

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Waltham Forest College

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**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 86/95

WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE

GREATER LONDON REGION

Inspected September 1994 – March 1995

Summary

Waltham Forest College is a large general further education college which has good external links. It offers a wide range of vocational and academic courses to school leavers and adults. The college is effectively governed and managed, although the management structure within schools should be improved, and curriculum managers and tutors require access to better quality management information. There are effective arrangements for enrolment and induction but the college lacks standard procedures for admissions and pre-course assessment of students' skills. High-quality information, guidance and counselling is available to students. Valuable additional support is provided in the English and mathematics workshop and students have access to good information technology facilities. The quality of tutorial support varies. There is some good teaching in almost all areas of the college's work, but there are also a number of curriculum areas where standards need to be raised. Examination results on vocational courses are satisfactory but they are below average for GCE AS/A level courses and GCSE courses. The college is successful in enabling students to enter higher education, particularly from vocational and access courses. There is good practice in course review and evaluation. The college should improve retention and attendance rates and the levels of achievement on some courses; adopt a cross-college approach to developing good practice in tutorial work; develop the libraries as an effective resource for learning; and improve some aspects of its accommodation.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Computing and science	2	Health and social care,	
Mathematics	3	hairdressing and beauty	2
Construction	3	Art, design and performing arts	3
Motor vehicle engineering	2	Access, education,	
Mechanical/electrical		languages and TEFL	2
engineering	3	English and other humanities	4
Business	2	ESOL and SLDD	3
Catering, leisure and tourism	3		

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INTRODUCTION

1 Waltham Forest College was inspected between September 1994 and March 1995. Recruitment and induction procedures were inspected at the start of the academic year and other aspects in February and March 1995. The inspection team of 22 full-time and part-time inspectors spent a total of 80 days in the college. The team inspected courses in science, mathematics, computing, construction, motor vehicle engineering, mechanical and electrical engineering, business, catering, leisure and tourism, health and care, hairdressing and beauty, art and design, performing arts, humanities, English for speakers of other languages and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Inspectors visited 257 classes, saw some 2,600 students and inspected a broad range of students' written and practical work. There were meetings with members of the corporation, senior and middle managers, teaching staff and support staff, students, employers and representatives of the London East Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the technical and vocational education initiative, the local education authority (LEA), the community and a local school. The inspectors also had access to extensive documentation relating to the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Waltham Forest College is a large general further education college, offering courses which are mainly vocational. It is based on two sites. The main site, which was purpose built as a technical college in the 1930s, is in the northern part of the London Borough of Waltham Forest. The second, smaller site is in Chingford. There are two sixth form colleges in the borough and one grant-maintained school with a sixth form. The LEA provides an adult education service. In 1993, 71 per cent of 16 year olds in the borough chose to continue in full-time education. About 46 per cent of the college's students live outside Waltham Forest.

3 The population of Waltham Forest at the time of the 1991 census was 212,000. In January 1995, the overall unemployment rate was 13.9 per cent compared with 12.0 per cent for London as a whole. About half of the borough's workers are employed in the service industries. A relatively high proportion of the workforce, 13.7 per cent, are employed in manufacturing industries, compared with a London figure of 10.7 per cent. About 12.9 per cent of the population in the borough have qualifications above General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) standard, compared with 16.8 per cent in London as a whole.

4 The proportion of residents from minority ethnic groups in the borough is 25.6 per cent, which is higher than the 20.2 per cent for London as a whole. The largest single minority group is Black Caribbean, forming 8 per cent of the population, followed by Pakistani (7.4 per cent). It is estimated that the proportion of young adults in Waltham Forest whose first language is other than English is about 10 per cent.

5 On 1 November 1994, 9,460 students were enrolled at the college. Of these, 18 per cent were attending full time. Almost half the students were over 25 years old and 29 per cent were aged 16-18. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. Almost half the students identified themselves as being of minority ethnic origin in 1994, although over a quarter preferred not to state their origin. The college employs 369 teachers, representing 235 full-time equivalents. There are 187 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff shown as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 3.

6 College management is based on three directorates comprising development, curriculum, and administration and management services. Within the curriculum directorate there are nine teaching schools which provide a broad range of vocational further and higher education courses; GCE A level and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses; training courses for industry and courses providing access to higher education. The curricular areas covered by the nine schools are: applied science (including construction technician studies); arts, language and teacher training; automobile engineering; business, computing and management; engineering (including construction craft studies); general education; health and community care; office technology and administration; and tourism, hospitality and leisure. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 4.

7 In its mission statement, the college states that it aims to be the major provider of high-quality, post-16 education and training in North and East London and also a significant provider of learning opportunities for clients (young people, adults and employers) in the local, regional and international community. The college is committed to a client-centred approach which stresses personal achievement and offers a flexible and responsive curriculum.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college is responsive to the needs of the community and to industry. Market intelligence from a wide range of sources is used to anticipate local needs. There has been consultation with other providers of education and training and with interested organisations locally and regionally to avoid unnecessary duplication. The college is the major provider of vocational courses in the borough. It also provides general education programmes but faces competition for these from the two sixth form colleges in the borough.

9 There is a wide range of courses on offer which caters for students of all abilities. Many of the courses are offered in differing modes and patterns of attendance. The service provided by the college is appreciated by employers, who were keen to show their support during the inspection. There are well-established courses in automobile engineering, construction, business and office administration, hairdressing and beauty, and catering which lead to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs).

Most can be studied either full time or part time. In addition, the college provides tailor-made courses for industry. These courses, which are paid for by employers, enable employees to gain the underpinning knowledge for NVQ qualifications, for which they are assessed at their place of work. Among the many contracts for this service is the training provided for about 500 engineering employees, who are supported through open-learning packages and assessors on site. Local employers and training agents are also offered a service whereby potential motor vehicle trainees can be tested and interviewed on any Tuesday during the year. The college is well known for its training in construction and has developed strategies for maintaining much of its expertise and course provision at a time of declining demand.

10 Students are enrolled on full-time courses leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) in health and social care, business, manufacturing, science, built environment, art and design, leisure and tourism, and catering and hospitality. At present, not all subjects are available at all three levels (foundation, intermediate and advanced). New GNVQs planned for September 1995 will increase the range of courses and the opportunities for progression in science, leisure and tourism, engineering, and media and communications. There are courses validated by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) in 10 vocational areas and by the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) in others, many of which can be studied full time or part time. Other vocational courses for full-time students include management, meat technology and the National Nursery Examinations Board (NNEB) diploma. There is also large provision for English as a foreign language at levels up to Cambridge Proficiency level. Staff in the college's schools are successful in helping students to identify viable progression routes which, where possible, are provided within the college. Recruitment to foundation courses is difficult because students are often unwilling to spend an extra year studying before proceeding to intermediate level.

11 The college's strategic plan gives a commitment to widen access to education and training for students who are disadvantaged, including the unemployed, or those who are not free to study within traditional working hours. Foundation level courses in several areas are timed to enable parents to deliver and collect children from school, and there are several short courses designed to provide students with the skills and confidence to undertake further study. A co-ordinator ensures support on mainstream provision for 20 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is also a separate two-year course for students with moderate or severe learning difficulties, which is planned to have an enrolment of 40 by the end of 1995. The new directions course provides language support for full-time students aged 16-18, who are speakers of languages other than English, while they study a package of other subjects designed to prepare them for entry to mainstream provision. There is close and effective collaboration between the college and the borough's adult

education service. In particular, speakers of other languages who attend basic level courses at adult education classes are able to progress to the more advanced courses in English at the college.

12 There are courses, validated by the North and East London Access Federation, which are designed to prepare students for access to higher education in a number of areas including: combined studies, computing and law at the University of East London; teaching and technology at Middlesex University; and other courses at Westminster and North London Universities. The college has a one-year foundation course in science which forms part of a degree course validated by the University of North London, and a number of management courses are run in conjunction with Middlesex and Luton Universities. The hours of study for these courses are designed to suit adult students who have other commitments.

13 The college offers 19 subjects at GCSE and 19 at GCE A level. Full-time GCSE students study mathematics and English, unless they already have a grade C in these subjects, together with a package of other humanities or science-based subjects. Full-time students taking GCE A levels generally choose either a science-based or a humanities-based combination of subjects, but are able to combine sciences and humanities if they wish. There are also a small number of GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects. The college offers part-time day and evening classes, which full-time students can also attend. The subjects attracting particularly large numbers of students, apart from mathematics and English, are computer studies, political history, sociology, law and psychology. An interesting feature of the provision is the AS course in Irish studies.

