

**St Francis
Xavier
Sixth Form
College**

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
2000-01**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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

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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1999-2000, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	6	44	44	7	0
Cross-college provision	9	45	38	8	0

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Sample size: 112 college inspections

Note: percentages subject to rounding

Student Achievements

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

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1996, would appear in the results for 1997-98 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not included.

Summary

St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College *Greater London Region*

Inspected October 2000

St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College is a Roman Catholic college located in the London Borough of Wandsworth. The college's mission is centred on Roman Catholic beliefs and values, which permeate all its activities. The college provides full-time courses, mainly for 16 to 19 year olds. It offers an extensive range of courses in seven of the programme areas funded by the FEFC. Provision in four of these areas was inspected together with aspects of cross-college provision. The number of students on roll has increased since the last inspection. The increase in the number of adult students is the result of the development of part-time and evening courses. The college is committed to meeting the needs of a wide range of learners. It is particularly successful in attracting students who may not previously have considered entering further education.

In preparation for the inspection the college produced a self-assessment report which contained many of the strengths and weaknesses of provision which were subsequently identified by inspectors. The college has a clear commitment to improving the standard of its provision. Self-assessment is thorough. Courses are managed effectively and teaching is good. Provision in art and design, media and performing arts is outstanding. The

college has strong links with local schools. Support services available to students are outstanding. Induction, tutorials and careers advice and guidance are all well organised and effective. Students can choose from an extensive range of enrichment activities. The governance and management of the college are outstanding. Staff speak highly of the open and consultative style of managers. The college should improve: student retention rates on some courses; some overcrowded accommodation; the monitoring of quality assurance procedures; and the lesson observation scheme.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Sciences	2	Support for students	1
Business	2	General resources	2
Art and design, media and performing arts	1	Quality assurance	2
English and modern foreign languages	2	Governance	1
		Management	1

Context

The College and its Mission

1 St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College is a Roman Catholic college adjacent to Clapham Common in the London Borough of Wandsworth. It was established in 1985 for students aged 16 to 19 and it draws about 55% of its students from eight partner schools. Most students live in the London boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth, and 85% of all students live in postcode areas defined as disadvantaged in the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' index of local conditions. The college also provides for the needs of the wider community. For example, it offers a day nursery, an increasing range of courses for adults and a sports-coaching scheme for schools. The college aims to broaden its provision further and has restructured its community education programme.

2 The college proclaims Christian values in the Roman Catholic tradition and strives to ensure that all individuals are given equal opportunity to fulfil their unique potential and to grow in respect of self, other people and God. This commitment permeates all the activities and relationships within the college, for example pastoral care, the religious education programme, the liturgical life and the central role of the chaplaincy.

3 In November 1999, the college had on roll 1,046 students aged 16 to 19. Of its students, 65% were baptised Roman Catholics. Some 67% of students were of minority ethnic origin, and 53% were female. A high proportion of students are on advanced level courses, and 20% are taking general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) foundation or intermediate courses, or subjects at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). During the 1998-99 academic year the college enrolled 1,023 adult students on part-time community education courses or on work-related training programmes.

The Inspection

4 The college was inspected in October 2000. The inspection team had previously considered the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other directorates of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college submitted data on rates of student retention and achievement for 2000 which were checked against primary sources, such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The individualised student record (ISR) information on rates of student retention and achievement for 1998 and 1999 was also used by inspectors. The inspection was carried out by nine inspectors and an auditor working in the college for a total of 37 days.

5 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000. Of the lessons inspected, 78% were judged to be good or outstanding and 2% less than satisfactory, compared with national figures for sixth form colleges of 72% and 3%, respectively, for 1999-2000.

