

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

---

# **Luton Sixth Form College**

**July 1994**

---

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

---

## **THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL**

*The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a statutory duty to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements to assess the quality of provision in the further education sector. It discharges the duty in part through its inspectorate, which inspects and reports on each college in the sector every four years. The Council's inspectorate also assesses and reports on a national basis on specific curriculum areas and advises the Council's quality assessment committee.*

*College inspections involve both full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have specialist knowledge and experience in the areas they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member from outside the world of education and a nominated member of staff from the college being inspected.*

### **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

*The procedures for assessing quality are described in the Council Circular 93/28. In the course of inspecting colleges, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also summarise their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses using a five-point scale. 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.*

*Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT  
Telephone 0203 863000  
Fax 0203 863100*

---

# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 57/94

## LUTON SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

### EASTERN REGION

Inspected September 1993 – April 1994

#### Summary

Luton Sixth Form College is one of three colleges in the further education sector in south Bedfordshire. It offers an extensive range of courses at GCE AS and A level and a one-year foundation course which integrates GCSE with vocational elements. This provision has been supplemented by some vocational courses and opportunities for adults to study during the day and evening. The college is a successful institution which is responsive to the multi-ethnic community it serves. It is well governed and effectively managed. There is a strong commitment to the support and care of individual students. Students achieve good results in external examinations reflecting the high quality of teaching and learning. Achievements in the faculty of mathematics, science and technology are consistently good. A notable strength of the provision is the development of accessible and well-equipped resource bases for each subject area, which have succeeded in fostering an independent approach to learning. Students' learning is supported by well-qualified staff and by good equipment, particularly in information technology. The different strands of the student services faculty are not yet sufficiently integrated to ensure consistent support for all students. Although there is a well-defined programme for evaluating the work of the college, the criteria used for monitoring are not clearly defined and this limits the effectiveness of the evaluation process. The college lacks a staff-development plan linked to college objectives, and it has yet to develop a marketing strategy which fully matches the aims of the strategic plan.

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

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Mathematics	2	Art, performing arts	
Sciences	2	& media studies	2
Computer studies & design technology	2	Humanities	3
		Social sciences	2
Economics & business studies	2	English, communication & psychology	2
		Modern languages	2

---

---

# CONTENTS

	<b>Paragraph</b>
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	3
Responsiveness and range of provision	9
Governance and management	20
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	30
Teaching and the promotion of learning	42
Students' achievements	51
Quality assurance	60
Resources	69
Conclusions and issues	80
Figures	

---

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

1 Luton Sixth Form College, Bedfordshire, was inspected between September 1993 and April 1994. A team of nine inspectors spent a week in the college from 18-22 April 1994. A further 37 days were used to inspect specialist aspects of college provision. Inspectors visited 176 classes, examined samples of students' work and held discussions with governors, staff and students. They also meet representatives of local employers, schools and the community.

2 The inspection was carried out according to the framework and guidelines described in the Council Circular 93/28. The framework describes a four-year inspection cycle. When this cycle becomes fully established, colleges will have the opportunity to respond to the findings of earlier inspection visits before their quadrennial inspection and the subsequent published report. As the inspection of Luton Sixth Form College occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response was not available.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

3 Luton Sixth Form College, opened in 1966, was the first sixth form college in the country. The college is situated on a single site in a residential area of Luton, occupying buildings formerly those of a boys' school founded in 1938. It is one of three further education colleges in south Bedfordshire, the others being Barnfield College and Dunstable College. The University of Luton is located some two miles away.

4 The 1991 census records the population of Luton as 171,671, a figure which is expected to grow by nearly 3 per cent by the year 2001. The population of Bedfordshire as a whole, 524,105 in 1991, is forecast to increase more quickly, by about 8 per cent over the same period. The number of 15-19 year olds in Bedfordshire is recovering from the decline of the 1980s and is now expected to rise more rapidly than in the rest of the country. Ethnic minority groups represent almost 20 per cent of the resident population of Luton, 13 per cent originating from the Indian sub-continent and 5 per cent African or Caribbean. The pattern of employment in Luton differs from that in the rest of Bedfordshire. It is largely associated with manufacturing, mainly concentrated on the automobile industry. Unemployment is higher in Luton than in the rest of the county. In January 1994, the unemployment rate was 12.9 per cent compared with an average of 9.8 per cent for Bedfordshire.

5 The college provides further education for young people from the 11 high schools in Luton. With the exception of one voluntary controlled school these are 11-16 schools with no sixth form provision. The college also attracts some pupils who transfer from state and private schools in the rest of the county and in adjacent counties. The percentage of students staying on in full-time education in Luton has increased from 48 per cent in 1990 to 69 per cent in the current year. The level of participation remains lower than for the county as a whole, which has a staying-on rate

---

of 74 per cent. In 1993, 40 per cent of final year pupils from Luton high schools subsequently enrolled at the college.

6 In November 1993 the college had 1,882 students on roll. Of these, 1,583 were full-time and 299 part-time. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. The college achieved a 7 per cent growth in full-time equivalent enrolments compared with the previous year. This includes a significant increase in part-time students. Further growth is planned, particularly in part-time provision which the college anticipates will make up at least 5 per cent of full-time equivalent numbers by 1996.