14 The business centre, set up two years ago, is successful in attracting students to full-cost courses, both at the college and off site. About half of the training offered is delivered through open and flexible learning, using methods devised with the aid of TEC funding. Other training is delivered through short courses provided by the schools, all of which have employer liaison groups which meet regularly. Heads of school are required to set targets for short courses. Some schools have been more successful than others in developing such courses. Much of the work is delivered off site. For example, the European languages unit delivers training in nine foreign languages to Lloyds of London and other firms in the City of London and elsewhere. The languages taught include Portuguese, Russian, Korean, Mandarin Chinese and Japanese. This provision has won the Employment Department's National Training Award for 1994, and the London Regional Training Award. Other successful programmes include: engineering training for the Engineering Training Authority; NVQs in care offered through the local consortium of care employers; short courses in computing; and assessor and verifier awards for NVQ assessors. Commercial short courses run by the business centre had an estimated gross turnover of £350,000 in 1993-94.

15 A recently-appointed marketing manager is working with the information and guidance department to publicise courses within secondary schools, and is building on earlier project work to promote the image of the college within the community. Current projects are designed to investigate public perceptions of the college as a basis for developing a stronger corporate identity. Liaison with secondary schools is being strengthened by initiatives such as the workshops for pupils, which supplement the college's open day, and the presentations given to pupils by college staff. Schools of study within the college are being encouraged to help raise the profile of their courses by publicising their work in the local press.

16 There is a good working relationship between the college and the London East TEC. The college is regarded by the TEC as being responsive to the training needs of employers, and willing to develop collaborative links with other colleges. The TEC regards the college as keen to develop standards of customer care and response which match the best practice in industry. The college is funded by the TEC to provide work-related further education worth £500,000 during 1994-95. A further £82,000 of work-related further education funds supported the initial testing of students in English and mathematics which was implemented for full-time students enrolling in 1994. Bids to the TEC for the coming year, if successful, will serve to develop youth training, the modern apprenticeship scheme, and accreditation of prior learning for women returning to study.

17 The college has been successful in obtaining funds from a range of external sources. Effective use has been made of sponsorship from the technical and vocational education initiative, for instance to introduce GNVQs and to develop flexible-learning provision. A successful bid for £150,000 from the European Social Fund has helped to increase support for a number of courses, including those for speakers of other languages and for women returners to education. With the aid of matched funding from the college, the European Social Fund will also finance a programme for disaffected young people.

18 There are a number of overseas links. These have resulted in visits by science students to colleges in Denmark, Germany, and France; a visit to Holland by automobile engineering students working on a pollution control project; and a day trip to France by a group of students with learning difficulties. Links with groups in Spain, Italy and France have been established and there are plans to bid jointly for European funding for a number of collaborative projects. There is a European action group within the college, which has conducted an initial audit of the language skills of staff, as a step towards increasing awareness of European issues. In July 1994, the college organised and hosted the first Europe-wide conference for teachers of Urdu, attended by over 100 delegates. The aim is to establish a European network. There have been links with other educational organisations in Poland, Hungary, Japan and China.

19 The equal opportunities policy has recently been revised. The succinct new version is printed in the student handbook. Issues are monitored by a committee which is chaired by the chief executive. The current priority, in line with the strategic plan, is to increase access to courses for disadvantaged and under-represented groups. Each school of study is producing an action plan detailing its contribution to the target. Staff have a strong commitment to the college's anti-racist and anti-sexist ethos. A successful effort has been made to increase the numbers of female students using the information technology centre.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

20 There are 14 governors, including two women and two members of minority ethnic groups, one of whom has served as a commissioner with the Commission for Racial Equality. The chief executive is the only member of the college's staff who serves on the governing body. The president of the students' union is also a member. The governors have a wide range of experience and expertise, particularly in business, which the college has been able to draw upon to good effect. A governor who is a solicitor has provided valuable advice on the legal ramifications of a code of conduct for governors which has been developed recently. The committees of the governing body cover finance and general purposes, personnel, audit and remuneration. The full governing body and each committee meet at least once a term. The personnel committee, which includes members with substantial experience of human resource management, has played a key role in developing personnel policies and procedures for the college.

21 The powers which are delegated from the governing body to the college's managers are appropriate for the efficient management of the college. Managers and governors clearly understand each others' roles and responsibilities. Although there is a high degree of trust between them, governors expect to be kept fully informed about developments in the college. Senior managers report regularly to governors on financial, staffing and resource matters. The chief executive presents a comprehensive review of current issues facing the college to each meeting of the full governing body. Governors' meetings are conducted in an effective, businesslike manner. The quality of documentation used to support items on the agenda is good. The director of administration and management services provides effective support as clerk to the governors. The average attendance rate for governing body meetings held during 1994 was 66 per cent. Some governors have attended external training courses and this year the college organised a two-day training and development event for governors.

22 The college's mission and strategic plan were developed after extensive consultations with staff. Governors were kept fully informed as the plan evolved and they approved the final version. Designated senior managers have been appointed to oversee the achievement of the

operational objectives within the strategic plan. In line with the plan, the nine academic schools have prepared their own annual business plans, although the range of operational objectives which these cover, and their level of detail, vary widely.

23 The college's executive management group comprises the chief executive, the director of development, the director of curriculum, the director of administration and management services, and the finance manager. The executive group meets weekly to develop policy and review the extent to which strategic planning objectives are being achieved. Overall, the group provides strong, determined leadership although some staff at the college said that they were confused about the precise roles and responsibilities of its members. The college recognises that, despite the introduction of some new management committees and the regular briefings and newsletters from the principal, communications between senior managers and other staff could be improved. Teaching staff in particular feel that they lack adequate opportunities to explain their views on college developments to senior managers.

24 A number of management committees has been established to advise the executive management group. For example, the curriculum management group, which comprises senior managers and heads of school, meets every three weeks to consider issues relating to the planning and delivery of courses. This group is complemented by the operations management group which includes managers of cross-college services as well as senior managers. Matters considered by the operations group include marketing, publicity arrangements, enrolment procedures and staff-development proposals.

25 The executive management group is advised by the college's academic board. The board has 27 members, including senior managers, heads of school, the client services manager, and elected representatives drawn from teaching staff, support staff and the students' union. The board also has an elected member of staff with an equal opportunities brief. The fact that many of the issues addressed by the board are also covered by other management groups has reduced its impact and influence.

26 Heads of school are hardworking and conscientious and contribute significantly to the overall effectiveness of the college. Most schools do not have a tier of middle managers; the head of school may manage as many as 16 team leaders. The lack of a formal management structure impedes communications within many of the schools, limits collaborative working and the sharing of good practice, and imposes a heavy administrative burden on the head of school. In general, courses are managed effectively by course teams. There are detailed specifications governing the roles and responsibilities of teams and team leaders. In vocational areas of work, course team leaders provide a focus for the development of individual subjects of study. In some areas, for example, the school of general education, co-ordinators have been appointed to develop individual

subjects and encourage joint approaches to teaching. The job specification for subject co-ordinators lacks detail and no procedures have been established to assist them in achieving their objectives.

27 Summaries of the college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6. In 1994-95, the college received approximately 73 per cent of its income from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Its average level of funding for 1994-95 is £21.08, compared with £22.72 in 1993-94. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £18.17 and the median for the sector is £19.01.

28 The college has established 30 cost centres to which funds are allocated. In the case of the schools, these funds are intended to cover expenditure on educational materials, small items of equipment and some aspects of staff development. In addition, heads of schools manage their part-time teaching budget. Clearly-presented, informative reports are sent each month by the finance manager to all cost-centre managers, to enable them to compare actual and budgeted spending. In addition, managers have ready access to computerised financial reports and have received training to help them take advantage of this facility. Heads of school may apply to the director of curriculum for funds to develop courses. Some heads do not know what criteria are used to decide upon the relative merits of bids. The college has not yet calculated unit costs for all of its courses although it expects to have a complete specification by September 1995.

