

Macclesfield College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL**

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also 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.*

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision, curriculum areas and lesson observations, for colleges inspected during 1996-97, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %
Curriculum areas	9	59	30	2	-
Cross-college provision	18	51	27	4	-
Lesson observations	19	42	31	7	1

Source: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report. Grades were awarded using the guidelines in Council Circular 93/28, Assessing Achievement.

Sample size: 122 college inspections

Retention and Pass Rates

Where data on students' achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in two ways:

- *as a retention rate, which is the proportion of students who completed a course in relation to the number enrolled on 1 November in the first year of the course*
- *as a pass rate, which is the proportion of students which passed examinations in relation to the number entered. Pass rates for GCE A level are quoted for grades A to E unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for GCSE courses are quoted for grade C or above unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for vocational and professional awards are for successful completion of the full award.*

Summary

Macclesfield College North West Region

Inspected May 1998

Macclesfield College is a medium-sized general further education college serving north-east Cheshire and the edge of the Manchester conurbation. From September 1998, it will be based on one site just outside the town centre. The self-assessment report was comprehensive and largely evaluative but some sections were more rigorous than others. Action plans arising out of self-assessment have been linked to strategic and operating plans. The college used an internal moderation process in drawing up the report but there was little use of external views. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the report, but the college had overestimated the progress made in some areas. Insufficient attention was paid to some weaknesses, notably those in teaching and learning. Data on students' achievements were not used consistently to inform judgements in the curriculum sections. Inspectors agreed with four of the curriculum grades and three of the cross-college grades that were awarded by the college.

The college has good links with a number of collaborative partners and offers a broad range of courses, especially in vocational provision. There are effective arrangements for prospective

students to gain information about courses and a well-organised induction programme. In some areas of the college, such as art and design, administration and health and care, teaching is effective and students' achievements are good. The college is making good progress in developing its provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff development procedures have improved since the last inspection. There have also been significant improvements to the accommodation on the main campus, although further work is needed. There is effective governance of the college and strategic planning is well developed. The college is addressing the need for greater efficiency measures. Restructuring has taken place and performance targets have recently been put in place. The college acknowledges the need to address weaknesses in curriculum management. It should monitor teaching more closely and address poor attendance, retention and achievement in a number of areas. The profile of grades awarded to lessons observed was below national figures. Quality assurance arrangements have not improved since the last inspection, though there are pockets of good practice. The college needs to improve the quality of some tutorial support and address inadequacies in access to IT.

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

Curriculum area	Grade
Science	4
Administration, business and management	3
Health, social and childcare	2
Art and design	2
English, modern foreign languages and EFL	3
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2

Cross-college provision	Grade
Support for students	3
General resources	3
Quality assurance	4
Governance	2
Management	3

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Macclesfield College is a general further education college serving north-east Cheshire, including the edge of the Manchester conurbation. The main campus, Park Lane, is just outside Macclesfield town centre. A Victorian town centre site, Park Green, will be vacated in summer 1998 when a new building opens on the main site. The college also offers courses for adults in six high schools and a variety of community venues. Its mission is 'to promote and encourage lifelong learning in the local community and beyond, by creating an accessible, high-quality service which enables people to achieve their learning goals'. The mission statement goes on to say that 'the college will work collaboratively with organisations in its community to ensure that opportunities for learning are widely available'.

2 The college offers courses at all levels from entry to level 3, though it has identified gaps in its provision at foundation level. In April 1998, there were 5,716 students on courses funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and 4,683 enrolments on other courses. The general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) programme is offered in partnership with a neighbouring high school. The college increasingly specialises in vocational provision. It offers higher education courses in engineering and information technology (IT) as an associate college of Staffordshire University. The college delivers local education authority (LEA) funded adult education under contract with Cheshire County Council. Approximately 10 per cent of FEFC-funded work is delivered as collaborative provision. The college experiences keen competition from six 11 to 18 high schools and colleges in Stockport and other parts of Cheshire. It is a member of the Cheshire Colleges Consortium, which has recently agreed objectives for co-operation.

3 North-east Cheshire includes areas with high levels of disposable income, according to

the county council's economic survey. Careers service figures show high staying-on rates for pupils over the age of 16. The Macclesfield unemployment rate is around 4 per cent and the level of youth unemployment is negligible. However, there are pockets of deprivation within the Macclesfield district and in the surrounding rural area. The majority of students are recruited locally but almost 25 per cent come from surrounding areas, such as Congleton and Stockport. There are major national and multinational employers, particularly in the pharmaceutical and engineering industries, but also a high proportion of small to medium-sized enterprises. Occupational growth areas are business, financial and administrative services, retailing and hotel and catering.

4 A new principal was appointed in August 1997. The management of the college has recently been restructured. The senior management team comprises the principal and the heads of planning and development, learning services and corporate services. The curriculum is organised into four sectors: business and technical services; general education; key skills; and public services.

Context

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected in May 1998. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and reviewed information about the college provided by other directorates of the FEFC. The college was given about two months notice of the inspection agenda and the sample of provision to be inspected. The college produced data on students' achievements in two stages. The first report submitted was incomplete. Omissions were partly explained by changes in computer systems. Inspectors checked the data against class registers and results issued by examining bodies and found a number of errors. The college then carried out further work and resubmitted the data. A second validation visit by inspectors confirmed improvements in the accuracy of data. There were still some omissions, particularly for 1993 to 1995, and some data could not be checked because of inconsistencies in register-keeping across the college. The inspection was carried out by a team comprising 11 inspectors working in college for 38 days and an auditor working for four days. Inspectors observed 70 lessons and examined students' work and documentation relating to the college and its courses. Meetings

were held with governors, managers, teachers, students and support staff. Inspectors also met local headteachers and representatives from the LEA and South and East Cheshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