7 The college has a full-time equivalent staff of 167. A profile of the teaching and support staff is shown in figure 3. The curriculum is managed through 19 subject-based departments grouped into three teaching faculties: arts and communication; humanities and business studies; and mathematics, science and technology. A fourth faculty has responsibility for student services.

8 The college aims to expand its provision whilst continuing to develop as a centre of excellence, not only for the 16-19 age group, but also for the wider community. It aims to promote the overall development of its students through a strong system of personal guidance; to maintain and develop links across all sectors of education, with industry and with other groups and organisations; and to respond flexibly to change in the interests of students and the wider community. There is a policy of open access to all curriculum areas.

#### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

9 The college's primary role is to provide full-time courses for school leavers in Luton and the surrounding area. More than 95 per cent of its provision is aimed at 16-19 year olds. The college has no academic requirements for entry; places are offered to all students who are supported by school references and for whom the college can provide an appropriate course. In accordance with the college's strategic aims there has been a recent extension of provision to cater for adults wishing to study during the day and in the evenings.

10 At the time of the inspection, about 1,150 students were studying General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and advanced supplementary (AS) courses, 89 were taking advanced General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) or Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma courses, and 282 students were taking a one-year foundation course. In addition, there were 22 adult students on the one-year full-time access to higher education course franchised from Luton University and a further 126 adults attending one-year GCE A level courses part-time. Full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 4.

11 There is an extensive range of 38 GCE A level and 18 GCE AS subjects. The number of subjects offered is being increased from September 1994.

---

The college has strong provision in science and a comprehensive range of courses in performing arts. The college also provides vocational courses in sciences, business and performing arts. The number and range of vocational courses will be increased next year with the introduction of more GNVQ courses at all three levels.

12 The one-year college foundation programme is carefully structured to enable students to combine General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or Royal Society of Arts (RSA) qualifications with the City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI) diploma of vocational education. Students can choose from more than 30 subjects and study up to five at GCSE, or take RSA subjects in one of seven vocational groups.

13 Religious studies is available as an examination course at both GCSE and GCE A level: eight students take the subject at GCE A level and 10 at GCSE level. There are also facilities for students belonging to different faiths to meet weekly for religious observance. However, the college does not provide a weekly act of collective worship, and although there have been no requests from students, parents or staff for it to do so, the college, consequently, fails to satisfy the requirements of the Further and Higher Education Act, 1992.

14 There are close links between teaching staff in the college and in local schools. The Luton Curriculum Network has been established, in partnership with the local high schools, to encourage curriculum development in the schools. There are presently groups in science, mathematics, technology, and English, and there are plans to set up additional groups for information technology and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The meetings between school and college staff have helped to support students' progress from school to college.

15 The programme to promote college courses is well organised. It focuses mainly on the Luton high schools from which the college draws 84 per cent of its intake. There is a well-produced prospectus and other advertising is carefully targeted. As yet, the present marketing strategy does not fully match the college's aims to increase the recruitment of adults and widen the provision of courses for industry.

16 A federation of colleges has been created by the four post-16 providers in south Bedfordshire. Its purpose is to formalise relationships and to enable more effective co-operation in achieving the national targets for education and training. Links with the University of Luton have led to the college teaching some university science degree modules and the franchised access to higher education course. A high proportion of college students progresses to courses at the university. The college provides support for students on teaching practice through its links with a school-based consortium which organises teaching training.

17 There is a good range of links with industry and business to support both the curriculum and staff development. Members of local companies actively support the college by providing work placement for students.

---

Vauxhall Motors provided substantial financial support for the development of resource bases. A business links co-ordinator arranges an extensive programme of visits, speakers, projects, and work experience placements for staff. Links with the local training and enterprise council are developing. The council has provided some assistance for college development activities, including a European work experience project through which foreign language students were placed with a major motor manufacturer in Spain. Students also have opportunities for work experience in France and Germany.

18 The college recognises the importance of liaison with the local community. A community liaison group was re-established following incorporation. The group serves as a forum for the exchange of information and contributes to the monitoring of equal opportunities. The college attracts 40 per cent of its students from ethnic minority backgrounds, a higher proportion than is represented in the population as a whole. The college is multicultural in its social and curricular provision.

19 Well-established equal opportunity policies are monitored by the faculty directors. Some good initiatives have been taken including the introduction of a history GCE A level course which is not based entirely on European history. The policies have had an impact on curricula and on procedures for the appointment of staff. Nethertheless, there are few staff from ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly at management level.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

20 The college's mission and strategic plan are well defined and understood by college staff and governors. The governors are effectively involved with the college through their supportive relationships with the principal and management team, and more widely through attendance at college events.

21 The corporation has 17 members. The independent governors represent a range of local business and community interests. Education interests are well represented by members from higher education, further education and the school sector. The corporation has sought governors representing the substantial ethnic minority interests within the local community. So far it has secured the appointment of one governor from an ethnic minority group.

22 The corporation has a comprehensive committee structure to handle its business. The committees meet regularly and are well attended. Good use is made of the expertise and experience of governors. A distinctive and positive feature of the committee structure is the existence of a review committee whose remit is to review the effectiveness of the corporation in achieving its objectives in the context of the strategic plan. The practice of linking individual governors with one of the four faculties enables those governors with specific interests to work supportively with college staff. Governors also work closely with college managers through their involvement in the property, and health and safety committees.



