Loreto College

Contents

Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses

- grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses

- grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses

- grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths

- grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

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

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

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

Student Achievements

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

- as expected completions, which is the number of initial enrolments on qualifications where the student expected to complete the qualification in a given year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification

- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which the students have completed as expected (or are continuing with the prospect of late completion). For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification

- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not shown.

Summary

Loreto College

North West Region

Inspected April 1999

Loreto College is a designated Catholic sixth form college in Manchester. The college produced a detailed and thorough self-assessment report. It was prepared through the college's existing quality assurance system and was validated by a grading panel which included external representatives. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report and with all but three of the grades awarded; two of which were judged to have improved since the college made its assessment. Judgements were well supported by evidence drawn from various sources.

The college offers courses in nine of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Provision in four of these was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. The college provides a wide range of programmes for 16 to 19 year olds, and has also developed GNVQ provision for school link and community programmes. Inclusiveness is a major part of the college's mission. Courses are well managed and there is much outstanding and good teaching. Over a third of all lessons observed were graded 1. The proportion of lessons graded 1 and 2 was above the national average. Many students on GCE A level courses achieve higher grades than predicted by their GCSE results. On several courses, examination results are good, but there are low achievements on some level 3 programmes. Achievement and retention rates on short courses are good. Support for students is outstanding. A notable feature is the exemplary individual support for learning at every level. The college's core values are applied, reinforced and promoted through student support services. There are good links with Catholic high schools and effective action to widen participation. Students experience an extensive range of enrichment activities. The accommodation strategy has led to improvements in accommodation since the last inspection. Further improvements are taking place or are at the planning stage. Quality assurance arrangements are thorough and are an integral part of the college's activities. There is a strong commitment to staff development. Governors demonstrate a clear commitment to the college and students' achievements, and rigorously monitor college performance. Effective management ensures that the Catholic identity is maintained and developed. There is strong leadership and involvement of staff in strategic and operational planning. The college should address: some poor retention rates, particularly on some level 3 programmes; the further development of IT resources to support learning; the limited access for students with restricted mobility; issues of non-compliance in governance and the lack of detail in operating statements at course level.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Computing and information technology	3	Support for students	1
Health, social and childcare	2	General resources	2
Art, music and media	2	Quality assurance	1
English and modern foreign languages	2	Governance	2
Sociology and psychology	1	Management	1

The College and its Mission

1   Loreto College is situated close to the centre of Manchester. It is one of an international network of Catholic colleges whose trustees are the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a religious order founded in the seventeenth century by the Englishwoman Mary Ward. It has provided Catholic education for young people in the diocese of Salford since 1851. The college was established as a sixth form college in 1977 as part of the reorganisation of Catholic education in the city. It is situated on a single campus which straddles the Moss Side and Hulme wards of Manchester. Hulme was the focal point from 1992 to 1997 of a major regeneration exercise through the government's City Challenge programme. The college is housed in a range of buildings dating from the 1820s to the 1970s. The chapel, formerly part of the convent building, is still used for worship and contemplation.

2   The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has identified the college as one of a group which typically recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas. The city of Manchester is the third most deprived city in England and the Moss Side ward is ranked fifth in the government's most recent national index of urban deprivation. In January 1997, the unemployment rate for Manchester was 13.4% compared with 7.5% for the north-west and 6.7% nationally. The percentage of pupils who gained five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 28.7% compared with the national average of 46.3%. Loreto College's local community embraces 18 partner schools in Manchester and the surrounding areas. Currently, approximately 60% of the college's students come from these 17 Catholic schools and one Church of England school. The rest of the students come from 60 other schools and colleges, from a wide radius including some who travel from parts of Cheshire. Students from minority ethnic groups represent 27% of those

of the college as compared with 12.3% of Manchester residents: 65% of students are Catholic. A quarter of the college's students are in receipt of a means-tested discretionary award. The college is part of the wide choice of sixth form education available to students in Manchester. There is strong competition from other Catholic sixth form colleges, general further education colleges, and a number of schools with sixth forms.

3   At advanced level the college offers 34 subjects at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), two national diploma courses, four general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes and the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing. At intermediate level it offers eight GCSE subjects, four GNVQ courses, a first diploma and the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education certificate in childcare. At foundation level the college offers four GNVQ programmes and courses accredited by the Open College Network for students with learning difficulties. Loreto College also contributes to courses at the newly-established Moston Sixth Form Centre as part of widening participation for 16 year olds in north Manchester. Courses for adults that reflect the mission of the college have been developed with appropriate partner organisations. The college also teaches the foundation year of a bachelor of arts (BA) course in partnership with another college.

4   The college principal is a religious sister. The senior management team comprises the principal, the quality assurance manager, the college services manager, the head of student services, the head of curriculum, and the manager for adult education and collaboration. The college is divided into five senior tutor groups which deliver the tutorial support system and seven curriculum areas of religious education, languages and arts, science, social science, care, enrichment and learning services, managed by five curriculum leaders.

Context

5   The mission of the college is to respond to the educational needs of young people from its partner high schools and special schools in Manchester and the surrounding areas. Inclusiveness is a major part of the mission. The college aims to widen opportunities for all young people, not just for those who are academically able, and to respond to the needs of other learners. Thus, its mission sets out to reach disengaged young people and adults in the poorer parts of Manchester and Salford. The aims are to give expression to the core values of Mary Ward which are freedom, justice, sincerity, truth and joy and to encourage 'seekers of truth and doers of justice' who are able to challenge accepted notions and modes of society. The college has high aspirations for its students not only in terms of academic excellence but also within the whole field of human endeavour.

The Inspection

6   The college was inspected during the week beginning 26 April 1999. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and reviewed information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used data on students' achievements derived from the individualised student record (ISR) for the three years 1995 to 1997 to inform the inspection. The college provided data for 1998 which were verified by inspectors before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by 12 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 46 days in the college. Inspectors observed 66 lessons and examined students' work. The inspection team examined documents provided by the college to support its self-assessment report and held meetings with college governors, managers, staff, students and other interested parties, including representatives of local schools, a representative of the local training and enterprise council (TEC), the chief education officer of Manchester and collaborative partners.