6 Grades awarded to lessons observed were below national averages. Fifty-four per cent of the lessons inspected were rated good or outstanding compared with 61 per cent of all lessons inspected in the year 1996-97, according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. Eleven per cent of lessons were judged less than satisfactory or poor compared with 8 per cent overall for 1996-97. Average attendance at lessons inspected was 76 per cent compared with a national average of 77 per cent for 1996-97, according to the same report. Health and care lessons had a high average attendance rate at 93 per cent; in science it was low at 63 per cent. The average number of students in lessons observed was 8.1 compared with 10.8 nationally in 1996-97. The following table shows the grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level and GCSE	0	5	7	1	0	13
GNVQ	2	1	5	4	0	12
NVQ	1	3	2	0	0	6
Other vocational	2	9	6	0	1	18
Other*	3	12	4	2	0	21
Total	8	30	24	7	1	70

*includes access to higher education, courses for students with learning difficulties and some modern foreign language qualifications

Curriculum Areas

Science

Grade 4

7 The inspection included the observation of general certificate of secondary education (GCSE), GCE A level and general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) across the science area. The college's self-assessment report lacked sufficient detail. The action plan did not include all the areas of concern and success criteria were not identified. The self-assessment report did not include several significant weaknesses identified during the inspection.

Key strengths

- effective use of IT in lessons
- well-resourced laboratories

Weaknesses

- small range of teaching and learning methods
- low pass rates in two-year GCE A levels
- poor recruitment and retention rates
- the lack of co-ordination across subject areas
- poor schemes of work
- inadequate marking of students' work
- few opportunities for visits, placements and fieldwork

8 There has been a recent restructure of management at the college. At the time of the inspection, there were no formal arrangements in place for leadership of the science programme. There is a lack of co-ordination between the subject areas. There are differences in the quality of lesson planning and assessment practice. There is little evidence of effective teamwork. Schemes of work are poor in some areas: they do not include learning objectives or strategies to deal with a range of ability levels. This was not identified in the

self-assessment report. There are no schemes of work in chemistry.

9 The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Relationships between teachers and students are good. In a successful GCSE lesson on the different types of pollution the teacher gave clear explanations and students responded well to questions. IT is used effectively to stimulate learning in many lessons. For example, in a GNVQ intermediate lesson students used computers to prepare bar charts as part of a presentation on conservation. In other lessons, teachers fail to use an appropriate range of teaching methods which take account of the size of the class. Where there are classes with a mixture of advanced and intermediate students teachers often fail to take account of the varied needs and abilities of the students. In one lesson observed, some of the students were completing homework for another subject and talking about social events.

10 On the national certificate course, students benefit from industrial visits and strong links with industry. The self-assessment report did not record that, on other courses, there are few opportunities for students to take part in industrial visits or field trips. Students do not have work placements. There is ample laboratory space. Rooms are light, spacious and well equipped. There is a good range of resource material, including models, specimens, microscopes and audiovisual aids.

11 Examination pass rates in the majority of GCE A level subjects are well below the national averages and have shown this trend over the last three years. In 1997, the GNVQ advanced pass rate was in line with the national average and it was above the average on the intermediate course. The college has no system for assessing whether value is being added to students' performance by comparing their GCE A level results with their attainment on entry to the college. The college acknowledges in its self-assessment report that retention rates are low in all subjects. In 1997, they ranged from

Curriculum Areas

21 per cent in GCE A level human biology and chemistry to 67 per cent in biology.

12 Students' work examined during the inspection was at an appropriate standard for the level of course they were studying. There is a termly review by the tutor of students' progress and this is valued by the students. Students' practical work is generally marked according to published examination board criteria but, on the majority of courses, marking lacks the detail required to enable students to improve their performance. Attendance was very low in a number of classes observed during the inspection. There is insufficient monitoring of the attendance and progress of students who attend workshops on a flexible basis.

Examples of students' achievements in science, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level (two years)	Retention (%)	*	43	41
	Pass rate (%)	57	36	36
GCE A level (one year)	Retention (%)	65	66	54
	Pass rate (%)	17	30	33
GNVQ advanced	Retention (%)	+	+	42
	Pass rate (%)	+	+	60
GCSE	Retention (%)	70	64	57
	Pass rate (%)	86	80	42
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	94	71	63
	Pass rate (%)	63	30	80

Source: college data

*data not available

+course not running in 1995; low numbers in 1996

Curriculum Areas

Administration, Business and Management

Grade 3

13 The college presented three self-assessment reports, covering administration, business, and management, each with a different grade. Inspectors agreed with a number of the strengths identified in the self-assessment reports but attached more weight to some of the weaknesses and identified several weaknesses not included in the reports. The college did not identify any weaknesses in teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- effective combination of theory and practical work
- realistic work environments and well-planned work experience for administration students
- good national vocational qualification (NVQ) pass rates
- effective management on administration and accounting courses
- well-presented students' portfolios

Weaknesses

- some ineffective teaching on business and management courses
- lack of tutorial support for some students
- lack of opportunity for students to gain accredited key skills
- poor and declining retention rates on some courses
- lack of rigour of course review and analysis
- poor learning resources

14 The provision contains a range of courses from vocational access to higher national certificate level across a broad spread of

business provision. As the self-assessment report indicates, there are good examples of schemes of work and course documentation; on the administration programmes they are detailed and written to a common format. On other programmes, however, some schemes of work are minimal and are often not accompanied by lesson plans. The administration courses have a particularly strong combination of theory and practical work. Good examples of assignments on business and management courses require students to relate theory to their own business experience and to the local business context. There are many cases of teachers' good marking of students' work which indicates clearly to students how good, or otherwise, the work is. Students' portfolios are well presented and well structured. The administration students gain practical experience by undertaking work in the training office which is a realistic work environment. This experience is integrated with a well-planned period of external work experience. However, GNVQ first-year students have no experience of work as part of their course.

15 In one lesson on aspects of business planning the teacher, whose professionalism and subject expertise clearly commanded the respect of the students, skilfully used question and answer techniques and handouts of topical relevance to illustrate the points made. On the Association of Accounting Technicians course there were good examples of teachers giving individual attention to students working effectively on classroom tasks. In several other lessons, teachers had failed to plan the work effectively and had poor classroom management. In some lessons, teachers' ineffective use of question and answer techniques allowed a minority of students to dominate the discussions. Other than on GNVQ programmes there are few opportunities for students to achieve accredited key skills. These weaknesses were not recognised in the self-assessment report.