---

23 The 1993-95 strategic plan and the operating statements for the current year were developed by the college management team and presented to the corporation. There is a clear and carefully-prioritised agenda for the development of the college. The strategic plan has been effectively used within the college as a framework to shape and co-ordinate developments. The 1994-96 strategic planning cycle is informed by the results of faculty and college review processes, although the college has not yet defined criteria for monitoring and reviewing all areas of its performance.

24 The principal provides highly effective and well-respected leadership. His clear guidance and participative management style have led to the achievement of a significant number of initiatives. These include a new management structure, the introduction of resource bases for learning, an enhanced curriculum and the growth in student numbers. The college has benefited from a careful and considered approach to the transition from local authority control to independence within the further education sector. Staff have been effectively consulted and involved in this process.

25 The present management structure has been in operation since January 1993 and is well understood by staff. The principal is supported by a vice principal, an assistant principal and five directors. This group forms the college management team and effectively represents all aspects of the college. Three of the five directors are each responsible for a teaching faculty, one for student services and the fifth for resource management. The management team meets fortnightly to consider overall strategy and college developments.

26 The teaching faculties are working well. Each faculty has developed its own identity, distinctive management structure and style of working. The faculty management teams comprising the director and heads of department, ensure efficient and effective co-ordination of the faculties' work. The departments and teams work productively to deliver and monitor the college curricula. A strength of the college is that staff are constantly developing their provision to provide better learning opportunities for students.

27 In 1992-93, the college's unit of funding, as recorded in the FEFC report, *Funding Allocations 1993-94*, was £2,961 per weighted full-time equivalent student. The median for sixth form colleges was £2,647. Summaries of the college's income and expenditure for 1993-94 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

28 Financial allocations are controlled largely by senior managers. The principles underlying the allocation and distribution of monies are clear and well understood. Regular monthly financial reports on income and expenditure are made to the corporation and senior managers. However, unit costs and the balance sheet position are not routinely analysed. Currently, a very small proportion of the budget is devolved to faculties and departments. Plans are established to extend this.

---

29 A number of different systems are used to record and analyse the information required by the college. Information on enrolment is routinely reported to the corporation and college managers receive reports on enrolment, retention, examination results, value added measures of student achievement and student destination. However, the college has recognised that more work is required to analyse and agree its information needs before making further investment in computerised management information systems. The college is taking part in the FEFC trial of the proposed individual student record.

### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

30 The excellent relationships between staff and students help to create a caring and supportive learning environment. Personal tutors, senior tutors and careers staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to supporting individual students. Responsibility for students' recruitment, guidance and support is located in the faculty of student services; the director of the faculty is the college admissions co-ordinator. The faculty has recently been re-organised to ensure more effective management and co-ordination of the different services it provides. The overall strategy is now in place although it is just starting to be implemented.

31 The close links with local schools involve good contacts with careers tutors and language support and special needs co-ordinators. The inclusion of former pupils from the schools in liaison visits is particularly valuable. Prospective students have the opportunity to visit the college on open evenings in November. They value these visits as informative and helpful.

32 The procedures for entry are documented effectively and there are well-defined criteria for admission. All applicants for full-time courses are interviewed to ensure that they are placed on appropriate courses. A useful further opportunity to consider course and subject choice is provided during the induction week in July. College staff are also available in September to offer guidance prior to enrolment.

33 The main focus of guidance is on 16-19 year old students. The college has not yet fully established a system of tutorial support for adults returning to study.

34 Students receive a good general introduction to the college. Individual subjects have their own additional induction programmes which students appreciate as providing an effective start to their college courses. There are clear procedures for students considering a change of course and all changes are carefully discussed and documented. The reasons for course change are also monitored.

35 All full-time students are members of a tutorial group which they attend for daily registration and a weekly tutorial period. Tutors effectively monitor the progress and welfare of the students and refer them to senior tutors for more detailed advice and guidance. There are a number of administrative tasks which are undertaken in the weekly tutorial period

---

during the college year but there is no other clear guidance on its purpose. In consequence, the activities pursued during the tutorial period are often unfocused and ineffective. The tutorial arrangements are currently under review by the student services faculty.

36 The college provides extra help for students who have language difficulties. Comprehensive arrangements exist to assess the language needs of ethnic minority students through links with the local high schools. However the needs of all students are not yet systematically addressed. Diagnostic assessment of language needs is being developed but is not yet established.

37 All students who are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or medical problems, are interviewed to determine their support needs and preferences. There is good liaison between the college disability and learning support co-ordinator, partner schools and appropriate agencies. However, teaching staff do not receive sufficient information to enable them to adjust their teaching to meet these students' needs.

38 The college counsellor has a well-established and valued role within the college and the service is extensively used by students on a self referral basis or through referral by senior tutors. Support is also available for family members of those students who are receiving counselling. There are many links with outside agencies and the counsellor is an effective intermediary or point of contact with these.

39 Attendance is closely monitored by both subject staff and personal tutors and there are effective procedures for following up unexplained absences. The college is piloting a 'swipe card', electronic registration system for all classes.

40 The college has close contacts with parents through regular consultation evenings to which students are also invited. Parents are encouraged to approach tutors or senior tutors if they have any worries. They express appreciation of the concern shown by college staff. The system of issuing traditional reports to parents is being phased out and replaced by profiles and records of achievement which involve students in assessing their own learning and progress.

