

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Reigate College

May 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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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 every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

By June 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-95

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 50/96

REIGATE COLLEGE
SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected April 1995-January 1996

Summary

Reigate College in Surrey is a sixth form college whose students are mostly aged 16 to 18 and studying for GCE qualifications. The college has particularly good relationships with its partner schools, and its co-operation with adult education providers and a neighbouring general further education college has resulted in agreement that each should specialise in providing part of the education service required by the local community. The college has met its own growth targets, but restricted accommodation results in a waiting list for places. Managers and governors of the college are consultative and effective. The college was the first in Surrey to achieve the Investors in People award. Teachers are highly motivated, and are supported by good technical and administrative staff. Standards of teaching are high in many areas. Students achieve good results in public examinations which place the college in the top third of institutions in the further education sector. There is a strong commitment to provide tutorial support and guidance for students. Relations with parents, employers and the local TEC are close. The quality assurance system is relatively new but it has been carefully designed and includes measurable standards and targets for all areas of the college's operations. Some teaching accommodation is poor. Social and refectory areas for students are very poor. Access for wheelchair users is also poor. The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics	2	Creative studies	2
Sciences	2	English	2
Business and computer studies	2	Geography and history	2
		Social studies	3
		Classics and religious studies	1

INTRODUCTION

1 Reigate College was inspected between April 1995 and January 1996. Eleven inspectors spent a total of 42 days in the college. Enrolment and induction were inspected in June and at the beginning of the autumn term 1995. Specialist inspections took place in two phases; science and mathematics were inspected in April and the other curriculum areas in December 1995. Aspects of cross-college provision were inspected in January 1996.

2 Inspectors visited 132 classes, including lectures and workshop activities. Samples of students' written and practical work were examined. A wide range of college documentation was examined. Meetings were held with governors, parents, students, employers, the adult education service manager and representatives from partner schools, East Surrey College, Surrey Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the local education authority, and Surrey careers staff.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Reigate College serves a mixed suburban and rural area in south-east Surrey. It recruits students from over 80 schools in Surrey and the adjoining areas of Croydon, Sutton, West Sussex and Kent. The college was formed in 1976 as a result of educational reorganisation in Reigate and Redhill. There is a variety of schools in the college's catchment area, some of which are selective, some non-selective, some 11-16 and some 11-18. There are several large secondary schools with sixth forms in the same borough, to the east at Oxted, to the west at Dorking, and to the north in Banstead, Caterham and Warlingham. Just over 30 per cent of the college's students come from four 11-16 partner schools and a further 35 per cent come from county and grant-maintained schools which mostly have their own sixth forms. Twenty per cent of students come from the independent sector.

4 At the time of the inspection, the college had 1,096 students enrolled, of whom 1,030 were full time and aged between 16 and 19 years old. Enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. The college has met its target of increasing student numbers by 24 per cent in the past three years. There are just over 68 full-time equivalent teachers and just under 20 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 Reigate College aims to provide students with an appropriate learning environment in which to acquire the skills, knowledge and qualifications to progress into higher education or employment. To do this, it places emphasis on maintaining a college community that is supportive to both its students and its staff.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 The college co-operates with the neighbouring general further education college in Redhill, East Surrey College, and with the adult education service to provide prospective students with comprehensive educational choice. East Surrey College concentrates on work-related vocational education and training, and Reigate College on academic courses. Reigate College offers 35 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects, 21 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses and 21 courses leading to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). There are optional syllabuses for several GCE A level subjects. In addition, there are General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses in three subjects at intermediate and advanced levels. A foundation level course was launched in the 1995-96 academic year.

7 Reigate College has close links with its four partner schools and works hard to achieve good relationships with 11 to 18 schools in the area. It is represented at careers and parents' evenings from year nine onwards in the partner schools. Head teachers report that they find the college receptive to the needs of their pupils and they value the close association developed over time with the senior tutors who are responsible for working with each partner school. The pupils of one particular school are boarders and when they progress to the college they remain boarding at the school. This relationship entails high levels of trust between the school staff charged with the care of these students and those staff at the college who share responsibility for looking after them. Curriculum links with schools assist the college to provide courses which meet the aspirations of their pupils. The college provides GCE A level classes for pupils to sample and this eases their transfer from school to college. Panels of teachers from the college and the schools meet regularly; there are particularly active groups in science, physical education, English and mathematics. There is an annual day of courses for year 10 pupils. Open evenings provide opportunities for pupils in year 11 to view the college with their parents. Feedback to schools on former pupils' achievements cements the links between schools and the college.

8 The college rents out its accommodation for adult education on three evenings a week. Several college staff teach adult programmes. Some adult education students study on mainstream college courses. The adult education manager is pleased with the co-operation she receives from the college. Over 1,000, mostly mature, students will be taught on college premises this academic year. There is a limited programme of one-year GCE A level courses for part-time students, which is designed to complement the parallel provision made by East Surrey College and the adult education service.

9 The college offers its students opportunities to broaden their education, and to learn how to deal with the challenges of daily life, through its enhancement programme. This is compulsory for all first-year students and it includes consideration of a variety of important social,

environmental, scientific and economic issues. Students are encouraged to participate in a wide range of recreational sports and games, including outdoor activities. Team games are pursued with enthusiasm and success. There is extensive participation in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Drama and music are important features of the college's culture. At the time of the inspection, Sophocles' Oedipus Rex and Fauré's Requiem were both in rehearsal for performance before Easter.

10 The college works closely with the Surrey TEC. It was the first college in Surrey to achieve the TEC-sponsored Investors in People award. TEC funding has been used to enhance information technology provision and to provide GNVQ assessor training. A member of the college staff is on the board of the Surrey Education Business Partnership which provides colleges and schools with work-experience and work-shadowing places. The college's links week in July allows all first-year students to have a taste of work. Twenty-five students each year have work experience in mainland Europe. Local employers praise the assistance that the college gives to students to prepare them for the workplace. Close ties between the college's science staff and the research departments of a multi-national pharmaceutical company and East Surrey Water create work-experience opportunities for GCE A level students.

