Just over half of the students live locally. Over 90 per cent are aged 19 or over, and of these nearly 25 per cent are below the age of 25. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. There are almost equal numbers of men and women on roll. In 1993-94, 35 per cent of the students identified themselves as black African or Caribbean and 39 per cent identified themselves as white. The college employs 544 full-time equivalent staff of whom 437 are full time. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 The LEA has retained responsibility for adult education provision. Other provision for 16-19 year olds is made by: five voluntary-aided schools; three special schools; the sixth forms of the LEA's eight maintained schools, organised on a consortium basis; and the nearby Christ the King College, a Catholic sixth form college. The post-16 participation rate in Lewisham has remained relatively stable over the past four years at about 50-55 per cent.

6 Responsibility for the curriculum is divided between three faculties, each with its own director: the faculty of technology, the faculty of business, computing and languages and the faculty of services for people. Each faculty is further subdivided into four schools. A fourth faculty, also headed by a director, is responsible for learner and curriculum services including additional support, guidance and information. At the time of the inspection, this faculty also contains a school of supported learning which provides substantial separate provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

7 As set out in the strategic plan for 1993-98, the mission of the college is to 'be a force for change which will promote and support economic employment and individual development for the actual and potential workforce both locally and regionally'. To this end the college has established a number of key strategic objectives:

- to offer the widest opportunities to those who live and work locally for further education leading to national qualifications
- to be a regional centre of excellence for those with learning difficulties
- to provide an environment which builds self-esteem and inspires high levels of attainment
- to ensure progression into higher education and employment
- to work towards achieving world class targets in vocational education and training

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- to be a regional centre of excellence in meeting the training and consultancy needs of employers
 - to be an innovative learning institution which invests its resources
 - to ensure equality of opportunity for all who study and work at the college
 - to be an efficient and effective college providing quality and value for money.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college offers an extensive range of full-time and part-time courses which provide education and training opportunities for students at most ability levels. All students enrolling on full-time foundation and intermediate level courses in September 1994 underwent English and numeracy assessments devised by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU). The assessment revealed that about 700 students, about 75 per cent of those tested, would benefit from some form of additional learning support. The particular concern is that many students do not possess the basic levels of numeracy and literacy to enable them to join an existing course and be successful. A gap in the provision at foundation and pre-training levels has been identified by the college and is currently being addressed.

9 A major strength of the college is its extensive vocational provision, including courses in art and design, business and finance, construction, dance, drama, engineering, English for speakers of other languages, European languages, fashion, hotel and catering, teacher training, leisure and tourism, management, marketing, music, nursery nursing, recreation management, and secretarial and office studies. The college offers a particularly wide range of computing courses. Engineering provision includes specialist courses in electrical, electronics, and mechanical engineering, motor vehicle maintenance and repair, and refrigeration and air-conditioning. Construction and building studies cover housing, brickwork, carpentry, plastering, plumbing, signwork and welding. Many of the vocational courses lead to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) or General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs).

10 Twenty-five subjects are offered at General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level). Most can be studied full time or part time over one or two years. Twenty-four subjects are offered for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Most can be studied full time or part time. Combined programmes of related GCSE subjects are offered in four fields: business, creative arts, social science and caring, or technology.

11 The college offers an impressive range of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For students with severe learning difficulties there is a link course leading to a two-year, full-time,

pre-vocational course and a further enterprise scheme under which students set up, run and wind up their own company to provide them with practical experience and understanding of business. The students at Lewisham run a company called Posyganza, which produces and sells arrangements of fresh and artificial flowers. Provision for adults with severe learning difficulties is run in conjunction with the adult education centre and social services. For students with moderate learning difficulties there is a link course leading to two levels of a full-time, two-year course, or directly to a pre-vocational group. Students with moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties can also undertake the initial training programme in technical services, business administration and services for people, and then proceed to any vocational course. There are two courses in information technology for people with physical disabilities. The total number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is 353, of whom 211 are on specially-designed courses, 61 on courses with additional support, and 81 on courses without specific additional support.

12 There are strong links with higher education institutions, especially in vocational programme areas. The college offers courses in primary and secondary school teaching. There are partnership links in engineering with South Bank University and the University of Greenwich for computing, business information systems, and caring. A diploma in management and a certificate in education are run in partnership with Christ Church College, Canterbury. In March the college became an associate college of the University of Greenwich. Links and relationships between the senior managers, course tutors and admissions tutors of the college and local universities are strong. Christ Church College, Canterbury adapted the Lewisham College's students' charter for use with its own students. The higher education institutions expressed the view that the college prepared students well for higher education courses and that the quality of students from the college was high.

13 The college has particularly strong links with schools in the north of the borough. It is an active member of a sixth form consortium with four 11-18 schools and contributes one-fifth of the salary of the co-ordinator. Places on the college's GNVQ and GCE A level courses extend the range of choice which the consortium is able to offer to the pupils of its schools. More than 250 school pupils attend the college at some time during the week, including pupils from special schools and those from the sixth form consortium. Some are on special courses while others take elements of mainstream courses. Once a term, the directors of faculties act as host at lunches to which headteachers in the borough are invited, in order to maintain good links and share information.

14 In line with its mission, the college has extended its links with the local community over the past three years. Two members of the governing body represent the local community. One is the vice-chair; the other is chair of a community forum established to strengthen community links.

The college is involved in a number of community initiatives to improve the lives of local people, among them the support of a house for homeless young women, a training centre for unemployed black adults and a project to provide information technology training for adults. The college provides teaching, professional help in fund raising, and the use of its facilities. Its commitment to the community is much appreciated by the local voluntary organisations, which reciprocate by providing work experience places for college students. A City Challenge initiative has been established in Deptford and money from it has enabled the college to contribute to the funding of a learning shop there. The three local members of parliament take an active interest in the college.

15 The college has developed productive links with a wide range of employers in an area where there are few large companies. Each of the faculties has established employer advisory groups to keep the college informed about industrial and business developments, and associated training needs. The groups also advise it on the development of course programmes. Groups are currently active in the fields of business, computing, engineering, construction and hospitality. There are also links with employers through day release of employees, work experience for students, and partnerships in engineering, construction, business and management and social care. The college has appointed an enterprise officer who, among other responsibilities, organises a business breakfast club for local business people. The club has a membership of 70 and an average attendance of between 35 and 40 at the monthly meetings. At a recent meeting, NVQs were explained to the members, and this resulted in one local organisation starting NVQ training for its staff. The college has a reputation among the business community for its ability to respond to requests. One engineering employer praised the willingness of college staff to adapt a course to meet its highly-specialised training requirements, after they had visited the employers' premises to study the machinery in use. The college has taken advantage of its links with employers to establish a job shop with the aim of helping its students to get the best possible job. The shop provides support and guidance to students in conducting their own job search and preparing themselves for interviews.

16 The college had a good relationship with the South Thames TEC and worked closely with it on strategic planning before the TEC went into receivership. It entered into sizeable contracts in training for work (185 starts), training credits (for 183 part-time students) and youth training. Programmes associated with training credits include catering, engineering, plumbing, childcare and motor vehicle body repair. The college also offered a summer school programme sponsored by the TEC. A total of 119 trainees, of whom 28 per cent lived in the borough, were enrolled on the four-week programme covering art and fashion, electronics, engineering, catering, business and information technology. The college was rated highly by the TEC for its quality assurance, financial monitoring, financial viability, and

health and safety. The TEC praised its responsiveness to local employers' needs and requests.

17 Following a study by management consultants, the college has contracted a professional team to work with college staff to provide a comprehensive marketing service. On the basis of detailed research, target markets have been identified. Publicity material of high quality is distributed widely and effectively at times when prospective students are taking decisions about further education. With one student in every 20 households in the borough, the students themselves have become an effective means of distributing publicity. A system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the marketing activities is being developed.

18 There are longstanding but modest links with other European colleges in catering and engineering. The college has adopted the ambitious aim of establishing itself, over the next four years, as one of the foremost European centres in the United Kingdom. An open learning module is being prepared for use by all tutors to establish a European dimension in all courses.