Curriculum Areas

16 NVQ pass rates are generally good or improving. NVQ level 2 administration pass rates have increased from 61 per cent to 96 per cent from 1996 to 1997. In the Association of Accounting Technicians' centrally set assessments, students achieved pass rates which compare favourably with the national average. On other courses, pass rates are more mixed. Some assessments on GNVQ business courses were generously marked in relation to the assessment criteria. On some courses, including supervisory management and GNVQ business, there are poor or declining retention rates and there is no effective strategy to improve this situation across the programme area.

17 There is good management on NVQ administration and accounting courses. In administration, the workshop is effectively managed to allow flexibility in attendance and students to work at different NVQ levels. The accounting course is planned and managed to allow students to adjust their programme across daytime and evening attendance. The management of some combined first-year and second-year classes, however, is weak. The quality of analysis and action-planning in course reviews is poor; some pay little attention to students' feedback and the use of external benchmarking for standard setting is inadequate. Arrangements for tutorials are not effectively monitored and some students do not get the tutorial support to which they are entitled. There are examples of insufficient communication between part-time staff and course teams. None of these weaknesses were identified in the self-assessment report.

18 At the time of the inspection, much of the provision was located at Park Green, where accommodation is poor. Students at the Park Green campus do not have access to adequate and reliable computing equipment. The library includes outdated stock and the quality of handouts and overhead transparencies in some business and management classes was poor. Much of the staff development which has

occurred has focused on providing staff with assessor and verifier awards. Too few opportunities have been provided for staff to update their industrial experience.

Curriculum Areas

Examples of students' achievements in administration, business and management, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Professional and management	Retention (%)	84	88	77
	Pass rate (%)	42	53	92
GNVQ advanced	Retention (%)	76	79	62
	Pass rate (%)	72	57	89
NVQ administration level 3	Retention (%)	89	50	50
	Pass rate (%)	100	71	100
NVQ administration level 2	Retention (%)	76	75	89
	Pass rate (%)	100	61	96
NVQ administration level 1	Retention (%)	*	91	100
	Pass rate (%)	*	20	86
National certificate in business and finance	Retention (%)	47	64	75
	Pass rate (%)	100	50	83
NVQ accounting (all levels)	Retention (%)	61	85	78
	Pass rate (%)	24	34	42
Other vocational	Retention (%)	77	68	81
	Pass rate (%)	80	76	64

Source: college data

*reliable data not available

Curriculum Areas

Health, Social and Childcare Grade 2

19 Inspectors concluded that the self-assessment report paid insufficient attention to teaching and learning, though in other respects the report was detailed. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the report but identified some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-supervised work placements
- high pass rates on childcare and counselling courses
- good attendance and retention rates on childcare courses
- effective development, monitoring and recording of students' key skills
- frequent and systematic review of students' progress

Weaknesses

- declining recruitment and retention rates on GNVQ intermediate courses
- low achievement rates on GNVQ courses
- poor accommodation

20 The college offers a wide range of well-established childcare courses. GNVQ courses in health and social care at intermediate and advanced levels were introduced in 1994 and 1995, respectively. Short courses in counselling and a one-year counselling certificate are provided as evening courses. Good links with local employers in both public and private sectors are maintained through frequent communications and regular meetings. Many schemes of work are detailed, but course documentation is not standardised. Part-time teachers are not well supported in planning and class management. The scheduling of assignments is unco-ordinated and this has caused difficulties for some students.

21 Much of the teaching is of good quality. In an advanced childcare lesson, a complex exercise on the features of poverty was introduced clearly and the students' knowledge of the topic was established through questions. The objectives and sequence of the lesson were shared with students. They worked on linked activities as a whole class and in small groups to build up their understanding of the topic. Each activity was supported by concise, well-presented handouts which provided a useful record of key information. A third of lesson plans seen lacked objectives and expected student outcomes. In these lessons, teachers failed to time activities accurately and planned topics were not always covered. Students were given little opportunity to put forward their own ideas or discuss those presented by the teacher. Opportunities were not given for students to share appropriate learning from work placements. These strengths and weaknesses are not identified in the self-assessment report. Work placements are well supervised and undertaken in a wide range of establishments matched to each student's course. All full-time students undertake a minimum of three placements a year. They are well prepared and benefit from a comprehensive work placement handbook. Staff make frequent visits to check on their progress. Links with work placement providers are maintained through frequent communications and termly meetings.

22 Students work well and are interested and responsive in lessons. The self-assessment report claims that they have good opportunities to develop key skills through weekly timetabled workshop sessions and inspectors agreed with this. Progress is carefully monitored and appropriately recorded. All full-time students follow a course leading to a qualification in IT. Students receive clear, written briefings on assignments and written and oral feedback on marked work. Teachers check each other's marking to ensure consistent standards. Full-time students have frequent reviews to monitor and record their progress.

Curriculum Areas

Examination pass rates are consistently above the national average on all courses in childcare. Attendance and retention are high on these courses. As the self-assessment report identifies, retention rates and examination pass rates are consistently above the national averages on BTEC national diploma and certificate courses in childhood studies and on the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education nursery nursing diploma. Retention and pass rates are high on the part-time counselling certificate course. Recruitment, retention and examination pass rates have declined on the GNVQ intermediate course. Both retention and pass rates on the GNVQ advanced course are poor. In 1997, only 58 per cent of students completed the course and of these only 57 per cent achieved the award. These weaknesses are not identified in the self-assessment report.

23 The self-assessment report states that accommodation for health and childcare courses is poor. Inspection evidence supported this view. The courses are housed in temporary buildings which are inadequately ventilated and subject to high levels of noise from nearby workshops. While displays of students' work greatly improve the learning environment, furniture is worn and whiteboards and screens

are in poor condition. Facilities for practical work are inadequate. Lack of appropriate storage for IT and video equipment and specialist books and journals results in students having insufficient, ready access to these for class work. Though the section in the library has a good range of books, many of them are out of date and there are insufficient numbers of the books recommended for assignment work. Teachers are well qualified. However, no full-time teacher and only one part-time teacher has had recent industrial experience.