41 All students have a careers tutor and individual careers advice is widely available. There is a programme of compulsory careers education but little systematic evaluation of its effectiveness. The relationship between the internal college careers team and Bedfordshire Guidance Services is good but there is insufficient joint planning to ensure the most effective use of the expertise available.

#### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

42 The teaching is of a high standard. Sixty-three per cent of the lessons inspected exhibited more strengths than weaknesses. In communication, geology, and government and politics there were many strengths and few weaknesses. There was very effective teaching in the GCSE integrated

---

programme and in the social care modules for the diploma of vocational education. The following table summarises the assessment grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

**Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE A level		18	52	37	5	0	112
AS		3	3	3	0	0	9
GNVQ		1	4	1	0	0	6
BTEC		1	1	1	0	0	3
NVQ		0	0	0	0	0	0
GCSE		5	10	10	2	0	27
Other		6	8	4	1	0	19
<b>Total</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>176</b>

43 The majority of lessons were well structured and had clear learning objectives. Some departments had devised comprehensive student handbooks which gave useful guidance on content, teaching methods, resources and assessment. These ensured that students were fully aware of the demands of the course.

44 A wide range of teaching and learning strategies was employed including exposition to the whole class, small group activities and individual work. The best teaching was enthusiastic, dynamic, inventive and well matched to students' abilities. Teachers involved students in activities which made them think and learn. In communication, for example, activities were carefully organised to help develop students' oral and written skills. In government and politics, the concepts being studied were linked effectively to current political issues through the use of case studies. In science, students clarified their own thinking and gained knowledge and understanding through presenting their research findings.

45 In a minority of classes, the range of teaching and learning activities was narrow: there was an over-reliance on the formal presentation of information; students were not questioned sufficiently; or the tasks set did not enable class members to share key learning points or the teacher to check their levels of understanding.

46 The use of resource bases in each of the curriculum areas is a particular strength of the college. The bases are attractive and well equipped and their easy accessibility encourages teachers to link classroom activities with what students are doing, working on their own in the bases. The development of the bases has also promoted the creation of well-structured and varied learning activities which extend students' capacities to work independently. The resource bases are well used by students both in class time and for independent work and the support staff in the bases are skilful in helping students to organise themselves. In English literature

---

and language, students worked both in the classroom and resource base when drafting and revising projects or coursework and the resulting work was of a high standard and attractively presented.

47 Assignments and projects were generally well designed. They were of an appropriate standard, testing both knowledge and skills. Students responded with enthusiasm to imaginatively-designed GNVQ business studies advanced level assignments. In science, assessed practical tests were well managed and students were made clearly aware of the basis of the assessment. Research skills were developed in computer studies and design technology through projects that required investigation, analysis and synthesis.

48 There is a college-wide strategy for ensuring that all students have opportunities to develop skills in information technology. First-year GCE A level students have an information technology course in the first term which is integrated with their subject studies. All subject areas support the development of information technology skills through at least one assignment. Other core and study skills are less systematically addressed at GCE A level and, in general, the guidance given to students on study skills varies considerably between subjects and courses.

49 Students' progress is routinely and closely monitored. Many students receive additional subject guidance on an individual basis. Homework is marked conscientiously and returned promptly. Teachers' comments are generally informative. In a minority of cases, there is insufficient advice on what students should do to improve the standard of their work.

50 Students have many opportunities to broaden their learning through the college's extensive provision of field trips, theatre visits, poetry readings, language exchanges and work experience. A good range of performance venues, including visits to Denmark, Sweden and the Czech Republic is offered to creative and performing arts students. A mathematics masterclass is organised in conjunction with local schools. College students participate in the Engineering Education Scheme sponsored by major national companies.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

51 Students are disciplined in their approach to work and responsive to their teaching. Many display high levels of motivation, concentration and enthusiasm and are able to discuss their work with knowledge and confidence. They work well, both independently and under supervision.

52 Most students are developing the knowledge and skills appropriate to their levels of study. High standards are achieved in performing arts; most performances are disciplined and dance is inventive. Modern language students acquire an impressive level of confidence in using spoken language as well as achieving high standards in their written work. In government and politics, effective presentational skills are developed through the use of classroom debates and varied group work. A high level

---

of skill in keyboarding and word processing is evident in office and business skills lessons. Standards of coursework and project work are generally high throughout the college.

53 In 1993, the national average pass rates for sixth form colleges at GCE A level and AS were 80 per cent and 72 per cent, respectively. The college's results were well above these figures, as shown in the following table:

**GCE AS/A level results 1991-93: numbers entered and average pass rate**

YEAR	1991		1992		1993	
	Entered	% pass	Entered	% pass	Entered	% pass
<b>GCE A level</b>	1,237	85	1,258	81	1362	84
<b>AS</b>	168	87	141	75	207	85

54 In the faculty of mathematics, science and technology, GCE A level results are impressive. The percentage of students achieving the higher grades, A – C, is significantly above the national average for sixth form colleges. Mathematics results are consistently good: in 1993, the pass rate was 86 per cent; 70 per cent of entrants gained grades A to C compared with a national average of 50 per cent, and all students taking further mathematics were successful. In physics and electronics, half of the students gained passes at the higher grades. In geology, the pass rate was 87 per cent and 72 per cent gained grades A to C. In design technology all students passed and 68 per cent gained the higher grades.