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	9	11	3	0	0	23
GCSE	2	1	1	0	0	4
GNVQ	2	4	1	0	0	7
Other vocational	3	6	3	1	0	13
Other	2	3	3	0	0	8
Total (No.)	18	25	11	1	0	55
Total (%)	33	45	20	2	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000 (%)	17	45	31	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Note: percentages subject to rounding. The total number of lessons includes tutorials

6 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College	16.2	88
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000	10.3	76

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Curriculum Areas

Sciences

Grade 2

7 Inspectors observed 13 lessons covering the full range of science subjects. Inspectors generally agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report, but identified some additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good teaching
- well-organised laboratory work
- strong links with industry

Weaknesses

- poor rates of retention on some courses
- inadequate written feedback on some students' work

8 The college offers full-time courses in: GCSE and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) biology, chemistry and physics; GNVQ intermediate science; and BTEC national diploma in science. Courses are well managed. Course teams work well together and keep appropriately detailed records of course team meetings. Curriculum changes have been managed effectively. However, setting of targets for students' rates of achievement and retention is underdeveloped at course level. There are strong links with industry. On the BTEC national diploma course students enjoy and benefit from their work experience. Employers speak highly of the commitment and competence that students demonstrate during work experience. There is a well-established science advisory board, which includes several employer representatives, some of whom sponsor 'best student' awards.

9 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that the teaching is well planned and effective. Teachers give good support to individual students. Laboratory work

is well organised. Students have reached a competent standard in practical skills. A strong emphasis is placed on attention to issues involving health and safety. Most of the lessons observed were good or outstanding, and no lessons were unsatisfactory. In an effective chemistry lesson, students were looking at the properties of halogens. By the use of demonstrations and everyday analogies, the teacher stimulated students' interest and maintained their attention. In a physics lesson, students were working on the characteristics of sound waves. The teacher generated friendly competition amongst the students by skilful questioning, keeping them all focused on the topic. The disruptive behaviour of a small minority of students in a biology lesson created a potential difficulty for the rest of the group. Firm action by the teacher resolved the situation quickly without alienating the students involved.

10 Teachers emphasise the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and are gaining a good response from students. The attendance rate of 94% during the week of the inspection, is significantly higher than the national average. Pass rates on the BTEC national diploma science and GCE A level chemistry are good. All students who took these qualifications last year were successful. The pass rate in all other subjects is in line with the national averages for sixth form colleges. Retention rates for GCE A level biology and physics are low at 53% and 35%, respectively. These low rates are identified in the self-assessment report and there are plans to improve the situation.

11 Students' written work is of an appropriate standard. Teachers often require them to evaluate their own work on assignments. However, written feedback on students' work is sometimes inadequate. Teachers' comments do not always help students to identify how to improve their performance. Progression from advanced level courses is well monitored; many students are successful in gaining entry to

Curriculum Areas

higher education. Many science students progress from intermediate to advanced level courses.

12 Teachers are well qualified and experienced. This strength is noted in the self-assessment report. They engage in a range of staff development activities. There is an adequate number of laboratories. Several have been refurbished to provide a good learning environment but a few remain shabby in appearance. Overcrowding in laboratories is

evident, particularly during practical work in biology and chemistry. Three science technicians provide good support. Storage and preparation facilities are inadequate. There is insufficient information technology (IT) equipment within laboratories, which limits the practical work that can be carried out. A range of relevant web pages is available on the college intranet. The library has an adequate stock of books, journals and videos for science subjects.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in sciences, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE biology, chemistry, physics (grade C or above)	2	Number of starters	43	53	45
		Retention (%)	*	81	76
		Achievement (%)	46	53	47
GNVQ intermediate science	2	Number of starters	10	16	16
		Retention (%)	80	94	81
		Achievement (%)	75	60	62
BTEC national science	3	Number of starters	36	33	31
		Retention (%)	*	*	68
		Achievement (%)	85	97	100
GCE A level biology	3	Number of starters	57	53	43
		Retention (%)	53	32	53
		Achievement (%)	90	88	91
GCE A level chemistry	3	Number of starters	46	38	25
		Retention (%)	70	39	76
		Achievement (%)	71	100	100

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

*data may be unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 2

13 Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but found that some strengths were given insufficient emphasis and a few weaknesses had not been identified.