Examples of students' achievements in health, social and childcare, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Advanced vocational (full time)	Retention (%)	92	83	81
	Pass rate (%)	91	100	90
Advanced vocational (part time)	Retention (%)	+	83	65
	Pass rate (%)	+	100	100
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	92	71	67
	Pass rate (%)	50	100	50
Other intermediate vocational	Retention (%)	100	80	89
	Pass rate (%)	100	93	86

Source: college data

+course not running

Curriculum Areas

Art and Design

Grade 2

24 Inspectors observed a range of courses, including GCE A levels in art and media studies, GNVQ and foundation programmes, part-time provision and programmes for updating adults in graphics/IT. The self-assessment report mentioned all of the strengths and some of the weaknesses identified during the inspection.

Key strengths

- good coverage of basic artistic skills early in programmes
- good achievement in full-time advanced level programmes
- imaginative development of students' key skills
- well-planned integrated assignments and negotiated projects
- appropriate programme of field trips and visits
- good range of provision for adults

Weaknesses

- low recruitment and retention rates on intermediate and GCE A level courses
- failure of some teachers to motivate some students to produce sufficient work
- poor equipment and accommodation in some specialist areas

25 There is a good range of full-time and part-time courses. The majority of students are concentrated in two separate course groups: the fast-growing provision for updating adults, and full-time advanced general art and design. Course records and assessment data are well kept for these programmes. Curriculum organisation is effective. In the early stages, specific skills and knowledge, such as drawing and colour theory, are efficiently covered.

Students are taught to become more independent learners later in the year by moving to team-taught assignments and specialist projects. The self-assessment report notes the wide range of specialisms available to students including, for example, ceramics and embroidery. This range is made possible by students on different courses coming together for activities in specialist workshops. Workshop facilities are good in some areas, such as ceramics, but poor in others such as printmaking, three dimensional design and media. The IT suite is increasingly inadequate for the scale and level of work. In some areas, such as the photographic studio, there are health and safety hazards. The college recognises these weaknesses and plans to address them when the provision moves to the main site in September 1998.

26 Teaching is good. At the time of the inspection, towards the end of the summer term, most lessons were planned to give support to students engaged on individual interpretations of an assignment task. The self-assessment report describes how teachers plan projects carefully to integrate different specialisms with key skills. Students are able to work on challenging 'live' projects, such as redesigning the college prospectus. Where there was a whole-class activity, the lesson was well planned to cover particular skills. For example, in a life drawing lesson, students were required to make a series of quick sketches with twigs and bits of wood dipped in paint leading to expressive use of brushmarks in a longer exercise. In a few lessons, teachers did not motivate students who were failing to work properly or to produce required work. Some students who were having difficulty with the work had to wait too long for help. Students' progress on assignments and projects is regularly monitored in tutorials. Records of these meetings serve three purposes: students are assessed for units, as appropriate; they are given feedback on the quality of their work; and they are helped to form individual action plans.

Curriculum Areas

27 There are big variations between courses in recruitment, retention, examination passes and progression. For example, both recruitment and retention are generally good for vocational courses in art and design but poor for GCE A levels and GNVQ intermediate. This was partly recognised in the self-assessment report. Pass and progression rates are good for foundation and ordinary national certificate/higher national certificate courses. Examination results are poor on some courses for part-time students. Progression is poor from the GNVQ advanced course. Some excellent creative work is produced by the best students in the two main programme areas. Higher national certificate work was used, for example, in a prize winning exhibition display, and foundation/advanced GNVQ students have produced a fine series of paintings and textile concepts. Students on part-time City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) photography have achieved high marks and some of their work is of high quality.

Examples of students' achievements in art and design, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced and post GCE A level foundation	Retention (%)	86	86	79
	Pass rate (%)	92	94	89
GCE A levels	Retention (%)	*	53	30
	Pass rate (%)	*	89	100
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	50	55	60
	Pass rate (%)	42	100	100
Other vocational	Retention (%)	+	93	81
	Pass rate (%)	+	55	62

Source: college data

*data not available

+courses not running

Curriculum Areas

English, Modern Foreign Languages and EFL

Grade 3

28 Inspectors observed a broad sample of provision in English, modern foreign languages and English as a foreign language (EFL). The self-assessment report was not thorough, but inspectors agreed in general with the judgements included in it.

Key strengths

- above average pass rates on some courses
- flexible arrangements for study
- a good range of provision

Weaknesses

- poor results in GCSE English
- low attendance and retention rates
- some poor-quality schemes of work and lesson plans

29 Most teaching is good or satisfactory. Teachers make good use of question and answer techniques in lessons to promote discussion. In a French lesson, the teacher structured the lesson to include speaking, reading and grammar work, promoting amongst students a high standard of fluency and accuracy. In some lessons, teachers failed to involve all the students, talked too much or pitched the subject matter at an inappropriate level. English at GCSE level and below is taught in the English workshop, allowing students to attend at times which suit them and to work on their own with materials designed for the purpose. Adults in particular appreciate the flexibility of this arrangement. The self-assessment report acknowledges that initial assessment in the workshop is inadequate. Some students, who originally enrolled for a GCSE programme, have had to transfer to lower level programmes

during the year. Students joining EFL programmes during the year also receive insufficient initial assessment to ensure that they enrol at a suitable level.

30 Poor retention rates and attendance patterns are recorded in the self-assessment report. The retention rate in most subject groups in 1996-97 was below 70 per cent. Pass rates in GCE A level English language and literature, and in GCSE modern foreign languages, were above the national average for general further education colleges in 1997.

GCSE English results have been significantly below the national average for the last three years. Some of the best students' achievements in coursework is of a high standard: students of GCE A level communication studies and those on access courses use IT to produce well-presented and well-researched projects. Adults on language courses were able to speak extensively about their learning. Some teachers annotate students' work with detailed advice to help them to improve their performance, whereas others offer minimal feedback.

