

Pendleton College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1998-99**

**THE
FURTHER
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FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses
- grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses
- grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses
- grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths
- grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

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

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

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

Student Achievements

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

- as expected completions, which is the number of initial enrolments on qualifications where the student expected to complete the qualification in a given year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which the students have completed as expected (or are continuing with the prospect of late completion). For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not shown.

Summary

Pendleton College

North West Region

Inspected December 1998

Pendleton College is a sixth form college in Salford, Greater Manchester. The production of its first self-assessment report involved all teachers in the self-assessment of their curriculum area. The report was comprehensive, but insufficiently evaluative and some of its judgements lacked clarity. Action plans were not clearly linked to the weaknesses identified. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the report, but considered that, in the main, the college had been overgenerous in its grading of provision. In particular, it had understated weaknesses in students' retention and achievements. Inspectors agreed with one of the curriculum grades and with two of the cross-college grades that were awarded by the college.

Since the last inspection, the college has successfully merged with De La Salle College, a neighbouring Roman Catholic sixth form college. It has broadened its provision and has established an extensive programme of collaborative provision and distance learning. Its financial position is strong. The accommodation at the De La Salle centre has been extensively refurbished. The college has good links with schools and with a wide range of partners. It provides helpful guidance to potential students, and a high level of practical support to those requiring it. Governors have a good understanding of the college and are closely involved in setting the college's strategic

direction. The quality of most lessons was good, and teaching programmes were well organised. The newly established vocational areas have good links with employers, provide well-organised work experience placements for students and are appropriately resourced. Provision in beauty therapy is particularly successful. Students' retention rates across the college are significantly below the average for sixth form colleges, and achievements are poor in many areas. The college has made little progress in developing its quality assurance system since the last inspection. The college should: improve its poor operational planning and target-setting; strengthen its tutorial support and enrichment of the curriculum; provide more effective learning support; develop more rigorous self-assessment and quality assurance processes; strengthen its internal control systems; clarify lines of responsibility; and improve student retention and achievement rates.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Mathematics	3	Support for students	3
Business and administration	3	General resources	2
Health, care and beauty	2	Quality assurance	4
Art, design and performing arts	3	Governance	2
English and modern foreign languages	3	Management	3

The College and its Mission

1 Pendleton College was established as a sixth form college in 1973 as part of the reorganisation of education in the city of Salford. In 1997, it merged with De La Salle College, a voluntary-aided Roman Catholic sixth form college situated half a mile away. Salford has one other sixth form college and a general further education college within a three-mile radius of Pendleton College. None of the schools in Salford has a sixth form. The college is located three miles from Manchester city centre. A wide range of further education provision is available to students in the Manchester area.

2 Salford has a population of a quarter of a million people. It has pockets of severe inner-city deprivation: 31% of the population live in wards which are among the 10% most deprived wards nationally. In 1998, the proportion of year 11 pupils leaving school with five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) grades C or above was 33.3%, compared with a national average of 46.3%. In 1997, only 48% of pupils of school-leaving age in Salford continued in full-time education, some 20% below the national figure. The unemployment rate for Salford was 5.1% in 1997, compared with a national rate of 5.0%.

3 The college's full-time students are drawn mainly from the 12 local authority schools and five voluntary-aided Roman Catholic schools in Salford. In November 1998, the college had 1,279 students, 830 of whom were studying full time. Of the full-time students, 50% were studying general certificate of education advanced/advanced supplementary level (GCE A/AS level) courses, 15% were following general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes at advanced level, 16% were following GCSE and GNVQ intermediate programmes, and 19% were studying other vocational programmes. A small number of adults attend the college to study part time in the evenings. The college also enrolls part-time

students on distance learning and collaborative provision, mostly in first-aid and sports coaching courses; the college estimates that some 11,200 students will enrol on these courses during the 1998-99 academic year. The college has substantially broadened its curriculum to include courses not commonly found in sixth form colleges, such as beauty therapy and equine studies. It offers courses in eight of the 10 programme areas funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Provision includes 29 GCE A level subjects, 17 GCSE subjects and GNVQ programmes in eight areas. The senior management team consists of the principal, and two vice-principals, one responsible for personnel and students, and the other for curriculum, resources, estates and quality. The curriculum is grouped in seven academic departments.

4 The college occupies two sites, a main site and the site of the former De La Salle College. The main site comprises a building which dates from 1963 and a temporary building where the nursery is housed. The De La Salle centre is subject to leasing arrangements and includes a hall of residence and a chapel. The college rents facilities elsewhere for the teaching of its equine studies courses and the practical aspects of its hospitality and catering provision.

5 The college's mission is to offer educational opportunities first and foremost for students aged 16 to 19 in Salford and its surrounding area. It is the college's aim, expressed in its mission statement, that by the end of their courses students should be appropriately qualified, better prepared for continuing education or the world of work, more self-confident and socially responsible. In 1997, on the merger with De La Salle College, the college revised its mission to include responsibility for the spiritual well-being of all students and of Roman Catholic young people in particular.

Context

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected in December 1998. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and had studied information held by other divisions of the FEFC. Inspectors used data on students' achievements drawn from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1996 and 1997. The college submitted data on students' achievements for 1998. These were checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies and were found to be accurate. The college was notified approximately two months before the inspection of the sample of provision to be inspected. The

inspection was carried out by 10 inspectors and an auditor, working for a total of 42 days. Inspection team members held meetings with college governors, managers, staff and students. They consulted representatives of the local education authority (LEA), the De La Salle Brothers, business and community groups, and the local training and enterprise council (TEC).

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the lessons observed, 69% were judged to be good or outstanding and 2% were less than satisfactory. This compares with the national averages of 65% and 6%, respectively, for all colleges inspected during 1997-98.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	5	10	5	0	0	20
GCSE	0	6	5	0	0	11
GNVQ	1	6	4	1	0	12
Other vocational	5	5	2	0	0	12
Total (No.)	11	27	16	1	0	55
Total (%)	20	49	29	2	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

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

Context

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

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Pendleton College	9.5	81
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

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

Curriculum Areas

Mathematics

Grade 3

9 Inspectors observed 10 lessons on GCE A level and GCSE courses. The self-assessment report did not contain sufficient evaluation of the quality of mathematics provision. It overstated some of the strengths in this area of work. Inspectors found some weaknesses in teaching and learning which were not mentioned in the report.