Key strengths

- good teaching
- good achievement by most students
- effective course review and evaluation
- an articulate response from students in lessons

Weaknesses

- the low retention rate of GCE A level business studies courses

14 The college offers an appropriate range of full-time academic and vocational courses, including GCE A level courses, foundation and intermediate GNVQ programmes and national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2 courses in business administration. The college also runs the BTEC national diploma in business and finance. Students on advanced level vocational courses study either Spanish or Italian as part of their programme.

15 The programme area is well managed. Section leaders are responsible for curriculum planning and development, monitoring attendance and punctuality, and tutorial support. Course team meetings take place regularly. Curriculum and pastoral issues are closely monitored and reviewed. The requirements of curriculum 2000 have been well managed. Students enjoy college and speak enthusiastically about their work. Teachers have high expectations of their students in terms of achievement, attendance and

punctuality. Effective action is taken with students who fail to honour their learning agreements. Course review and evaluation are effective. This strength was given insufficient emphasis in the self-assessment report. Inadequate targets are set for retention and achievement at course level. This weakness was insufficiently emphasised in the self-assessment report.

16 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that teaching and learning constitute a strength. Lesson planning is effective and teachers use an appropriate variety of teaching methods to engage and sustain students' interest. They frequently check students' understanding of the work during probing question-and-answer sessions. Students are confident and articulate. In a particularly effective first-year lesson, the teacher used a quiz to promote debate. Students responded with great enthusiasm on issues such as higher education, employment and taking a year out from full-time study. In a second-year GCE A level business studies class, the teacher made exceptionally good use of students' earlier work to establish interesting and constructive links between motivation theories and organisational structure. Students are developing a satisfactory range of IT skills. Teachers also make excellent use of demonstrations. When appropriate, assignments relate to the world of work. Teachers have made effective use of local visitor attractions when designing suitably demanding project work. Work experience for students on vocational courses is well organised and is valued by the students. In a few lessons, there was an over-reliance on note-taking and insufficient demands were made on some students. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

17 Since the last inspection, the college has introduced several initiatives to improve rates of student attendance and punctuality. During the week of the inspection, attendance was around

Curriculum Areas

90%, which is well above national figures for the programme area. Students' written work is of a high standard. Marking of students' work is fair, and usually includes comments which help students to improve their work. In a few instances, marking was perfunctory and unhelpful. Students' achievements at GNVQ foundation level are excellent and pass rates on GNVQ intermediate and BTEC national diploma courses are at, or above the national benchmarks. Students achieve high standards in the foreign language component of their course. Retention and achievement on one-year courses is generally at or above national figures. The low student retention rate on the GCE A level course is recognised in the college's self-assessment report.

18 Teachers are appropriately qualified and their subject knowledge is up to date. A few classes are overcrowded to the point where the teaching and learning is adversely affected. The college is aware of the problems caused by large class sizes and has appointed a number of classroom assistants. The role of these assistants had not been made clear by the time of the inspection and full advantage was not being taken of their appointment. The provision of books and other learning resources is adequate.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in business, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GNVQ foundation	1	Number of starters	15	14	20
		Retention (%)	*	75	74
		Achievement (%)	*	92	88
GNVQ intermediate	2	Number of starters	19	22	24
		Retention (%)	58	91	71
		Achievement (%)	*	*	65
GCE A level business studies	3	Number of starters	52	64	62
		Retention (%)	*	*	60
		Achievement (%)	94	94	100
BTEC national diploma business and finance	3	Number of starters	35	26	38
		Retention (%)	77	69	76
		Achievement (%)	96	82	93

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

*data may be unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Art and Design, Media and Performing Arts

Grade 1

19 Inspectors observed 15 lessons. They found the college's self-assessment report to be a comprehensive and thorough analysis of strengths and weaknesses and agreed with the judgements in the report.