31 The range of provision is generally good, although there are some gaps such as the absence of languages other than French in the GCE A level programme. Foreign languages provision includes NVQ units for students on vocational programmes, courses for industry and a successful summer school in which students can work in the languages centre using self-study resources with tutor support.

Demand for EFL programmes is strong, and the college runs courses at three levels. The recent restructuring of the college's management has not yet clarified responsibilities for curriculum development. Languages provision in the adult education programme is managed separately from that on the main site and, as the self-assessment report recognises, there are insufficient links between the teachers concerned. In all areas, there is a lack of agreed policies on aspects of teaching such as schemes of work and marking; consequently, the

Curriculum Areas

quality and format of schemes of work and lesson plans vary considerably between teachers of the same subject.

32 The modern languages centre is adequately equipped but its location limits its effectiveness as a 'drop-in' centre. The English workshop is small and lacks IT facilities. The college plans to relocate both these resources in its new key skills workshop. Most classrooms are well furnished and have appropriate equipment, but the lack of dedicated classrooms for English and languages contributes to the poor displays and lack of accessibility to specialist materials.

Examples of students' achievements in English, modern foreign languages and EFL, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level English language and literature	Retention (%)	*	46	57
	Pass rate (%)	*	80	83
GCSE English	Retention (%)	52	83	79
	Pass rate (%)	26	33	28
GCSE modern foreign languages	Retention (%)	63	66	52
	Pass rate (%)	90	82	86
EFL	Retention (%)	52	45	63
	Pass rate (%)	80	76	73

Source: college data

**data incomplete*

Curriculum Areas

Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Grade 2

33 The inspection covered the college's specially designed programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the specialist support provided for such students on other programmes across the college. Inspectors agreed with the majority of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college in its self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- good-quality support for students with disabilities
- students who are developing confidence, competence and self-esteem
- the establishment of progression routes from separate specialist courses to other courses
- well-developed links with external agencies
- good range of specialist learning resources

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped individual learning programmes
- some less effective teaching
- the lack of a 'cross-college' group to manage inclusive learning

34 The college is successful in recruiting and supporting students with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that staff have developed effective links with external agencies which help them to analyse needs within the community and plan provision to meet these needs. For example, links with

the health service trust have resulted in the development of provision for students with mental illness at the college and at a secure unit within the local hospital. Funding from the health authority for a volunteer co-ordinator has enabled the college to recruit volunteers who have then supported students with learning difficulties in a variety of classes.

35 In the best lessons, teachers' planning takes account of students' differing needs and there is an emphasis on helping students to learn through practical activities. For example, students are running a shopping service for staff as part of an enterprise project. The work has been well planned to build on students' strengths and provide opportunities for them to develop their personal and social skills. However, in some lessons, teachers plan inappropriate activities such as asking students to copy writing that they cannot read. Teachers know the students well and are generally aware of their individual needs. However, they do not develop individual learning programmes for them which identify an overall goal and specify objectives which are then shared with each member of staff who works with the student. This weakness is not acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

36 Teachers and support staff work hard to provide a supportive working environment in which students, particularly those with emotional difficulties, feel comfortable and are able to learn effectively. Many students develop confidence and self-esteem and make significant progress in their studies. For example, students progress to more advanced courses in the college, to sheltered employment and to open employment. Teachers keep detailed records of the progress students make in relation to their accredited programmes, but the current systems do not record effectively the progress students make in their personal and social development.

37 Since the last inspection, the college has introduced new courses to provide progression routes from the separate specialist provision to

Curriculum Areas

vocational programmes for students with learning difficulties. Students now have access to an increased range of vocational options. In addition, students with disabilities are supported on a wide range of programmes across the college. Systems and procedures relating to specialist learning support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well thought through and carefully documented. Students' needs are carefully assessed and costed. The support they are given is recorded and staff monitor its effectiveness by liaising with programme tutors to check the impact it has on students' achievements. Inspectors supported the college's judgement that more work is needed to help staff adapt teaching materials and methods to meet the needs of these students. Inclusive learning has a high profile in college documentation but there is no cross-college working group or committee to support its development.

38 Staff are well qualified and work hard to support students and to raise the profile of this work in the college. Training needs are analysed systematically through the appraisal process and appropriate training opportunities are provided for staff. For example, a teacher has been supported to undertake training to support students who have dyslexia. Students have the opportunity to learn within real work environments such as the catering kitchens and restaurant. Specialist equipment and learning resources are available for students with particular needs. For example, funding from the East Cheshire Training Trust has enabled the college to purchase specialist equipment to enable students who are blind or visually impaired to learn IT skills.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 3

39 Inspectors broadly agreed with the college's self-assessment report but found that significant weaknesses were understated. The college is aware that restructuring has led to additional weaknesses since the self-assessment report was written and plans are in place to address some of these.

Key strengths

- good arrangements for pre-entry guidance
- a well-thought-out induction programme
- good opportunities for careers guidance

Weaknesses

- unco-ordinated tutorial framework resulting in a lack of equity of experience for students
- some gaps in personal support arrangements
- failure to follow up poor attendance consistently

40 Pre-enrolment guidance arrangements are good. Guidance is available throughout the year in an attractive and welcoming environment close to reception. There are clearly defined standards, and a commitment to impartiality. The college recognises this strength in its self-assessment report. Students who are unsure about their choice of course can receive an individual guidance interview arranged through the admissions and advice unit or attend an information event and speak to subject specialists. Adults returning to study spoke highly of the guidance offered to them. All applicants are given an interview by the course admissions tutor. They are encouraged to bring their record of achievement to the enrolment

interview and this is part of the evidence used in negotiating a suitable course. Publicity material has recently been tested on client groups and improved in the light of their suggestions. The college worked with South East Cheshire TEC and local schools to organise a successful careers convention in March which was attended by 500 pupils.

41 There is a well-thought-out induction programme which meets the needs of the majority of students. Mature students on the second year of a part-time childhood studies course spoke highly of an introductory session on managing their time. All but one have continued on the course. Students who join courses late are not always as carefully introduced to college life and have experienced difficulties in settling in.