29 With the notable exceptions of financial and personnel data, the information available to assist managers in formulating plans and taking decisions is fragmented and incomplete. Some managers make relatively little use of the information which does exist to examine trends and support decisions. The management information systems department is developing the information base and the range of standard reports, but there is little systematic consultation with curriculum managers as to their information needs. Staff in the department are very willing to respond to requests but the department has a limited ability to promote the effective use of computerised management information. These weaknesses have been recognised by senior managers who are determined to rectify them. Recently, the executive group has initiated a thorough review of the information needs of managers across the college, including heads of school and course team leaders. Many of the college managers will require extensive training if they are to make effective use of an enhanced management information system.

30 Enrolment targets for courses are established through a process of consultation and agreement between heads of school and senior managers. Enrolments for 1994-95 are currently 18 per cent above the target figure. Only one school has, so far, failed to reach its overall target. Targets for retention and achievement rates are set across the college but the factors

which determine these are not specified. Furthermore, there is a lack of accurate, cross-college data on retention and achievement rates.

31 Responsibility for implementing and monitoring the college's policies on equality of opportunity and health and safety is clearly allocated. The equal opportunities committee, which is chaired by the chief executive and advises the executive management group, meets termly to monitor the implementation of the policy. It focuses on the extent to which course teams are addressing equal opportunities issues. The director of administration and management services, assisted by the health and safety committee, is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of the policies and procedures relating to health and safety at work. Following a thorough process of consultation, involving staff and governors, a health and safety handbook has been developed which includes policies to raise staff awareness of issues surrounding HIV and AIDS, and alcohol and drug abuse.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

32 Information about courses is widely disseminated through the careers service, careers conventions, visits to schools and community organisations, and publicity in local and minority ethnic newspapers. Informed and impartial pre-course guidance is offered by the information and guidance department. The majority of enquiries are handled by course teams. Admissions are processed through the college's schools, some of which have a designated member of staff for this work. There is no cross-college procedure for admissions and thus no way of ensuring that all students are provided with the same level of service.

33 The procedures for enrolment in September 1994 were efficient, effective and sensitive to the needs of students. However, the high rate of absenteeism and poor retention rates on a number of courses indicate that there is a need for a more effective means of identifying students' existing skills and commitment before enrolment. The college has recognised this and intends to focus on measuring students' skills in mathematics and English.

34 Students are able to transfer to other courses within the college although there is no set procedure to counsel them in this process. There is some use of the assessment and accreditation of students' prior learning within the college's schools. For example, a pilot project to develop accreditation of prior learning has enabled some students to progress from a C&G catering course to the second year of a BTEC national diploma course.

35 There are induction programmes for students on all full-time courses, which involve the careers officer and staff from the information and guidance department. Induction handbooks are provided on many courses. The student handbook is clear and helpful and is well received. It outlines students' entitlements and responsibilities, and gives

information on disciplinary procedures and support facilities. The student affairs committee is involved in its evaluation and review.

36 High priority is given to supporting students in their studies. The college has grouped together a range of learning support services whose operations are guided by a committee, chaired by the associate director of curriculum. These are the information and guidance department, the English and mathematics learning centre, the information technology centre, the library, media resources, and initiatives on flexible learning and learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These services are all at different stages of development.

37 The information and guidance department is valued by staff and students for its responsiveness and the excellent service provided by well-qualified and approachable staff. The department is a resource for students, staff and members of the public making enquiries. It also organises contributions from visiting specialists such as the careers officer and the LEA awards officer. The department is sited in newly-adapted accommodation next to the main college entrance and has a good careers library and a range of other materials that provide useful information. The use made of the department is monitored and the data collected will contribute to the college's system for individual student records, as well as providing information relevant to strategic planning. Data collected during the 1994-95 session show that 80 per cent of inquiries were made by students with financial difficulties. The department is to open in the evenings from April 1995 to support evening students.

38 A new English and mathematics centre was opened in September 1994 in newly-adapted accommodation, bringing existing support arrangements together in one unit. Staff are well qualified and committed to supporting students. The numbers of students using the centre are monitored. Overall, the centre is well used, but there is wide variation between programme areas in the proportion of students who visit the unit. In the first few weeks of the autumn term, staff from the English and mathematics centre co-ordinated the diagnostic testing of all full-time students, other than those on courses in English for speakers of other languages and English as a foreign language, using literacy and numeracy tests devised by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit. The tests showed that 31 per cent of students were below level 1 in literacy and 39 per cent were below level 1 in numeracy. Students in need of additional help were encouraged to attend the centre. Support is also offered within mainstream classes by staff from the team attached to the centre. Adequate procedures have not yet been developed for monitoring and reviewing the support provided in English and mathematics.

39 Provision for bilingual students, which is oversubscribed, is made through separate courses in English for speakers of other languages. Enrolment after the beginning of the course is discouraged, and students applying during the remainder of the academic year are being enrolled

inappropriately on courses in English as a foreign language. All other provision for bilingual students is made through the English and mathematics centre and is not necessarily related directly to the mainstream curriculum.

40 Support for independent learning is available in the information technology centre, which provides students with open access to networked computers. The centre is well used and appreciated by students. The library at Forest Road is less supportive to learning, partly because of its location and the small number of study spaces, and partly because of the poor resources available. There are plans to develop open-learning centres in each school and some of these are already in place, for instance, in the areas of motor vehicle engineering and office technology.

41 The importance of tutorial support has been emphasised by a recent college initiative, which provides each full-time student with the equivalent of two 20-minute individual tutorial periods every term. Staff are committed to fulfilling their pastoral and academic responsibilities and students value this and feel supported. However, the actual use of tutorial time varies very widely across course teams and schools. In some GNVQ and BTEC courses, which require systematic review and evaluation of students' work and progress, the tutorial period is seen as a useful complement to existing one-to-one or group work. For some GCE A level courses there is some confusion amongst students over the relative roles of the GCE A level co-ordinators and personal tutors whom they may not know very well. The use made of tutorial periods varied widely. Tutorials ranged from useful group or individual sessions in which students were actively involved, to sessions which were poorly attended and where little was achieved. There is no tutorial curriculum bringing together study skills, careers education, social and life skills and pastoral support, though some or all of these may be covered by individual tutors. The college has no overall policy on students' entitlement to tutorial provision, and no standardised procedures for following up students' progress and levels of attendance. The college should review its policy and practice towards tutorial provision.

42 The college is undertaking a pilot project to develop records of achievement, initially focusing on GCSE and the new directions courses, since these courses do not have systems for profiling students' achievement. There are plans to extend records of achievement to GCE A level courses but it is not envisaged that these will include other courses, such as GNVQ programmes, which already require review and evaluation of students' achievements and action planning.

43 Waltham Forest Careers Service has a service contract with the college which provides for the attendance of a careers officer for two and half days a week. There is also a college careers counsellor. Together these specialists provide an effective and valued service, both in working with groups of students during the induction period, in tutorial sessions and, by appointment, in one-to-one interviews.

44 There are a number of other ways in which students are supported. The nursery is highly valued by students. It provides 18 full-time equivalent places for children aged three to five. Approximately 50 students who are parents make use of it over the course of a year and there is a long waiting list. The nursery is also used by the college for work placements, especially for students on NNEB courses. The recently-enlarged accommodation for the students' union provides adequate space for meetings, recreation, support and welfare. There is a student affairs committee, chaired by the associate director of curriculum. A recent concern over bullying, raised by students, is being carried forward to become a whole college initiative. The numbers of students requesting financial support has grown over the last three years. There is limited assistance with funding. Between September 1994 and March 1995, 136 students had benefited from the chief executive's students' fund and 254 from the access fund. There are some funds available through the students' union and the student counsellors direct students to many outside organisations which administer trust funds. Some financial support is provided through the European Social Fund.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

45 Two hundred and fifty-seven teaching sessions were observed. The average attendance in these sessions was about 70 per cent. Levels of attendance in programme areas ranged from nearly 90 per cent on care courses to less than 60 per cent on construction courses.

46 The strengths clearly outweighed the weaknesses in 55 per cent of the sessions observed. Weaknesses outweighed the strengths in 10 per cent of sessions. The following table gives a breakdown of the grades given to classes inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		4	11	18	5	0	38
GCSE		0	4	9	3	1	17
GNVQ		4	7	13	4	0	28
NVQ		3	21	13	1	1	39
Access to HE		3	8	5	0	0	16
Other*		22	53	33	11	0	119
Total		36	104	91	24	2	257

* **Note:** this includes BTEC and C&G courses.