Key strengths

- a suitable range of courses
- appropriate attention to the presentation and development of mathematical arguments
- effective organisation of courses
- high GCE A level pass rates in 1996 and 1997
- improving retention rates on GCSE courses

Weaknesses

- a narrow range of approaches to teaching and learning
- poor retention rates for students on two-year GCE A level courses
- the weak algebraic and numerical skills of many students
- poor action-planning to bring about improvements in the quality of provision

10 The college offers a suitable range of courses for school-leavers and adults at different stages of their mathematical development. This strength was noted in the self-assessment report. GCSE courses, offered during the day and in the evenings, form a major part of the provision. Provision at GCE A/AS level is flexibly arranged; modules in further mathematics, mechanics, statistics and pure

mathematics can be combined appropriately to meet the needs and interests of individuals.

11 Lessons are carefully prepared, and teaching is sound. Working relationships between teachers and students are good. When developing theory and solving problems, teachers emphasise the importance of using correct notation and of presenting logical solutions. At the end of the better lessons, teachers draw together key points and offer students some indication of how the work might develop further. For example, at the end of a mechanics lesson the teacher asked the students to compare the acceleration of a motorcyclist with that of an apple falling off a tree. The subsequent discussion enabled the teacher to indicate to students that the equations of motion could be applied to objects accelerating as a result of the force of gravity. Inspectors did not agree with the college's judgement that students experience an appropriate variety of teaching methods. The lessons observed did not include practical and investigative work, the use of information technology (IT) as a mathematical tool, opportunities for students to work in pairs or the use of learning resources other than worksheets, even though there was scope for such activities to be included. In some GCSE lessons teachers do not take enough account of students' prior experience of learning mathematics.

12 The high pass rate on the two-year GCE A level course was identified as a particular strength in the self-assessment report. In 1996 and 1997, all students who completed the course were successful, but in 1998 the pass rate fell to 75%. Some students struggle with the demands of GCE A/AS level work because they are unable to differentiate and integrate simple functions, or manipulate algebraic expressions and numerical fractions. In 1996 and 1997, the proportion of students who obtained grade C or above on GCSE courses was well above the national average for sixth form colleges but, in 1998, it fell significantly to 44%.

Curriculum Areas

Nevertheless, college data show that 72% of students who retook the examination were able to improve their performance by at least one grade. Retention rates for students on the two-year GCE A level course are poor. The need to improve students' retention was identified as a major priority in the action plan accompanying the self-assessment report. The plan, however, does not give sufficient details about the action to be taken to improve students' retention rates and performance. The self-assessment report itself did not acknowledge the poor retention rates. Retention rates for the GCSE programme show gradual improvement over the last three years to a figure broadly similar to national benchmarking data.

13 Courses are effectively organised. Schemes of work are detailed, as indicated in the self-assessment report, but they do not pay enough attention to the continuous development of students' mathematical and numerical skills. Teachers of mathematics meet termly to discuss operational matters but they do not give enough attention to identifying and sharing best practice in teaching methods. The quality of records of students' progress kept by individual teachers varies considerably and in some instances it is poor.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE mathematics	2	Expected completions	203	210	212
		Retention (%)	63	68	73
		Achievement (%)	54	57	44
GCE A level mathematics	3	Expected completions	56	42	40
		Retention (%)	63	24	50
		Achievement (%)	100	100	75

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

Curriculum Areas

Business and Administration

Grade 3

14 Inspectors observed 10 lessons, covering a wide range of courses. They agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They considered, however, that the college had failed to acknowledge some low rates of students' achievements and some weaknesses in teaching and that it had given too high a grade to this area of provision.

Key strengths

- some well-planned, stimulating lessons
- useful business links
- consistently good pass rates in GCE A level business studies
- attractive and businesslike working environments

Weaknesses

- undemanding and insufficiently varied activities in some lessons
- poor pass rates on GNVQ programmes
- some unsatisfactory retention rates

15 As its self-assessment report stated, the college offers a varied range of business courses from foundation to advanced levels. Most students are aged 16 to 19 years and undertake full-time GCE A level, GNVQ, national vocational qualification (NVQ) or office skills courses. There are some adults on full-time programmes and several part-time courses meet the needs both of adults and younger students. Courses are thoroughly planned and effectively managed. Assessment arrangements are well documented, and there are thorough procedures for verifying assessment standards. Inspectors could not agree fully with the statement in the self-assessment report that key skills are an integral part of vocational programmes. Although key skills are a well-established and

integral component of full-time vocational programmes, they are not necessarily covered in part-time courses. Furthermore, the college does not systematically identify the needs of part-time students in relation to key skills. Members of the department use their links with business for the benefit of students, for example by arranging visits to local firms and obtaining up-to-date and relevant materials. Administration students are able to develop their skills in realistic work situations and they benefit particularly from efficiently arranged work placements.

16 Most lessons are well planned and their aims are made clear to students. There were some particularly stimulating and productive lessons in which students enthusiastically undertook varied activities, working both on their own and together, to produce solutions which showed good understanding of the practical aspects of business. Teachers give support and attention to individual students to ensure that their needs are met. In a lesson on a GNVQ advanced course, after initial discussion on the social costs of business, students worked in groups on a related assignment, showing a good awareness of the issues and working responsibly and systematically. The lesson was well controlled by the teacher, who gave the students support and guidance. All students are encouraged to develop IT skills. Many use the internet as a useful source of current information on business activities, to complement their theoretical knowledge. However, the self-assessment report overstated the extent of the good teaching and learning. Some lessons lack appropriate variety, and the demands made on students are often too low. For example, in one lesson, the teacher spent far too long reading through a handout without questioning the students on their understanding of it or engaging them in discussion about its content. In another, time was wasted copying from overhead transparencies. Some marking failed to correct errors in the students' written English.