42 Learning support systems are in place but are not always effective. Staff have developed screening and diagnostic tests to identify students who may need additional support in English and numeracy. The tests are administered to all full-time students during induction. Currently, students needing support are referred to the mathematics and English workshops and support is provided through study for additional qualifications. This is not directly linked to their main programme of study. The self-assessment report recognises that some students who need help are not attending the sessions.

43 College staff respond well when students ask for help with personal or academic problems. Students appreciate that staff are approachable and generous with their time. However, the college does not have a planned study skills programme. This weakness was not identified in the college's self-assessment report. For example, individual students suffering from panic attacks related to examinations are treated sensitively by staff but the college does not routinely arrange tutorial sessions to help students manage examination stress. Students can receive a variety of advice on welfare and

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financial matters from staff in student services or from the literature contained in the area. The mental health awareness week arranged in the autumn term was well attended and valued by students. Students do not receive assistance with childcare costs.

44 Inspectors agreed with the weakness identified in the college's self-assessment report that the tutorial policy is not consistently implemented. This results, in part, from the lack of a co-ordinated framework for tutorial arrangements. Although there is a tutorial handbook, tutors are free to devise their own schemes and there are no meetings of tutors at which good practice can be shared. This approach, which is praised by some tutors as flexible, has resulted in wasteful efforts and a lack of equity for students. Inspectors saw some good practice, in particular where tutorial support is integrated within a course. In many areas, part of the tutorial time is effectively used to check that students are up to date with work and to help them organise their files. However, inspectors met other students who had been allocated a personal tutor at the beginning of the course but had not had a tutorial for six months. Such irregularity means that students' attendance is not always well monitored. Tutorial policy states that all students should do an additional qualification, for example, in IT, first aid or public speaking. Students on an intermediate course had not received this entitlement. Where students on other courses had been given these opportunities, they generally spoke about them positively.

45 There is a detailed careers service level agreement with Cheshire Guidance Partnership. The careers officer works with members of student services to provide individual careers guidance. The careers team is present at enrolment to advise students who are unsure of their choice. They attend college induction sessions and this provides students with a useful introduction to the service. Guidance interviews take place in an attractive, well-resourced suite

of rooms and students are encouraged to make full use of the computer guidance programmes that are available. Some tutors do not encourage students to make full use of the service.

General Resources

Grade 3

46 The self-assessment report was comprehensive and evaluative. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in it but found that a few weaknesses were not recognised. Since the report was drawn up, action has been taken to address many of the weaknesses it identified.

Key strengths

- significant improvements to the quality of accommodation on the main campus
- new building programme linked to curriculum strategy
- good access at the main campus for students with restricted mobility

Weaknesses

- inadequate access to IT facilities for students and staff
- insufficient and outdated bookstock for many courses
- deficiencies in the temporary buildings at the main campus

47 The college's main campus, Park Lane, is located approximately half a mile from Macclesfield town centre where the annexe, Park Green, is situated. In July 1998, the annexe will be vacated and cleared for disposal. All provision will be relocated to the main campus. Park Lane has two main buildings, seven temporary buildings and a large sports hall, to which the neighbouring school has right of access. After the last inspection, the college

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developed an accommodation strategy to improve the quality of the two existing buildings at Park Lane and construct a new one. The main entrance and reception area have been modernised, a new learner services unit has been created and engineering workshops have been remodelled. A new lift, ramps and widened doorways have given access to most areas of the campus for students with restricted mobility. Internal signposting has been improved. Most classrooms are carpeted, well furnished and well equipped and many include displays of students' work. The new building, due to be completed in July 1998, is designed to support the strategic aim of extending the use of information and learning technology in the curriculum. It will accommodate an IT resource centre and a key skills centre. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, some areas of Park Lane remain in poor condition, notably the temporary buildings, which are noisy and have worn furniture, whiteboards and screens. The sports hall is in need of refurbishment.

48 The self-assessment report recognises that IT facilities do not meet the needs of all students. Of the 672 computers in the college, 186 are outdated and have limited functions. Access to computers on a 'drop-in' basis is limited, particularly for part-time students. Good progress has been made in implementing the action plan resulting from the self-assessment. A head of computing and information services has been appointed and an IT strategy has been developed. Most full-time students are now timetabled to follow IT courses and gain supplementary qualifications. The self-assessment report identifies that many teachers lack access to IT facilities and make little use of IT in the curriculum. The IT strategy includes plans to address this.

49 Library staff have good links with teachers in curriculum areas. Although the library is small, records show that it is well used. Approximately 7,000 items were issued during the period from September 1997 to April 1998.

Seven of the nine computers in the library are linked to the internet. Library records show that the number of bookings to use computers rose to 1,025 in the first three months after the internet connections were installed compared with 333 in the previous three-month period. Other facilities provided by the library are quiet study places, bookable computers and video machines and inter-library loans. Surveys indicate that over 90 per cent of students value the library but that many part-time students find the opening hours do not fit in with their attendance times and full-time students find it noisy and overcrowded at peak periods. Though there is a good range of books in most curriculum areas, many are out of date. A computerised catalogue is accessible to students but not all of the library stock is entered. These weaknesses were not mentioned in the self-assessment report.

50 A central purchasing strategy has now replaced a departmental purchasing system which led to some duplication of resources. The self-assessment report acknowledges that accommodation is not centrally managed and that there is no planned programme for routine maintenance and repair. Since the report was drawn up, action has been taken to redress these weaknesses. Room usage is in the process of being systematically measured and centrally co-ordinated to improve efficiency. Photocopying and reprographic facilities are good.

51 As the self-assessment report states, the refectory at Park Lane provides an adequate choice of menus and an efficient service. Toilet facilities for students are poor, particularly for female students based at Park Lane, where there is only one women's toilet. There is no crèche. Sports facilities are underdeveloped, though since the self-assessment report was drawn up, a daily programme of sports activities has been established in the sports hall over lunchtime.

Cross-college Provision

Quality Assurance

Grade 4

52 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and most of the weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report. They identified some weaknesses not recognised in the report. By the time of the inspection, the college had begun to address some of the points in the action plan.