11 Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate to meet the needs of the 40 or so students who are currently enrolled. The support offered is designed to meet individual student need. Some parents spoke of their 'school-phobic' children who had been treated with sympathy and understanding at the college and who were now achieving work standards above all expectations. Emphasis is placed on the importance of maintaining good relationships with parents throughout students' time at the college. Parents are invited to open days and they participate in students' initial interviews and staff consultation days. They feel welcome in the college.

12 The college's marketing is successful and is designed to support the aims of the strategic plan. Promotional materials and events are effective; the prospectus and other promotional literature are attractive, informative and appropriate. All staff accept that marketing is part of their role. Marketing strategies are based on relevant information about courses which is made readily available through the management information system.

13 An equal opportunities policy and implementation strategy have been developed by a group of students and staff. Consultations have been thorough during the past year and the complete documentation has become available recently. The launch of the policy has been linked to staff training. Students are being introduced to it during tutorials.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

14 Managers, staff and governors of the college have a united view of the direction they wish the college to take. Analysis of the local context,

and well-informed delineation of alternative courses of action make possible searching debate. An open and consultative style of management has encouraged community of purpose at all levels.

15 The corporation board has 18 members, including the principal and one student. There are nine independent members, two staff, two parents and three co-opted members. Governors have professional experience of accountancy, commercial management, health and safety, higher education and the law. The chair of the board, who is the nominee of Surrey TEC, is a frequent visitor to the college. Other members regularly support academic and social events. The board receives a brief presentation on an aspect of college activity before each meeting; these have included introductions to the counselling and chaplaincy service, the management of a large teaching department and inspection.

16 Much of the work of the board is carried out through its six committees. These are audit, development, management, personnel, remuneration, and search. Each committee has clear terms of reference and care has been taken to match members' interests with the objectives of the committees on which they serve. The corporation's committee structure is closely aligned with the responsibilities of each member of the college's senior management team. Members have a clear view of their planning and monitoring roles. They are kept well informed about developments in the college and in education more widely. Though the board has yet to set criteria against which to judge its own performance, it has approved a code of conduct for members. In partnership with the college's senior management team, the corporation undertakes an annual evaluation of its operating procedures and of the quality of information it receives.

17 Departments and cross-college areas such as student services produce analytical annual review and planning documents which contribute to the college's strategic planning and target-setting cycle. Governors play an active part in the development and review of the strategic plan.

18 The college management structure is described in the staff handbook. It is understood by both teaching and support staff. Lines of communication and accountability work smoothly and staff are kept well informed about plans and decisions. The college is led by the principal and three vice-principals who have responsibilities for academic, pastoral, and resourcing matters. The principal takes responsibility for employment issues and the vice-principals deal with quality assurance and staff appraisal. The senior management team provides sensitive yet decisive leadership. The pressures caused by recent change are recognised and the support of staff for changed working practices has been secured through effective communication and debate. There is a middle management team of senior tutors and heads of academic departments. They are familiar with their responsibilities and all have up-to-date job descriptions.

19 The present management structure has served the college well. Some restructuring is planned to improve efficiency. Smaller subject areas are being combined under single heads of department, although designated subject leadership will be maintained wherever possible. As the new arrangements develop, it is expected that there will be greater delegation of powers to middle managers. Introduction of these new proposals is well advanced.

20 The allocation of resources to departments takes account of the cost differences between different subjects. Distribution is mainly based on the subject weightings used by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Departments bid for extra funds for the development of new courses. Governors and managers receive detailed monthly reports on the budget, and heads of department are both supervised and assisted when they make decisions on expenditure. The computerised management information network has two systems; one for financial management and the other for timetabling and student records. A staff users group planned the systems and they are widely accessible. They provide accurate and timely information and efficiently support the academic, pastoral and financial data management processes.

21 There are well-documented policies for health and safety, equal opportunities, learning support and other college functions. Together with a number of codes of conduct and the procedural guidelines in the staff handbook, the policies provide sound direction for staff and students. The college satisfies the requirements of sections 44 and 45 of *The Further and Higher Education Act 1992* in making provision for religious education and for a collective act of worship. This provision is co-ordinated by the college chaplain, who is also the head of religious studies and classics. There are weekly meetings of the students' Christian union. The chaplain provides religious counselling when requested. The college has made available a room for worship for Muslim students.

22 The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 is £18.24 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.37 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

23 The college has a clear policy and well-tried procedures for recruitment. At the annual information evenings in the four partner schools, the college principal shares a platform with the principal of East Surrey College and with local careers officers to provide impartial advice. The main responsibility for school liaison lies with the nominated college senior tutors. They visit schools regularly and are sometimes accompanied by other academic staff to provide specialist advice. In addition, the college holds four information evenings and two open evenings between September and March. These are well advertised in the local press and in

libraries and attendance is high. Enquiries from the large number of applicants are handled efficiently. Applicants from the partner schools are interviewed at school.

24 The college holds an introductory day in June for all students who have accepted a place for the following academic year. Students are introduced to their tutors, are given tours of the college and attend presentations by departments to assist them in choosing subjects. Representatives of the students' council talk about its contribution to college life. Each new student is given an appointment for an enrolment interview to be held early in September. Handouts are concise and informative. The introductory day is followed by an evening reception for parents of new students to meet the principal, staff, the college chaplain and senior students. This occasion affirms the college's commitment to parents; it is used to explain the arrangements for keeping them informed about attendance, students' progress, and progression to higher education and employment.