Curriculum Areas

17 Students' pass rates vary considerably. Results in GCE A level business studies have improved steadily and for the last two years they have exceeded the national averages for sixth form colleges. In 1998, all candidates passed. Of these, 54% obtained grade C or above and most achieved grades which were higher than those predicted for them on the basis of their previous performance in the GCSE. Pass rates of students following GNVQ programmes at both advanced and intermediate levels have been consistently below national averages, although the GNVQ advanced pass rate improved significantly in 1998. In 1998, the retention and pass rates were excellent on courses leading to wordprocessing at stage 1 and to NVQ administration at level 2. Students' achievements in office skills have varied considerably and in some instances they have

been poor. In 1996 and 1997, retention rates were low on some office skills courses. The self-assessment report did not acknowledge these poor retention and pass rates.

18 Teachers keep abreast of commercial and curriculum developments. Inspectors agreed with the comment in the self-assessment report that teachers have a good level of industrial knowledge and experience. Much learning takes place in well-equipped specialist accommodation which contains excellent displays of subject material and provides a suitable business environment. Up-to-date business books and periodicals are available in the libraries. Early library closing times and restrictions on borrowing disadvantage some students, but students are able to borrow books from the well-chosen departmental collection.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Wordprocessing stage 1 and social care	1	Expected completions	100	25	99
		Retention (%)	54	68	87
		Achievement (%)	43	94	90
GNVQ intermediate business	2	Expected completions	20	20	16
		Retention (%)	65	75	69
		Achievement (%)	31	53	27
GCE A level business studies	3	Expected completions	93	83	34
		Retention (%)	70	59	76
		Achievement (%)	76	86	100
GNVQ advanced business	3	Expected completions	14	26	22
		Retention (%)	71	35	77
		Achievement (%)	30	33	71

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

Curriculum Areas

Health, Care and Beauty

Grade 2

19 The inspection covered a range of childcare, health and social care, and beauty therapy courses, including collaborative provision in first aid. Twelve lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They found both strengths and weaknesses, however, which were not identified by the college.

Key strengths

- outstanding provision in beauty therapy
- the high quality of teaching
- good use of relevant work experience
- well-managed collaborative provision
- good resources

Weaknesses

- declining achievement rates on childcare and nursery nursing courses
- low retention rates on some courses
- some unsatisfactory teaching of key skills

20 This curriculum area has been successfully developed over recent years, including the introduction of beauty therapy courses in September 1997. Course teams manage their work effectively. A programme of frequent meetings enables courses to be regularly reviewed and monitored. Key performance indicators are discussed during meetings, but not all courses set specific performance targets. The departmental manager reviews provision annually and has regular departmental meetings. Collaborative first-aid provision, delivered in partnership with St John Ambulance, forms a substantial part of this area of work. In its self-assessment report, the college identified the good management and

regular monitoring of provision in this curriculum area as strengths. It also acknowledged as strengths its strong links with the community and with employers. As a result of the college's good links with employers, students on care and beauty therapy courses are provided with opportunities for wide-ranging work experience. Workplace supervisors speak highly of the good communication they have with college staff. Extra-curricular activities are available to students. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that students on nursery nursing courses are unable to take part in these activities because of timetabled commitments.

21 Work experience is well managed. It is an integral part of courses and students can relate what they have learned in college to activities in the workplace. Students on work experience in a primary school were able to apply knowledge they had learned in college about children's development of fine motor skills when carrying out activities with the pupils. Students' progress on work experience is monitored regularly. Staff identify aspects of students' performance which need to be improved and they record students' achievements.

22 Teaching in all areas is effective, and most of the lessons in beauty therapy were judged to be outstanding. Students speak highly of the support they get from their teachers. Teachers use their knowledge and experience of the workplace to relate theory to practice. Teaching and learning activities are appropriately varied and they enable students to develop and demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding to the requisite standard. In the better lessons, teachers encouraged students to link aspects of learning from different course modules when developing workplace skills. For example, in a lesson on planning the early years curriculum, students worked in small groups to identify how key objectives relating to key stage 1 of the national curriculum could be achieved through water play. The self-assessment report

Curriculum Areas

failed to acknowledge that teachers miss opportunities to further the students' development of key skills. For example, a group of students on the GNVQ intermediate course had prepared a presentation on health promotion but the teacher failed to use the activity as a means of assessing the students' ability in the key skill of communication.

23 Student achievement and retention rates on beauty therapy courses are excellent. On the GNVQ intermediate health and social care programme, rates of achievement and retention have improved in 1998 to a level which is above the national average. On childcare courses, retention rates are low, and a large proportion of students on the diploma of nursery nursing course are continuing on a part-time basis because they failed to complete the award within the expected timescale in 1998. In lessons and in the workplace, students

demonstrate oral, written and practical skills at an appropriate level. Students on the GNVQ advanced course used a variety of different materials, including jigsaws, board games and posters, to demonstrate their knowledge of food and diet. Strengths and weaknesses in students' achievements are not sufficiently evaluated in the self-assessment report.

24 Teaching accommodation is good, a strength noted in the self-assessment report. All classrooms and practical areas used for the lessons observed were suitable for the learning activities undertaken and for the size of the groups. The beauty therapy suite consists of well-equipped salons with an adjacent classroom for theory work. Wall displays celebrate students' achievements and help to create a stimulating working environment. Learning is supported with good-quality overhead transparencies and handouts.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	Expected completions	17	20	28
		Retention (%)	65	65	82
		Achievement (%)	45	62	74
Certificate in childcare and education	2	Expected completions	16	16	23
		Retention (%)	50	75	70
		Achievement (%)	88	67	45
NVQ beauty therapy	2	Expected completions	*	*	16
		Retention (%)	*	*	94
		Achievement (%)	*	*	93
Diploma in nursery nursing	3	Expected completions	*	24	19
		Retention (%)	*	75	63
		Achievement (%)	*	94	58

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

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Art, Design and Performing Arts

Grade 3

25 Inspectors observed 11 lessons across a range of courses in art, design and performing arts. They considered that in its self-assessment of this curriculum area, the college overestimated some strengths and failed to identify some weaknesses, particularly in relation to students' achievements.