47 Most courses were well planned and well organised. Schemes of work were in use on all courses, although these varied in terms of their detail and the use made of them as an aid to monitoring and developing teaching strategies. In the best practice, for instance on access and some

health and community care courses, schemes of work had clearly-stated aims and objectives and contained descriptions of curriculum content, teaching methods, expected outcomes for students and information on assessment. There were also effective schemes of work in art and design, leisure and tourism, health and beauty, computing, mathematics, English for speakers of other languages, English as a foreign language and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The use and quality of schemes of work for humanities, English, science and catering courses were variable. Schemes of work were not always shared with students and the provision of course handbooks for students was not consistent across the college.

48 Teaching staff are knowledgeable and committed and have developed good working relationships with their students on most courses. There were some examples of good teaching in almost all areas of the college's work. On counselling courses, teaching was of a particularly high standard. On courses in English for speakers of other languages, classes were lively and positive. Teachers employed a variety of teaching methods, and students had opportunities to work in pairs, small groups and as a whole class. On access courses, students found the work stimulating and challenging. These courses extend their knowledge and encourage personal development. Fashion courses, particularly in clothing craft, were highly structured and students benefited from this approach. A range of skills was covered in each session, and assessment and feedback were continuous. Practical demonstrations were integral to the work and students were not allowed to attempt a technique without prior input from the teacher. The quality of teaching was good in hairdressing and beauty. Teachers paid close attention to students' competencies during practical treatments and detailed feedback was provided. Teaching was also of a good standard on courses in English as a foreign language and in modern European languages. In some modern European language lessons, team teaching, involving the class teacher and a foreign language assistant, was particularly successful in meeting the learning needs of students with different levels of ability. Urdu studies were enriched by the teacher's contributions on the cultural and intellectual background to the language and literature.

49 In some programme areas, the quality of teaching and the promotion of learning varied considerably. In English, there was some effective teaching. For example, students in one GCE AS English class, working individually, had written the first scene of a play. They then took roles and read the scenes in turn, while the teacher encouraged them to discuss aspects of character and the writer's technique. The teacher constantly reinforced concepts previously learned, using informative handouts. Students' oral and written responses were of a high standard. In other English classes, teachers failed to motivate students, to support them effectively in their learning or to use methods which were appropriate for the wide range of ability. The quality of lessons in other humanities

subjects was similarly varied. There were examples of well-organised activities and of students engaging in lively discussion. There were also examples of poorly-structured lessons, or lessons in which the pace of the work was slow and undemanding. In one leisure and tourism lesson, a teacher made excellent use of her up-to-date experience in industry to capture students' interest. However, in some other lessons the students were insufficiently stretched and activities lacked purpose and direction. Many teachers, across the programme areas, failed to make full use of the teaching aids available. Students wasted valuable class time taking notes when the information could have been provided for them in the form of handouts. They also completed written exercises in lessons which could have been prepared at home in order to make best use of their contact time with teachers.

50 Assignments and project briefs were generally well designed to support learning objectives. Practice varied considerably across the college on matters such as the use of standardised assignment front sheets, the sharing of assessment criteria and deadlines for submission and marking. Assignments and project briefs in motor vehicle engineering were well prepared, with clear assessment plans, but in mechanical and electrical engineering the standard of project briefs was variable. The quality of marking on most courses was good; the grading was appropriate and teachers provided supportive comments. On access courses, assessments were set and marked within agreed deadlines. In humanities subjects, standardised forms were used to provide thorough written feedback. Students' written work on the BTEC national diploma course in travel and tourism was marked thoroughly, and included constructive comments. The marking in science and some English courses was also helpful. Suitable records are kept of students' achievements and progress.

51 The development of core skills such as communication, numeracy and information technology skills was a requirement of many courses. In motor vehicle engineering, core skills within each assignment were identified and students recorded the skills demonstrated in a standardised document. On some other engineering courses the approach to core skills was not co-ordinated or systematic. Although some engineering teachers developed core skills through assignments which integrated them with other vocational skills, others were missing such opportunities. In science, planning and groupwork skills were being developed effectively in national diploma and GNVQ practical sessions. In construction, the application of number was regularly included in projects and assignments and formed an important part of most practical craft activities. On the GNVQ built environment course, communication skills were taught separately. In one successful session, students delivered presentations, took part in a discussion and made notes of key aspects of communication skills as they arose. In contrast, the separate teaching of communication skills on the GNVQ leisure and tourism course was less effective in motivating students. In some programme areas, the subject-based application of information

technology is inadequate. There was little use of information technology in catering, mathematics or management courses, or in laboratory work in science. In engineering, computer-based learning approaches have been introduced in mathematics and electronics.

52 In general education, there is a core skills programme for GCSE students, which leads to BTEC accreditation. The programme has been effective in developing students' self-confidence and oral skills. Useful assignments have been developed which integrate core skills with the content of GCSE courses, although there is scope to broaden the content of such assignments and to make them sufficiently challenging for a range of ability levels. Study skills, which include practice in the use of academic English, have been introduced to support students on GCE A level and other courses. The aims of this provision should be clarified in order to ensure its relevance to students' programmes of study.

53 Practical work is an important feature of teaching and learning in the college, and is generally well designed and implemented. In motor vehicle engineering, practical tasks had been developed, accompanied by clear instructions, to enable students to collect evidence of competence in preparation for NVQ accreditation. In science, practical work was well organised and resourced; there were good summaries of the work and discussions of results and underlying theory. On the access to Bachelor of Education course, students in a practical pottery class were learning the basic techniques of working with clay to prepare them for teaching primary school children. Realistic work environments have been created in a number of areas, particularly for supporting the teaching and learning on NVQ programmes. Work environments for food production and meat trades courses were modern and well equipped. For the Engineering Training Authority craft engineering course, students 'clock on' and 'clock off', and the clockcards are sent to employers as attendance records.

54 Well-established industrial links play an important part in the delivery of course objectives. Links are particularly well developed in catering, hairdressing, health and community care, and science. In health and community care, students on the nursery nursing course benefit from a system of work placement whereby they spend six days in the workplace and four in the college. The documentation to support this is meticulous and the students' progress is regularly appraised. In hairdressing, part-time students follow a course which involves them attending college one day a week and working in a salon one day a week. Some full-time students are also provided with work placements, for example those on GNVQ courses in science and care. There are no cross-college procedures to ensure that all students and employers are appropriately prepared for work placements and that the best use is made of these opportunities.

55 Much of the teaching on specialist courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities lacked rigour and there were no strategies for meeting the students' differing learning needs. Teachers had low

expectations of students' ability to operate independently. For instance, a teacher in a practical class started the task for each student, although this was not necessary. Students had to work at the same pace and complete each part of the task before the group moved on. The work of this section is not sufficiently integrated with that of the rest of the college. Some students may have no contact with any of the college-wide services or resources, and thus fail to benefit as much as they could from their college experience. The section has introduced a new framework of accreditation to provide better recognition of students' achievements.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

56 The majority of students were well motivated and enjoyed their studies. They were able to speak articulately about their work and were keen to be involved in class discussion and practical work. Students on courses in English for speakers of other languages were developing good knowledge and understanding of language. There were examples of lack of motivation among some of the younger students. For example, on GNVQ intermediate courses the motivation and behaviour of some less able students were poor, and a significant proportion of students in GCSE English classes lacked enthusiasm for their work.

57 Most students were acquiring appropriate levels of knowledge and were generally able to apply what they had learned. In humanities, many students developed good oral skills. Students on the access to higher education and teacher training courses successfully engaged in role-play which included self and group evaluations. In business studies, the better motivated students were able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and their preferred methods of learning. In art and design there were examples of thorough research, careful recording and the sequential development of ideas and skills. However, there were areas of weakness: students with learning difficulties were failing to develop independent learning skills; in GCSE English, there was a noticeable weakness in study skills; and on several courses, particularly at GCSE, students were failing to develop appropriate levels of understanding in mathematics.

58 Practical work was generally carried out well and with due care for health and safety. In practical hair and beauty work, students demonstrated that they had acquired appropriate skills. There were some good examples of practical work in carpentry, joinery and brickwork. Engineering students used the workshop equipment competently and with confidence, and observed safe practices.