25 Enrolment is well managed. All new students are welcomed individually by senior tutors and their programmes of study confirmed. Staff are knowledgeable and deal with students sensitively, particularly those whose achievement in GCSE examinations has been less than expected and who consequently require a change of plan. Careers and learning support staff are available throughout the day.

26 Induction comprises a well-planned programme to help new students adjust to college life. The college charter is presented in an imaginative way by means of a quiz. Students receive a handbook which contains all the information they need, including a calendar for the year. Each department provides a specialist induction which is consistent with college guidelines. Induction for students starting GCE A level and GNVQ programmes is particularly good. Transfer between courses is well managed for those who need it and procedures include counselling by teaching and tutorial staff. Records of transfers are punctilious. They are monitored so that the pattern of retention for each course remains clear.

27 Students are appreciative of the support they receive from personal tutors. Daily registration is supplemented by a weekly tutorial. Tutors work to an outline programme for each term. Tutorials are used flexibly to give information, or to work with students in groups or individually. The freedom to organise tutorials so that only those who are involved on a particular occasion need attend has been introduced this academic year. It has been welcomed by both staff and students. Student attendance is closely monitored, with spot checks of some classes by senior managers. Tutors meet twice a term to evaluate the effectiveness of their work against quality standards.

28 The learning support needs of all students on foundation courses and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are assessed as a matter of routine and appropriate programmes are provided for them.

Support for students with dyslexia is particularly good. For the moment, the college has decided that it will not assess all students on entry because the majority have achieved appropriate GCSE qualifications to progress to advanced courses. The college receives detailed individual reports from feeder schools for the majority of its new entrants.

29 The college has a well-established system of twice-termly review of student progress. This mainly involves subject and personal tutors but senior tutors and heads of department contribute as necessary. Students are encouraged to maintain their records of achievement and most do so. Progress reviews identify students who need additional help. Some support is given through clinics which are called access periods and some through workshops. Students who are repeating courses, for example GCSE mathematics, often receive extra tuition. A growing number of students on GCE A level courses have been identified as needing help with basic knowledge. This is fulfilled to some extent by the use of access periods and by the goodwill of staff who help students in their own time. However, availability of support is patchy and the college should develop more systematic learning support.

30 Students in need of confidential advice have access to a qualified counsellor and the college chaplain. Their guidance and discretion are valued. Information about the number of students using these services and the general nature of their needs is published in an annual report. The college provides further advice on many issues through an information centre managed by staff and by students themselves.

31 The college invests heavily in its careers education programme. There is a range of activities to engage the interest of most students. The higher education programme is particularly strong. A booklet mapping out the procedure for applying to university helps students to keep a record of each stage of preparation and of the dispatch of their entry forms. Students and their parents attend a higher education forum to consult admissions officers and obtain advice on grants and accommodation. Students attend university open days and the higher education fair at Brunel University. The college is a member of the University of Surrey compact. The careers library has a comprehensive range of prospectuses. There is a range of software to help students with their research on higher education courses. Students who intend to find jobs are equally well served. Experienced and knowledgeable careers staff are available to advise students.

32 The student council encourages students to arrange their own activities and to become involved with teachers and senior managers in consultation about college matters. Students contributed substantially to the formation of the enhancement programme. Meetings of the council are attended by staff and the principal is a member. The elected chair of the student council is a member of the governing body.

33 The college has established quality standards for all aspects of students' recruitment, guidance and support. There is evidence that

systematic evaluation through student questionnaires and consultation with staff has led to improvements. The gradual improvement of introductory and enrolment days are examples of the effectiveness of the quality assurance process in this respect.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

34 Seventy-six per cent of the lessons inspected had strengths that clearly outweighed their weaknesses. The proportion of classes found to have weaknesses that outweighed strengths was less than 1 per cent. The average attendance level in the 132 teaching sessions inspected was 80 per cent. However, the majority of curriculum inspections took place during a period of heavy snow and difficult travelling conditions. The grades awarded to the sessions inspected are summarised in the following table.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		35	45	18	1	0	99
GCSE		3	8	10	0	0	21
GNVQ		1	6	0	0	0	7
Basic education		0	0	3	0	0	3
Other		0	2	0	0	0	2
Total		39	61	31	1	0	132

35 Courses at the college are well planned to meet the requirements of examination syllabuses. Most schemes of work and lesson plans are thoroughly prepared. Students are provided with course handbooks which conform to college guidelines advising staff to set out the nature of the work clearly and to provide additional information on, for example, career and higher education prospects. Assignments and homework are set and marked regularly. The working relationships between staff and students are informal and productive.

36 Science courses have detailed schemes of work which are also given to students. They are reviewed regularly and feedback from students is taken into account. Staff are knowledgeable about their subjects. They supervise practical work with due regard to health and safety. In the majority of classes, the work engages students' interest and stretches their capabilities. Students' conduct in all the sessions inspected was of a high standard. The use of information technology was well integrated with the treatment of the subject. For example, in biology a genetic simulation program provided visual presentation of complex data. In physics, computers were used for data logging and to show such phenomena as wave movements. In several classes observed during good weather in April students arrived late, especially for the first session of the day, and a

number of them had not completed their homework in preparation for the class. This laxity reduced the effectiveness of the sessions for all students. Staff expectations of students were pitched too low in some GCSE and GCE AS classes.

37 The majority of GCE A level students in mathematics are taught in a way that challenges and extends their understanding. Classrooms contain good visual displays. There are computers in each room but some of these machines are outdated. Students are able to discuss their progress realistically. Teachers have agreed a standard which guarantees that marked work will be returned within a week of the deadline for submission. The work in some GCSE and GCE AS classes is too simple and the pace is too slow. There was little use of teaching aids other than the whiteboard.