Key strengths

- the institution of new arrangements to tighten controls
- well-developed policies and procedures for staff development
- rigorous evaluation of performance in a few areas of the college

Weaknesses

- failure of quality assurance arrangements to provide a reliable picture of college performance
- insufficient use of standards, performance indicators and targets in planning for improvement
- no formal monitoring of student charter
- inadequate action plans which fail to address significant issues
- insufficient analysis of students' achievements and retention data

53 The college has not made adequate progress in developing effective quality assurance since the last inspection. The college's self-assessment report states that there is 'no culture of continuous improvement with goals linked to strategic or operational planning'. Inspectors broadly agreed with this but found growing awareness of quality assurance issues amongst staff and some examples of good practice in the college. The college's strategic plan makes an explicit

commitment to developing systems to ensure continuous improvement across the college. The principles and policies to support this objective are clear, but the systems are disjointed; some staff are confused about them and their roles within them. The emerging quality assurance framework contains elements which have only recently been put in place and which are unable yet to give a clear picture of the college's performance. Some elements are more established but their effectiveness is difficult to assess since the college does not routinely use standards and performance indicators to measure its progress. These weaknesses are largely recognised in the self-assessment report. The college has recently appointed a quality assurance manager who is working towards tightening controls and standardising procedures. A quality assurance subcommittee of the academic board has recently been convened to support this work.

54 Inspectors did not agree with the college's claim that course reviews are generally thorough. Course teams collect detailed information but most do not analyse it systematically or evaluate it in depth. Consequently, significant matters such as retention data and teaching and learning issues are not identified and taken account of in action plans. Since action plans are drawn up at programme area level some courses do not have their own development plans which they could use to address their priorities. A few courses have developed effective improvement and monitoring strategies. So far, only two cross-college areas have evaluated their practice and provision. These evaluations are detailed and self-critical.

55 Inspectors supported the college's own assessment that it has improved systems for the professional development of its staff. The quality assurance manager uses strategic objectives, self-assessment action plans and appraisal outcomes to formulate the training plan and allocate budgets. Staff evaluate their

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training routinely and the college produces a full report annually. There is still a lack of recent industrial experience among the teaching staff and the college has plans to address this.

Appraisal of all staff takes place annually and arrangements have been recently revised to address performance as well as developmental needs. Senior and middle managers' effectiveness is reviewed every two months against agreed targets derived from the college's development plan. Lesson observations form part of appraisal for teachers and were used in the self-assessment process. The grading of lessons was overgenerous and, as a result, did not contribute effectively to self-assessment.

56 Arrangements to collect students' views about the college have yielded useful information for college managers. The college has published a detailed bulletin to students summarising the findings and responding to issues identified in the exercise. Course staff sometimes fail to use the information to develop and improve provision. The college charter is currently being revised, following self-assessment. Students are not familiar with the charter. The college does not formally monitor charter commitments. Written complaints are logged and are dealt with adequately but the college does not formally monitor them. Some students have not used the complaints procedure but took the opportunity to raise issues with inspectors.

57 The self-assessment report prepared for the inspection is the first to be produced by the college. The process involved a majority of teaching staff, though there was little opportunity for support staff to become involved. Governors were involved in discussing a draft and approving the final report. The report identifies strengths and weaknesses and includes action plans and a clear indication of how progress is to be monitored. The report did not include all the weaknesses identified during the inspection and paid insufficient attention to those in teaching and learning.

Inspectors were unable to rely on some of the statistical data presented as evidence, particularly when records held by teaching teams differed from those held centrally. The college is using the self-assessment process and its outcomes to build a detailed action plan addressing the issue of continuous improvement in all aspects of the college's work.

Governance

Grade 2

58 Inspectors generally agreed with the college's self-assessment of governance. However, they identified some strengths and some weaknesses which were not in the self-assessment report. They recognised some of the progress which had been made in the implementation of the action plan since the compilation of the self-assessment.

Key strengths

- active participation by governors in the strategic planning process
- open and effective conduct of corporation business
- an exceptionally well-attended audit committee which carefully monitors internal audit procedures
- particularly good clerking arrangements
- structured training programme for new and experienced governors
- open procedures for the recruitment of new governors

Weaknesses

- insufficient formal financial monitoring by the full corporation
- inadequate attention to curriculum and quality assurance issues

59 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the

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governance of the college is good. 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.

60 The corporation has a membership of 14, comprising one higher education representative, one TEC nominated, two staff and nine business governors, and the principal. There are currently three recent business governor vacancies. Between them, the governors have a range of relevant skills and professional expertise covering higher education, business, personnel and law. As a result of a recent retirement, there is now no governor, other than the principal, with accountancy expertise. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that board members bring valuable expertise to the college. However, the board recognises in its self-assessment the need to achieve a wider representation from the local community. Attendance at corporation meetings has been good. As noted in the self-assessment report, there is an effective induction and training programme for board members. New governors are provided with an initial training and briefing pack. A well-conceived programme of seminars for all governors is currently in progress and governors who attend external courses provide written summaries for the benefit of other board members.

61 There are four standing committees which have met regularly: finance and estates; audit; membership; and personnel and remuneration. Attendance at committee meetings has been very good. The audit committee has developed an effective mechanism for monitoring the implementation of internal audit recommendations. The finance and estates committee is responsible for the detailed monitoring of the college's financial position. Inspectors did not fully agree with the strength identified in the self-assessment report that

governors are well informed on the college's financial position, because not all governors formally consider the college's management accounts on a termly basis.

62 Members of the corporation have a clear understanding of their roles. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the corporation is closely involved in strategic planning. Governors hold an annual planning day in order to set the college's strategic direction and to review formally the progress made towards the achievement of the previous year's operating plan. Governors receive at every corporation meeting a report from the principal which reviews progress towards the achievement of the college's targets. Inspectors agreed with the corporation members' self-assessment that their attention has not been sufficiently focused on curriculum issues. In order to address this issue, governors have started to attend meetings of the academic board and a termly informal meeting with staff. Corporation members receive an annual report on students' achievements but it is not accompanied by sufficient supporting analysis. They do not receive reports on the outcomes of the college's quality assurance processes to allow members to identify the issues to be addressed. The corporation has taken an active role in self-assessment and is in the process of establishing performance indicators by which to measure its own performance.