59 The ability of students to work effectively as members of a group was demonstrated in a number of the activities inspected. In English for speakers of other languages, students from different cultures and backgrounds worked together very effectively as members of a group. In English as a foreign language, students worked together to produce a

newspaper, the 'Foreign Enquirer', which included a report from a former student, a nun, who had spent some time in Rwanda during the war in that country. There were few examples of effective group work in GCSE English or in Urdu classes.

60 The amount and the quality of written work produced by the students was generally appropriate. In business studies, work of a high quality was produced on supervision, management and business administration courses. In engineering, students' assignment work was generally well presented. Science assignments were of a high standard. In a number of classes in mathematics and intermediate GNVQ business studies, students did not regularly submit set work.

61 Retention rates varied across the college and were low on some courses. Sixty-nine per cent of the students enrolled on two-year courses in 1993 entered the second year of the course in 1994. This was an improvement on the previous year's figure of 62 per cent. The retention rates at the end of the first year for the 1993-95 cohort of students were 52 per cent in computer studies, 49 per cent in hotel administration and 50 per cent in leisure and recreational studies. The retention rate for the GCE A level programme in general education for the 1992-94 cohort of students was also low, at 64 per cent. A system for monitoring retention rates and transfer between courses on a cross-college basis has recently been established.

62 Achievements on vocational courses are generally satisfactory. In 1994, 84 per cent of the 153 students aged 16-18 in their final year of study on vocational courses were successful. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. It represents a significant improvement over the previous year when 67 per cent of the candidates of this age group were successful. However, 71 per cent of the students in the college are aged 19 or over and their achievements are thus not included in this performance measure.

63 There is a wide variation in achievements between courses and levels. In 1994, the overall pass rate at intermediate level was 55 per cent. On BTEC first and intermediate GNVQ courses, pass rates were poor in engineering, manufacturing, science and business, where less than 45 per cent of candidates achieved full awards. Results were good in health and social care (76 per cent). At advanced level, 74 per cent of students in BTEC national level courses achieved full awards. All the students who entered the second year of national diploma courses in hotel administration and performing arts, and the national certificate course in business and finance, were successful. Pass rates exceeding 80 per cent were also achieved in diploma courses in construction, business and finance, travel and tourism and computing, and in the certificate course in construction. The weakest pass rate was in leisure studies (50 per cent). These figures

do not take account of students who withdrew from courses during the first year.

64 NVQs were offered in 11 vocational subjects during 1994, mainly at levels 1 and 2. Of 338 candidates, 56 per cent achieved full awards and 34 per cent achieved partial accreditation, with 10 per cent achieving no outcome. On the Engineering Training Authority engineering level 2 programme, all the candidates were successful and on the business administration programme, all candidates were successful at level 1 and 20 per cent of them also achieved the level 2 award.

65 Success rates were good or satisfactory for a number of the other awards offered in 1994. The pass rate for the NNEB nursery nursing course was 75 per cent. In RSA Examinations Board (RSA) individual skills examinations, pass rates were generally good. Particularly good results were achieved by large cohorts of students attempting stage 1 awards in core text, typewriting and wordprocessing, where the pass rates were 99 per cent, 84 per cent and 82 per cent, respectively. Of the 228 students enrolled for RSA computer literacy and information technology, 57 per cent successfully achieved all elements of the course. Success rates were high on the RSA counselling courses, with 87 per cent of students achieving the award in 1994. On access to higher education courses, completion rates were satisfactory and pass rates for those students who completed were good. Of 199 students enrolled on 11 access courses, 74 per cent successfully completed their course and 68 per cent progressed to higher education. Completion and progression rates were particularly strong on the access to Bachelor of Education and access to combined studies courses. The examination results in modern commercial foreign languages accredited by the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry were good, and there were high proportions of credit and distinction grades, especially in French. In 1994, of 172 entries in four languages, 94 per cent were successful, with 19 per cent gaining distinctions and 38 per cent credits.

66 For C&G engineering courses, results in 1994 were generally good. In a number of cases, all the students who completed the course passed their examination. Results were also good for the British Airways fares and ticketing courses which generally had pass rates of 80 per cent or more, and for the Institute of Meat examination results which had a pass rate of 90 per cent.

67 In 1994, GCE AS/A level pass rates for 16-18 year old students were below average for the sector. The 98 students of this age group entered for GCE AS/A level examinations scored, on average, 2.4 points (where A=10, E=2). This compares with a national average for the sector of 3.0 points. Of the 66 students entered for two or more GCE AS/A levels, the average score per candidate was 6.0 points, compared with a national average of 15.3 points. This places the college among the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the

Department for Education. However, 75 per cent of the college's total number of GCE AS/A level candidates are aged 19 or over, and for those taking two or more GCE AS/A level examinations, the average point score per full-time student was 5.0 and the average point score per part-time student 3.8.

68 GCE A level pass rates in sciences, for students aged 16-18, fell short of the average for general further education colleges: biology (55 per cent), chemistry (64 per cent) and physics (67 per cent). However, the pass rate was good in mathematics (72 per cent). Students aged 19 and above fared better, with pass rates exceeding the national average for this age group in chemistry (67 per cent), physics (59 per cent) and mathematics (62 per cent). Biology pass rates were weak (39 per cent). In humanities, the GCE A level results for both age groups were generally weak. The pass rates for 16-18 year olds were well below the average for general further education colleges in law (35 per cent), psychology (11 per cent), sociology (36 per cent) and English (38 per cent), although results were good for a small group of government and politics candidates (80 per cent). For students over 19, the pass rates were slightly better in psychology (50 per cent) and sociology (47 per cent), and there were good pass rates in government and politics (80 per cent) and history (61 per cent). Pass rates for students over 19 were weak in English (42 per cent) and law (30 per cent).

69 GCSE examination results in sciences for students aged 16-18 were good when compared with national averages for the further education sector. The proportion achieving grades A-C exceeded the average in biology (69 per cent), chemistry (50 per cent), human biology (31 per cent) and physics (41 per cent). The number of students achieving grades A-C was low in computer studies (28 per cent) and in mathematics (16 per cent). Students aged 19 or over generally fared less well than the 16-18 year olds. Pass rates at grades A-C were below the sector average in physics (25 per cent), human biology (41 per cent), computer studies (39 per cent) and mathematics (24 per cent). However, good results were achieved in chemistry (63 per cent).

70 Both age groups had poor GCSE examination results in humanities subjects, except for history. Eighteen per cent of 16-18 year olds achieved grades A-C in English, compared with an average of 46 per cent for sector colleges other than sixth form colleges, whilst only 8 per cent achieved these grades in English literature, and 5 per cent in law. Other results were psychology (27 per cent) and sociology (36 per cent). In history 32 per cent achieved grades A-C compared with a national average for this age group of 27 per cent. Amongst candidates aged 19 and over, achievements were weak in English (50 per cent), law (33 per cent), psychology (36 per cent) and sociology (60 per cent) compared with national figures for general further education colleges of 72 per cent, 59 per cent, 66 per cent and 73 per cent, respectively. There was again a good result

in history where 67 per cent of students achieved grades A-C, compared with a national average of 61 per cent.

71 The college is successful in enabling students to enter higher education from vocational courses. In 1994, over 400 students, representing about a quarter of the students completing their courses, went on to higher education. Fifty-three per cent of those entering higher education came from a wide range of BTEC courses, 33 per cent were from access courses and the remaining 14 per cent were from GCE A level courses.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

72 The strategic plan expresses the clear aim of developing quality systems throughout the college's operations. The strategy is based on a continuous improvement model which encourages the involvement of all staff. The total quality committee is the main decision-making body. It is chaired by the chief executive and attended by the directors, associate directors, management information systems manager, client services manager, marketing manager and the quality projects co-ordinator. The committee is advised by the quality advisory group which has a wider representation from each school and from the learning support section. This is chaired by an associate director, who devotes most of his time to quality issues, assisted by a quality projects co-ordinator who spends about half his time on quality-related work. The customer care departmental managers group, which covers quality assurance aspects of business support activities, also advises the total quality committee.