38 In English, most students are attentive and articulate. They understand their work and are encouraged to debate openly and questioningly in class. Staff and students are responsible and balanced in addressing sensitive topics. In one class the teacher prompted students to discuss aspects of a recent mock examination that they had found difficult. It made them realise that many of their problems were shared. After the discussion, the marked papers were returned for more detailed individual advice. The department offers additional activities which include poetry readings and theatre visits. Most teachers manage class time skilfully and their lessons are lively and interesting. Where students were bored, it was because the teacher had not provided work which was difficult enough.

39 Teaching in classical civilisation, religious studies and Latin is consistently of a high standard in whole-class and group sessions. There are 110 students taking classical civilisation, an unusually large number which is a testimony to the quality of the staff. They are talented in bringing classical texts to life. For example, in one lesson students compared the opening paragraphs of Homer's *Odyssey* with Virgil's *Aeneid*. The differences between Greek and Roman cultures were highlighted through question and debate. The session gave students a real insight into the works and their historical context. The pace and levels of work in this department related appropriately to the needs of different groups of students. The curriculum is enriched with museum visits and study in Greece.

40 Lessons in psychology, philosophy and sociology show clear structure and logical sequences of work which encourage efficient learning. Interesting source materials are commonly used to enliven the investigative elements of the curriculum. Work is marked thoroughly and teachers give clear and helpful guidance to enable students to improve. However, in about half of the classes inspected, students spent too much time in unrelieved listening and note taking which hindered learning. Insufficient attention was paid to ensuring that students understood before the teacher moved to the next topic. In approximately one-third of the lessons, only a few students were prompted to respond to questions; the others were not encouraged by the teacher to participate.

41 In geography, law and history staff use a variety of teaching and learning methods and appropriate resource materials. There are opportunities for the more able students in history and geography to extend their studies through field study or extra homework. For example, history staff have introduced a 'stretch' programme of additional essays and seminars. In geography, students are encouraged to explore the subject in depth through personal studies which range far beyond the immediate locality. Primary sources are used to good effect. In law, a news scrapbook is maintained by the class and a different student is responsible each week for updating and presenting it. In one session, there was a lively discussion on the fate of Nick Leeson and Baring's Bank. Some students' work is spoiled by standards of literacy that are inadequate for work at GCE AS/A level. Students in history need to read more widely to extend their understanding of the context of their studies.

42 Students in business and computer studies are provided with well-produced handouts and are encouraged to participate in a variety of classroom activities. Students and staff work well together. Much of the work in GNVQ business is based on realistic case studies. One dealt with The Body Shop; staff made explicit connections with previous work and enlivened the lesson with relevant use of computers. In some classes there was too much time spent on note taking from the board, when other methods would have been more effective in extending students' understanding.

43 Staff in art, design, media and theatre studies use displays of students' work to aid their learning and to provide reference material. Students in these subjects show initiative and work well individually and in groups. Staff ensure that theory and practice are properly related. For example, design students followed up a museum visit to research automata with their own design and fabrication of moving figures. The work brought together technical knowledge and creative skills. Lessons are well planned and organised. For example, a theatre studies class began with a brief summary of the previous lesson followed by physical and vocal warming-up. It flowed smoothly into small group work on a text and then a performance by each group, showing their interpretation of the work. The session finished with students enacting 10 lines of their own. The teacher drove this lesson forward at a fast and highly-productive pace throughout. In art and design, there is too little attention given to visual research and objective drawing. Some project briefs do not contain clear instructions that cover aims, objectives, dates for completion and assessment criteria.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

44 Students at the college are confident, articulate and enthusiastic. Practical work is competent, and properly supervised. Most staff and students pay appropriate attention to the use of correct English, spelling and punctuation in essay and project work. Most written work is neat and

well presented. Many students have good study skills and maintain well-organised notebooks from which to revise. Students experience group work which helps to prepare them for higher education and employment. In oral work they combine skill in debate with sensitivity to the views of their peers. Students' capability in using information technology varies widely across the college.

45 In 1995, 391 students entered for GCE A level examinations. The pass rate was 85 per cent, a 2 per cent improvement over the previous year. There has been steady improvement since 1985, when the pass rate was 71 per cent. Students aged 16 to 18 taking two or more GCE AS and A level examinations in 1994-95 scored, on average 4.5 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This measure places the college in the top third of institutions in the further education sector on this performance measure, according to the tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. The A to C pass rate was 54 per cent, with considerable variation between different subjects. For example, every student in religious studies and 79 per cent of those in design technology achieved an A to C grade, but only 12 per cent in sociology achieved passes at grades A to C.

46 In 1995 the following GCE A level subjects had pass rates of 95 per cent or above: art, business and information studies, design technology, English language and literature, English literature, French, general studies, German, Latin, mathematics with statistics, photography and Spanish. Physical education and media studies have had 100 per cent pass rates since their introduction two years ago. Students in a few subjects performed poorly; for example, in psychology only 50 per cent passed. This was the first year in which students had taken this examination and action has been taken to remedy the problems. Sociology has had poor results for the last three years; pass rates have not exceeded 60 per cent and dropped to 43 per cent in 1995. Staff use the national Advanced Level Information System to evaluate students' examination performance against grades predicted on the basis of their GCSE scores. This year's analysis shows that 23 subjects had results in line with predicted performance; four subjects achieved higher than predicted; and seven lower.

47 Entries for GCE AS subjects fell by 12 per cent in 1995 and the pass rate also fell to 71 per cent. Most GCE AS classes were small, but among those with 10 or more students, classical civilisation achieved a 92 per cent pass rate and has had 100 per cent pass rates for the previous two years. English has only had one student fail in the past three years. Poor results were recorded in mathematics and psychology.