19 The promotion of equality of opportunity is given a high focus. The college's equal opportunities policy includes separate statements of intent to cover race, gender, exceptional need, class and age. Under the principal's direction, managers have been assigned specific responsibilities for action to implement the policy. Detailed implementation plans have been drawn up. Advice has been sought from a number of agencies recommended by the Equal Opportunities Commission on the sampling of learning materials and assessment of their suitability, with a view to issuing advice to staff on their future design. For the convenience of students, courses start at or after 10.00 hours; this gives them the chance to organise childcare before attending college, and to take advantage of the cheaper public transport available in London after 09.30 hours. A room in each building has been allocated for daily Muslim prayer. In March each year, the college celebrates International Women's Week, with exhibitions of women and work, and invitations to prominent speakers.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

20 Members of the governing body have wide-ranging expertise and useful local connections. There are 17 governors, including the principal and the president of the students' union. The chairman is the deputy vice-chancellor of the University of Greenwich, whose experience of that institution becoming a corporate body was especially valuable. All governors were deliberately sought for their skills in functions associated with incorporation; property, banking, accounting, personnel and links with the community. Five of the governors are black and four are women. Two vacancies for staff members are being held in abeyance while the governing body reviews its composition. There is a full-time clerk to the

governors. Governors are kept well informed about further education and the college. Dates for meetings are arranged a year in advance and attendance is good. Governors show a strong commitment to the college. Training sessions have included three Saturday meetings; briefing sessions are sometimes held before governors' meetings.

21 There are three standing committees with agreed terms of reference: audit, remuneration, finance and general purposes. The finance and general purposes committee has two subcommittees: personnel and estates. The latter has met frequently to consider the implications of the purchase of a new building. In addition to the students' forum and the community forum, the governing body has also established an advisory group for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is chaired by a governor and consists of representatives from education and the community. Its aim is to advise the college on course development, work preparation, training and employment opportunities for these students.

22 As identified by its chairman, the governing body's priorities are to be forward-thinking, to secure the college's financial position, to appoint key people, and to secure the college's future. Governors monitor college performance through statistical data, reports from college managers, and attendance at college functions. There are not yet any formal arrangements for the review of governors' own performance, but governors are beginning to discuss informally amongst themselves their role and effectiveness. At a meeting attended by inspectors, governors questioned the director of corporate services very closely on college finances and on an audit report. They also considered the principal's paper on unmet demand, examination results and the lack of sufficient foundation level courses across the borough as a whole.

23 The principal was appointed in September 1991. Strong, imaginative leadership inspires confidence among staff, students and governors in the standing and future of the college. Clear procedures and structures, clear allocation of responsibilities and a regular cycle of meetings ensure effective management. The principalship meets weekly. It comprises the principal, the deputy principal, the vice-principal, the clerk to the governors and the director of corporate services. The college management team of 15 meets fortnightly. It includes the four directors of faculties, five directors and managers of corporate services, and the policy assistant to the principal. This last appointment is an innovation: the full-time secondment of a member of staff for one year to develop and manage the implementation of college policies, brief the principal on key issues and reports, and manage external events and projects.

24 The mission of the college, expressed in the strategic plan, is clearly understood by the staff. It is translated into objectives, as a basis for planning and review at all levels. Twice a year, principal's planning days are held when all staff meet to agree objectives and discuss implementation. The strategic planning process starts with an analysis of external influences

and competition for recruitment. All heads of school and directors of faculty meet with the vice-principal to decide on the programme of courses on which the allocation of resources is based. Objectives and targets are set for all senior managers, directors of faculty, heads of school, and programme area leaders. Any changes must be by agreement and in conformity with the strategic plan.

25 The chairman of governors appraises the principal and receives reports from her on the appraisal of the other members of the principalship. Under the appraisal scheme, the responsibilities of senior managers are continually reviewed, and objectives and targets are set in relation to these. Attainment of personal targets is linked to 10 per cent performance-related pay. Last year the remuneration committee awarded at least 9.5 per cent to all members of the team, including the principal.

26 Directors of faculties manage their areas on the same pattern of planned, regular meetings with individual heads of school and with faculty management boards. Objectives and targets are set and monitored formally and effectively in the four faculties. The intention is to delegate responsibility for the management of courses and resources to heads of school and to programme area leaders. This is happening in many schools, for example in the schools of supportive learning, business education, computing and information technology, performing and creative arts, hospitality and leisure, where lines of communication are clear and responsibilities are clearly allocated. In the school of science, engineering and mathematics, and the school of construction technician and management studies, roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined, the allocation of resources is not fully understood and planning is not forward-looking. In science and mathematics, this has had a damaging effect on the quality of teaching and learning. An action plan has already been put into operation to address weaknesses revealed by the specialist inspection of this area in November 1994. The college is attempting to bring the management of all schools to the same standard in two ways. Firstly, by strengthening and supporting course teams so that they are able to take responsibility for managing their own programmes and resources. Secondly, by the piloting of school boards. The school boards set up in the faculty of services for people have been introduced to devolve some of the planning and monitoring function of faculty management boards to the schools.

27 Themes of quality, equality and value in the strategic plan are supported by effective policies, and procedures for identifying the action required and the lead manager responsible for implementing it. Within faculties, working parties have been set up to develop policies. Each of the directors of faculty is responsible for overseeing the development of policies and procedures to improve recruitment, retention and examination results, and for monitoring and evaluating progress.

28 Information and management decisions are communicated to staff openly and effectively. Elected faculty representatives on the academic

board systematically report back to faculty boards after academic board meetings. Minutes of academic board meetings are sent to governors and to all libraries. The clerk to the governors edits a monthly college staff newsletter, 'Insight'. It is well produced and provides useful information about students, staff, sites and systems. Strategic briefing notes are issued to summarise the college's approach to key issues such as quality, strategic planning, the budget and accommodation. The principal holds a question time once a month. She also meets teaching and support staff to brief them on important issues. Well-known guest speakers are invited to the college once a term to speak on important topics such as developments in further education, assessment and teaching of basic skills, and race relations. An event is held each term during which staff from all faculties and college services exchange information on what they are doing. The principal and other senior managers are accessible to all staff. Staff interviewed by inspectors said that they were well briefed and understood the reasons for decisions even if they did not always agree with them.

29 Management information on students, courses and finances is generally accurate, reliable and used effectively. A steering group monitors the overall strategy for management information and makes sure that the system provides for the needs of its users. The college is in the process of transferring from one computerised system to another to enable it to track students from initial enquiry to exit. Existing systems support finance, personnel and payroll, and provide information on students and courses. There is an electronic prospectus and an electronic mail system, accessed through one networked computer in each staffroom. This facility is particularly useful for staff working on different sites. The college recognises the desirability of providing all staff with access to the management information system and the accompanying need for appropriate training. Monthly financial reports are provided for each budget holder. To support the greater devolution of financial responsibility, budget holders should have more up-to-date information at the stage when finances are committed.

30 Allocation of resources is closely tied to strategic planning. The strategy and the proposed allocations for capital and minor works are agreed by the finance and general purposes committee of the governing body. Budget holders are required to prepare budgets based on the courses offered and the targets for enrolment. Seventy-five per cent of the consumables budget is allocated to faculties on the basis of a formula derived from weighted full-time equivalent numbers. The initial allocation is adjusted after enrolment. Twenty-five per cent of the budget is held in reserve and allocated on the basis of bids from faculties for extra costs arising from the requirements of particular courses, such as NVQs, or initiatives to develop new methods of teaching. Methods of allocating resources are clearly understood by staff.

31 The college slightly exceeded its target for 8 per cent growth in full-time equivalent enrolments in 1993-94 and expects to meet its target

of 7 per cent for 1994-95. For 1994-95, the college received £15,127,000 of recurrent funding, and its average level of funding is £23.81. This is significantly above the median for general further education colleges, which is £18.17. Although it has been reduced from a level of about £37.00 before incorporation, it remains the seventh highest in London. With careful financial management and the achievement of targets for growth, the college has a projected surplus. Summaries of the college's income and expenditure for the 16 month period from 1 April 1993 to 31 July 1994 are given in figures 5 and 6.

32 South Thames TEC went into administrative receivership on 21 December 1994. It is likely that the future activities for education and training will be contracted with South London TEC. South London TEC was in discussion with the college in February 1995 to secure the continuation of present contracted activities beyond 1 April 1995. These comprised training credits, training for work, bids to the competitiveness fund, the development fund, education business partnership, teacher placement and joint funding for European initiatives. The college remains an unsecured creditor in respect of payments for activities contracted by South Thames TEC for 1994-95.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

33 There are clear policies and effective procedures for the recruitment and induction of students. Much effort is devoted to providing prospective students with the information and advice needed to make informed choices about programmes of study. The information centre, managed by learner and curriculum services, provides the initial point of contact with the college for many students. Up-to-date and accurate information on all courses is available in the centre through the college's electronic prospectus and in course leaflets. Guidance officers are on hand to provide advice on courses and welfare matters. Excellent relationships with the faculties ensure that guidance officers can quickly call on specialist advice from teachers. During the seven weeks from the middle of July to the end of August 1994, the information centre dealt with some 1,600 enquiries. At the busiest times, bilingual interpreters for Vietnamese, Turkish, Somali and French speakers were available. There were also signing facilities for applicants with a hearing impairment.