73 The college has a quality policy statement which combines a total quality philosophy, to which all staff contribute. It is working towards gaining Investors in People status, and an international standard (ISO 9002), which will apply to the business centre. The intention is to blend separate approaches into a system designed to meet the college's needs. The policy is supported by an implementation strategy which includes the dissemination of models of good practice. The implementation strategy focused initially on curriculum review and evaluation. Statements of measurable service standards for support functions such as management information systems have recently been introduced.

74 There is a considerable amount of good practice at the level of course review and evaluation. The first full round of the new system was completed in October 1994. A valuable course team handbook has been developed to support the process. Course teams carry out an evaluation process using standardised documentation at the entry, delivery and progression phases of the students' time in the college. Course team leaders report annually on responses to the reports of external verifiers and moderators, the results of surveys of students' opinions and statistical data. They identify action points and timescales for further improvement. Results are set against statements of expected achievement and reported

to the total quality committee. The quality of internal evaluation varies between schools and course teams. A course approval contract is completed annually by the head of school for all existing and projected new courses. New courses are submitted to a course validation panel.

75 Feedback from students is used effectively to monitor the quality of provision. Students' views are sought in a variety of ways. The results of student surveys are used to inform course reviews and evaluation procedures. These surveys reveal a good level of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and support. Action arising directly from surveys includes the improvement in students' recreational areas.

76 There is a systematic response to external moderators, verifiers and examining bodies. Reports are received by school boards of studies and the curriculum management group note identified weaknesses and monitor the action taken. Course teams comment on the concerns raised by moderators or external verifiers, and identify the remedial action to be taken within a specified timescale.

77 There is an effective staff-development scheme. The financial allocation for staff-development activities is £104,000, which represents 1 per cent of the college's FEFC income. This is supplemented by access to central funds for curriculum development. Technical and vocational education initiative funds add a further £20,000. Priorities are determined by reference to the strategic and operating plan and to the needs of managers and teaching staff as expressed through the staff-development committee. The committee includes school representatives and has recently been enlarged to involve support staff. The committee is chaired by the associate director of curriculum and meets termly. The college proposes to appoint a staff-development officer from mid-1995. A termly programme of cross-college events is produced which reflects priorities determined by cross-college co-ordinators. An initiative on flexible learning is an example of this. In addition, heads of schools identify needs for training which can be met through in-house arrangements or through external arrangements. Intensive customer care training has been carried out for all support staff. Evaluation of in-house and external training events takes place, but on a limited basis. There is a need to develop more comprehensive systems for evaluating staff-development activities against the college's objectives.

78 An enterprising programme of training and accreditation for Training and Development Lead Body assessors and verifiers has been developed through the business centre. This includes training opportunities for external candidates, funded through the TEC, as well as for college staff. Although the programme started in October 1992, relatively few college staff have achieved the awards. To date, 175 staff have registered but only 47 have achieved their awards and most of these are assessor awards. Few staff have achieved the awards for internal verification and the accreditation of prior learning. At present, there is no whole-college system

for the internal verification of assessment standards for NVQs and GNVQs, although a team of internal verifiers has recently been established. The number of staff so far trained is small and does not represent an adequate spread across the schools.

79 Performance indicators are collected as part of the course review and evaluation process, and they are used at local level. However, inadequate management information means that collection and use of performance indicators on a wider scale has been difficult. The college subscribes to the Advanced Level Information System which measures the value added to students' achievements beyond their predicted achievements. As yet, the college has no definitive results from this analysis.

80 The planned system for staff appraisal, which was due to be fully operational from September 1995, has fallen behind schedule. The appraisal model was developed through extensive consultation and has received considerable support from staff. The initial training of 70 appraisers was completed during 1994, but progress has been halted pending restructuring within the schools to put in place a tier of middle managers. These middle management posts will enable a greater number of appraisers to be involved in the appraisal process. There has been no training for appraisees. The delay in implementing the scheme may make it necessary to conduct refresher training for appraisers. Appraisal for teaching staff will include classroom observation, and the results of this will feed into the quality of teaching and learning section of the college's self-assessment report.

81 A self-assessment report was produced for the first time in 1995, using the headings in the FEFC's inspection guidelines. The report identifies many of the strengths observed during the inspection. It is also honest and accurate in pinpointing a number of weaknesses. The main shortcoming of the report is that the section which concerns teaching and learning focuses mainly on staff development and access to resources. The report proposes remedial action for a number of problems and is cross-referenced to other sources of information.

82 A college charter has been produced which meets the requirements of the national charter for further education. It is designed as an accessible information leaflet and is supported by the students' handbook which goes into more detail on aspects of the college's provision. The implementation of the charter will be monitored by the charter review group, the associate director of development and through management information systems. The necessary processes have yet to be set in place, although some of the charter standards can be monitored through existing systems, such as course review and evaluation. The procedures developed for cross-college support functions should be brought into line with the standards in the charter, and performance measures and monitoring processes need to be developed. The complaints procedure outlined in the students' handbook has been established recently. There is a 'Red Alert'

system which enables the quality projects co-ordinator to address problems and issues not covered satisfactorily through the usual channels. The college has an employers' charter, but employers' knowledge of this is limited.

RESOURCES

Staffing

83 Most of the 369 teachers have a professional qualification or first degree and are properly qualified for the specialisms they teach. There are a few instances where this is not the case; for instance, some of the staff teaching English as a second language do not have an appropriate qualification and some staff teaching students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not have previous experience in this work. Forty-four per cent of the teaching staff have a degree and one in six have a higher degree. Half have a teaching qualification. Some staff have a strong vocational expertise; for example, the wide range of experience in industry held by the catering and leisure staff brings authenticity to the courses. Some staff have a limited amount of recent industrial experience. The college is addressing this by allowing staff to act as industrial consultants or to work in industry for short periods. The languages department is well supported by its foreign language assistants.

84 Slightly over half of the total staff are women and 12 out of 32 management staff, including heads of school and heads of department, are women. There are no women in the executive management group. It is not possible to identify accurately the proportions of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds, nor those who are registered as disabled, as many staff decline to provide this information to the college.

85 The level of technical support is good or adequate in all areas. The ratio of teachers to technicians is almost eight to one. All are suitably qualified or experienced to carry out their work. Clerical support for staff is good. The level of support for each school is proportional to the number of teaching staff and this is planned to increase in the near future as the requirements of the management information system also increase. The ratio of teachers to clerical support staff is 25:1

Equipment/learning resources

86 The provision of equipment and learning resources meets the needs of the curriculum in most areas. Specialist equipment is available where necessary except in art and design, fashion and performing arts where there are inadequate photographic facilities. The range of surveying equipment in the area of construction is especially good and the wide range of equipment for the motor vehicle engineering course meets industry standards. Overhead projectors and other teaching aids such as video camcorders are in good supply and distribution and maintenance are generally well managed. However, the links between the main building,

where most of the equipment is housed, and the Chingford site, are poor, occasionally resulting in longer than necessary repair times. The quality and condition of the blackboards, whiteboards and projection screens vary considerably. In the main site buildings, most are in reasonably good condition, but at the Chingford site, some boards are decrepit and poorly sited.

87 Information technology facilities throughout the college are good. There are 454 computer workstations, giving a good student to workstation ratio of 7.4:1. There is a 65 station information technology resource room which is well used by students. All the machines are gradually being connected to a developing network which will greatly increase their data-searching capabilities and their value to students. A long-term information technology strategy for the college includes networking and video conference facilities. The English and mathematics centre has a collection of learning materials as well as 16 computers, audio equipment and facilities for the visually and hearing impaired. There is a multi-media materials development unit which is able to produce materials on compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases to support course teams. There is also a television studio and editing suite.

88 The 100-seat library at the Forest Road main site is clean and comfortable and has some areas for private study, but it is too small for the number of students enrolled and does not adequately support learning. There are two CD-ROM machines for students to use but the range of software is limited: for example, there is no software for science. All the books are computer catalogued, but the system is old and not user friendly. There is a smaller, 40-place library at the Chingford site. Overall, the bookstock is currently about 30,000 and expenditure last year was £10.75 per student. The range and quantity of library books are inadequate for many subject areas. Business studies students are particularly disadvantaged and there is little provision for wider reading. There are 173 periodicals and newspapers on subscription. Despite an electronic security system, around 900 books were stolen or not returned last year. Within schools, the range and breadth of textbooks are adequate for most courses, though the book resources for students on English courses are insufficient in number and are out of date.