7   The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the lessons inspected, 71% were judged to be good or outstanding and 3% were less than satisfactory. This compares favourably with the national averages of 65% and 6%, respectively, for all colleges inspected during 1997-98.

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
GCE A/AS level	12	10	6	0	0	28
GCSE	4	1	2	1	0	8
GNVQ and NVQ	4	5	3	0	0	12
Other vocational	2	3	3	1	0	9
Tutorials	6	0	3	0	0	9
Total (No.)	28	19	17	2	0	66
Total (%)	39	32	26	3	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

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

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

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Loreto College	12.0	77
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

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

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 3

9   Inspectors observed 10 lessons covering GCE A level courses in computing and information technology (IT), first diploma and national diploma IT, and computer literacy and information technology as supplementary subjects. The self-assessment report was concise and clear. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgements but they identified a few additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good personal support for students

- good achievement rates on vocational courses

- high levels of retention on national diploma IT and computer literacy and information technology courses

- excellent monitoring of resource utilisation and internet access

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates on GCE A level courses

- inadequate lesson planning and some unimaginative teaching

- poor punctuality and low attendance

- unsatisfactory accommodation

10   Enrolments in computing and IT have increased by about 50% in the past three years, and there is a high proportion of female students. A broadening of the range of courses and close links with three partner schools have contributed to the increase in numbers. Pupils from the partner schools attend college to study for GNVQ IT units and their teachers receive training in the use of software. Difficulties in staffing and managing the provision of computing and IT courses and complaints by students about the quality of enrolment and induction processes in 1998 were identified as weaknesses in the self-assessment report. Since then staff have worked hard as a team to improve administrative procedures and the organisation of courses. For example, new multimedia, internet and programming elements have been introduced into courses. Staff hold regular meetings to discuss provision but insufficient attention is paid to a number of important issues.

11   Schemes of work are comprehensive and well structured. Most lesson plans are insufficiently detailed, a weakness not identified in the self-assessment. They fail to identify the individual learning needs of students, the learning outcomes to be achieved and the key skills which will be developed. In the best lessons, teachers establish clearly what has to be achieved and provide students with good learning materials at appropriate stages. For example, in one lesson students were provided with a range of job advertisements relating to the IT industry. They had to identify what type of role the advertisement related to and what type of experience likely applicants should have. Some students found the task difficult. The teacher worked hard to ensure that their understanding was developed. Many lessons were unimaginative and some were poorly organised. Poor punctuality often disrupted teaching and learning. For example, in an otherwise well-organised lesson on the key characteristics of good presentations using IT, late arrivals over the first 30 minutes disrupted teaching. Although some teachers provide detailed answers to examination questions and explore how marks are allocated, a high proportion of marked work lacks feedback on which key skills have been achieved and how students should improve their work. Feedback on students' work was not entered on many assessment sheets. Teachers provide good personal support to students, often in their own time. They are also developing an increasing range of learning materials and model answers

on the college intranet to support students. Course handbooks are overcomplex and poorly structured.

12   Retention and pass rates in the GCE A level computing course are unsatisfactory, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. Of the eight students who enrolled in 1996 only one gained the qualification. Students fared little better on the GCE A level IT course; of the 21 students enrolled in 1996 only six gained the qualification. Retention and achievement rates on the national diploma in IT are well above national averages at 82% and 93%, respectively. The pass rate for the first diploma in IT course shows a yearly improvement and was high in 1998 at 93%, whereas retention declined from 85% to 75% between 1997 and 1998. The small number of students studying computer literacy and information technology achieve well; of the seven students commencing the course in 1997, all completed the course and five achieved the qualification. External verifiers reports are complimentary about the vocational provision. Students are mutually supportive and work well individually and in teams. Some of the most able students provide additional IT support for their peers in other subject areas. The quality of students' projects and written work is good. In the best examples, students' responses are technically accurate, fluent, logically developed and authoritative and good use is made of integrated graphics and text in presentations. However, a substantial proportion of students' work makes little use of IT and is poorly presented.

13   Staff are appropriately qualified, and there is adequate technician support. Most of the rooms used for computing and IT are small, overcrowded and uncomfortable. Only one room contains video presentation equipment. In most lessons, teachers have to demonstrate computer software by collecting large groups around small monitors. The ratio of full-time students to networked computers in the programme area is good at 8:1. There is effective monitoring of hardware, software and internet use.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in computing and information technology, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
First diploma in IT	2	Expected completions	16	26	20
		Retention (%)	63	85	75
		Achievement (%)	78	81	93
National diploma in IT	3	Expected completions	14	*	17
		Retention (%)	64	*	82
		Achievement (%)	33	*	93
GCE A level computing	3	Expected completions	22	36	8
		Retention (%)	77	56	50
		Achievement (%)	50	47	25
GCE A level IT	3	Expected completions	*	21	21
		Retention (%)	*	48	43
		Achievement (%)	*	80	71

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)
not offered

Health, Social and Childcare

Grade 2

14   Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering health and social care, nursery nursing, and childcare and education. In most cases, inspectors agreed with the college's judgements, but they identified a few additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- much outstanding and good teaching
- good retention and achievement rates on short courses
- good integration of key skills
- work experience well used to extend students' learning
- effective response to widening participation
- equal opportunities well implemented in curriculum
- the college's core values of care well promoted by staff and students

Weaknesses

- some low and declining achievement rates

15   The standard of teaching and learning is high. Inspectors judged nine of the 11 lessons to be good or outstanding, a similar profile to that stated in the self-assessment report from college internal observations. Lessons are well planned and include a suitable range of learning activities. A group of GNVQ students were given clear tasks to address the problems of young people leaving care. Students were confident in expressing their views. Tutors are responsive to individual and group needs. The work of staff and students reflects the attitudes important to care work. Students' assignments and learning clearly reflect and integrate the core values of the college. This strength was stated in the college's self-assessment report. Equal

opportunities is effectively demonstrated in the recruitment of students and the delivery of the curriculum. Students demonstrate their awareness of equal opportunities issues in the classroom.