34 To support and extend the work of the information centre, a 'learning shop', funded by the Deptford Task Force, was opened in Deptford Broadway in July 1994. The shop, managed by one of the college's six guidance officers, is attractively furnished and well equipped. It provides a relaxed and encouraging atmosphere in which local residents can receive advice. The guidance officer based at the shop also provides information and guidance on an outreach basis at local advice shops and community centres. The shop offers short preparatory courses in communication, study skills and numeracy, for people contemplating enrolling at the college. Local people can also use the shop's computing facilities to acquire

and develop skills in information technology. Some students already enrolled on courses at the college use the shop for private study, especially on Saturday when the main college sites are closed.

35 The college organises open evenings to enable potential students to meet staff and students and view the facilities. Guidance officers, teachers and the careers service provide information and advice. Tours of the college are organised by the students' union. The first open evening in December 1994 was widely publicised in schools, careers offices and the local press; it attracted 300 people.

36 Enrolment procedures operate smoothly and effectively. Efforts to encourage applicants to seek advice and enrol early, during July and August, help to make the September enrolment period more easily manageable.

37 The college is making steady progress in developing procedures for the assessment and accreditation of students' prior learning and experience in catering, care and business administration. However, student demand for accreditation has been relatively small. During 1993-94, 70 students had some element of their prior experience formally accredited. The scope for extending accreditation, and any practical benefit, depends on the course structure. Courses in business administration are divided into modules, each lasting about six weeks and each repeated so that students can complete the course at the level that is right for them. In contrast, students wishing to join a childcare programme, organised as one-year courses, might have to wait some time for the course to reach the level to which they have been accredited. A joint project with Woolwich College is under way to divide the whole curriculum into units, each with clearly stated learning outcomes which can be assessed and accredited. Units are currently being developed in mathematics and numeracy, English as a second language, computing and information technology, fashion and motor vehicle maintenance.

38 Induction for full-time and part-time students provides an effective introduction to the college and its courses. An induction pack, prepared by learner and curriculum services, covers a wide range of induction activities and is effectively used by tutors. Students receive comprehensive information on counselling, careers and learning support services, and on the facilities offered by the students' union.

39 Arrangements for students to transfer between courses are effective. Some course teams maintain that an extended diagnosis of students' capabilities is required before finally deciding on an appropriate programme of study. For example, the final decision on whether a student should follow the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma in information technology applications, or the BTEC national diploma in computer studies, is not made until a month after enrolment. Until then, students follow a common programme during which their abilities are assessed.

40 Of the students identified by the ALBSU assessment as needing additional learning support, approximately half were allocated timetabled support. In all, this amounted to more than 9,000 hours from 12 support tutors. Since resources were limited, it was decided to concentrate support on borderline students who had the best chance of succeeding if given extra help. There has been close liaison between the additional support tutors and subject teachers to determine the exact form such support should take. Learning support objectives have been agreed with the students concerned and incorporated into their learner agreements.

41 The support provided for students in English and numeracy is a major strength. It is arranged flexibly to match the needs of the students and the nature of their course. Support is organised through tutorials and by providing support staff in mainstream lessons. Students may also be referred by their tutor to the learning support unit attached to the learning centre or may use the unit's facilities on a drop-in basis. Between September 1994 and February 1995, some 250 students used the unit, most of them more than once.

42 A college-wide policy on tutoring for all students, has been implemented recently. It requires tutors: to clarify learning objectives; set goals for each student; monitor and record the progress which students are making; arrange for students to receive learning support where appropriate; and ensure that they have appropriate information and guidance on courses and on careers. Records of achievement are an integral part of the policy. At the end of a course, tutors have to summarise each student's achievements and use this as a basis for writing references. Whilst the policy encourages a consistent approach to tutoring across the college, the framework is flexible enough to allow individual tutors and course teams to address their own specific requirements.

43 Information and guidance on careers and progression is provided by tutors supported by the college's two vocational guidance officers. The officers help to prepare tutorial materials and open learning resources for job searches and applications. They also answer specific queries, arrange visits and liaise with the careers service. Three careers officers from Lewisham careers service, conduct individual careers interviews. Students also have on-line access to the local careers service information database.

44 Almost all of the tutorials inspected were successful in achieving their objectives. Most sessions were well planned and tutors gave assistance to students in a supportive and sensitive way. There were ample opportunities for students to seek clarification on matters relating to their course and to the development of their own skills. Tutors maintained satisfactory records of students' progress and students were usually given sufficient opportunities to discuss their progress with their tutor.

45 A 'study buddy' scheme has been introduced under which students who are experiencing particular difficulties with their course are paired with other students who act as supplementary tutors. The 'study buddies'

receive training and are paid for their services. To date, 15 have been trained and have supported 21 students. The college aims to maintain a core of 10 'study buddies' to provide assistance to identified students on courses which have experienced serious retention difficulties.

46 Six guidance officers are based in the faculty of learner and curriculum services. Two are attached to each of the teaching faculties. They provide information and advice on a broad range of personal, financial and other welfare matters, and are well qualified to do so. Each officer is encouraged to develop expertise in particular areas, such as counselling, housing, support networks for refugees and asylum seekers, assistance for one-parent families, and coping with domestic violence. A large number of students avail themselves of the guidance unit's welfare advice services. Between August 1994 and January 1995, the unit dealt with 1,162 such cases, 53 per cent of them on financial matters. Poverty amongst students at the college is a major problem. A total of 492 students, all meeting stringent qualifying criteria, have applied for assistance from the college's 1994-95 access fund of £44,000. Only 149 of them could be provided with funds. Similarly, the college's £25,000 hardship fund has been sufficient to provide support to only a small proportion of the 620 students who applied for assistance. Guidance officers are mindful of the stress which poverty imposes upon students and provide sound advice and assistance. Where appropriate, students requiring specialist help are referred to external agencies, such as the Refugee Training and Employment Centre which is funded by the Home Office in association with four London TECs.

47 There is effective support on mainstream courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students with impaired hearing can be provided with a signer when required. Dyslexic students are assessed by the college's dyslexia co-ordinator to determine what extra tuition is needed. Specialist equipment such as Braille dictionaries are loaned to students for the duration of their course. Students are appreciative of the high level of support which they receive.

48 Childcare facilities are available on three of the college's sites. Priority is given to single parents, those on benefit and, at the Lower Sydenham site, to women on construction courses. A total of 48 places is available for babies and children aged between nine months and five years. Demand for places is high. In addition, about 50 students receive grants through the European Social Fund to finance childcare.

49 Students' attendance is recorded by individual teachers, and registers are checked by heads of schools. However, there is no formally agreed strategy to address the high levels of absenteeism on some courses, including some in business, catering, computing and engineering. Learner and curriculum services have recently prepared draft guidelines for teachers on monitoring attendance and reacting to absenteeism.

50 Procedures are in place to ensure that students are made aware of their rights and responsibilities. All are issued with a copy of the college's charter when they enrol, and the charter is discussed during induction. The students' union is active in promoting the interests of the students and lobbying senior managers on matters relating to students' welfare. The students' forum, chaired by the vice-chair of governors and comprising representatives from the students in each school and senior managers of the college, meets at least once each term. Its aim is to keep the college and the governing body fully informed about the concerns of students. It is complemented by similar bodies in each faculty.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

51 Two hundred and twenty-seven teaching sessions were observed. The average attendance was about 66 per cent. Levels of attendance may have been affected by the industrial action taken by teachers on two separate days during the main specialist inspection week. The strengths of the teaching and learning clearly outweighed the weaknesses in 65 per cent of the sessions observed. The weaknesses outweighed the strengths in 7 per cent of sessions. The following table shows the grades given to the teaching sessions observed.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		3	14	11	1	0	29
GCSE		2	5	4	2	0	13
GNVQ		0	6	6	2	1	15
NVQ		8	15	11	0	0	34
Access and higher education		1	13	6	1	0	21
Other advanced		12	29	10	1	1	53
Other intermediate		5	14	5	2	0	26
Foundation including ESOL		8	12	11	3	2	36
Total		39	108	64	12	4	227

52 There is a good level of planning for most programmes which is well documented in course files. The best files contain syllabuses, schemes of work, details of examination or accreditation requirements, and assessment criteria. They are particularly valuable for new staff. There were good schemes of work for art and design, business studies, construction, drama and dance, engineering, modern languages and some English courses, all of which included descriptions of the methods of teaching and learning and the time to be allocated to the various topics.