89 The staff have access to an excellent reprographics facility. There are also 27 photocopiers available throughout college which are serviced and maintained on an ad-hoc basis. Considerable savings are lost by not having a college-wide photocopier purchasing and maintenance strategy. Long-term leases on these and on other items of equipment, negotiated before incorporation, constitute a significant proportion of the resources budget.

Accommodation

90 The college occupies two sites in North East London. The main Forest Road site is in Walthamstow. It constitutes two large buildings and a

number of smaller classrooms in outbuildings, covering an area of 2.79 hectares. The entrance to the front building is an impressive neo-classical design with wide stone steps leading up to a multi-columned facade and doorway, which is represented symbolically in the college logo. Behind this is the Lowery building which has a leaking roof and peeling paint inside and out. The Chingford site, two miles away, is also in generally poor condition. The outbuildings which are used as classrooms are shabby and uncomfortable. Most of the classrooms in the Lowery building and on the Chingford site are in need of decoration. They provide a depressing learning environment. The college also has access to a residential study centre owned by the Youth Hostels Association at Castle Heddingham in Essex.

91 Desks, chairs and other furniture are generally in good condition and suitable for their purpose. Part of the main hall has been converted to two 64-seat lecture theatres of a high standard. The rest of the hall is utilised most lunchtimes for badminton, table tennis and other student activities. It is also let out for private functions to the local operatic society and the Forest Philharmonic Orchestra.

92 In general, the accommodation is used reasonably efficiently. A new system of room allocation has recently been implemented and areas for improvement have been identified. Except for the libraries, there are no other formal areas for students' private study or group work. Some classrooms are left open and unsupervised for this purpose but tend to be used for recreational purposes, especially around lunchtimes and early evening. A new student common room, equipped with pool tables, video games and satellite television was opened in January. However, at this early stage, it is not being used by a full cross-section of students. The student refectories are quite small, and spartan in appearance and furnishing.

93 The college has several areas that serve as realistic work environments. For example, the 50-cover training restaurant, is open to the public at lunchtimes and some evenings. There is a small nursery facility for use by staff and students and a 30 x 10 metre swimming pool, which is also let to local schools and other parties. The quality of the accommodation for staff varies. Some teaching staff are sited at a considerable distance from their teaching areas, and shelf and storage space is at a premium. All but one of the classrooms at the Forest Road site are accessible to students who use wheelchairs. Very little of the Chingford site has access for students with disabilities. There are some car-parking places at the Forest Road site which are set aside during the day for students with restricted mobility.

94 College security has recently been improved. There are now a number of closed-circuit television cameras linked to one system in particularly vulnerable areas. It is hoped that this will restrict the resources lost through theft and break in, which last year amounted to £15,000, as well as ensuring a safer environment for staff and students.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

95 Waltham Forest College is making good progress towards achieving its mission. The strengths of the college are:

- its responsiveness to the needs of students, the community and industry
- the wide range of academic and vocational courses
- effective arrangements for governing the college
- strong, determined leadership from senior managers
- hardworking and conscientious heads of school and knowledgeable, committed teaching staff
- effective arrangements for enrolment and induction
- good progress in providing learning support for students
- some good teaching in almost all areas of the college's work
- success in enabling students to enter higher education, particularly from vocational and access courses
- good practice in course review and evaluation
- good resources to support learning in most subjects.

96 If the college is to continue to raise its standards, it should:

- improve communications between senior staff and teaching staff
- improve the management structure within schools
- improve the quality of management information and of access to it by curriculum managers and tutors
- develop cross-college procedures for admissions and pre-course assessment of students' skills
- develop a cross-college approach to good practice in tutorial support
- improve the quality of teaching and learning methods on some courses
- improve students' level of achievement on some courses
- improve retention rates and attendance on some courses
- develop a whole-college system for internal verification of the assessment of NVQs and GNVQs
- develop the libraries as a resource
- improve the accommodation for some courses.

FIGURES

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

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

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

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

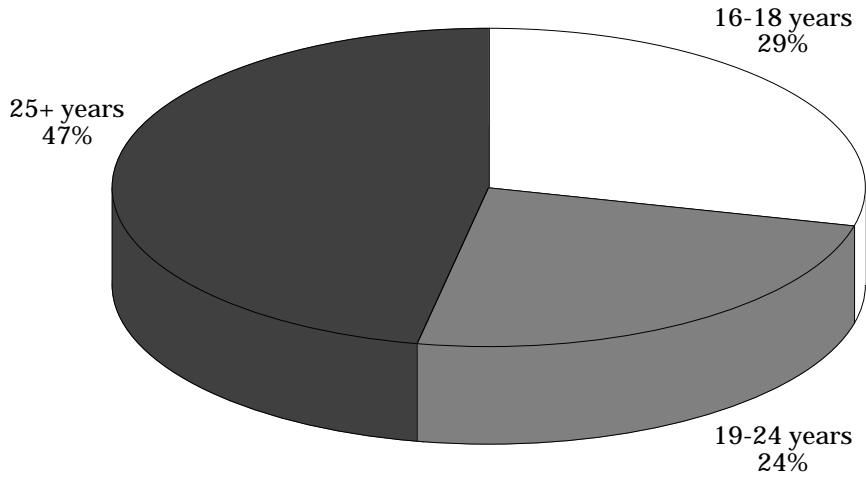
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

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

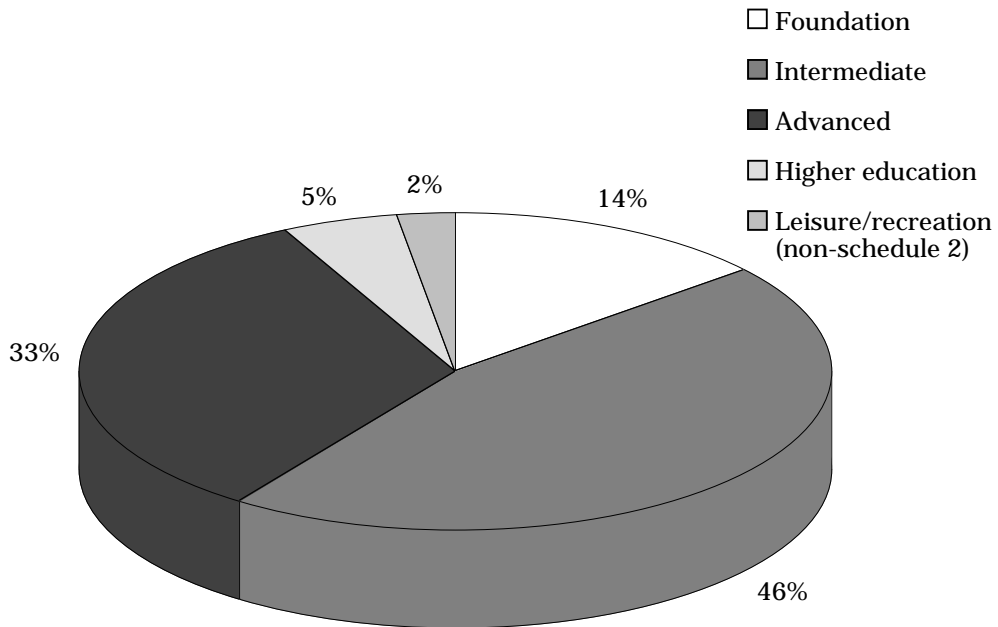


Enrolments: 9,460

Note: this chart excludes 40 enrolments under the age of 16.