55 Exceptionally good results were also achieved in theatre studies, performing arts and English at GCE AS and A level, and in government and politics, physical education and religious studies at GCE A level. In contrast to previous years, the 1993 results in GCE A level sociology were weak. Only 47 per cent of students following the course were successful. However, 87 per cent of students passed GCE AS sociology, 57 per cent at the higher grades of A to C.

56 The college has analysed its GCE A level examination results in relation to students' GCSE results over a four year period and now participates in a national GCE A level information system. The analysis shows that in the majority of subjects, students' results at GCE A level are at least as good as would be predicted from GCSE scores. In a significant number of subjects, results are better than would be predicted.

57 Students on the college one-year foundation programme were generally successful in the courses which they followed: 52 per cent progressed to GCE A level or GNVQ courses at the college and a further 32 per cent began an advanced or vocational course elsewhere. In GCSE examinations, 1991-93, the average percentage pass rate, grades A - C, was 52 per cent. In 1993, the percentage was 48 per cent compared with

---

the national average of 50 per cent for sixth form colleges nationally. Royal Society of Arts results between 1991 and 1993 showed a pass rate of 65 percent and the Pitman's results in 1993 reached over 99 per cent. Twenty-nine students gained the diploma of vocational education in 1993.

58 The college has a high completion rate on all its courses. In 1993, average retention rates on full-time GCE A level courses were more than 90 per cent.

59 Destination statistics are well documented and analysed. A high proportion of students go on to further study or full-time employment. Of those completing their two-year courses in 1993, 64 per cent entered higher education.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

60 The college is committed to the raising of standards, through a process of continuous monitoring and evaluation. The annual programme of subject and course review is well defined and there are clear reporting deadlines. There are also procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of the central support services. Governors are actively involved in evaluation through the corporation review committee which receives annual review reports. The process itself is evaluated by a college working party. This has resulted in some modifications and improvement to the overall system of quality control.

61 The current review process is well informed by performance indicators of student achievement. There is monthly monitoring of student withdrawals from subjects and courses. Examination results are closely monitored by management and by each teaching faculty. Where results are unsatisfactory, reasons are sought. A number of changes have been made to enhance the quality of learning and improve examination results. These include changes in syllabus to find a course more suited to the needs of students at the college. For example the GCE A level music syllabus has been changed after careful consideration of teaching style, methodology and the best use of the new music technology resources.

62 Analysis of examination results includes measures of the value added to students' qualifications on entry when compared with their achievements at college. There is also monitoring of student performance in relation to gender and ethnicity, which has led to important changes in teaching methods and the provision of student support. For example, the department of economics and business studies is implementing a revised policy of referral to language support tutors as a result of a comparative evaluation of the grades achieved at GCE A level by students from different ethnic backgrounds.

63 The monitoring process has not yet developed explicit criteria for assessing the quality of teaching and learning or the use of common evaluation methods. Very few reports attempt to measure progress in relation to targets in the college or departmental strategic plans and only a minority of reports contain clearly identified points for improvement and

---

action. Members of the college management team have recognised the need to specify more explicit evaluation criteria. There is an expectation that revised review methods will evolve as a result of critical reflection on the existing process of review.

64 The gathering of information from students, parents, carers and staff, through the use of questionnaires, has led to significant quality improvements. For example, a revised procedure for enrolment and initial guidance was introduced as a result of an extensive analysis of student and staff perceptions. However, questionnaires and other mechanisms for obtaining feedback are not routinely used as part of the evaluation of teaching and learning. Methods for surveying students' perceptions of their courses have been piloted by some departments but are not standard across the college.

65 There is strong institutional support for the professional development of college staff. A full programme of in-house and external staff development events is co-ordinated by the staff development officer. The college has made a commitment to achieving the Investors in People kitemark by 1995 and is reviewing its staff development policy and practice in the light of this quality standard and the experience from its pilot staff appraisal system.

66 A well-established and positive feature of professional development is the provision of regular industrial placements. A range of commercial placements is organised through the business links co-ordinator. Staff from all departments speak highly of the opportunities provided through the placement system for updating their specialist experience.

67 Although staff are involved in a wide range of activities to support their own professional and curriculum development, there is no systematic planning of staff development at either college or faculty level. Priorities for supporting different types of development activity have not been agreed and staff development needs are not routinely assessed against clear criteria.

68 The college has developed a draft college charter in line with the national Charter for Further Education. At present, it is developing a standard learner agreement and disciplinary and grievance procedures.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

69 The staff are well qualified for the teaching they undertake. A third of the teaching staff have public examination or awarding body experience which is regularly shared within their departments. About a quarter are late entrants to the teaching profession and many of them have relevant industrial or commercial experience which has brought considerable benefit to the delivery of the curriculum. The four staff who do not have a formal teaching qualification are receiving college support to achieve certification.



---

70 The college is making increasingly efficient and effective use of its staff. The student-staff ratio has increased over the past two years. The college is progressively raising the proportion of part-time teaching staff and this is improving the college's flexibility in responding to the needs of students, including its capacity to offer evening classes. The strategy for course team leaders to manage the increasing number of part-time staff has yet to be developed.

71 The support and administrative staff are closely integrated into the work of the college. The commitment and support from library and student services staff for both students and teachers are particularly notable. However, there are some instances where support for the production of teaching materials is inadequate.