16   The college identified the integration of key skills development with childcare courses as a weakness. Inspectors found that action had been taken to address this. Students were aware of the importance of key skills and keen to use opportunities to develop them. Close working with an IT teacher has led to assignments containing appropriate IT tasks. For example, a GNVQ assignment guided students through producing a spreadsheet derived from their own research.

17   Work experience is an integral part of the courses and makes an effective contribution to students' learning, a strength clearly stated in the college self-assessment report. Students make useful links between the theory learnt in the classroom and the practice of the workplace. In national vocational qualification (NVQ) lessons held at a centre in the community, students used their own experience of working with children well. As part of their work placement, students identify strengths and weakness and produce action plans. Their progress is systematically monitored by the work placement supervisor.

18   The provision makes an effective response to widening participation, as stated in the self-assessment. Health and social care provide linked courses for 14 to 16 year old pupils in schools, many of whom have achieved GNVQ foundation units and succeeded in progressing to further education. First aid at work courses have been delivered to large numbers in the community with achievement rates consistently above 97%. Childcare and education staff have effectively promoted courses on parenting for people in the community. This has led to the development of the provision of NVQ level 2 in early years care and education for a group of women already working with children and

wishing to gain a qualification. The college recognised the weakness in a lack of strategy to recruit students to the childcare courses.

19 Students' work both in the classroom and the workplace is of a good standard. Achievement rates on short courses are consistently high and reached 99% in 1998. In 1997, all GNVQ foundation students gained the qualification. The achievement rate on GNVQ intermediate courses has improved and was above the national average in 1998. Achievements on some courses have declined, in some instances to very low levels. In nursery nursing and childcare and education, achievement rates have declined by 27% over the last two years. Only 40% of students achieved the GNVQ advanced qualification in 1998.

20 Courses are well resourced. Classrooms are spacious and provide a stimulating learning environment. Students' work on display reflects the college's core values. Staff bring a good balance of vocational and academic expertise to their teaching.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in health, social and childcare, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	Expected completions Retention (%) Achievement (%)	12 75 63	15 80 100	14 64 67
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	Expected completions Retention (%) Achievement (%)	21 70 35	14 86 42	16 75 75
Intermediate childcare and education	2	Expected completions Retention (%) Achievement (%)	32 * *	15 67 80	12 58 71
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	Expected completions Retention (%) Achievement (%)	15 * *	24 * *	12 83 40
Advanced childcare and education	3	Expected completions Retention (%) Achievement (%)	15 73 100	17 * *	28 68 74
Short courses	Various	Expected completions Retention (%) Achievement (%)	1,631 100 88	1,924 99 96	1,900 98 99

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)
•incomplete data

Art, Music and Media

Grade 2

21   Inspectors observed 11 lessons which covered a broad range of provision across the areas of art, design, media and performance. They agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They considered that the college had failed to recognise some strengths, and some additional areas of weakness were identified.

Key strengths

- good examples of well-planned, productive teaching
- challenging and well-devised assignments
- good standard of work and students' achievements
- students' well-developed practical skills

Weaknesses

- lack of resources
- poor retention and achievement rates in music, design technology and textiles

22   The programme area offers a range of visual and performance subjects at GCE A level and GNVQ programmes. The curriculum is well managed and staff have appropriate professional experience and expertise to teach the range of subjects in the curriculum. Students are skilfully supported in their academic and practical studies and the standard of personal care is high.

23   The quality of teaching is good. Of the 11 lessons observed, inspectors judged eight to be good or outstanding. As the self-assessment stated, lessons are well planned and include a suitable range of learning activities. Practical lessons are well organised and carefully structured. In the best lessons, the tasks set were rigorous and challenging and enabled students to develop their own ideas and

techniques. Teachers take care to encourage full participation from students in lessons. In one GCE A level fashion and textiles lesson in which the students were felt-making, the teacher encouraged feedback during the session and students were productively absorbed in practical skills and discussion. In the long theory lessons, however, teachers failed to vary the pace and content of the work sufficiently to maintain students' interest. They made little use of visual aids to stimulate students' learning. In one music demonstration lesson, which was 140 minutes long, many students lost concentration.

24   In art and design, students' practical skills in printmaking and textiles are well developed. In a GCE A level class, art students visited a local exhibition as part of the introduction to printmaking. The visit was followed by a printmaking workshop supported by a brief lecture and slide show. Teachers provide in lessons a suitable range of opportunities for students to develop critical and analytical skills. In one theatre studies lesson, students translated the principles of Brechtian theatre into an effective self-devised performance which showed a sound understanding of the underlying theory. In media studies, students' critical skills were developed through group presentations in which they explored contemporary issues. Key skills are successfully integrated with GNVQ programmes. For example, in one lesson students confidently manipulated mathematical data to complete a design project. The use of graphic design skills is less well developed. Students have few opportunities to learn design skills using specialist software and industry-based hardware. The lack of basic IT and graphic design equipment has limited the breadth of work presented in portfolios.

25   Project briefs are challenging and well devised and ensure that students are guided through the assessment process. Practical projects often reflect the core values of the college. As part of a group project, GNVQ

students produced a striking set of panels to celebrate the values and the spiritual journey of Mary Ward. Many assignments give students the opportunity to work outside the college and collaborative ventures are encouraged. Performing arts students are frequently involved in community-based projects. They took a piece of *commedia dell'arte* street theatre to the centre of Manchester, along with other students from the college and a local school.

26   The quality of students' portfolios and of their written and practical work reflects the high standards expected by their teachers. Theatre studies, art and GNVQ art and design have good examination pass rates. For example, there were 100% pass rates in GNVQ advanced courses in 1997 and 1998. The achievement and retention rates in music, design technology and textiles are lower. Inspectors agreed with the college that retention and achievement rates are a weakness in these programmes. Adaptations in curriculum content and delivery and additional guidance have been made to improve both enrolment and retention.