Figure 2

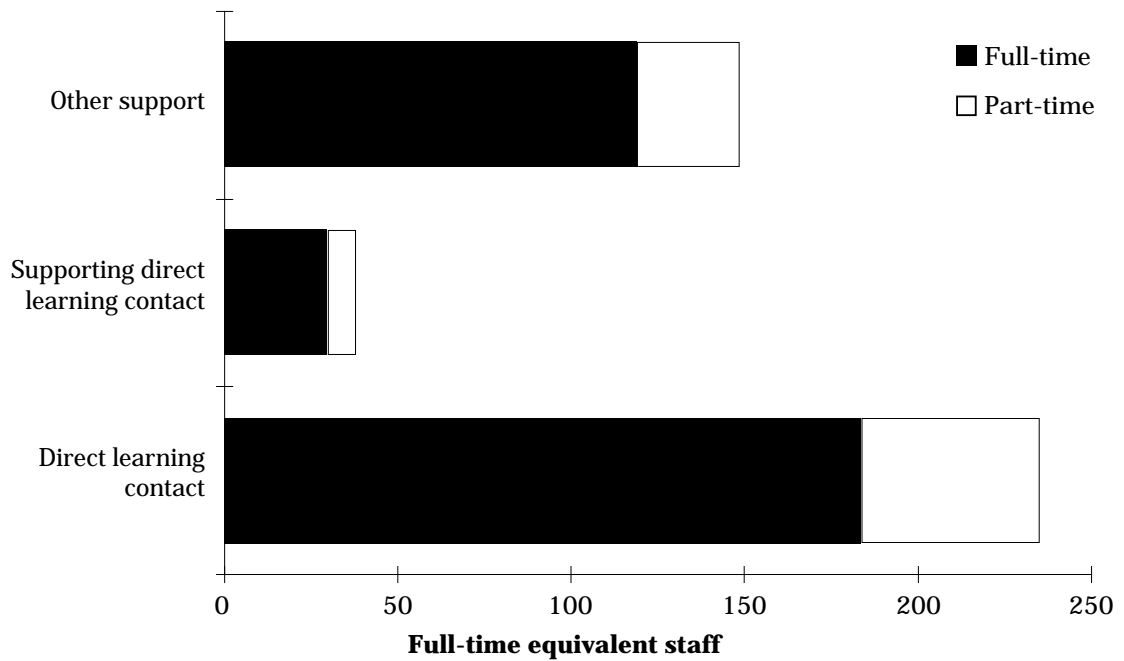
Waltham Forest College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 9,460

Figure 3

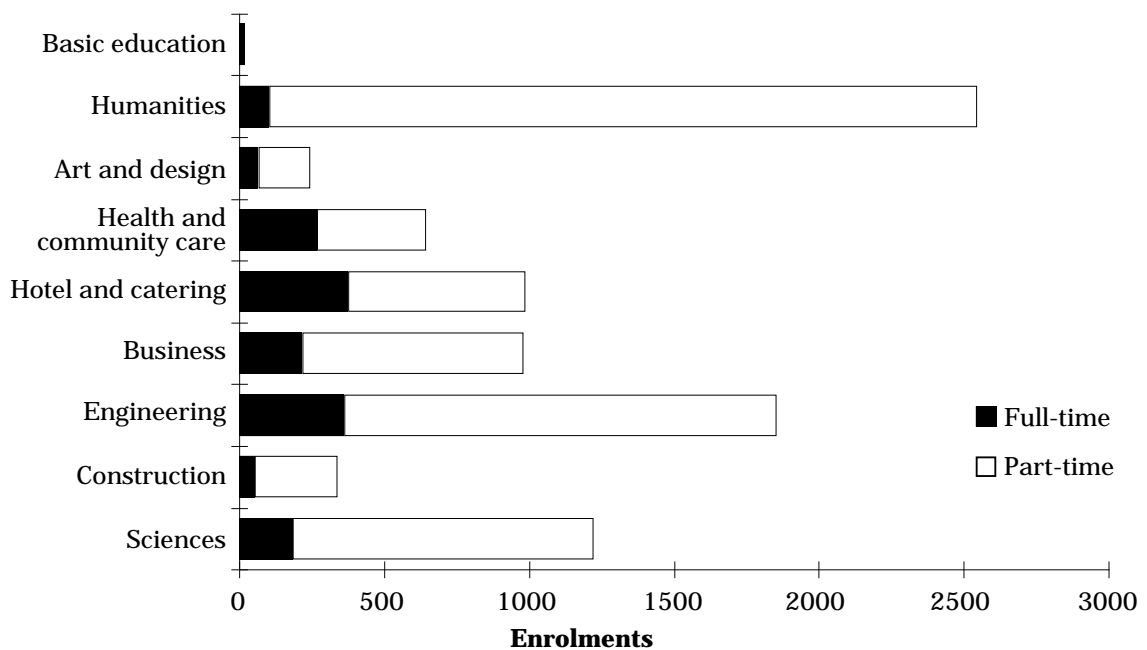
Waltham Forest College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1994)



Full-time equivalent staff: 422

Figure 4

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

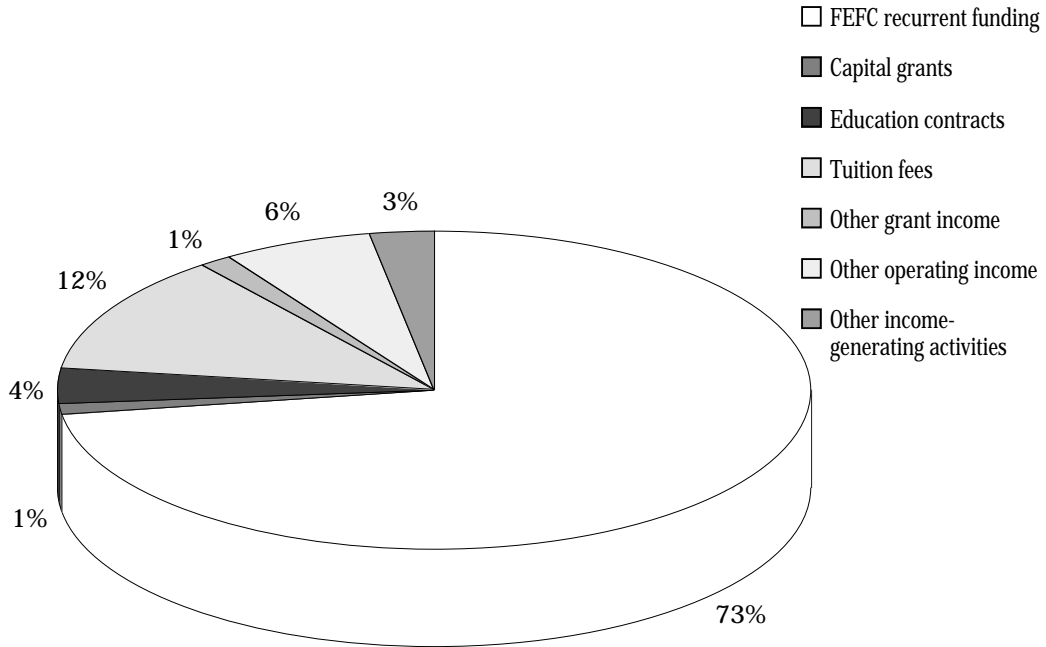


Enrolments: 9,460

Note: this chart excludes four part-time agriculture enrolments.

Figure 5

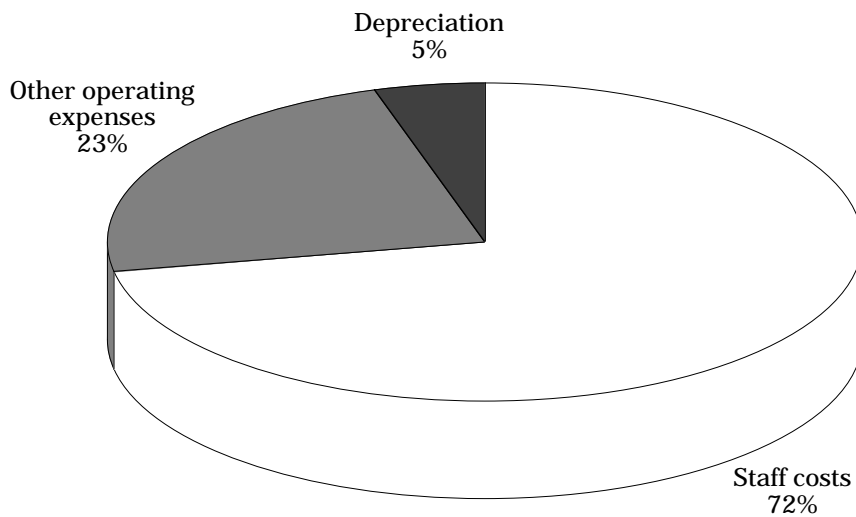
Waltham Forest College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)



Income: £18,509,000

Figure 6

Waltham Forest College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £19,616,000

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