48 There were 509 subject entries for GCSEs in 1995. The pass rate at grades A to C was 53 per cent; 9 per cent better than in 1994. This compares with the provisional national average pass rate for students in sixth form colleges of 48 per cent. The college publishes results for students who are only taking GCSE examinations separately from those who are

also taking GCE A levels. Passes at A to C grades were achieved by 45 per cent of the former group, and by 72 per cent of the latter. This marked difference has prompted the college to question the viability of repeating GCSE examinations in some cases, and it is developing alternative courses of study that will be more appropriate to the aptitudes of some of its students. Particularly good results were achieved in classical civilisation, photography and Spanish. Poorer results were recorded in German and history.

49 The college offers GNVQs in three subjects and at two levels. Advanced level courses have not yet seen the passage of a complete cohort. At intermediate level, the pass rates vary from 62 per cent for health and social care to 88 per cent for both business and science. These results are good in comparison with national averages.

50 Student enrolment, retention, progression and destinations are analysed by the college. The corporation receives information on trends and debates their implications. Retention rates have been high, at approximately 96 per cent, for a number of years. However, in 1994-95 the number of students leaving the college before completing their courses more than doubled. While senior management assesses the volume of transfers and the retention rate annually, there is little evidence of the accumulated information being used to take action during the academic year.

51 In 1995, 203 students leaving college were offered places in higher education, 95 per cent of which were for degree courses. One student was awarded the Salter's GCE A level chemistry prize for achieving the joint second highest marks in the country. Students also won a number of sporting prizes, including the Surrey Sixth Form Colleges' Combined League Trophy for the seventh time in eight years. Twenty-five students completed their gold or silver Duke of Edinburgh award.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

52 The college has a carefully considered quality assurance system which covers all aspects of the students' experience. Clearly-defined and measurable performance standards have been produced by a team of staff who comprise the quality review group. These standards cover each of the following aspects of students' experience of the college: pre-entry; entry; teaching and learning; guidance; counselling; and exit. The final elements of the system have only just been completed. Over the two-year period in which teaching and learning standards have been reviewed, there have been discernible improvements in resources and course organisation. The method of review is sound; it draws upon the views of staff, students, parents and employers. The college has used the financial audit model as a basis for its approach and has conducted a risk analysis to identify the areas most in need of attention. Quality audit reports are considered at management team meetings and are distributed throughout the college to encourage sharing of ideas to achieve improvement. The

quality assurance process is an integral part of the college planning cycle. Twice-yearly reviews ensure that the focus on achievement of college objectives is maintained.

53 Performance indicators are used to help monitor achievement. For example, data from the Advanced Level Information System are used to inform the review of teaching and learning. Heads of department show varying degrees of confidence and thoroughness in using this information in their review work. This difficulty is being addressed by helping staff to interpret the data and by producing statistical reports which include commentaries. Feedback to students about Advanced Level Information System questionnaires has been provided recently at their request.

54 The college's self-assessment report is lucid. Issues identified in the document were corroborated by the inspection process, as were the college's perceptions of its strengths. The areas of divergence related to learning support, accommodation and staffing. The evaluative dimension of the 1994-95 report had improved in comparison with the previous year, suggesting that quality assurance in the college is maturing. The report is presented to the corporation by the key staff responsible. Annual self-assessment reports are produced by teaching departments and some service areas. Their reports include action points from the annual operating plans. These reports also inform resource allocation and the staff-development plan. Staff appreciate this obvious connection between need and response.

55 Students' views are gathered by several means. However, there is no college overview of the different processes and the inconsistencies between departments mean that some students are overloaded with questionnaires and their care in completing them consequently diminishes. Other students believe that they rarely have a chance to air their views. Students also report that they are sometimes uncertain about the purpose of questionnaires. They do not always receive feedback from the college on any action taken in response to them.

56 There is a staff-appraisal system about which staff speak positively. They praise the commitment of their managers and the value of personal action plans which result from appraisal. Self-review is an important first step which is followed by observation of teachers in their tutorial role and in class. Induction is provided for all new teaching staff and there is a well-structured programme for newly-qualified teachers. All teaching staff who are new to the college are encouraged to participate. There is no induction scheme for new support staff.

57 A college staff-development plan is compiled using information from a variety of sources. It identifies the development needs of individuals as well as those of the college. Less than 0.5 per cent of the college budget is devoted to staff development, but this cash sum is supplemented with five in-service training days a year and with courses run without identifiable cost by college staff and governors. Priorities are set every year. Staff

development is evaluated through the use of review sheets immediately after training events. There is no requirement for managers to formally evaluate the longer-term benefits of training. The college's achievement of the Investors in People award is to be commended; it has given impetus and formal definition to the introduction of new procedures.

58 The college has a student charter. Staff and students are aware of its purpose and significance. However, the charter was devised with very little contribution from students and staff and there are no standards in it against which the college might monitor its fulfilment. The areas dealt with by the charter are subject to scrutiny because they include those covered in the standards defining the work of the college, but the college should ensure that the connection between the charter and college standards is more explicit. The complaints procedure is understood by all, although it is seldom used.

RESOURCES

Staffing

59 The college employs 59 full-time and 19 part-time teachers, amounting to a total of 68 full-time equivalents. Student numbers have increased by 24 per cent and teaching staff levels have increased by 10 per cent. As a result the college staff to student ratio has risen to 1:15. To improve staff efficiency there was a general increase in classroom contact time by two lessons a week from September 1995. The average teaching group size is now 14, but some subjects still have small groups. Seventeen per cent of classes this year have fewer than 10 students.

60 All subject areas have sufficient teachers with appropriate qualifications to cover the curriculum. Ninety per cent of teachers are graduates, 31 per cent hold higher degrees and 77 per cent have teaching qualifications. Nine staff delivering GNVQ programmes have achieved the necessary assessor awards and two have the verifier qualification. Most of the staff teaching GNVQ courses do not have vocational qualifications and their recent professional experience is limited, although in business studies there are close links with local employers.