27   General accommodation is sufficient and fit for purpose. Performing arts has a suitable performance space and studios provide a stimulating environment. However, the location of music and media, away from the main provision, restricts links between subject areas and the sharing of resources. Music equipment is insufficient in some respects and access to rehearsal space is difficult. There is a lack of up-to-date resources and technician support to meet the needs of courses. The college recognises this weakness.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in art, music and media, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	Expected completions Retention (%) Achievement (%)	17 82 43	7 71 80	11 73 88
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	Expected completions Retention (%) Achievement (%)	11 55 100	12 67 100	12 33 100
GCE A level performing arts and GCE A level theatre studies	3	Expected completions Retention (%) Achievement (%)	32 69 91	35 49 100	33 94 87
GCE A level design and technology and GCE A level fashion/textiles	3	Expected completions Retention (%) Achievement (%)	28 68 53	25 64 75	12 58 71
GCE A level media	3	Expected completions Retention (%) Achievement (%)	14 71 89	22 82 100	13 69 100
GCE A level art	3	Expected completions Retention (%) Achievement (%)	17 82 82	16 81 100	18 78 86

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

Curriculum Areas

English and Modern Foreign Languages

Grade 2

28   The inspection covered provision in English language, English literature, French, German, Spanish and Italian. Inspectors observed 14 lessons. They agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report, but considered that some of the weaknesses were given insufficient weight. One additional weakness was identified and some weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths
- much good and outstanding teaching in modern foreign languages
- good achievements in GCE A level German, Spanish, English literature and GCSE Spanish
- many students achieving higher grades than predicted by their GCSE results
- good retention rates on many courses
- effective management of foreign languages
- good support for students throughout their courses
- good progress to higher education
- effective use of information learning technologies in languages

Weaknesses
- weaknesses in managing and monitoring English courses
- poor retention on GCSE English and GCE A level French courses
- insufficient English provision for pre-GCSE students
- some poor punctuality and attendance

29   Much of the teaching in modern foreign languages and 50% in English is good or outstanding. All teachers openly value students' views and encourage independent judgements. This accords with the assertion in the self-assessment report that students' learning experiences reflect the college's core values. Most courses and lessons are well planned. The transition of English students from GCSE to GCE A level is well managed. The best lessons are demanding and lively. For example, in a GCE A level English language lesson aimed at developing students' skills in investigating data, the teacher used an entertaining list of the names of 'real ales' to stimulate discussion. In a challenging GCSE English revision lesson on poetry, the teacher developed students' analytical skills and clearly gave them a sense of achievement. Modern language students demonstrate a high level of understanding of complex issues and the ability to discuss them fluently in the language being studied. In a GCE A level lesson, conducted entirely in German, students developed their knowledge of structures and vocabulary relating to the workplace. Less able students are skilfully taught in modern foreign languages. In the less effective lessons in English, the teaching had no spark and students were not engaged in the tasks they had been set.

30   Teachers are suitably qualified for their work and some serve as examiners for national awarding bodies. They design many of their own learning materials, which are up to date and thought provoking. In modern languages, teachers and students make excellent use of the internet as an aid to learning. Little use is made of technology in the teaching of English.

31   Modern languages provision is well managed. The management of English courses is insufficiently formalised and rigorous. Information relating to students' achievements, attendance and retention is not analysed critically enough to be useful in monitoring performance and informing planning. Meetings fail to consider in depth issues of development and progress. Despite poor GCSE results in

1996 and 1997, the department has been slow to address the development of a pre-GCSE level English course. Arrangements for standardising and moderating assessment are well established.

32   Value-added calculations based on GCSE achievements show that students of GCE A level English language, English literature and German have done better than anticipated in 1997 and 1998. During the same period results in German and Spanish GCE A levels have exceeded the national average. Over the last three years, GCSE Spanish courses had high retention and achievement rates. In 1998, all 14 students who started the course achieved grades C or above. English GCE A level pass rates remain slightly below the national average, but have been improving. For two of the last three years, GCSE results at grades C or above

have been well below the national average and the pass rate for GCE A level French was poor in 1998. Retention rates on GCE A level English and French courses fall short of national averages and, as stated in the self-assessment report, below the college's own target of 85%. For example, the retention rates for English language GCE A level were 10% below national figures in 1997 and 1998, at 69% and 66%, respectively. The self-assessment report did not sufficiently recognise weaknesses in achievements, but identified retention as a weakness. Attendance in the modern language lessons observed was high at 92%; in English lessons it was poor at 68%. In half of the English lessons observed, learning was disrupted, sometimes badly, by students arriving late, a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in English and modern foreign languages, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	**1997**	**1998**
GCSE English	2	Expected completions	135	122	130
		Retention (%)	72	85	80
		Achievement (%)	43	35	53
GCSE Spanish	2	Expected completions	10	18	14
		Retention (%)	80	78	100
		Achievement (%)	43	64	93
GCE A level languages	3	Expected completions	27	30	45
		Retention (%)	85	66	75
		Achievement (%)	86	90	76
GCE A level English	3	Expected completions	*	109	111
		Retention (%)	*	71	68
		Achievement (%)	*	86	89

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)
*incomplete data

Sociology and Psychology

Grade 1

33   Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report and found that one weakness had been addressed by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- much outstanding and good teaching
- good value-added achievements on GCE A level courses
- above average achievement rates on GCE A levels and sociology GCSE
- effective curriculum organisation and management
- excellent planning and preparation of lessons
- comprehensive high-quality resources

Weaknesses

- retention rates slightly below national average in GCE A level sociology

34   There is effective curriculum organisation and management. Teachers hold regular meetings. Minutes and action points are circulated from meetings and actions are monitored. Teams carefully analyse data on retention, attendance, achievement and value added and use these to inform the quality assurance review. The teams establish performance indicators which are relevant to the cohort of students. Good practice is identified and shared. As noted in the self-assessment report, there are well-documented policies and procedures which are shared with staff and students.