Key strengths

- outstanding teaching
- good additional learning opportunities
- the effective use of IT
- the consistently high achievement of students
- the high standard of students' work

Weaknesses

- the inappropriate use of some accommodation

20 The college provides a wide range of courses in the programme area. These include: GNVQ in art and design at intermediate and advanced levels; GCE A level drama and fine arts; GCE advanced subsidiary (AS) and GCE A level performing arts, film studies and media studies; and GCE AS dance.

21 Inspectors agreed with the college that the organisation and management of the programme area has developed effectively within the three departments. The curriculum is well monitored at course team meetings. There are good course handbooks. Assignments and projects are demanding and imaginative. Students benefit from the close collaboration across departments and faculties between staff teaching the courses. Teachers from the different subject areas co-operate in the design of integrated projects. For example, students on GNVQ courses who are engaged in drawing

movement, and students on media courses who are making videos, are able to observe and draw dance and drama activities.

22 There is much outstanding teaching across the programme area. For example, in one GCE A level drama lesson, the teacher established clear learning objectives. As a result, students made rapid progress from a text reading exercise to group dramatisations. Students interpreted the work with lively and creative movement. In an outstanding art lesson, students were engaged in constructive criticism of drawings of figures. The lesson was part of a preparatory session for a later painting. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and have high expectations of students. Attendance at lessons is high, although students' poor punctuality led to the disruption of lessons on a few occasions. Students are introduced to a wide range of topics, which are further extended by well-planned, enriching visits to galleries, studios and theatres. Teachers have established effective co-operation with key skills tutors. In another outstanding lesson, students on the GNVQ advanced course in art and design were working with computers. The project effectively linked work produced in the studio and the manipulation of images on screen. Students across the programme area demonstrate a high level of ability in the use of computers and specialist software.

23 As stated in the self-assessment report, students' achievements are consistently high and a significant majority of students are on courses which have pass rates above national averages. The pass rate on the GCSE media course has been 100% for the last two years and all students completing the GNVQ intermediate art and design course achieved the award in 1999. Pass rates on the GNVQ advanced and GCE A level courses have also been high over the past three years; all students obtained high grades. The retention rate fluctuates, but college initiatives have led to improvements over the last two years, except in GCE A level art.

Curriculum Areas

Students produce work of a very high standard. The overall high levels of achievement are reflected in the number of students who progress to higher level courses and gain entry to degree programmes.

24 As recognised in the self-assessment report, teachers are well qualified. Students also benefit from contact with specialist

practitioners who use their up-to-date professional and commercial experience to develop students' understanding. Lessons in drama and dance are carried out in good accommodation which is suitable for both individual and group work. However, high student numbers result in some overcrowding in art and design studios.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in art and design, media and performing arts, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE communications/media	2	Number of starters	22	19	25
		Retention (%)	*	74	80
		Achievement (%)	94	100	100
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	Number of starters	17	15	17
		Retention (%)	*	73	88
		Achievement (%)	88	100	67
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	Number of starters	15	19	18
		Retention (%)	73	68	72
		Achievement (%)	100	92	100
GCE A level fine arts	3	Number of starters	75	25	37
		Retention (%)	77	88	65
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100
GCE A level performing arts	3	Number of starters	13	26	15
		Retention (%)	77	54	80
		Achievement (%)	80	100	100
GCE A level media	3	Number of starters	80	77	81
		Retention (%)	*	76	99
		Achievement (%)	*	100	100

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

*data may be unreliable

Curriculum Areas

English and Modern Foreign Languages

Grade 2

25 Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with the judgements made in the self-assessment report, but found additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good achievement by students in GCE A levels and GCSE modern languages
- the extensive provision in modern languages
- the good support for individual students
- a high standard of response from students in lessons
- the good use of resources to support learning

Weaknesses

- a low retention rate on some courses
- insufficient monitoring of the students' progress in some lessons

26 The college offers full-time GCE A level courses in English language, English literature, English language and literature, French, Spanish, German, Italian and Portuguese. GCSE courses in English, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese are also available. Full-time students on BTEC national diploma business courses take a certificated course in business language competence. Adult evening classes are offered in five languages including Mandarin Chinese. There has been an increase in the number of students choosing English subjects following the introduction of curriculum 2000. Course teams meet regularly to discuss operational and subject planning issues. There are clear strategies for monitoring student retention and achievement rates. Teachers are

working on improving students' attendance. For example, lists showing students' attendance in English lessons are prominently displayed. Attendance during the week of the inspection was above the national average for the programme area.