The aims and objectives of courses are generally shared with the students and set out in course handbooks. Some of the handbooks are excellent, but the standard varies and some provide little useful information. In business, some course handbooks are particularly informative: they contain assessment criteria and dates for the submission of assignments, a full analysis of the topics to be covered each week, and guides to effective study. In dance and drama, too, students are given handbooks of high quality, setting out the details of individual units and relevant practical information on health and safety. Art and design students are made aware of the aims of their courses; there are clear learning objectives, and published deadlines for the submission of work. Course handbooks for English as a foreign language give clear outlines of the course and the requirements of the examination syllabus. In chemistry, there is a detailed scheme of work which includes an appropriate amount of practical work. However, in physics and biology there are only outline syllabuses for the GCE A level and GCSE programmes. The college should identify the best schemes of work and course handbooks and use these as models for all courses.

53 The quality of teaching and the promotion of learning in courses for students with learning difficulties is of a particularly high standard. The range of choice in their programmes provides appropriate incentives to learn and the students are well motivated. Assignments and the criteria for their assessment are clearly explained to students. The quality of much of the teaching in real-life situations is outstanding. Students are involved in projects from the initial idea for the project to its completion. This ensures that they fully understand the whole process and is particularly helpful to those students with learning difficulties who have limited experience of the outside world. A group of students with moderate learning difficulties was observed learning the skills involved in refurbishing, painting and redecorating a hostel for homeless young women. Not only were they learning in a real setting where the results of their work mattered, but they were also having to learn the social skills required to work in an inhabited household. Teachers have high but realistic expectations of their students and give sensitive and effective support particularly to those with behavioural or emotional difficulties. Teachers introduce different methods of working to add variety to lessons and maintain students' interest. Learning activities are shaped with an awareness of the interests and life styles of differing ethnic groups. Learning materials such as worksheets are carefully drafted so that students with reading difficulties can understand them.

54 There were many examples of good teaching in other areas of work, particularly on access courses and courses in education, art and design, fashion, performing arts, business, computing, construction, engineering, hotel and catering, and sports and recreation management. In a class on book-keeping, the teacher involved students in a range of interesting learning activities, used an overhead projector effectively to convey ideas,

ensured that work was conducted at an appropriate pace and checked students' progress. In a construction class, the teacher made excellent use of team-working skills and students' previous knowledge to help to solve a design problem in a building project. The restaurant service produced by BTEC national diploma students was of a professional standard; they demonstrated good technical and social skills; they were smartly dressed and took a pride in their work. One group of students learning English as a foreign language was engaged in role play involving a meeting of some holiday island residents to discuss the growing number of tourists. This encouraged them to work effectively as members of a group as well as helping them to develop their language skills. Students taking GCE A level French selected recent news items and translated them with help from the assistant. They then practised reading them in preparation for a television recording in the college studio. With the aid of technicians, they subsequently presented their news programme on camera, and the assistant introduced and linked the items. Drama students are quickly involved in a professional working ethos focused on performance. The discipline of the theatre was observed in all practical sessions.

55 In poorer sessions, teaching methods were inappropriate, the pace of work was too slow, or students were poorly motivated.

56 In mathematics classes, the diet of activity was monotonous. GCSE students spent much of their time completing worksheets. There were few practical activities and teachers made little attempt to develop oral skills. The large classes made it difficult for teachers to provide individual help. GCE A level students received a similarly narrow experience. Much of the difficulty lay in the planning and management of mathematics in the college. Some of the work in English as a second language classes was slow and undemanding, and there was insufficient attention to the development of students' speaking skills. Teachers depended too much on the use of textbooks.

57 Some teachers were adept at coping with widely differing levels of student ability. This was particularly evident in drama and dance, art and design, fashion and catering classes. In vocational subjects, students were given effective support to develop their language and number skills. In a practical electronics class an extra member of staff was present to help five students who had been identified as needing numeracy support. In many fashion courses, several adults with language problems were given additional exercises and extra practical demonstrations. A supportive learning environment was also provided for students with learning difficulties following mainstream courses. Where necessary, individual learning programmes were arranged and adjustments made to timetables.

58 Visits outside the college and events within the college are widely used to enrich students' learning experience. Groups of art students study collections at the Tate Gallery and National Gallery. Students of English have visited the theatre, some for their first time, and a short trip to

Florence is planned. A group of students from the dance foundation course forms a touring company which performs demanding pieces to professional standards. Fashion students go to Paris for a four-day study visit and stage an annual fashion show to display their work. For the last two years, a visiting artist has spent a year at the college: last year it was a painter and this year a photographer. A professional jazz singer has worked with the dance students, who are required to take singing as part of the curriculum to extend their skills.

59 The diversity of students' ethnic and cultural background helps shape the college's curriculum. The pieces chosen for performance in dance reflect the backgrounds of the performers and their audiences. A novel by a black writer and actor about drug addiction was dramatised and staged at the college. Black history has been the subject of one of the theme weeks which are organised about once a month throughout the year. A series of events to celebrate the achievements of black people included workshops for students led by the poet Benjamin Zephaniah. Well-known black musicians gave performances alongside music students.

60 Students' progress is monitored through appropriate assignments which are marked and returned with helpful comments from teachers. The progress of students with learning difficulties is recorded in ways that they can understand and value. In fashion courses, the coursework deadlines are displayed in the workroom, and students record their completion of assignments. In drama and dance, teachers jointly assess practical and written work to moderate grades and ensure consistency of standards. In catering, students are regularly informed about their progress. Students of English as a foreign language have regular homework and progress tests indicate that they are achieving an appropriate standard of attainment.

61 Standards for the setting and marking of work are variable. In construction, NVQ competencies are accurately assessed and recorded. There are detailed assessment plans for engineering students. In business courses, some grading of NVQ work failed to differentiate effectively between levels of competence and teachers' comments provided little guidance to students on how their work could be improved. Students on courses in English as a second language maintain a daily record of work but have little opportunity to build a cumulative record of achievement. In humanities, the marking of written work is generally consistent and constructive but weaker students of modern languages often receive negative comments which threaten to discourage and demotivate them. In science and mathematics, students mark much of their own work and teachers fail to check this regularly. In physics and chemistry, the work is thoroughly marked and returned promptly. In biology, standards are not as high.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

62 Most students enjoyed their work and spoke with enthusiasm about their studies. This was particularly evident among mature students following access programmes, and among students on dance, drama, art and design, education, business, construction and engineering courses. The introduction of NVQs in catering and the use of modern, well-equipped and realistic work environments has contributed much to students' enthusiasm.

63 On most courses students showed that they were able to work together effectively. Performing arts students worked regularly in small groups, recognising the need for mutual support. In art and design, fashion, catering, construction, education and engineering, students worked effectively in teams to achieve group goals. In a City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) education class small groups of students discussed how it feels to be assessed and to assess. In modern language classes, group work was used to good effect to simulate real-life situations. Many of the discussions in English classes also enabled students to practise their teamwork skills. Students were observed working in pairs and groups in the majority of GCE and GCSE classes which were inspected. An imaginative application of group work was used with adult GCSE English students who were required to use their problem-solving skills to produce an agenda for a group meeting. In GCE A level law and sociology, students participated enthusiastically in whole class activities but there was little evidence of collaborative work or group projects.

64 Many courses provided students with ample opportunity to develop their study skills. For example, in a communication skills class, engineering students shared their views on study and revision skills and were introduced to alternative strategies. Access students showed an ability to work on their own and, towards the end of the course, they were re-appraising their study skills and developing examination techniques.

65 Core skills were being developed effectively in many areas of work, and safe working practices were a significant feature of almost all courses where students were developing their practical skills. A group of students with severe learning difficulties worked together on a project to construct a wildlife pond. At each stage they were required to solve problems, make decisions, undertake practical activities, work as a team and develop communication skills. Catering students had too little practice in developing their writing skills and insufficient weight was given to core skills as part of the curriculum in both drama and dance. Generally, mathematical skills were inadequately developed.

66 There was inadequate provision for the development of skills in information technology in many of the courses inspected. The lack of information technology in dance and drama limits students' career opportunities. Little use of computers was evident in business studies courses. Most students studying for an NVQ in administration/secretarial

studies did not use a wordprocessor for drafting text. In catering courses, computers were used effectively only for stores control. Information technology is not an integral part of work in GCE and GCSE English courses, though some evening class students had wordprocessed their assignments. Computing is available to students of English as a foreign language, but only as one of several options. There was little evidence of the use of information technology in science and mathematics; in the 17 classes inspected, only three pieces of work from students had been wordprocessed.

67 Students enter for a wide range of assessments validated by BTEC, C&G, the RSA Examinations Board, the Chartered Institute of Marketing, the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management, the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and other examination boards. National performance tables published by the Department for Education show that of the 32 students aged 16-18 entering for vocational qualifications in 1993-94, 27 (84 per cent) were successful. This places the college in the middle third of colleges within the further education sector, though only a small proportion of the college students are in this age group.