Key strengths

- well-planned lessons
- effective and enthusiastic teaching teams
- detailed feedback to and rigorous action-planning for students
- good resources
- students' high levels of achievement in GCE A level art

Weaknesses

- insufficient adaptation of teaching and learning methods to suit students of different attainment in the same group
- too limited a range of specialist studies
- insufficient action-planning and target-setting
- poor achievements in photography
- declining and poor rates of retention and achievement on GNVQ advanced courses

26 Teaching programmes are thoroughly planned, and have detailed schemes of work and assessment arrangements. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic, and work well together in subject teams. In their teaching, however, they fail to make sufficient links between related subject areas in order to help the students to acquire a more comprehensive

understanding of the overall scope of their course. The range of specialist studies available to students in GCE A level art and GNVQ art and design is too limited. The lack of opportunity for students to carry out three-dimensional work and to develop skills in graphics and ceramics was not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. The planning of future developments and improvements in this curriculum area and the setting of targets lack rigour.

27 In many lessons, the teaching was good. More than three-quarters of the lessons had strengths which outweighed weaknesses, but only one was judged to be outstanding. Some teaching groups contain students working at different levels, and where this occurred teachers often failed to cater effectively for the diversity of students in the group. As the self-assessment report indicated, teachers encourage students to extend their work outside the classroom environment and the students' success in doing so is reflected in the breadth of work in their projects. Project briefs are helpful and well designed, and ensure that students are guided through the assessment process. Subject-based tutorials help students to understand the criteria for success. In the tutorials, students readily discuss their own work and that of others, developing their critical and analytical skills. The performing arts curriculum includes performances in the community. Students mount productions for the public in the college's theatre, in local venues and in commercial theatres such as the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield. They have attended a masterclass led by Ben Kingsley. In studios and classrooms, the work ethos is purposeful and the friendly environment encourages learning.

28 Students' achievements in GCE A level art are above the national average for sixth form colleges. Of the 27 students who sat the examination in 1998, 26 achieved a pass grade and 17 passed at grades A to C. Rates of retention and achievement are improving on

Curriculum Areas

some courses, such as GNVQ intermediate art and design programmes. The self-assessment report did not mention the low rates of retention and achievement on GNVQ advanced programmes. Few students achieve the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) photography qualification. The quality of students' portfolios, and of their written and practical work, is good, and reflects the high standards expected by their teachers. GCE A level students were working on a project concerning the development of motor skills in pre-school children. They displayed highly developed skills in analysis, problem-solving, visual communication and practical realisation. Verifiers' reports indicate that students are achieving appropriate standards.

29 Resources within the area are good. The excellence of the music technology equipment was not identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Studios and performance spaces are fit for their purpose, and workshop areas have adequate equipment. IT resources in the art and design suite are limited and, as a result, opportunities for work in graphic design are too limited in scope. Available resources are not always employed to best advantage and there is no scheme for ensuring their most effective use. For example, the large design technology workshop is underused, and its potential to contribute to the work of the art and performing arts curriculum is insufficiently exploited.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in art, design and performing arts, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	Expected completions	16	17	19
		Retention (%)	63	65	79
		Achievement (%)	30	64	67
C&G photography	2	Expected completions	20	29	*
		Retention (%)	70	79	*
		Achievement (%)	0	10	*
GNVQ advanced art and design, performing arts	3	Expected completions	10	9	39
		Retention (%)	100	67	56
		Achievement (%)	67	83	33
GCE A level design technology	3	Expected completions	27	17	15
		Retention (%)	56	65	80
		Achievement (%)	47	73	75
GCE A level art	3	Expected completions	27	+	37
		Retention (%)	48	+	73
		Achievement (%)	92	+	96

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

*data not available

+ISR-derived data were incomplete

Curriculum Areas

English and Modern Foreign Languages

Grade 3

30 The inspection covered provision in English language, English literature, French, German, Spanish and basic communication. Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with some of the strengths in the college's self-assessment report and noted some additional ones. Some key weaknesses were not identified in the report.

Key strengths

- some good teaching and learning
- good support for students in their studies
- regular and careful assessment of students' work
- well-organised courses

Weaknesses

- the lack of rigour and momentum in some teaching
- low retention rates
- poor students' achievements on many courses
- lack of rigour in monitoring performance and setting of targets

31 Teachers co-ordinate their teaching well. They issue students with thorough and informative course handbooks and schemes of work. The schemes of work focus on the demands of the examinations and clearly identify students' tasks and assignments, but they do not identify the purpose of activities or the skills to be developed. Arrangements for moderating and standardising students' work are well established. Teachers have close contact with the relevant examination boards and several serve as examiners. Monitoring of

students' performance is not well developed and, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report, target-setting is poor. Teachers are unclear about the criteria to adopt in setting targets, and some of the targets they have set are unrealistic. Course reviews acknowledge some low levels of achievement, but do not identify any strategies for improvement. The college's data on the value-added factor in students' achievements, calculated by comparing students' actual GCE A level results with those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE attainment, are not used in the analysis of results.

32 There is some good teaching and learning. Two-thirds of lessons were good or outstanding. This is below the proportion found nationally as stated in *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*. Most lessons are carefully structured and contain a variety of appropriate activities. In a GCSE English lesson, students worked on a range of oral tasks. As a result of carrying these out, the students had, by the end of the lesson, produced a plan for their next assignment and the teacher had been able to assess their performance in oral skills. In many instances, discussion between teachers and students was lively and suitably focused. For example, question-and-answer sessions and group work were effective and well structured. In a GCE A level English language lesson, the teacher made skilful interventions to help students in their analysis of some demanding texts. In modern foreign languages, teachers conducted the lessons in the language being studied, and made effective use of the language assistants. The self-assessment report did not identify as a strength, the effective methods which teachers used in some lessons in order to cater for the individual needs of students. Some teaching is dull and lacks momentum and rigour. In some lessons, the teacher spent too long on explanations, failed to check the students' understanding of them and did not

Curriculum Areas

require the students' full participation in demanding tasks. The purpose of activities was not always clear. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that there are productive relationships between teachers and students and that students are well supported. There is a high level of support for coursework preparation and many teachers give generously of their time to help individuals. Students' work is carefully assessed. Teachers' comments on students' written work are positive and encouraging, and they indicate how the students may improve their performance.