35   Much of the teaching is of high quality. Out of 11 lessons observed seven were judged to be outstanding. Lessons are well planned to give a variety of appropriate learning activities in which students can contribute to the discussion and think for themselves. For example, in a GCSE sociology lesson a mock election was used to help the students to experience the issues which occur in an election. Teachers use skilful questioning to encourage students to think and also to assess how well they have understood the work. In all lessons observed students were engaged in and enjoying learning. Teaching is lively, responsive and enthusiastic and teachers have a good relationship with students which encourages learning. As documented in the self-assessment report, teachers respond to students' needs and provide additional sessions and study support as required. Induction programmes are effective in introducing students to the course, sharing expectations and helping the students to get to know one another. Opportunities are provided for high achievers to pursue their studies further. Key skills criteria are mapped against GCE A level skills and achievement in key skills is recorded. The progress of students is carefully monitored. Surveys of students' views show that they find the methods used by teachers stimulating and challenging.

36   Students frequently demonstrate high levels of subject knowledge. Most develop skills of criticism and evaluation in both their written and oral work. In some cases, teachers' marking of students' work leaves spelling and punctuation errors uncorrected. Students are responsive and keen to contribute to discussions. They work effectively on their own, in pairs and in groups. In group work, students' presentations show evidence of good research skills. For example, in psychology, GCE A level students held a debate about whether psychology is a science, each student having researched and presented an aspect of the argument covering theoretical perspectives, philosophical issues and practical applications.

37   As identified in the self-assessment report, achievement rates are equal to or above national averages. In GCE A level sociology and psychology the pass rates are above the national average. Achievement rates in GCSE sociology have significantly improved by 37% between

1997 and 1998. Value-added analysis shows that students on GCE A level courses performed better than predicted from their GCSE scores. Retention rates for GCE A level sociology are below the national average. Teachers have implemented a monitoring system to address retention, and reasons for withdrawal are being documented.

38   Resources are of high quality. Students are supplied with appropriate texts which are supplemented by handouts, journal articles, articles from the internet and other texts. Handouts and support material are of a consistently high standard. Support materials include comprehensive handbooks and coursework guides. The library contains a good range of texts and an intranet site has been developed in both sociology and psychology. Self-study units have been developed in sociology. Audiovisual resources and IT equipment are available for students to use. Accommodation is of a good standard. It is well maintained and decorated and there are relevant subject displays which encourage students' learning. Classrooms are comfortably furnished. Staff are keen to identify areas in which they would benefit from staff development. They organise training days during which staff development needs are met

and good practice shared. Teachers have appropriate qualifications and experience and less experienced teachers are mentored. The majority of staff are examiners or moderators.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE sociology	2	Expected completions	45	26	36
		Retention (%)	71	75	81
		Achievement (%)	79	44	82
GCE A level sociology and psychology	3	Expected completions	154	178	211
		Retention (%)	79	73	75
		Achievement (%)	91	84	86

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

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 1

39   Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report. In addition, they recognised that the college is making progress in addressing the few weaknesses identified.

Key strengths

- core values applied, reinforced and promoted through student support services
- exemplary individual support for learning at every level
- effective promotional activities
- good links with Catholic secondary schools
- highly effective action to widen participation
- extensive range of enrichment activities

Weaknesses

- there are no significant weaknesses

40   The college is building on strengths identified during the last inspection. Inspectors agreed that the distinctive Catholic ethos of the college makes a major contribution to the comprehensive systems for student support. The underlying principles behind the student support services ensure that students are recognised as individuals with special needs and values. Staff and students speak proudly of, and try to live up to, the college's core values and Christian ethos. The college welcomes people of other faiths because of the richness and diversity they bring to the college and curriculum.

41   Inspectors agreed that promotional activities are a strength. Well-produced materials are circulated widely. Specific marketing activities are aimed at adult learners. A November 'taster' day enables year 11 pupils from local and distant Catholic secondary schools to sample college courses. Parents are invited to a seminar held on the same day which focuses on the support given to pupils in the change from school to college. Feedback from this event shows high levels of student and parent satisfaction.

42   The college has firm links with Catholic schools. For example, teachers give exemplar GCE A level lessons in schools and teach a range of units for GNVQ courses for school pupils. Link courses provide pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with the opportunities to sample college courses. Students progress from the link programmes to full-time college courses. Staff and students are highly effective in applying the college's core values in responding to needs identified in the community. For example, a local primary school experienced difficulties in motivating and improving the attendance of children from minority ethnic backgrounds. Black students in the college responded by pairing with the children to act as role models and mentors. This action improved school attendance and the children's attitudes to learning.

43   Pre-course guidance and induction is thorough and effective. Feedback from students shows a satisfaction rate of 99% with the guidance they receive. All students have timetabled weekly tutorials which are recognised as a strength by the college. Tutorials are well planned, regularly reviewed and action is taken for improvement. The majority of tutorials were outstanding. Tutors apply and promote the core values in tutorials. Students agreed realistic goals to improve their learning with their tutor. Achievement towards these goals is closely monitored and recorded. Key skills development, and assessment and accreditation opportunities for 'improving own learning' and 'communication' are identified within tutorial programmes. Students' progress towards achieving these units is recorded by staff and students.

Cross-college Provision

44   Purposeful, effective action is taken to widen participation. Individual support for learning at every level is outstanding. Students obtain study support as a result of diagnostic testing, tutor referral and self-referral. Structured support for learning is negotiated to address individual needs. Short-term targets are set and agreed with students. These targets relate to changing lifestyles as well as academic progress. Students' learning goals may include working towards a basic skills award or, for high achievers, projects to develop advanced skills. Achievement of the targets is rigorously monitored and recorded by learning support tutors. In this way, students with histories of challenging behaviour are supported and encouraged to pursue academic achievement and adopt improved lifestyles. Personal tutors receive regular progress reports from learning support tutors. Over 90% of students needing support regularly attend the study centre. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in their lessons and included in curricular and extra-curricular activities. For example, a signing choir includes both hearing and hearing-impaired students. In addition, high achievers are encouraged to participate in activities such as philosophy groups or the debating society. These strengths were recognised in the college's self-assessment report.

45   The chaplaincy service provides individual support for students and effectively co-ordinates assemblies and liturgies. The essential focus of the chaplaincy is to build relationships. Many staff and students actively participate in the programme of weekly assemblies. These provide important opportunities for the consideration of relevant issues. Students are encouraged to reflect on and demonstrate their own values through their behaviour. Members of the chaplaincy service regularly review their activities, identify and act on areas for improvement.