68 In 1994, 59 per cent of students in their final year of BTEC courses achieved the full award. Students achieved notably good pass rates in business courses, particularly in accounting and business administration. At foundation level, all 58 students who took the external examination gained a pass grade. In both the intermediate and final examinations for the Association of Accounting Technicians students achieved a 100 per cent pass rate. In computing, good results included a 100 per cent pass rate by students taking the national certificate in the accelerated one year programme. There were good results in catering, fashion, engineering, dance and drama. All students taking the C&G refrigeration and air-conditioning course gained passes in the external examination. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities attained a variety of externally-accredited awards. In construction NVQ level 2, all the craft students in brickwork, carpentry and joinery, and plastering achieved the award. On other C&G construction craft courses, levels of achievements were unsatisfactory. These courses are being replaced by NVQs. Students taking the BTEC first diploma in science achieved poor results. Students' achievements in the examinations for the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management were good. One student gained the award for the highest overall performance in the 1994 examination; another student gained the institute's medal for the highest mark in the paper on management of recreational technology.

69 About 6.5 per cent of the college's students are entered for GCE A level and GCSE examinations. In 1994, there were entries in 22 subjects, though the numbers for some subjects were very small. Students aged 16-18 entered for the GCE A level examination in 1993-94 scored, on average, 2.9 points per entry. This places the college in the bottom third of

colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 tables published by the Department for Education. However, over 65 per cent of the entrants for GCE A level are aged 19 and over. In 1993-94, 53 per cent of all 432 entries for GCE A level examinations were awarded a pass at grades A-E; 29 per cent were awarded grades A-C. This compares with provisional average rates of 68 per cent and 36 per cent, respectively, for all further education colleges in England excluding sixth form colleges.

70 In 1994, satisfactory results were achieved in computing, art and design (graphics), history and law, all of which had pass rates of 60 per cent or over. In dance, 79 per cent of students gained grades A-E. In theatre studies, all the students passed and 81 per cent gained grades A-C. Examination results have been poor in sciences for the last four years. In 1994, 31 per cent of students entered for chemistry gained grades A-E, in physics 27 per cent and in biology 18 per cent. Overall, 28 per cent of students entering for mathematics gained grades A-E. The number of examination entrants for mathematics and science is also low when compared with the numbers who originally enrolled. There are also poor examination results in art and design (fine art) and sociology.

71 GCSE results are generally poor. In 1994, 26 per cent of the 1,221 entries (from 829 students) were awarded grades A-C. Nineteen per cent of the students aged 16-18 were awarded grades A-C compared with a provisional national figure of 39 per cent for general further education and tertiary colleges. Of the 500 students aged 19 and over, 39 per cent gained grades A-C compared with a provisional national figure of 64 per cent. The best results were in art and design, modern languages and music. In English 31 per cent gained grades A-C, in mathematics 12 per cent and in computing 5 per cent.

72 Retention rates are poor in many areas: art and design, business, computing, construction, English as a second language, health and social care, humanities, science and mathematics. Detailed statistics on retention have been collected since March 1993 and a full record of retention rates is maintained for all courses. Retention rates for the college as a whole have been calculated as a proportion of the total September enrolment. In 1992-93, the retention rate was 58 per cent; in 1993-94 it was 71 per cent. Retention rates in each of the faculties for the same two years were: 63 per cent and 64 per cent, respectively, in business, computing and languages, 50 per cent and 71 per cent in services for people, 64 per cent and 73 per cent in technology, and 63 per cent and 79 per cent in learner and curriculum services. The college has now adopted the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) methodology for calculating retention rates. Retention rates will be measured as a proportion of the numbers enrolled and attending at 1 November. The college has a retention target of 80 per cent for all faculties in 1994-95. Each school is required to report to the faculty management board on measures taken to improve retention. Strategies include: closer monitoring of attendance; flexible timetabling,

tutorial and learning support; student representation on course teams; use of college hardship funds to purchase materials and equipment for students; and the appointment of a group of tutors specifically to support corrective action.

73 The college records students' progression to higher and further education or employment by course, by faculty, and FEFC programme area. There was a good record of progression to higher education in 1993. Seventy-three per cent of all BTEC national diploma students and 60 per cent of those gaining two or more GCE A level awards gained entry to higher education. Twenty-three per cent of the full-time students gaining an award in 1993 entered employment. Of the 87 students gaining vocational awards other than BTEC and NVQ, 50 obtained employment. In 1994, 21 per cent of the 1,275 full-time students gaining an award entered higher education and 34 per cent continued in further education. These are good figures for an area in which the unemployment rate is high.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

74 The college's quality assurance systems are based on a quality management strategy which focuses on the needs of the learner and involves all staff. The strategic plan clearly sets out the priorities for curriculum planning and delivery. Targets are set, including measurable targets for recruitment, retention and progression. The vice-principal has overall responsibility for both strategic planning and quality. He acts as clerk to the quality task force, a working group of the academic board chaired by the principal, and including the deputy principal, the four directors of faculty and the senior registrar. The task force oversees the implementation of college policies and the maintenance of a standards manual.

75 There is a detailed procedure for course review and evaluation, which has now completed its second cycle. It provides both qualitative and quantitative information. Standardised forms are used to gather statistical data on enrolments, completion and retention rates, reasons for withdrawals from courses, students' achievements and destinations. The process enables the college to make year-by-year comparisons. The data can also be aggregated and comparisons made at the level of class, course, school, faculty and college.

76 After analysing the data, course teams consider and evaluate key features of the provision for which they are responsible, including programme design, delivery, organisational support and staffing. Each team is able to make comments, identify major issues and give their response to the results of surveys to monitor students' opinion of the courses they are following. Many teams conducted a thorough review of standards. However, some failed to produce clear action plans or to set timescales for the actions envisaged. The documentation is being

strengthened for the 1994-95 review by the addition of a section on action planning.

77 A number of improvements have been brought about as the result of the combined quality control activities of course teams, programme leaders and heads of school. For example, in GCSE and GCE A level English an identified need for improved co-ordination, internal moderation of marking and improved common resources has been answered by the appointment of a co-ordinator and the development of a bank of common teaching assignments for GCSE English. In catering, the issue of inadequacies in the setting and marking of students' written work has already been recognised and addressed.

78 Surveys of students' satisfaction with their courses are an important part of the quality assurance process. The system is currently being refined to provide one survey per term, instead of the one annual survey and the processing of information is to be made easier by the purchase of an optical mark reader. The survey in autumn 1994 covered 66 courses and involved 1,500 students. After responses had shown that students on an access to BEd course had inadequate opportunity to use information technology facilities, the head of school arranged for a timetabled period in the learning resource centre to ensure that they had access at a time appropriate to their needs as mature students.

79 Programme leaders and heads of school monitor the results of the course review and evaluation process with differing degrees of rigour. Directors of faculty oversee the process and are responsible for ensuring that the findings lead to action and improvement. The findings inform wider strategic planning through directors of faculty, the academic board and the quality task force.

80 A member of staff has been appointed to act as performance review co-ordinator, to ensure that statistical and evaluative data is captured and presented to best effect. As a result, high-quality reports and graphics have recently been made available to inform planning. A summary of the 1993-94 course team reviews and student surveys was produced in February 1995. The information is presented by faculty and for individual schools. It gives a commentary on the findings and students' levels of satisfaction with different aspects of their courses are expressed as scores, enabling comparisons to be made with faculty and college average scores. A comparative analysis of students' satisfaction by faculty is presented graphically and will be used to inform planning for 1995-96.

81 An internal moderation programme was introduced in 1994 to examine the quality of teaching, learning and students' achievement. Selected courses in each school are reviewed in the summer and autumn terms. Reports produced in the spring feed into the course review. The process is carried out by the deputy principal and teams of managers and includes the observation of teaching using protocols agreed between the senior management and the college lecturers' union. It also includes a

review of the operations of faculty boards, faculty management teams and course teams, and the use of course evaluation data on retention and results. The outcomes from the process feed into the course review and result in action points for the faculty and the college. These action points are being incorporated into an implementation plan which will go to the academic board in March 1995. Where unsatisfactory teaching was observed, immediate action was taken.

82 Another initiative has been the survey of employers' views. A questionnaire was sent in January 1995 to the 940 employers who had sponsored students at the college over the last two years. At the time of the inspection in February 1995, 154 responses had been received. These show that the survey is a potentially valuable instrument for gathering marketing information, such as the factors influencing employers in choosing an external training provider, as well as discovering employers' views of the services provided by the college.