72 All college staff undertake a formal and comprehensive induction procedure under the guidance of a nominated supporter. In particular, the programme ensures that the staff understand the issues involved in a college which has a large proportion of ethnic minority students. All staff are aware of and employ the services of the college's language support team.

#### **Equipment/learning resources**

73 The work of students and staff is supported by a good range of equipment and materials in most areas. Examples of good practice are the language laboratory, the wide range of specialist equipment in technology and the variety of audio-visual aids in business studies. Some equipment for English and media studies is out of date.

74 There are very well-equipped resource bases in all departments. Most centres have access to the college's open learning and information network consisting of some 130 computers. The layout of the resource bases encourages flexible approaches to study including individual work, small group discussion and research activities. The use of the centres is routinely monitored. Usage by both staff and students is high.

75 The attractive and well-staffed library has an adequate bookstock. It also contains other media including a wide range of information technology and video equipment. The accommodation is perceived by students to be somewhat crowded and there are well advanced plans to increase its area and to include more resources. There is some co-operation between the library and the resource centres. Further clarification of their relationship would ensure the more efficient use of resources.

#### **Accommodation**

76 The college is housed in a range of buildings which date from the 1930s to the 1980s, including some temporary accommodation. It is set within playing fields and open spaces. The newer buildings have been developed sensitively, in a way which maintains the integrity of the older style architecture. The accommodation includes a sports hall, a large hall

---

with theatre facilities and a small gymnasium. Only one room on the site remains inaccessible to those who use wheel chairs.

77 A continuing programme of maintenance and modification has taken place over the last three years to provide teaching accommodation which is appropriate for all departments and creates a good environment for learning. The programme has included the provision of resource centres for all departments. In the cases of mathematics and information technology, these have been created by imaginative use of former corridor space.

78 Most departmental accommodation is grouped together, although some subjects have to make use of dispersed temporary classrooms. Rooms are heavily used during teaching time. Consideration is being given to the introduction of an extended teaching week which might enable the old temporary accommodation to be taken out of use.

79 There is a large and well used split-level student common room. It is light, airy and adequately furnished and leads out to a grassed area provided with picnic tables. Snack facilities and vending machines are located in the common room area.

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

80 The college is a successful multicultural institution. It offers extensive opportunities to students through its broad and well-established curriculum provision. The college has many strengths:

- a strong commitment to the care and support of students and a curriculum which is well matched to individual needs
- well-planned, effective teaching and learning which include imaginative use of resource bases
- a high level of student achievement and successful progress to further and higher education or to employment
- strong liaison and effective co-operation with local schools
- good links with business, industry and the local community
- well-qualified and committed teaching and support staff
- an involved and supportive governing body
- effective leadership and a participative style of management
- a well-defined programme for evaluating the work of the college, which actively involves governors
- good levels of equipment to support learning including extensive networked information technology facilities
- attractive and well-cared for accommodation in most areas

81 The college recognises the issues which should be addressed in order to maintain and improve the quality of its provision

- a marketing strategy which does not fully match the objectives in the strategic plan

- 
- insufficient integration of support services for students
  - undefined criteria for monitoring and reviewing the work of the college
  - the absence of a staff development plan linked to college objectives
  - some poor quality temporary accommodation

---

## FIGURES

- 
- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)

---

  - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)

---

  - 3 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)

---

  - 4 Enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area (at November 1994)

---

  - 5 Recurrent income (1993-94)

---

  - 6 Estimated expenditure (1993-94)