63 The corporation has efficient and effective clerking arrangements. The clerk to the corporation is appropriately trained and experienced and has the required status and independence to enable her to perform effectively. Corporation and committee agendas and supporting papers are comprehensive and are sent out in good time, in advance of the relevant meetings. Minutes are promptly prepared and distributed with action lists. There is a comprehensive set of clear standing orders.

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64 The corporation has taken steps to achieve greater transparency in its processes and decisions. Corporation minutes are publicly available in the college's library; corporation meetings are open to the public; an annual public meeting is due to be held and there is a policy on 'whistleblowing'. As noted in the self-assessment report, governors have a code of conduct and a register of interests. Furthermore, governors are invited to declare any interests at all corporation meetings. The code of conduct is in need of updating.

Management

Grade 3

65 Inspectors substantially agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report. However, there were some issues which inspectors judged to be of greater significance than was apparent from the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- progress made in addressing key issues
- well-developed planning procedures
- good collaboration with other agencies

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped use of management information
- weaknesses in curriculum development and management
- communication processes not fully effective

66 The college is undergoing a period of considerable change. Restructuring is taking place in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness. Inspectors agreed with the college that there is a need to develop greater accountability across the organisation. Currently, management arrangements have

some gaps. New appointments planned, but not yet in place, include managers for corporate services and learner services. Staff are experiencing some uncertainties in roles and responsibilities. Nevertheless, they are generally supportive of the need for change and confident in the direction for the future. During the course of this academic year, rapid progress has been made in a number of initiatives. For example, the accommodation strategy has been formulated and performance review has been introduced. This progress is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Inspectors found weaknesses in the management of the development and delivery of the curriculum. These weaknesses are currently having an adverse impact on students' experience. The college has recognised the need to review and improve the curriculum management structure.

67 Communication processes are not fully effective. Innovations such as the staff bulletin are helping to improve the situation but the flow of information through the organisation is patchy. There is inconsistent practice in holding and recording meetings. The college recognises that further training is needed to help managers to develop a corporate identity across the organisation. The college management team is a new forum for middle managers which will have a key role in this.

68 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The college's financial position has improved in the last two years. The college's finances are monitored by the principalship through its consideration of the management accounts. The college has taken steps to strengthen its finance team. Management accounts are manually prepared, but are not very comprehensive. Until recently, delays were experienced in the production of the monthly management accounts and the monthly budget monitoring reports. Although the college has had some problems in the past with regard to its internal

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control system, this has improved recently as demonstrated by the positive conclusions contained in the internal auditors' 1996-97 annual report and the external auditors' 1996-97 management letter. The college's financial regulations and procedures have not been updated for some time.

69 The college's mission statement has been revised in a joint strategic planning event for senior staff and governors. Strategic objectives have been developed into an annual operating plan. This process is well informed by information from a wide range of external sources. Internally generated information on the quality of provision has been less well used in the past but is now being incorporated into the development of curriculum plans for 1998-99. As the self-assessment report states, a number of effective collaborative partnerships are developing. Good working relationships are well established with the South East Cheshire TEC and Cheshire County Council. Newer developments include the establishment of collaborative agreements with educational partners such as the Staffordshire University and the Cheshire Colleges Consortium. Examples of effective outcomes include the securing of a New Deal contract by the Cheshire Colleges. A local school participates in a curriculum link for GCE A level subjects which extends the range of subjects offered by both institutions.

70 Inspectors concluded that the college overstated the progress made in the effectiveness of its management information system. Until 1996, the management information system used could not generate reliable student data. Whilst the situation has improved since a new system was installed, progress has been hampered by lack of staff access to on-line information and a generally low level of understanding of the potential for information to support decision-making. Examples include the lack of monitoring of equal opportunities and the absence of readily

accessible information on student attendance. The college has recognised the need to develop its management information systems and this will be a major responsibility for the new head of corporate services.

Conclusions

71 The inspection team found the self-assessment report provided a useful basis for planning and carrying out the inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report. They placed, however, more emphasis on weaknesses in teaching and learning. They also used national benchmarking data, such as those for students' achievements, to a greater extent than the college had in arriving at overall judgements. Inspectors agreed with the grades awarded by the college in four out of six curriculum areas. In the other two areas, they considered that important weaknesses had not been identified. In cross-college provision, inspectors agreed with the overall college judgements in three areas, but found that weaknesses had been underestimated in the other two.

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 (April 1998)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	0
16-18 years	10
19-24 years	7
25+ years	81
Not known	2
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (April 1998)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	20
Intermediate	23
Advanced	17
Higher education	2
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	38
Total	100

Source: college data

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	80	567	11
Construction	0	6	1
Engineering	84	314	7
Business	140	670	14
Hotel and catering	105	126	4
Health and community care	108	1,001	19
Art and design	76	244	6
Humanities	58	2,024	36
Basic education	27	86	2
Total	678	5,038	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (April 1998)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	69	24	0	93
Supporting direct learning contact	15	2	0	17
Other support	40	0	2	42
Total	124	26	2	152

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£4,952,000	£5,157,000	£5,224,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£18.92	£18.74	£18.64
Payroll as a proportion of income	76%	82%	69%
Achievement of funding target	102%	93%	101%
Diversity of income	27%	22%	21%
Operating surplus	£53,000	-£669,000	£120,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), Funding Allocations 1996-97 (1996-97)

Payroll – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), college (1996-97)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	96	56	61
	Average point score per entry	2.4	3.2	3.4
	Position in tables	bottom 10%	middle third	middle third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	125	70	110
	Percentage achieving qualification	74%	69%	74%
	Position in tables	middle third	bottom third	middle third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	75	59
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	47%	44%
	Position in tables	*	bottom third	bottom third

Source: DfEE

Note: the majority of the college's students are 19 years of age or older

The achievements of these students are not covered in published DfEE performance tables

*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

FEFC Inspection Report 105/98

**Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
October 1998**