33 Retention rates on the courses in this curriculum area are significantly below averages published by the FEFC. For example, only 47% of students who started courses in GCE A level modern foreign languages in 1996, completed them. Pass rates on several courses are also low. GCE A level English literature pass rates have been significantly below the national average for sixth form colleges in two of the last three years. GCSE English results have

improved steadily over the last three years to a level which is above the average for sixth form colleges, but retention rates on the GCSE course have fallen. The college calculates the extent of progress made by students during their course by comparing their GCE A level results with predictions based on their previous GCSE results. In 1998, on average, students on all subjects in English and language courses achieved results below those predicted for them. The self-assessment report did not identify weaknesses in students' achievements in this curriculum area.

34 Teaching takes place in well-decorated specialist accommodation which has a clear affinity with particular subjects. Students' work is displayed to good effect. Students are provided with a wide range of learning resources, although these vary in quality and some are of poor quality. There are examples of good study guides, particularly in GCE A level English language.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE English	2	Expected completions	189	205	218
		Retention (%)	61	65	57
		Achievement (%)	28	51	62
GCSE modern foreign languages	2	Expected completions	28	23	28
		Retention (%)	25	61	61
		Achievement (%)	57	43	53
GCE A level English courses	3	Expected completions	92	62	103
		Retention (%)	67	58	66
		Achievement (%)	85	87	82
GCE A level modern foreign languages	3	Expected completions	23	24	19
		Retention (%)	70	75	47
		Achievement (%)	53	59	100

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

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Support for Students

Grade 3

35 The self-assessment report was detailed and inspectors agreed with many of its findings. The report did not include sufficient evaluation of some key aspects of support for students, such as tutorial arrangements and the provision of learning support. Inspectors found a number of weaknesses which were not identified by the college.

Key strengths

- good pre-entry guidance
- effective induction processes
- readily accessible and well-resourced careers guidance
- teachers' strong commitment to providing good support for students
- a high level of practical and financial support for students

Weaknesses

- inadequate provision of learning support in numeracy
- some instances of unsatisfactory tutorial practice
- insufficient guidance for students intending to enter employment
- inadequate range of social and extra-curricular activities
- inadequate counselling arrangements

36 There are well-established procedures for informing pupils of local schools and their parents about the college's provision, such as open days and evenings, school events and careers fairs. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that liaison with schools is effective. Admissions procedures are well defined. However, the college has identified the need to modify some admissions arrangements in order to cater more adequately for students'

diverse needs. Information about the college is clearly written. Some short courses, such as those for Asian women, which are run with help from an outreach worker, are publicised in community languages. The induction process is supportive and effective. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, the student handbook is comprehensive and includes clear information on students' entitlements, rights and responsibilities. Students appreciate the friendly atmosphere at the college, and the high level of personal support they receive from teachers.

37 All students are allocated a personal tutor whom they meet, in tutor groups, for a 15-minute tutorial once a week. These sessions are used mainly to give students information by means of the college bulletin. Attendance at the tutorials is often poor. Students are also entitled to regular individual tutorials at which they may discuss their progress and set their targets. There is significant variation in tutorial practice and some tutorials are more effective than others. In the best tutorials, tutors keep detailed records of discussions with students. They set the students realistic targets and monitor the students' progress towards reaching these. Many vocational courses have a regular schedule of individual tutorials. On other courses, tutorial provision is less systematic. In some instances, students had not had an individual tutorial after almost four months in the college. There is no tutorial curriculum or entitlement to ensure that all students have opportunities to explore personal and social issues, receive health education or develop study skills. For some students, however, such opportunities occur through the teaching and learning on their course. Few students add information to their record of achievement. Part-time students and those on distance learning programmes have access to tutorial support.

38 In 1998, for the first time, students aged 16 to 19 were tested at induction to identify their needs for additional literacy and numeracy

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support. Those requiring literacy support receive help either on a one-to-one basis or within small groups. No students have taken up the offer of additional numeracy support. The inadequate provision of learning support was highlighted as an issue in the college's previous inspection report. There is still no provision for students across the college who encounter difficulties with the mathematical aspects of their courses. Those students who have support needs as a result of physical disabilities or specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, are given systematic and additional help.

39 There are opportunities on Wednesday afternoons for students to participate in sport, although timetabled lessons prevent some students from attending. There are few other opportunities for students to engage in extra-curricular or enrichment activities. The range of student social activities is limited. Student council meetings are not well attended. These weaknesses were identified in the self-assessment report.

40 The college provides good support for students progressing to higher education. There is up-to-date and comprehensive careers information on both sites. A quality standard in careers education and guidance was recently achieved by the college. Students value the range of higher education guidance available from tutors, senior tutors and the specialist careers guidance officer. The self-assessment report recognised that support for students seeking direct entry into employment is less well developed. There are, for example, few opportunities for students to meet employers, other than through the work placements provided for those on vocational courses.

41 Students receive good levels of practical support. Student support officers give information and assistance on basic welfare issues and sources of financial support, such as the college hardship fund. The college provides subsidised bus transport and free meals to students under the terms of published criteria.

Students value the free college nursery provision. Arrangements for personal counselling are inadequate. The self-assessment report did not identify this weakness. The college mission states that the college has a special responsibility for the spiritual well-being of all students and Roman Catholic people in particular. The college provides opportunities for religious worship for students, including mass in the chapel on notable occasions in the church calendar. The college recognises that it does not satisfy the requirement of section 44 of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* to provide a weekly act of collective worship. Students have opportunities to meet the college chaplains and there are facilities to promote worship for Muslim students. Very few students use the chapel or the chaplaincy.