61 Teachers are competent, hard-working and enthusiastic. Sixty-four per cent are between the ages of 30 and 49 and staffing is stable with 71 per cent staying at the college for five years or more. The three vice-principals teach for six periods a week. Senior tutors receive 12 sessions a week remission from teaching to enable them to fulfil their school liaison work and pastoral duties. All teaching staff act as personal tutors and for this a weekly tutorial period is added to the teaching commitment of 26 lessons.

62 There is a capable technical, administrative and clerical team of 28 staff, of whom five are full time. Sciences and information technology have a well-qualified and experienced team of six technicians. Two are

graduates and a third is studying for an Open University degree with the aid of a college bursary. Design, art and modern languages share a technician. In photography the popularity of the subject and inadequate technical support have resulted in heavy wear and tear on resources. Clerical and reprographic support for teachers is at times inadequate. The level of staffing in the college library allows little time for cataloguing and its heavy use by students demands that the full-time librarian and two part-time assistants spend much of their time in routine supervisory duties. There is a backlog of cataloguing and consequent delay before new books appear on the shelves.

Equipment/learning resources

63 Curriculum areas are adequately equipped. Not all classrooms have overhead projectors, but enough are available to satisfy teaching requirements. The library holds a stock of more specialised equipment such as portable computers, televisions, video recorders and camcorders which are available on a booking system. A 20-place language laboratory has been installed recently. There are equipment purchase and replacement policies.

64 Computer equipment is widely available throughout the college. Rapid growth in information technology has taken place in the last three years, and the machines available to students have increased by 83 per cent. The computer to student ratio is 1:10. The majority of machines are of modern specification and over 90 per cent are networked. The administration has a network of 32 machines. The college has responded to the needs of GNVQ courses by providing two information technology rooms for teaching, together with open access facilities.

65 The library contains over 11,000 catalogued books, with a further 10,000 titles available for student use but not yet catalogued. The bookstock is adequate for most subjects and the librarian maintains close contact with departments to select new books. The library holds a wide range of newspapers and journals and learning support materials such as video recordings and information on compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database. Library surveys reveal that lending is relatively low at less than 500 books a month and that less than half the student body borrows books. Ninety per cent of students use the library as a place to work and most of them consult texts for reference. The library budget this year is £12,800, of which half is spent on books, 11 per cent on journals and 10 per cent on computing and CD-ROM software. The library has no photocopier.

Accommodation

66 The college's main site of a little under six hectares near the centre of Reigate was originally developed as a girls' grammar school in the 1920s. The accommodation varies widely in design, construction and repair.

Thirty-six per cent of the internal floor area is in the original school building, which accounts for the majority of the teaching space. It has wide corridors, narrow stairways and solid internal structures that do not lend themselves readily to modification and efficient use. Very few of the classrooms are designed for student numbers greater than 20 and this has resulted in some overcrowding. Sciences are taught in rooms which were not intended for use as laboratories. Three of them are too small, and put good health and safety practice at risk. The laboratories are sited on different floors, causing problems with transfer of apparatus between rooms. Fourteen per cent of the teaching area is provided in huts. Decoration is poor and they suffer from noise intrusion. Practical photography work is housed in unsuitable accommodation with overcrowded and inappropriate workspaces.

67 The Langham building, which was completed in 1991, provides excellent reception and administration areas, a staffroom and offices, as well as a spacious library with study places for 100 students.

68 Most teaching areas are well maintained, adequately furnished and clean. A detailed maintenance programme has been drawn up and much repair and refurbishment has been carried out since incorporation. Using displays of teaching materials and students' work, staff in many areas have created rooms with strong subject identities, which help students to assimilate the standards that are expected of them.

69 The college has a sound accommodation strategy which responds appropriately to the inadequacies it has identified. The first phase of new building includes the creation of a better student refectory, a social area and more parking. The second phase will add more teaching accommodation and replace many of the huts. The existing social and refectory areas for students are very poor. The canteen is housed in a wartime Horsa building, which is both small and ugly. Students use the warmer and more attractive library as a place to meet and as a consequence, sometimes distract others who wish to study.

70 Access for students with restricted mobility is poor. There are no lifts and some ground floor areas are made inaccessible by steps. The college is dissatisfied with its situation and rearranges timetables and rooms as much as possible to accommodate wheelchair users. The entrances to some buildings are ramped but access to the canteen and the library is impractical.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

71 The particular strengths of the college are:

- high standards of teaching and learning
- good relations with partner schools, parents and employers
- the wide range of courses selected to complement those of other local establishments

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- the well-conceived guidance programmes for new entrants and for those progressing to higher education
 - effective tutorial and pastoral support
 - committed and widely-experienced governors
 - the effective consultative processes which facilitate change
 - early achievement of the Investors in People award
 - good relations between students and staff
 - the well-designed quality assurance system linked to the planning cycle
 - measurable quality standards.

72 If it is to continue to improve its service, the college should address the following:

- the lack of systematic learning support for students on GCE A level courses
- insufficiently high expectations of students on some courses
- the poor examination results in a few subjects
- some lack of vocational experience among staff teaching GNVQs
- insufficiencies in some administrative, technical support, and library staffing levels
- some poor teaching accommodation
- poor social and refectory areas for students
- poor access for wheelchair users.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1995)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1995)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1995)