46   Personal counselling and welfare services are provided by qualified and experienced senior tutors. Careers education and guidance is good. This includes higher education advice, support in developing curricula vitae and personal statements, mock interviews and employment searches. High-achieving students shadow students at Oxford University.

47   There are extensive enrichment activities available to students. These enable students to develop a broad range of skills. The college also operates the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. This enables students to obtain accreditation for voluntary work, part-time work and specific skills development. The college celebrates all students' achievements. Achievement notes are used to record achievements and are sent to tutors. This results in the achievements being celebrated, for example, by mention in assembly, a report in the college 'Loreto Life' news sheet or at a celebration evening which is held for the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network students.

General Resources
Grade 2

48   The inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the college self-assessment report. The college report was based on a wide range of evidence collected by different teams.

Key strengths
- a safe, attractive and welcoming environment
- up-to-date IT equipment
- a well-used chapel
- improvements to the learning environment
- well-maintained social areas and public spaces
- high degree of cleanliness throughout

Cross-college Provision

49   The college offers a safe, attractive and welcoming environment for its users. The buildings on its single campus date from the 1820s to the 1970s and are set in well-kept gardens. Staff and students alike take pride in the richly-decorated mid-Victorian chapel and make good use of it both as a place of worship and as a meeting place and concert venue. The age and configuration of the buildings make them difficult to adapt, but inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that since the last inspection there have been considerable improvements. The college's managers have given priority to ensuring that health and safety requirements are met and that the demands of the curriculum are taken into account. Most classrooms are well decorated and are suitably furnished and equipped. They are grouped to reflect subject links. Many classrooms and corridors have well-organised displays which are regularly updated. The main reception area has been refurbished and is welcoming. The college's managers set demanding standards for cleanliness and all areas are tidy and free from litter and graffiti. Students with restricted mobility have no access to parts of the college, including the library and the refectory. The college makes every effort to accommodate such students, and is seeking external advice on how it might address this continuing weakness.

50   Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that there have been considerable improvements in the supply of modern computers and software since the last inspection. Students value the resource and use it heavily. The ratio of computers to students is 1:7, slightly below the college's target of 1:6. Although the majority of computers are timetabled for use by students following IT courses, any spare machines in classrooms are available on a 'drop-in' basis. There are 20 networked computers for general use in the Mary Ward study centre. There is no booking system, but it is understood that students who need to complete assignments have priority. All students have access to the internet, the use of which is rigorously monitored. There is a well-managed college intranet. It contains a rapidly increasing number of learning resources, mainly in the form of interactive web pages dealing with different subject areas. Unusual features which reflect the college's mission include a theology web page, an introduction to the internet for priests, and pages designed for teachers in the college's partner schools and the primary schools with which they are linked. As yet, not all teachers have the expertise needed to make full use of the intranet.

51   The college's library houses a wide-ranging bookstock, periodicals, CD-ROMs, video and audio resources as well as a well-used silent study area. The self-assessment report recognised the need to forge closer links between library staff and teachers and to support students in making better use of the facilities. There are insufficient CD-ROMs in some subject areas. The bookstock is going to be reshaped to reflect more clearly the many different cultures represented in the college. Students are also offered a book purchasing service.

52   The college has a spacious canteen and ample social facilities, including a common room with a television, a separate common room for adult students and a pool room. Sports facilities include a sports hall in a separate building set in extensive sports fields with tennis courts and a running track. The sports hall is in poor condition and is awaiting refurbishment. Students have the opportunity to participate in sports activities elsewhere.

Quality Assurance

Grade 1

53   Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report, but felt the college had underestimated the strengths of quality assurance. The college has made its quality assurance procedures more rigorous since the previous inspection.

Key strengths

- strong commitment to continuous improvement
- comprehensive quality assurance and self-assessment systems
- rigorous internal validation processes
- effective staff development
- well-understood charter that reflects the college mission and aims

Weaknesses

- insufficient moderation of lesson observations

54   The college first assessed its provision for the inspection of 1994-95. Subsequently self-assessment has successfully become the basis of its quality assurance framework. The quality assurance committee oversees arrangements and an annual report is presented to governors. The quality assurance framework is coherent and comprehensive and has led to measurable gains in performance in students' achievements, particularly at levels 1 and 2. There has been improvement in GCE A level results and GNVQ achievements since 1995. Retention on one-year GCE A level and attendance at GCSE courses has improved this year. There are numerous examples of teachers improving their practices as a result of sampling students' opinions.

55   As stated in the self-assessment report, the staff of the college demonstrate a strong commitment to continuous improvement.

All staff make an input into the review process, which is effective and culminates in subject self-assessment reports. Managers formulate judgements against standards and performance indicators which have been previously defined in their teams' schemes for quality assurance. Judgements about teaching have been made more rigorous by a programme of graded lesson observations. In addition to subject and programme reports, 27 contributory reports from staff in support areas were combined to produce the college's evaluation of the five areas of cross-college provision. In English the analysis of achievements is not used rigorously; outcomes from lesson observations are not used to disseminate good practice.

56   The validation procedure is rigorous. All self-assessment reports are validated by panels formed from members of the quality assurance committee, a principal of another college and three part-time FEFC inspectors. An external consultant chairs the panels. The full quality assurance committee, which includes a governor, students, staff of partner schools and a parent, validated the self-assessment report for support for students. Two subject areas were asked to resubmit their self-assessment reports after revision. In health and care the pre-moderated self-assessment more closely reflected inspection findings than the post-moderated version. The self-assessment report acknowledged that students' assessed work has been audited in all subject and programme areas, but this audit was not undertaken in time to inform the current round of self-assessment.