83 Performance indicators are used to identify successful courses so that good practice can be identified and shared. Courses which are considered vulnerable because of poor recruitment or retention are pinpointed for particular attention. The principal was provided with detailed briefings on the courses identified as at risk during 1993-94 and met the course teams to discuss what action could be taken by the team and the college management. Action taken included the introduction of more flexible modes of attendance, continuous enrolment, and an improved induction programme. As a result, the enrolments on some courses have increased.

84 Standards relating to student administrative services are set out in the standards manual. A manual of property services procedures has been produced. Procedures for other corporate services such as finance and personnel are to be devised and will be monitored, through the International Standards Organisation (ISO) 9000 series, which the college hopes to achieve by December 1995.

85 A cross-college policy on the use of moderators' and verifiers' reports from awarding bodies such as BTEC was introduced in October 1994. Reports are sent to the deputy principal who has overall responsibility for ensuring that appropriate action is taken. Moderators' reports receive prompt action. At present, there is no cross-college policy on internal verification for NVQs and GNVQs. Schools are operating their own procedures, and there were some instances where internal verification was not being carried out.

86 In some programme areas, there was little staff development and no staff appraisal. This is being addressed. Staff development is being planned through a process called development review. It covers teaching and support staff, including part-time hourly-paid staff who have worked for 300 hours or more in the college. The aim of the scheme is to ensure that staff development is linked to the achievement of the college's objectives. An individual staff member's review takes place in the light of

a 'context statement', based on the strategic plan, which is produced by their manager. The review leads to an agreed action plan for the individual's training and development. The college has registered for the Investors in People award which it hopes to achieve by mid-1996.

87 The staff-development budget for 1994-95 is £130,800, which represents 1.1 per cent of the staffing budget. It is used effectively. Some £80,800 is devoted to a core programme related to the college's objectives. The priorities include marketing, NVQs and GNVQs, tutoring and the integration of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with other students in the vocational faculties. A proportion of the sum for core activities is allocated to the faculties on the basis of full-time equivalent staff numbers. Directors of faculty are responsible for the development, implementation and review of these plans. Corporate services are also allocated funds within the budget for core activities. The professional development centre for staff, which provides open learning and information technology training for teaching and support staff, is allocated £30,000. A further £20,000 is available to support staff in attending external conferences. A system for the evaluation of staff development activities has been introduced.

88 Customer care training has been provided for support staff, and there is a continuing programme of management training, which in 1993-94 was targeted at heads of school. A week at the end of the summer term is devoted to cross-college staff development for all staff. In 1994, activities focused on training for ALBSU testing, tutoring skills, enrolment procedures, and the provision of references for students. There is a programme of training and accreditation for assessors and verifiers' awards, which has made moderate progress since its inception in March 1993. Of 233 staff trained for the assessors' and verifiers' units, 90 have so far achieved the full award. Of the 45 staff trained for the internal verifiers' unit, 10 have achieved the full award, and of the 36 trained for the unit relating to accreditation of prior learning, 13 have achieved the full award.

89 There is a comprehensive and attractively-designed handbook to support both full-time and part-time staff. This includes information on the college's mission and strategic objectives, college policies, the course review and evaluation scheme, and the staff and student charters. The handbook is an important element in the induction of new staff. New full-time staff have a college induction programme and part-time staff are also invited to attend. The handbook sets out the entitlements of all new staff to information and meetings with their manager. Central records are kept by the personnel section to ensure that all full-time employees have received their induction. Schools are operating different practices for staff induction and some good practice is being developed. All faculties have faculty handbooks and schools are also developing their own handbooks. The staff charter sets out the commitments of the corporation to its staff and emphasises the shared responsibility for good working relationships.

90 The college has produced a students' charter which is a development of an existing charter pre-dating the national charter for further education. The charter is introduced to the students at their induction and is also incorporated into the course handbooks. It clearly sets out the students' entitlements in accordance with national requirements. Most of the standards given are measurable, although only one at present gives a timescale within which action is to be taken. Responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the charter has not been given to any one member of staff, since the standards are linked to aspects of the college's operations which can be monitored through existing procedures. There will need to be some adjustments to the charter and the college standards manual to bring their contents into line with each other. Enquiries about the charter, and complaints arising from it, are being logged. Reports are being prepared for the academic board and governing body. The charter does not address the entitlements of employers as customers of the college and the college may wish to consider ways of doing this, making use of the responses to its survey of employers' views.

91 In preparation for the inspection, the college produced its first self-assessment report. This provides a useful summary of the main initiatives taken by the college and some descriptive information concerning the college and its context. Although some problem areas are identified, the report fails to identify many of the strengths and weaknesses highlighted by inspectors.

RESOURCES

Staffing

92 The college employs 437 full-time staff and 107 full-time equivalent part-time staff. There are 209 salaried teachers and 65 full-time equivalent part-time teachers. Roughly half the teaching staff are women. Of the 15 members of the college management team five, including the principal, are women and nine of these have been external appointments made within the last three years. Twelve members of staff identify themselves as being disabled. The profile of the teaching staff shows that 19 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. The college monitors all appointments carefully. Since incorporation, 29 new appointments have been members of minority ethnic groups.

93 In recent years, there has been a reduction in the number of staff and there is a continuing restructuring programme to make better and more efficient use of staff. In some areas there is too heavy a reliance on part-time teachers, notably in mathematics and physics, but also in health and to a lesser extent community care, art and design, and catering.

94 Teachers hold appropriate academic and professional qualifications. Sixty-eight per cent of teaching staff, including part-time teachers, hold a degree or an equivalent qualification. In English, English as a foreign language, engineering, construction, health and community care, teachers are particularly well qualified. Seventy-three per cent of all teaching staff have a teaching qualification. All new full-time staff who do not hold a teaching qualification have to undertake the college's own teacher training programme. Most teaching staff have industrial, commercial and vocational experience which is relevant to their current work. Some full-time and part-time staff teaching dance have been members of the Royal Ballet Company. In a few areas, especially in science, modern languages and business studies, some teachers' industrial or commercial experience is not up to date.

95 The college has recruited professional expertise to support the functions bought about by incorporation. Corporate services are staffed by a strong team of professionals in accounting, finance, personnel, property services and management information. Contract staff contribute to services such as security and catering and are well integrated into the daily life of the college. All staff clearly see it as their task to help students to succeed.

96 Faculties have sufficient administrative staff to support teaching and learning. Each faculty has an administrator who plays a key role in overseeing the budget, administering examinations and managing the faculty office. The curriculum is well supported by technicians, especially in engineering, science, construction and computing. There is insufficient support in art and design.

Equipment/learning resources

97 The college has an effectively controlled budget for equipment and learning resources. A training office has been created with financial assistance from Deptford City Challenge and Deptford Task Force. The office is decorated and furnished to a high standard. It has good computer provision, though it still lacks some items of office equipment such as telephones, switchboard and fax. Students in the faculty of business, computing and languages have access to an ample number of computer terminals and software up to the standards required in industry. The installation of a 25-booth language laboratory, equipped with modern audio equipment and with access to a recording studio, has just been completed; it will provide an excellent facility when fully operational. Access to information technology for engineering students is good and the high standard of equipment for computer-aided design has added to the vocational relevance of their courses. There is good equipment for courses in electronics, office equipment maintenance, motor vehicle repair, art and design, fashion and photography. In the school of supported learning, students with learning difficulties have the equipment required to produce floral displays to commercial standards.

98 The specialist equipment in construction, science, performing arts and catering is generally of good standard, but there are some shortages or out-dated equipment in woodworking, physics and science for construction crafts. In drama and stagecraft, practical equipment for set design and construction and for sound production is limited. The new training restaurant is well equipped and reflects current industry practice, but some of the heavy-duty catering equipment is obsolete.

99 Many of the classrooms have been refurbished, and their excellent furniture and fittings create a pleasant working atmosphere. They provide a sharp contrast with some of the poorly-decorated older rooms.

100 Nearly half of the college's computers have been renewed during the last year under a planned programme for improving information technology facilities across the college. There is now a good provision of modern computers, many located in comfortable rooms. Altogether there are 490 workstations for students' use, providing a ratio of one workstation to 20 students.

101 The recently-refurbished Breakspears learning centre provides a good range of facilities and can cater for about 250 students at any one time. It is used by approximately 1,700 students a day. It incorporates: open access to computers; a languages and multi-media centre with compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases, tapes and video recordings; a library; an additional learning support centre; the professional development centre for staff; and a careers centre. Students speak highly of the learning centre and its helpful staff. A computing suite is specially equipped for students with physical disabilities. Facilities include touch-sensitive screens, large tracker balls, a speech synthesizer, a text enhancer and Braille printer for the visually impaired, and adjustable trolleys for wheelchair users. There are 17 full-time staff for supporting learning resources, including the libraries.