---

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

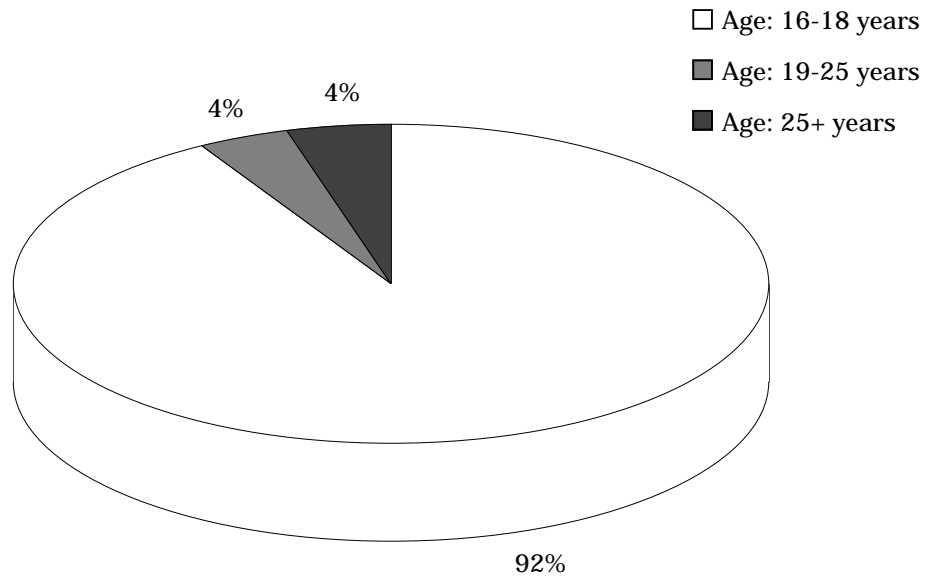
---

---

**Figure 1**

---

**Luton Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)**

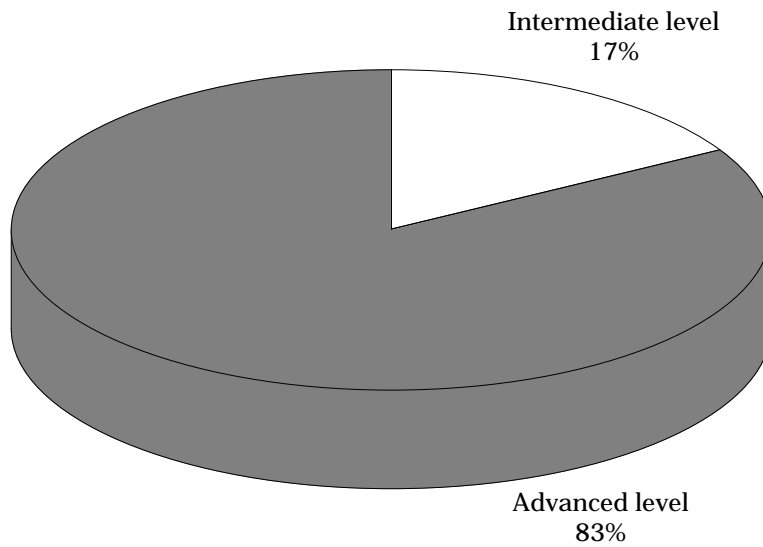


Enrolments: 1,882

**Figure 2**

---

**Luton Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)**



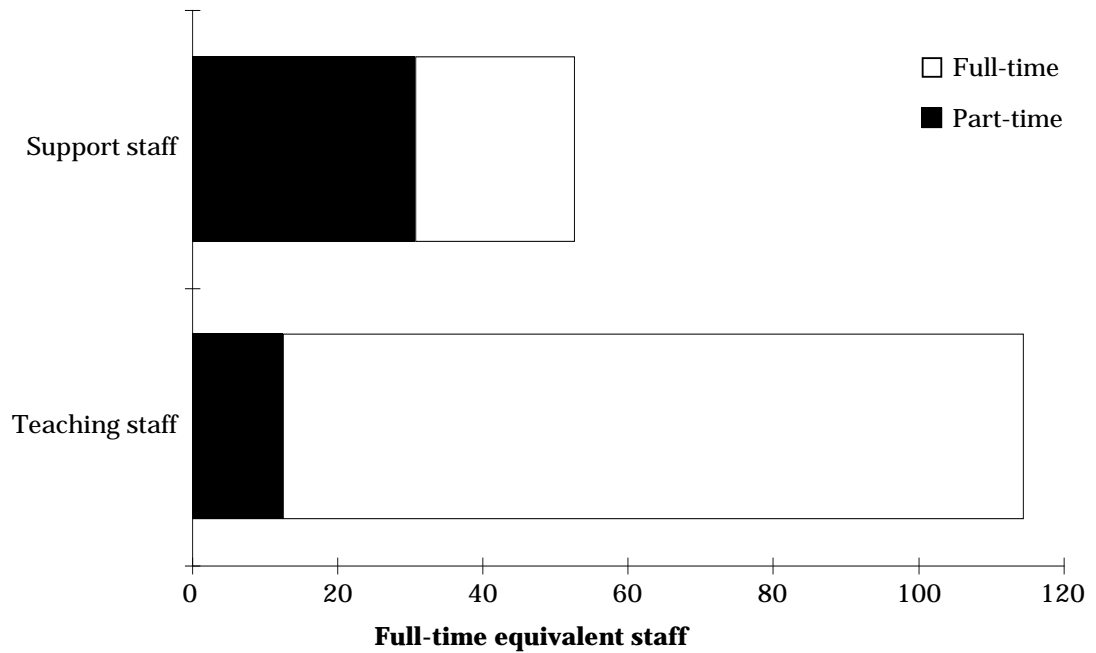
Enrolments: 1,882

---

**Figure 3**

---

**Luton Sixth Form College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)**

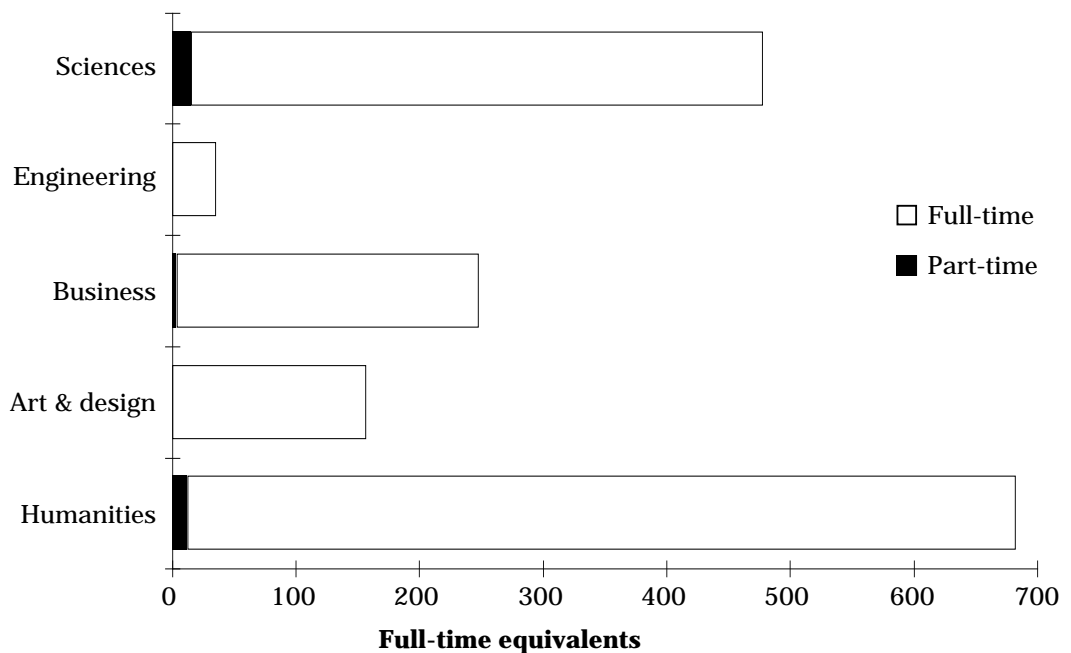