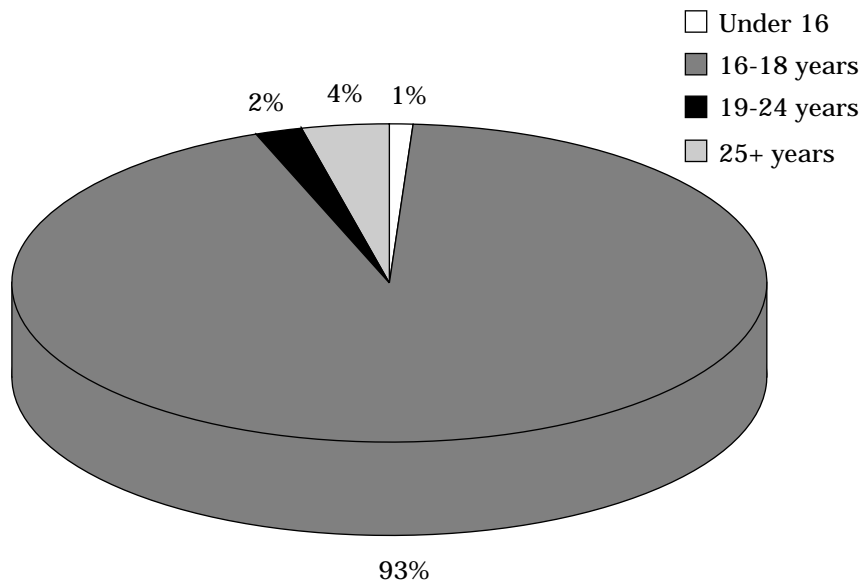
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

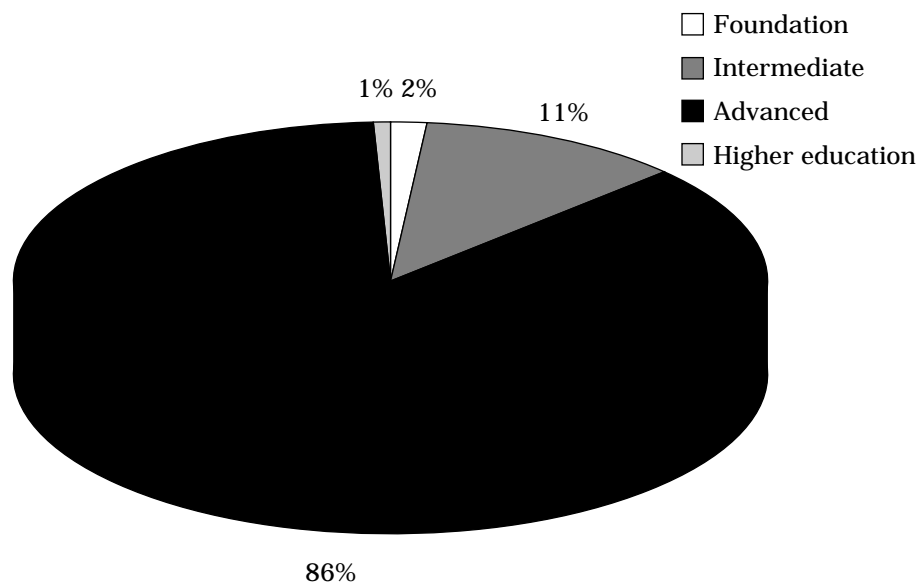
Reigate College: percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1995)



Enrolments: 1,096

Figure 2

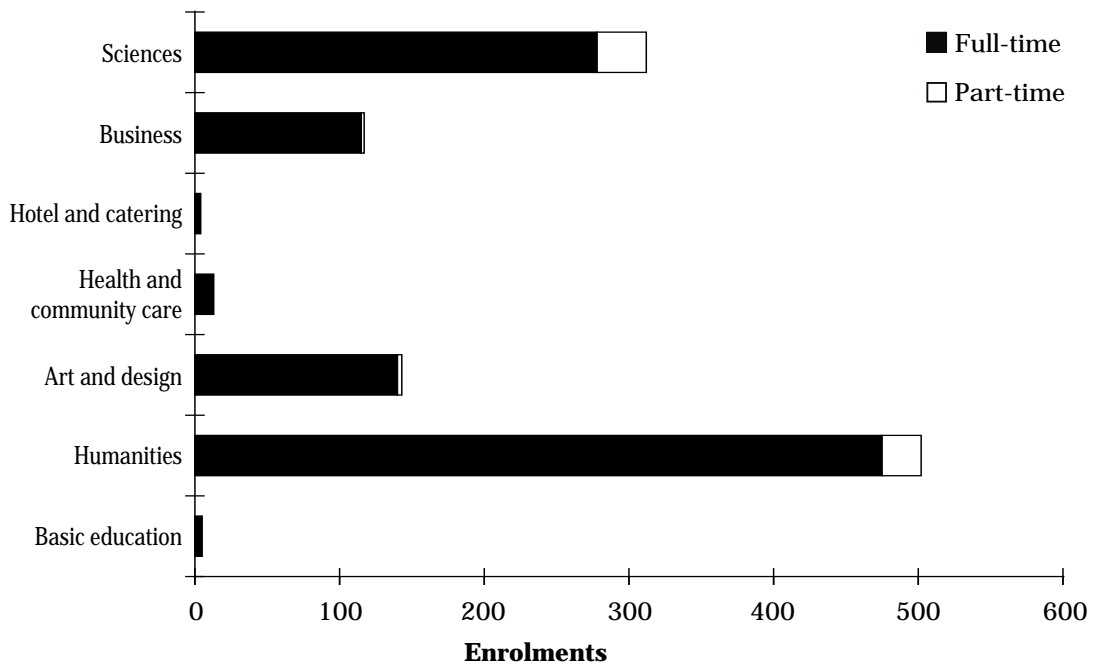
Reigate College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1995)