57   As stated in the self-assessment report, the charter reflects the college's mission and aims. It has sections for applicants, students, parents and employers. A version of the students' charter has been produced which is more accessible to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students interviewed were aware of the charter's undertakings, declared themselves well satisfied with the college's provision and could locate the charter's

commitments in their student diaries. Comments from parents indicate that they are satisfied that the college keeps them well informed about the progress of their children. The employers' charter is sent to all who offer work experience to students and employers' opinions are sampled each year. The charter is accessible, and satisfaction with the delivery of its commitments is measured annually; practice is altered when appropriate. Substantial use is made of feedback from students through questionnaires as indicated by the self-assessment report. The college has evolved good practice by making formal responses to many students' suggestions in the publication 'student view: what you think: what we plan to do about it'. The college receives very few formal complaints, which are investigated thoroughly. Students and parents are rarely unable to resolve difficulties informally.

58   There is a strong commitment to staff development. Staff development activities support the college mission and were evaluated in the self-assessment report. In each of the last five years, the staff development budget has been equivalent to 1% of staffing costs. This budget is used primarily for external events, but activity is significantly supplemented by staff development events held within the college. All staff have taken part in activities organised within the college. In-service training each summer term allows staff time to reflect on the college's mission and core values. Staff development activities are also related to strategic objectives, operational plans and quality assurance. Development has taken place in lesson observation, widening participation, inclusive learning, key skills, modularisation of courses, anti-bullying, the student code of respect, IT and the internet. Good practice is being disseminated. A mechanism appreciated by staff is the programme of 'skill share days' during which experienced staff mentor less-experienced colleagues in areas such as the internet and IT applications. There is specific training aimed at addressing weaknesses

identified in the self-assessment report. A planned induction programme for newly-appointed staff provides them with a useful introduction to the college. The self-assessment report stated that staff development requirements have been identified as a result of the recent implementation of the redesigned staff professional review programme and inspectors agreed. Professional review makes use of lesson observations carried out by line managers.

Governance

Grade 2

59   Inspectors and auditors mainly agreed with the college's assessment of governance but identified some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths
- a high level of commitment to the college
- strong role of governors in shaping the college's future
- effective financial management and control
- rigorous monitoring of college performance

Weaknesses
- a narrow evidence base to assess the effectiveness of governance
- some issues of non-compliance

60   The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. The governing body substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

61   Governors are strongly committed to the ethos of the college. They promote the core

values inherent in the mission. The governing body has 12 members, including seven foundation governors appointed by the trustees. There are currently two vacancies, for a foundation governor and a representative from the TEC. The governing body has decided not to fill the latter vacancy pending the forthcoming changes to the instrument and articles of government. One of the current parent governors is headteacher of one of the Catholic partner high schools. A systematic skills audit identified the need for a person with marketing experience. Attendance at meetings is exceptionally high, averaging in excess of 93% over the last 12 months. All these strengths were included in the self-assessment report. Arrangements to induct new governors work well. A comprehensive information pack supplements a suitable training programme. Training for the full governing body is not planned systematically. Governors attend training events organised by the college and the diocese, but there is no training programme based on a formal annual assessment of governors' training needs.

62 As stated in the self-assessment report, governors share a common sense of purpose and give a clear direction to the strategic development of the college. An example is the governors' intention to respond positively to the outcomes of a feasibility study on the future structure of post-16 Catholic education in Manchester. Formal agreements with relevant governing bodies enable the college to work in partnership with a general further education college, another Catholic sixth form college and partner high schools to promote Catholic education in Manchester after the age of compulsory schooling. The governing body is appropriately involved in the strategic planning process which is closely aligned to budget-setting. The governing body receives full reports on the college's progress towards the achievement of its strategic objectives during the year. Governors use the annual self-assessment report to evaluate thoroughly the college's

performance. It includes useful summaries and full details of enrolments, retention rates, examination results and value-added measures for a three-year period. The college's data are presented alongside benchmarking data produced by the FEFC for the sector. Based on the evaluation, the governing body sets the college's targets for enrolment, retention, attendance and achievement. This strength was included in the self-assessment report.

63 Since the last inspection, governors have developed a comprehensive set of quality characteristics and standards against which to judge their effectiveness. The quality characteristics commit governors to working relationships which reflect the core values of the college and to procedures which accord with good practice. Governors take seriously the self-assessment process but only used a narrow evidence base. Completion of a questionnaire is the main mechanism for assessing achievement of the quality standards.

64 There are four committees: finance and general purposes; audit; advisory; and remuneration. They meet regularly and have clear, recently-reviewed terms of reference. The clerking and operation of the governing body and its committees are generally effective. However, the 1998 strategic plan update and financial forecasts were approved by the chair of the finance and general purposes committee before submission to the FEFC. This contravenes the requirements of the articles of government. Subsequently, at its November 1998 meeting, the governing body ratified the plan and the forecasts. Reports from the committees are of good quality. The finance and general purposes committee is the forum for detailed consideration of the strategic plan. It meets 11 times a year and exercises a high level of financial control through a detailed review of the college's management accounts at each of its meetings. Whilst the audit committee has largely operated effectively, it has failed to advise the governing body of the overall opinion

on the college's internal control system contained within the 1996-97 and 1997-98 annual internal audit reports. There are no standing orders to determine the conduct of governing body and committee meetings. These weaknesses were not included in the self-assessment report.

65   The governing body conducts its business openly. Recourse to confidential items in reports and minutes is minimal. Governors have adopted a code of conduct which enshrines some of the college's core values. The code has not been updated to bring it into line with recommendations of the Nolan committee. Declarations of interest have been completed by all governors and members of the senior management team. However, only financial interests have been declared and the declarations do not extend to partners, spouses and close relatives. Governing body agendas, minutes and papers are open to public scrutiny. The governing body is awaiting guidance from the Catholic Education Service before it approves a 'whistleblowing' policy.