102 The college has five libraries on different sites, providing 282 study places. In the Breakspears building and at Lower Sydenham the libraries are open all day for five days a week. They are also open on four evenings a week at Breakspears, and one evening at Lower Sydenham. The libraries at Wickham and West Greenwich are open every day, but opening times are more restricted. The Downham library is open four mornings a week. The libraries have a stock of 72,000 books, 206 journals, 1,520 audiovisual items and 924 British standards. The budget allocation for books has increased substantially over the past three years from £39,000 to £95,000. Each faculty has a librarian designated to liaise with teaching staff on new purchases. Each school has part of the library budget allocated to it on the basis of student numbers. Some of the bookstock is outdated and students have expressed concern about the quality and number of books. There are not enough books on English, English as a second language, computing, science and mathematics. Students have to buy their own textbooks.

Accommodation

103 The college is located on four widely-dispersed sites. The site in Lewisham Way comprises four buildings: Breakspears, Tressillian, Wickham and Lea house. The site at Downham is shared with a primary school. The site at Lower Sydenham houses construction and is in a poor state of repair. A former school at West Greenwich is being refurbished as the centre for art and design. According to the college's accommodation survey, the utilisation of the buildings is about 20 per cent compared with the recommended figure of 64 per cent. There is space for the projected growth in student numbers up to 1996-97, if rooms can be used more efficiently.

104 The college has developed a clear and detailed accommodation strategy. A database has been established for planning and the management of premises. The data include professional surveys of the condition of the sites, the utilisation of space and health and safety checks. Other specific reports have been completed on access, security, lifts and refectories.

105 The buildings have many deficiencies constraining their use. There are significant dilapidations, which include roofs and mechanical and electrical plant. Only the Breakspears building is fully accessible by wheelchair users. The need to adapt many rooms for new and growing demands forms a key part of the accommodation strategy. Over the 10-year period from October 1992, £7.8 million (at 1993 prices), is required to bring the building stock up to an appropriate standard and proper use. The college proposes to dispose of the sites at Downham and Sydenham, to concentrate on the main site in Lewisham Way and to purchase a new site in Deptford. In the college's view the purchase at Deptford would enable it to take advantage of good transport connections and significantly lower operating costs, and the purpose-built former training centre of high-quality buildings would also improve its image and help to attract external funding. The venture will bring the building stock to a quality and level to meet the medium projection set out in the corporate plan. The estimated cost of the project is £9.8 million; progress is dependent on the completion of a funding package including a private sector mortgage, a bridging loan and successful disposal of the old buildings.

106 In the meantime, significant progress is being made in improving existing facilities. At incorporation, the state of the buildings was poor. There was a considerable backlog of essential work, which is now being tackled in accordance with a logical set of priorities, the first being health and safety. The programme of improvements to teaching, student and staff areas is being well managed, and the refurbishment is having a marked effect on the ethos of the college. Only critical work is being undertaken at the outlying premises.

107 The refurbished accommodation includes the learning centre, the training restaurant and bar, public areas, classrooms, three dance studios,

two new science laboratories, and facilities for computer-aided design. There remains a considerable amount of inadequate accommodation; for example, classrooms in the Wickham building and much of the Lower Sydenham site. Adults and students with learning difficulties in the Wickham building are often taught in rooms of an inappropriate size, which are poorly decorated and which convey a general air of neglect. Some of the food production areas in catering have not been adapted to current curriculum needs and are too large. The planned closures this summer, which include much of the poor classroom accommodation at Downham, irrespective of the proposed new project, will greatly improve the use of space and lead to savings in the costs of premises.

108 Security is a major issue on the Lewisham Way sites. It has been tackled professionally with enthusiasm and imagination. Technical improvements, security staff and the use of contract services, have made a valuable contribution to the well-being of students. Security staff manage to combine firm control with a welcoming and courteous manner. The standards are such that it is now proposed to offer security training as a course in the college.

109 Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high. Problems are dealt with promptly and the servicing of public areas, toilets and refectories is properly scheduled. The housekeeping in the workshops is good, and there is due regard for health and safety. The sites are well cared for and it is rare to find litter or graffiti. Credit is due to the combined efforts of students and academic staff and the professionalism of the managers and teams who are directly concerned with the daily upkeep of the buildings.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

110 Lewisham College is making good progress towards achieving its key strategic objectives. The particular strengths of the college are:

- an extensive range of vocational courses leading to national qualifications
- equal opportunities policies that influence the curriculum and college life
- governors with a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and a strong commitment to the college
- strong and imaginative leadership from the principal
- a clear mission, understood by all staff and translated into the strategic planning process
- effective policies and systems for the guidance and support of students
- sound policies and procedures for quality assurance which directly influence course planning
- teaching which is generally well planned and effective

-
- outstanding provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

111 If the college is to maintain and improve its standards it should:

- address problems of poor attendance and retention on many courses
- ensure that the management of all schools is equally effective
- tackle the weaknesses in teaching, especially in science and mathematics
- improve examination results at GCSE and in some GCE A level subjects
- monitor actions identified as necessary by the quality assurance process
- continue to improve the accommodation.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1994)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1994)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1994)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1994)

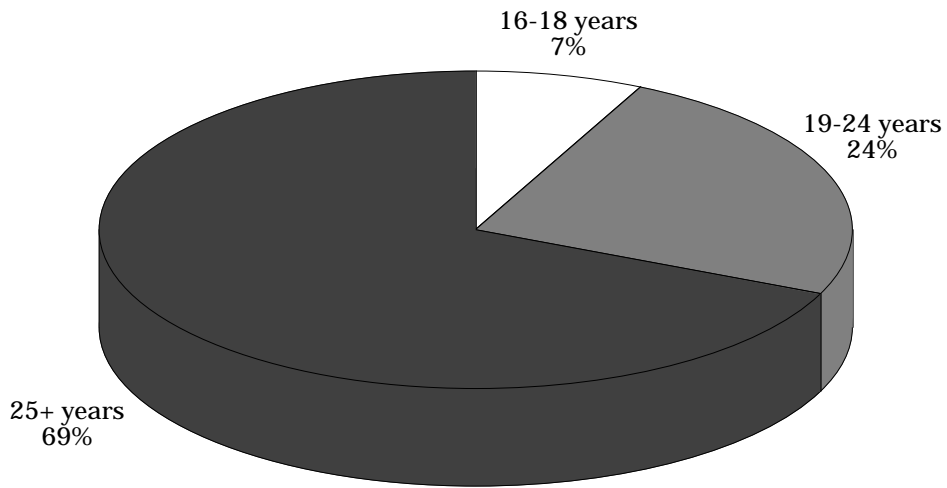
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

Lewisham College: percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1994)

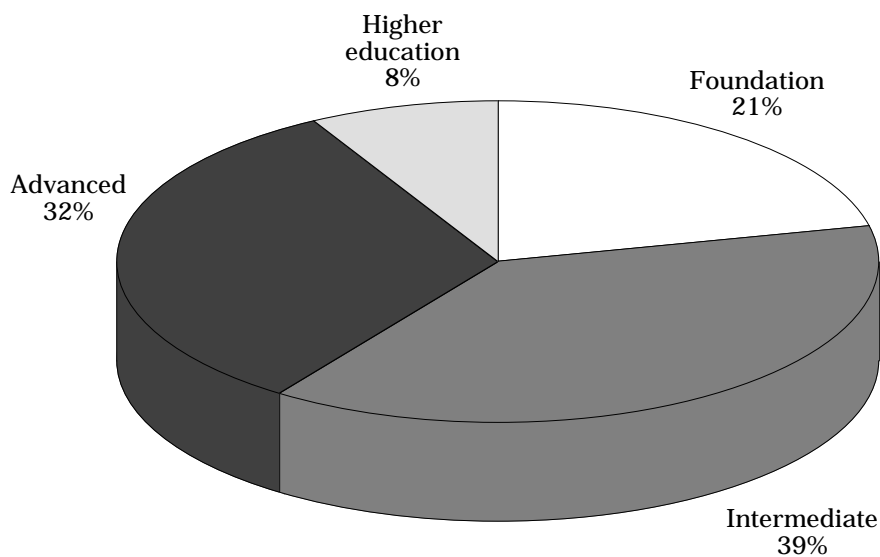


Enrolments: 10,006

Note: this chart excludes 27 enrolments under 16 and one enrolment where the age was not known.

Figure 2

Lewisham College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 10,006

Note: this chart excludes 31 leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2) enrolments.