Enrolments: 1,096

Figure 3

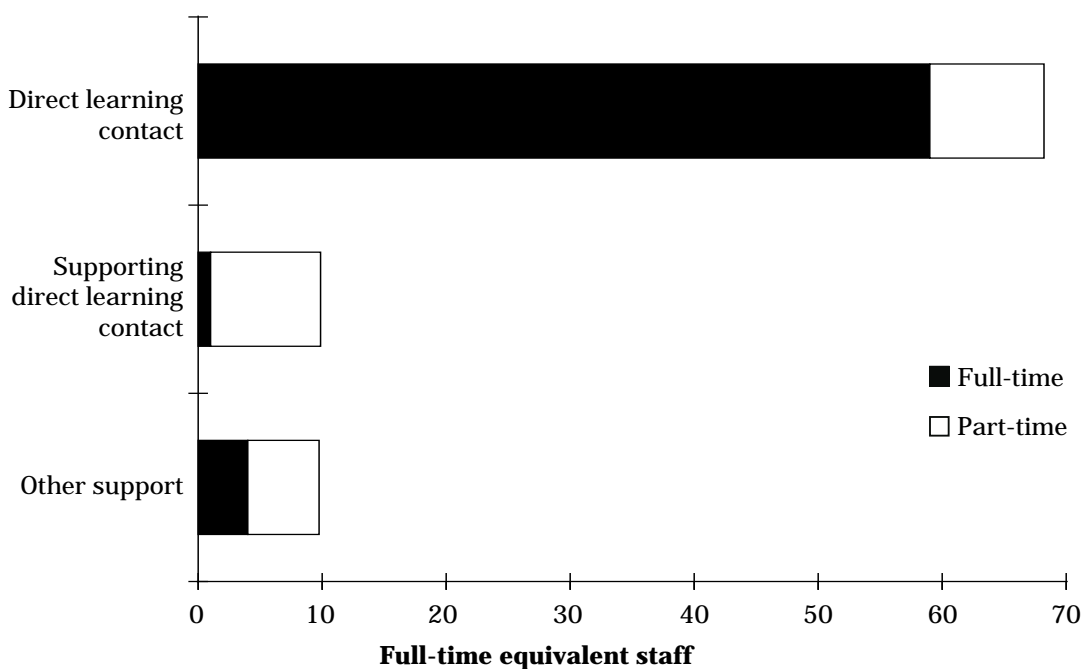
Reigate College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)



Enrolments: 1,096

Figure 4

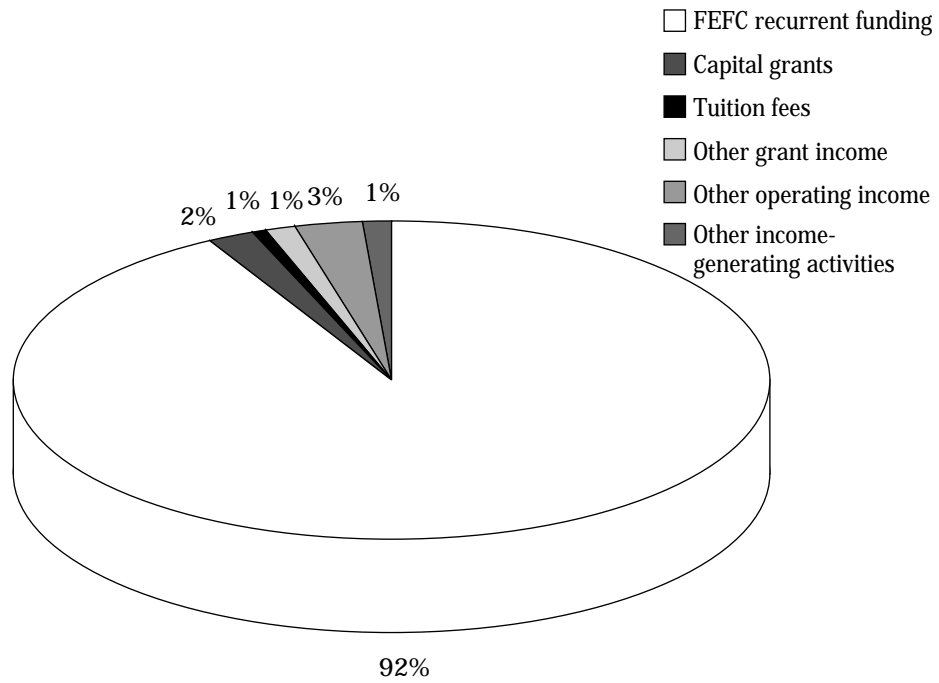
Reigate College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1995)



Full-time equivalent staff: 88

Figure 5

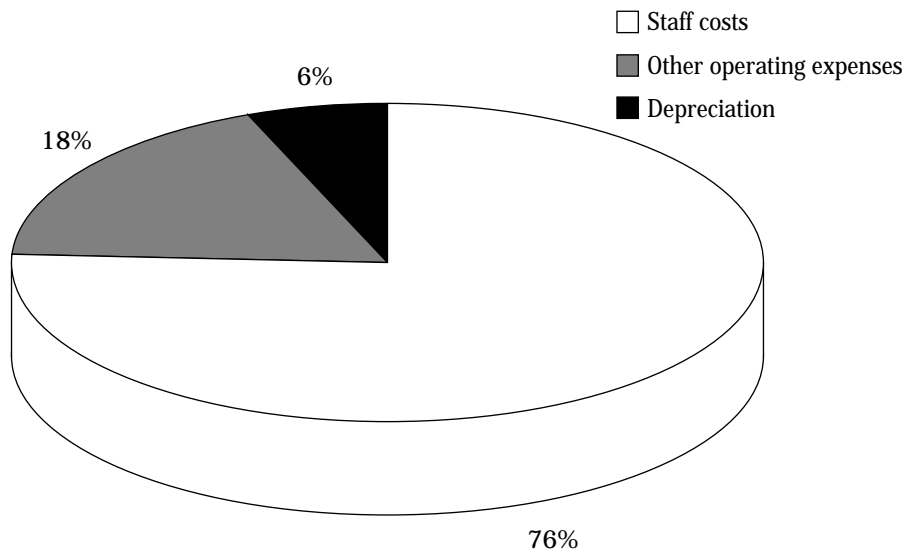
Reigate College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £2,720,171

Figure 6

Reigate College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £2,808,927

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