General Resources

Grade 2

42 Inspectors broadly agreed with the college's judgement on the quality of general resources. However, the self-assessment report did not provide a clear analysis of strengths and weaknesses relating to general resources, and contained some extraneous information. Weaknesses concerning the learning resource centres were not mentioned.

Key strengths

- well-decorated and well-equipped classrooms
- effective system for routine maintenance
- good provision of computer equipment
- the improvement of the learning environment through good wall displays
- swimming pool and theatre facilities

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Weaknesses

- poor access at De La Salle centre for students with restricted mobility
- inadequacies in learning resource centres

43 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the buildings provide a pleasant environment for students and staff. There is a systematic approach to building maintenance and the refurbishment and decoration of corridors, communal areas, classrooms and staff accommodation. Classrooms are well decorated and suitably furnished. Rooms for curriculum areas are grouped together and teachers often have work spaces in the same area. Classrooms and some corridors are brightened by displays of students' work and other materials. Reception areas at both sites are welcoming. Security has been improved on both sites by the installation of additional fencing. Since 1997, the major resource priority has been the improvement of facilities at the De La Salle centre. At the time of the merger, the site was extensively redecorated and its equipment upgraded. The college recognises that it now needs to address some problems with the buildings.

44 The college has invested substantially in IT equipment since the last inspection, as the self-assessment report acknowledged. The report states that the ratio of computers to students is 1:8, and this has been further improved since it was written. Some of the computers are in frequent use for teaching purposes on specific IT courses. Inspectors agreed, however, with the college's assessment that there are adequate arrangements for students to gain access to machines during the daytime. Facilities are open two nights a week for evening classes. The internet is readily accessible at the De La Salle centre, but is available on only two computers at the main site. The college is currently upgrading its computing facilities to

give students more access to the internet and to improve its IT network.

45 The learning resource centres at both sites are attractively furnished and provide a pleasant learning environment. Private study spaces and computer workstations, though small in number, contain a suitable range of books, periodicals and newspapers. All the computers have a CD-ROM facility and there are audiovisual facilities for viewing the 160 videos currently in stock. Books and materials may not be borrowed from the learning resource centres. Students have access to additional resource areas in departments, from which they may usually borrow materials. In many instances, these arrangements work satisfactorily. For some students and staff, however, the resource centres are open at times which are inconvenient for them. In addition, they are disadvantaged by the rule that the books in the centres are for reference only and not for borrowing. The self-assessment report did not acknowledge that students engaged on project work do not have sufficient access to the resources they need and that they are not always allowed to take books home from the department. There are insufficient formal links between the learning resource centres and the departments, and there is no comprehensive catalogue showing all stock held in the college.

46 The college provides adequate canteen and social facilities, including a separate common room for mature students at the main site. The Ben Kingsley Theatre is an exceptional resource: it is used by local community groups and has provided a venue for professional companies as well as student productions. Sports facilities at the main site include a swimming pool, gymnasium and playing fields. The changing rooms for the swimming pool are in poor condition. The college is awaiting the outcome of a lottery bid to provide a new sports centre. There is a well-used nursery for children over two years of age. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the college's self-

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assessment report that significant improvements have been made to the main site to make it more accessible to students with restricted mobility. A lift has been installed to all floors and ramps have been provided in parts of the building, although students with restricted mobility have to use a special entrance. Both sites have toilet facilities for students with disabilities. The college acknowledged in its self-assessment report that the De La Salle centre is not easily accessible to students with restricted mobility.

Quality Assurance

Grade 4

47 The self-assessment report did not give a full account of quality assurance arrangements in the college. Inspectors agreed with some of the judgements in the report, but they found some key weaknesses which were not identified by the college.

Key strengths

- the effective arrangements for gathering students' views
- well-established staff appraisal, linked to staff development
- thorough quality assurance arrangements for collaborative provision
- effective internal verification

Weaknesses

- unsystematic arrangements to assure the quality of provision in the college
- insufficient use of performance indicators, value-added data and the findings from student surveys
- inadequate course review system
- lack of impact of quality assurance on retention and achievements

- underdeveloped quality assurance arrangements for support services
- the failure to monitor progress towards fulfilling charter commitments
- the failure to record complaints and responses to them
- poor self-assessment process and report

48 Inspectors did not agree with the finding in the self-assessment report that the college has a system for quality assurance across the whole college and that its effectiveness is closely monitored. The college has made little progress in developing such a system since the previous inspection. There is no quality assurance policy, or forum where quality assurance issues are routinely discussed. The self-assessment report recognised that quality assurance, self-assessment and strategic planning are insufficiently linked. Quality assurance arrangements have not led to measurable gains in performance.

49 The system for reviewing courses is inadequate. It does not ensure that all course and subject teams conduct regular and rigorous reviews of their performance. Each department produces an annual report for its group of courses, but the quality of the reports varies widely. Most are unsatisfactory. Senior managers discuss each report with the head of department and a list of issues is agreed. Progress on these issues is reviewed at the next annual meeting. The analysis by course teams of students' achievements rarely leads to clear action plans to improve provision and the students' performance.

50 The self-assessment report recognised the need to improve the use of performance indicators for attendance, retention and achievement. In some areas of the curriculum, their use has not been established. This weakness was also highlighted in the college's previous inspection report. Information about the value-added factor in students' achievements

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is not normally used in the course review process, nor is it used in assessing whether students are making the requisite progress to attain their predicted examination grades. In 1998, in 16 of the college's 24 GCE A level subjects for which data were available, students on average performed below the level predicted by their GCSE results. Value-added data were omitted from the self-assessment report.