Management

Grade 1

66   Inspectors agreed with the college's conclusions, but judged the college had underestimated the strengths of management. The self-assessment report contained clear judgements and actions to remedy identified weaknesses. Some progress in rectifying these weaknesses was evident by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths
- strong leadership
- open and honest communication at all levels
- extensive involvement of staff in strategic and operational planning

- thorough checks on progress in meeting college-wide goals and targets
- good financial management
- excellent links with a wide range of external bodies

Weaknesses
- a lack of detail in operating plans for many subject areas

67   Senior managers effectively demonstrate a whole-hearted commitment to the college's core values. These qualities of leadership were highlighted in the self-assessment report. Staff welcome the open, responsive and supportive style of management. The promotion of equality of opportunity and an emphasis on teamwork enable everybody to play their part in responding to the college's mission. The management structure successfully ensures co-ordination between the curriculum and arrangements for student support. The curriculum committee includes members of the senior management team, senior tutors and curriculum leaders. Its remit is to advise on, monitor and review the curriculum development of the college. Other cross-college groups enable people from different teams to work together on common issues.

68   Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that communications are effective. As well as strong informal links, staff meet regularly. Half-termly meetings of the principal's forum provide opportunities for staff to express their ideas and views directly to her. Points arising are followed up systematically. The staff handbook provides details of college systems, structures, policies and procedures and is updated annually. Weekly briefings keep staff up to date with current issues.

69   As the self-assessment report acknowledged, a systematic strategic and operational planning process enables managers and staff at all levels to influence the future

direction of the college. Annually, a training day is set aside for staff to reconsider the implications of the mission, and to receive information about relevant local and national developments. During the day, team leaders create their own planning documents which, later, are incorporated into first drafts of the college's strategic plan and annual operating statement. After further consultation with staff, the final drafts are considered by the governing body. Inspectors agreed with the college's view that staff are well aware of the college's goals and targets for the three-year period ending in 2000.

70   Managers take seriously their responsibility to keep teaching and learning under constant review. Curriculum planning is well informed by data gathered from partner high schools. For example, GCE A level Italian was included in the college's portfolio of courses in response to the needs of pupils in a local school. According to a detailed timetable, the curriculum committee monitors closely the extent to which the college is on course to achieve objectives included in the annual operating statement. Timely and accurate data from the management information system help to inform these monitoring processes. Analysis of students' examination results, retention and attendance rates have resulted in successful measures to raise attainment. These strengths were included in the self-assessment report. Such thorough monitoring is not the case, however, in many subject areas where the operating statements and plans are insufficiently detailed.

71   The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The finance team is appropriately structured, qualified and experienced. Detailed management accounts are produced every month and reviewed in meetings of the senior management team. The college has set financial objectives and targets but, at the time of inspection, had not assessed the extent to which these targets are being met. Management accounts and budget monitoring reports are clear and easy to use. Over the last five years, the college has managed successfully a substantial reduction in its average level of funding per unit. It fell from £30.88 per unit in 1993-94 to £18.71 per unit in 1998-99. Recent financial forecasts reiterate the college's commitment to reduce its dependence on funding from the FEFC. To this end, an enterprise unit was established in September 1997. In line with the action plan drawn up to remedy weaknesses identified in the self-assessment process, the unit now has a clear management structure but it still lacks a detailed operating plan. The unit has had little success in raising income by other means. Reductions in staffing costs are planned but not yet finalised. The college's financial regulations have not been revised since January 1997 and are not in line with recognised good practice. Reports from internal and external auditors do not indicate any significant weaknesses in the college's systems of internal controls.

72   The richness and variety of links between the college, its local community and other educational institutions in the locality were strengths noted in the self-assessment report. The college works closely with Manchester Catholic Education Partnership to raise the aspirations and achievements of pupils in partner high schools and to encourage progression to Catholic sixth form colleges. For example, currently, the college is working with nine schools to enable students in their last two years of compulsory schooling to take units of GNVQ courses. Through its membership of many other partnerships, the college plays an active role in shaping the strategic direction of post-16 education in the area, and in working productively with local communities.

Cross-college Provision

Conclusions

73   Inspectors found the college's self-assessment report detailed and informative and an excellent basis for planning the inspection. The report focuses directly on students' experiences at the college. All areas have produced an action plan. Most actions are specific and useful, and timescales and those with responsibility for action are clearly referenced. Inspectors generally agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report, although some weaknesses recognised by inspectors had not been identified. Some strengths and weaknesses included in the report were not considered to be significant by inspectors. Many weaknesses which had been acknowledged had been addressed or were in the process of being addressed by the time of the inspection.

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

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (March 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	94
19-24 years	5
25+ years	1
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (March 1999)

Level of study	%
Foundation	2
Intermediate	14
Advanced	84
Higher education	0
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	0
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	210	4	23
Agriculture	8	0	1
Construction	3	0	0
Business	48	0	5
Hotel and catering	29	0	3
Health and community care	68	12	9
Art and design	59	1	7
Humanities	460	7	51
Basic education	5	0	1
Total	890	24	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 41% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (March 1999)

	Perm-anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	44	7	1	52
Supporting direct learning contact	9	1	1	11
Other support	20	4	0	24
Total	73	12	2	87

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£3,256,000	£3,232,000	£3,204,000
Average level of funding (ALF) Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£21.94	£20.52	£19.97
Payroll as a proportion of income	74%	76%	70%
Achievement of funding target	117%	121%	103%
Diversity of income	10%	12%	17%
Operating surplus	£70,000	-£72,000	£179,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)
ALF – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998)
Payroll – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)
Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), college (1998)
Diversity of income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)
Operating surplus – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1995	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
1	Expected completions	50	313	217	11	18	7
	Retention (%)	74	86	84	82	94	100
	Achievement (%)	41	83	88	33	67	100
2	Expected completions	511	651	476	48	43	18
	Retention (%)	81	75	83	85	93	78
	Achievement (%)	75	80	85	38	82	55
3	Expected completions	n/a	1,109	1,332	n/a	67	70
	Retention (%)	n/a	83	75	n/a	76	53
	Achievement (%)	74	79	79	53	63	65
4 or 5	Expected completions	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Retention (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Short courses	Expected completions	9	131	235	58	1,556	1,786
	Retention (%)	100	100	93	100	100	100
	Achievement (%)	78	86	84	79	98	98
Unknown/ unclassified	Expected completions	0	0	73	0	0	2
	Retention (%)	n/a	n/a	82	n/a	n/a	100
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	50	n/a	n/a	100

Source: ISR
n/a not applicable

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