Full-time equivalent staff: 167

**Figure 4**

---

**Luton Sixth Form College: enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1993)**

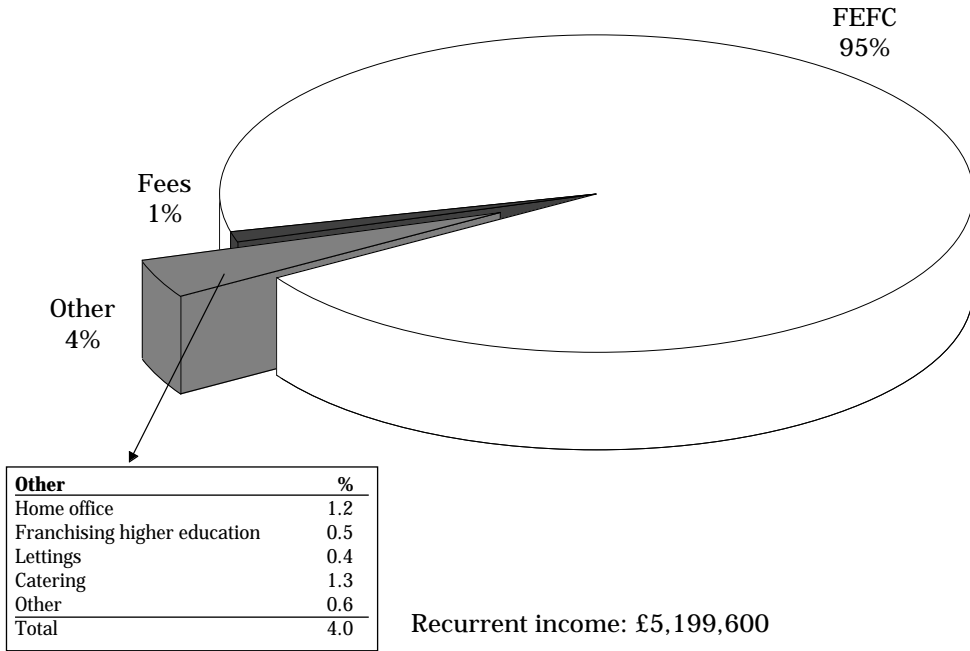


Full-time equivalent enrolments: 1,602

---

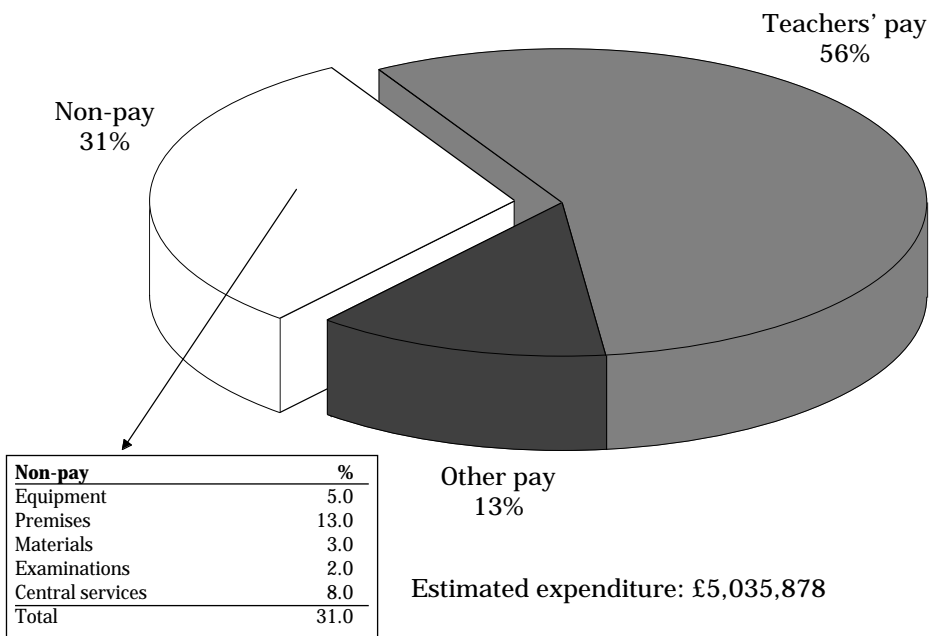
**Figure 5**

**Luton Sixth Form College: recurrent income (1993-94)**



**Figure 6**

**Luton Sixth Form College: estimated expenditure (1993-94)**



Published by the  
Further Education Funding Council  
July 1994