51 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that arrangements for gathering students' views are a strength. The college administers questionnaires on enrolment and induction; teaching and learning; and college services. The teaching and learning survey includes detailed questions about the performance of each teacher. The analysis of responses provides useful information for managers and teachers, but the findings are not systematically used in course reviews. Some curriculum areas also conduct their own surveys. Quality assurance of cross-college support services is mainly carried out through questionnaires to students. The students' views on the quality of the support services are clearly summarised and widely circulated. Support service managers decide what action should be taken in the light of the students' responses, but this action is not systematically monitored. Support areas do not have service standards, nor do they undertake any formal periodic review of the service they provide.

52 Students have received the college charter and the majority are aware of it. It is a comprehensive document with many clear and measurable commitments, but the extent to which the college meets these is not monitored. A students' suggestion box yields some worthwhile ideas which are discussed by the management team. The college has a complaints procedure, but it keeps no records of complaints or its responses to them.

53 Close attention is paid to external verifiers' reports. The GNVQ co-ordinator monitors departments' responses to verifiers'

recommendations. Internal verification of GNVQ and NVQ programmes also operates effectively. Quality assurance of collaborative provision is thorough. College staff make regular visits to partners to observe lessons, and hold review meetings with managers and teachers. Students on collaborative provision receive a summary of the college charter and complete an evaluation of their course.

54 Since the last inspection, the college has improved the quality of its staff appraisal system and staff development programme, and it achieved Investor in People status in 1997. The annual system of appraisal applies to all staff. For teachers it includes lesson observation. Staff are supportive of the system and all have been appraised. Findings from appraisal are used in drawing up the college's priorities for staff development. As a result, over the last two years, 17 middle managers have undergone an eight-day management development programme. All staff keep a professional development portfolio. This useful record contains details of their induction, appraisal and development activities.

55 The college produced its first self-assessment report in its current format in June 1998 for the inspection. All teachers were involved in the self-assessment of their curriculum area, and they valued the process. Collaborative partners were not involved in the assessment of their provision. Statements about teaching were informed by a full programme of lesson observations carried out by senior managers. Their lesson observation grades were significantly higher than those awarded by inspectors. The self-assessment of cross-college areas did not involve teachers, heads of department or support staff sufficiently. The self-assessment report was structured unsatisfactorily and as a result, it was not of significant use to the inspectors. Instead of listing strengths and weaknesses, it makes statements and attributes a grade to each of them. Many statements are descriptive rather than evaluative, and many are repeated. Some

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of the statements are contradictory. There are few evaluative comments on students' achievements. The action plans at the end of each section are not explicitly linked to the statements in that section. The college has not monitored the implementation of the action plans since the self-assessment report was produced.

Governance

Grade 2

56 Inspectors and auditors broadly agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report in relation to governance. Some of the strengths and weaknesses, however, were not stated clearly.

Key strengths

- good systems for the recruitment and induction of governors
- the governors' understanding of the college's educational business
- effective communication between governors and staff
- the governors' close involvement in determining the college's mission

Weaknesses

- lack of performance indicators in reviewing governors' performance
- inappropriate operation of the audit committee
- insufficiently detailed minutes of corporation and committee meetings

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

58 Governors have had considerable influence over the college's mission. At the time of the merger with De La Salle College, they gave careful thought to the market the college should serve. After considering the provision in the area, they decided that the college should develop broad, general and vocational education and training for students aged 16 to 19 years. They also decided to maintain and develop the provision for Roman Catholic students in Salford, previously served by De La Salle College. Governors also play an important part in the strategic planning process. The principal circulates a briefing paper to all staff and governors early in the year. This paper highlights the main areas of development for the college based on the outstanding objectives from the previous plan, and on local and national priorities. The governors debate the issues thoroughly, giving considerable steer to the final plan which they approve.

59 The corporation currently has 15 members, and there is one vacancy. To ensure that they obtain students' views the governors have decided that a student governor should be appointed. In order to make this student feel more comfortable at meetings they have also decided that a second student should be invited to attend as an observer. Governors come from a wide range of backgrounds and they use their experience and expertise for the benefit of the college. Collectively they have skills in law, finance, education, retail and human resource management. A search committee considers proposals for new members after identifying the skills needed of governors. Potential new governors are sought through advertisements, contacts of existing governors and by direct approaches to local organisations. Procedures for ensuring the eligibility of new and existing governors are not comprehensive. New governors are provided with effective induction and appropriate documentation but take-up of any subsequent training opportunities is low.

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60 Governors carried out a thorough self-assessment for the first time last year. As evidence for their evaluation, they used the analysis of responses to a detailed questionnaire, subsequent discussion at corporation meetings and a review of their work by the corporation of a comparable college. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the governors have not used measurable performance indicators to evaluate their performance systematically or regularly. For example, although a record is maintained of governors' attendance at corporation and committee meetings, this is not used as a performance indicator nor are routine reports on attendance made to the corporation.

61 The corporation meets termly and is supported by an independent clerk. The clerk has received no specific training for the role. The corporation is supported by committees which cover policy and finance, audit, remuneration and personnel, respectively. All committees have defined terms of reference. The minutes of the corporation and committee proceedings do not always contain sufficient detail. Inspectors and auditors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that there were some weaknesses in governors' understanding of financial issues. There is a lack of financial expertise within the policy and finance committee. As a result, key financial matters are considered in the audit committee, which has members with greater financial expertise, even though such matters are more appropriately the remit of the policy and finance committee. This compromises the impartiality and objectivity of the audit committee.

62 The corporation operates in an open manner and little of its business is deemed to be confidential. Members have a clear understanding of the distinction between governance and management. They approve all key college policies but do not have systems in place to monitor their implementation as a matter of routine. Governors have a good knowledge of the educational work of the

college. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the corporation maintains effective communication with staff. The two staff governors act as a useful channel of communication. They place items on the agenda of corporation meetings and they report back to staff. Governors have attended departmental meetings and have observed some classes. Staff know the governors and feel that they are able to contact them with appropriate matters. An appropriate set of standing orders is in existence and a 'whistleblowing' policy has recently been approved. The register of interests is based on a recognised sector model.

Management

Grade 3

63 Inspectors agreed with many of the findings in the self-assessment report. They considered, however, that some of the strengths of management were overstated and they identified some weaknesses which were not mentioned in the report.