Figure 3

Lewisham College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1994)

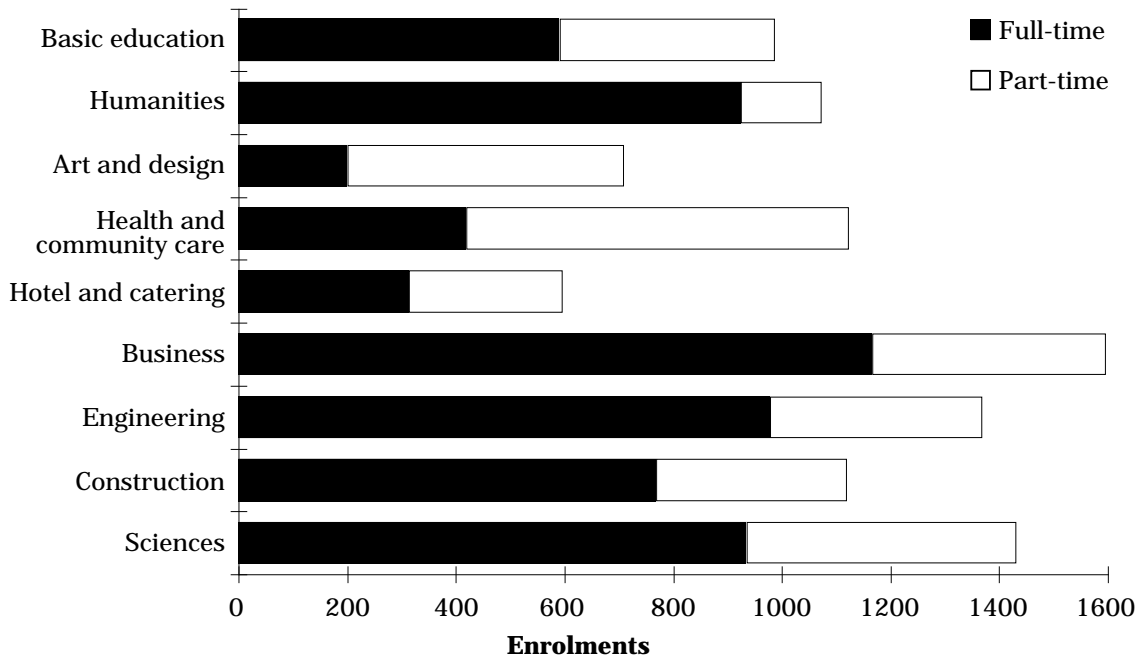


Figure 4

Lewisham College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1994)

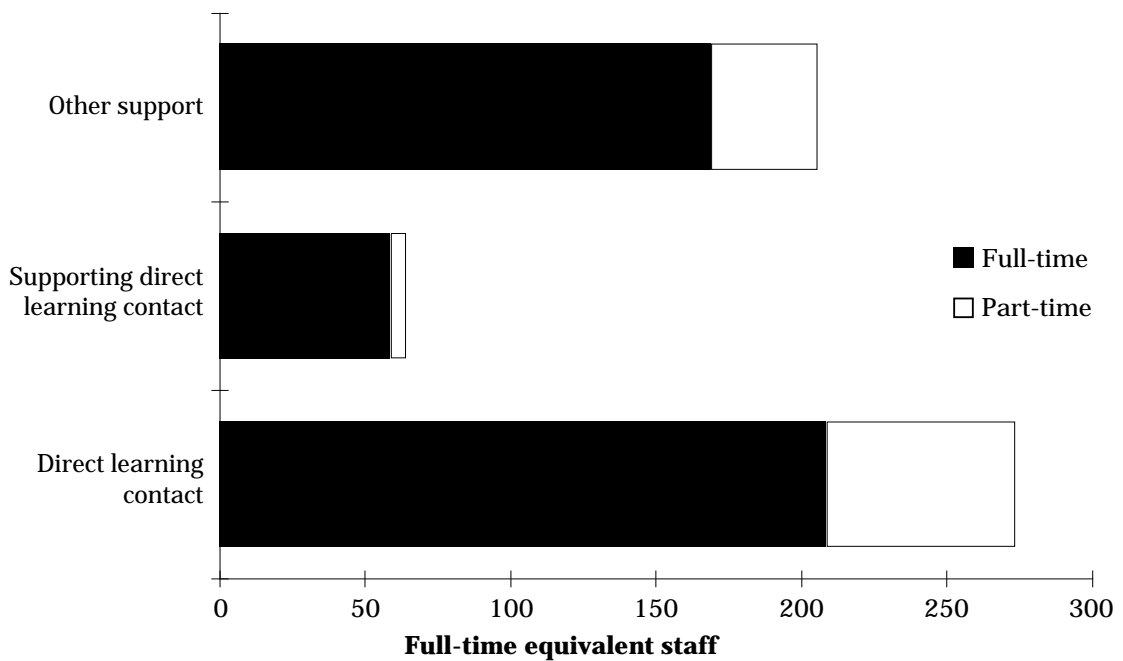
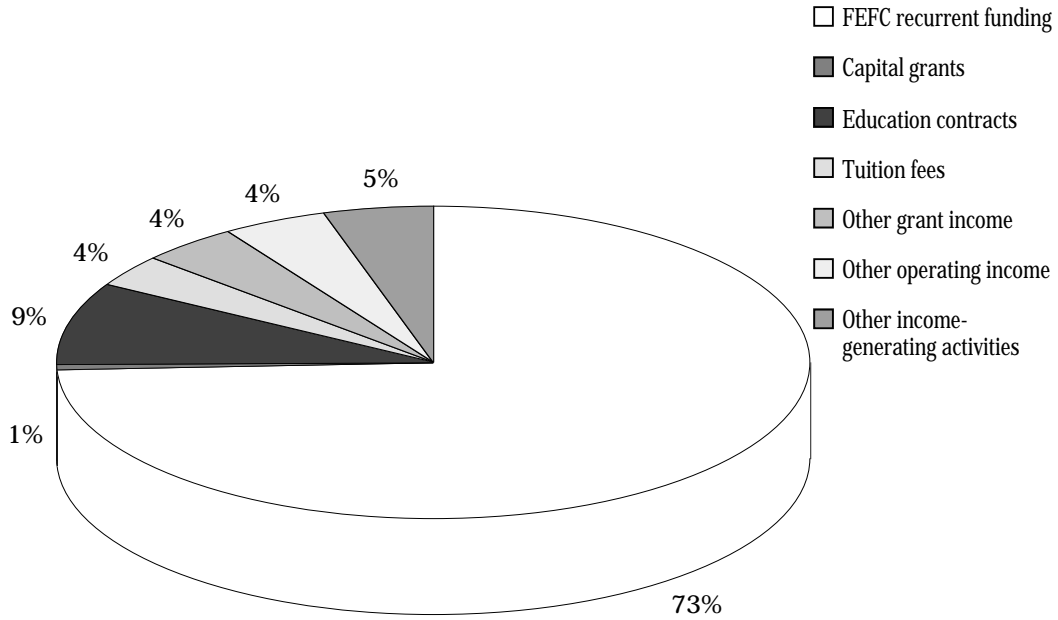


Figure 5

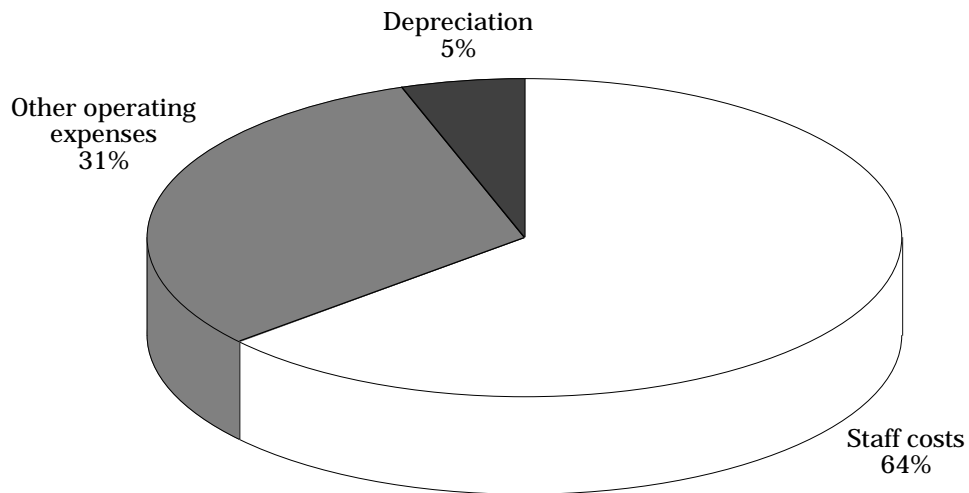
Lewisham College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)



Income: £26,137,000

Figure 6

Lewisham College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £26,192,000

Note: this chart excludes £2,000 interest payable.

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