Key strengths

- the effective management of the college merger
- the college's strong financial position
- the increased breadth of provision
- the college's effective collaboration with a wide range of partners

Weaknesses

- poor operational planning to support strategic objectives
- underuse of resources
- unclear lines of responsibility
- inadequate internal control systems

64 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the merger with De La Salle College was well managed. The

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mission, aims and priorities of the merged institutions were developed in an open and consultative way which involved all staff and students. As a result, there is a strong commitment from everyone in the college to furthering the college's success. Teachers and support staff from the two institutions have been successfully integrated. However, space is underused and many teachers have classes with small numbers. This has led to an imbalance in staff workloads. The college does not make the best use of the staffing and physical resources it has at its disposal.

65 The college has exceeded its targets for funding units and student numbers since incorporation. It has substantially increased the breadth of its provision and has introduced a number of vocational courses and a variety of approaches to off-site learning. The number of part-time students has grown considerably, although the number of full-time students has decreased recently. The strategic planning process involves staff at all levels. There is a well-defined planning cycle which give opportunities for staff to contribute to the final plan. The strategic plan has 11 key priorities which are well publicised throughout the college. Only a few of these priorities relate to specific performance indicators. Operational plans give insufficient indication of how these priorities will be met. Cross-college functions have no operational plans, and departmental plans make little reference to the college's strategic objectives. These plans do not contain targets and do not effectively assist the monitoring and development of the work of departments. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, target-setting is underdeveloped.

66 Since the last inspection, the college has improved its management information system; this now gives managers access to a good range of relevant data. An electronic registration system provides rapid information on students' attendance, and enables managers to monitor group sizes and resolve timetabling problems.

However, managers fail to exploit the management information at their disposal fully, for example to analyse and monitor problems related to student retention and achievement rates.

67 Senior managers are supportive towards staff and have friendly relationships with them. Effective informal communications are strengthened by regular meetings, newsletters and briefings. The minutes of management meetings are brief. They do not always identify the follow-up action to be taken, resulting in a lack of clarity about the way decisions are to be implemented. Inspectors did not agree with the college's assessment that operational responsibilities and management accountability are clear to all staff. There is a lack of uniformity in the way staff roles are defined and there is some confusion over lines of responsibility in the college, particularly in relation to those between senior and middle managers.

68 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The college is currently in a strong financial position. It has recorded operating surpluses for the past two years and, at the end of July 1998, it had income and expenditure account reserves of £1.4 million. The college has a small finance team which relies on external accountants for support in the preparation of financial reports. Detailed management accounts are produced monthly in accordance with required deadlines and are reviewed by senior managers. The accounts are not always accompanied by a written financial commentary. The reports from the external and internal auditors indicate that the college does not have an adequate internal control system. Financial regulations have been updated recently to address significant omissions. The college has delegated budgets for supplies and services and reports on actual and committed expenditure are provided for budget holders each month.

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69 As stated in the self-assessment report, the college collaborates with a wide range of partners. The principal is on the board of the local further education regional body. The college has strong links with Salford Education and Leisure Department, and with the local Asian community. The college has funded transport to enable Asian women to use its swimming pool. As a result of the college's encouragement, a number of Asian women have also attended basic literacy and numeracy classes.

70 In its charter and in the staff and student handbooks, the college makes an explicit commitment to promote equal opportunities for all its students and staff. There is an equal opportunities policy and its effectiveness is monitored by the equal opportunities committee. The college's work with the community in local centres exemplifies how it puts its policy into practice. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds studying at the college is higher than the proportion in the local community.

Conclusions

71 As a result of its structure, the college's self-assessment report was not significantly helpful to the inspectors in preparing for, and in carrying out, the inspection. It did not contain a sufficiently clear analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with only one of the curriculum grades awarded by the college. They considered that the college had given insufficient weight to weaknesses in students' retention and achievements. Inspectors agreed with two of the grades for cross-college provision. They found a number of weaknesses which the self-assessment report did not identify. In all cases where the inspection team and the college disagreed about the grades awarded, inspectors considered that the college had been overgenerous in its grading.

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

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (November 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	70
19-24 years	9
25+ years	17
Not known	4
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	34
Intermediate	19
Advanced	47
Higher education	0
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	0
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	182	67	19
Agriculture	22	0	2
Business	59	91	12
Hotel and catering	49	169	17
Health and community care	168	12	14
Art and design	96	11	8
Humanities	245	63	24
Basic education	9	36	4
Total	830	449	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 40% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	65	2	0	67
Supporting direct learning contact	11	0	0	11
Other support	31	2	1	34
Total	107	4	1	112

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£2,322,000	£4,628,000	£3,960,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£19.04*	£13.40*	£18.73
Payroll as a proportion of income	73%	44%	68%
Achievement of funding target	127%*	256%*	101%
Diversity of income	4%	3%	8%
Operating surplus	-£147,000	£863,000	£157,000

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

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

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

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

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

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

*combined data for merged colleges

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1995	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
1	Expected completions	105	252	181	2	54	36
	Retention (%)	57	66	77	50	46	72
	Achievement (%)	83	62	45	100	83	64
2	Expected completions	697	757	859	51	101	80
	Retention (%)	65	62	68	25	46	73
	Achievement (%)	56	81	81	54	79	76
3	Expected completions	–	818	731	–	83	96
	Retention (%)	–	68	60	–	45	60
	Achievement (%)	78	73	71	86	66	58
4 or 5	Expected completions	–	0	0	–	0	0
	Retention (%)	–	n/a	n/a	–	n/a	n/a
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Short courses	Expected completions	42	133	1,230	4,909	4,170	30,049
	Retention (%)	88	95	99	98	97	100
	Achievement (%)	97	94	94	99	96	96
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	259	105	101	6	1	11
	Retention (%)	77	72	68	83	100	36
	Achievement (%)	89	63	73	100	n/a	0

Source: ISR

–ISR data not collected

n/a not applicable

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