27 Teaching is well planned and lessons include appropriate activities. Students come from a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. They are highly motivated, enthusiastic and confident. Language learning is an important part of the culture of the college. In a particularly effective English lesson, second-year students gave presentations to the rest of the class using anecdotes from their own cultures. They each brought a different meaning to the text of *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys. Teachers give good support to individual students, a strength not sufficiently recognised in the self-assessment report. This support was demonstrated in a GCE A level lesson in Italian, in which students independently dramatised the roles of three women from a novel. They each took parts according to their level of language skill. Materials used to support learning are of a high standard. A particularly good example is the workbook produced for students on the GCE A level English language course. The workbook has been devised using an appropriate variety of techniques and gives clear directions for students. In a few lessons, teachers failed to sustain the interest of students. Learning objectives were not always made clear in these lessons, and students' progress was sometimes not monitored.

28 Students' achievements in GCE A level English literature, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian are well above national averages. All students on the five GCE A level language courses have been successful for the last two years. However, in GCE A level French and Italian, retention rates are below national averages, a weakness not sufficiently emphasised in the self-assessment report. In

Curriculum Areas

the academic year 1999-2000, there were small numbers of students enrolled on GCSE languages courses; only nine students studied French and four Portuguese. Students' retention and achievements are above national averages in all GCSE subjects. There has been steady improvement in students' achievements over the last three years. Achievement in English language, Italian and Spanish has improved by more than 20%.

29 English and foreign languages courses are located in an appropriate suite of rooms. Courses have dedicated IT facilities. Most rooms

have wall-mounted video and television units. There is a good language laboratory, which is used by most classes at least once a week. Some classrooms are cluttered and some wall displays are out of date. These weaknesses were not noted in the self-assessment report. The library is adequately stocked and there are sufficient copies of textbooks. Students use the college's website which includes learning materials for English. Teachers are well qualified, knowledgeable and appropriately experienced. Three language assistants provide helpful support.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in English and modern foreign languages, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCE A level English language and literature	3	Number of starters	90	39	60
		Retention (%)	74	87	85
		Achievement (%)	94	88	100
GCE A level English literature	3	Number of starters	63	109	76
		Retention (%)	*	83	78
		Achievement (%)	85	99	95
GCSE English (grade C or above)	2	Number of starters	111	132	132
		Retention (%)	*	73	77
		Achievement (%)	44	60	64
GCE A level French	3	Number of starters	21	30	23
		Retention (%)	*	53	52
		Achievement (%)	86	100	100
GCE A level Spanish	3	Number of starters	21	26	24
		Retention (%)	*	77	75
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100
GCE A level Italian	3	Number of starters	16	12	20
		Retention (%)	56	67	55
		Achievement (%)	71	100	100

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

*data may be unreliable

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 1

30 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- wide-ranging involvement of the chaplaincy in college life
- effective systems for pre-entry guidance, application and enrolment
- effective induction and tutorial support
- good links with partner schools
- outstanding support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- rigorous monitoring of students' attendance and punctuality records
- outstanding careers guidance

Weaknesses

- there are no significant weaknesses

31 Support for students is evident in all aspects of college life. Services are well managed and the roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly defined and widely understood by both staff and students. Staff work exceptionally well together to meet the needs of students. Inspectors agreed with the college's view that the Roman Catholic character and Christian values of the college are supported by all members of the college community. These values contribute to the college's distinctive nature and the excellent standard of support for students. Students are well informed about the range of services available and speak highly of their tutors and the care which they receive from them.

32 Inspectors agreed with the college's view that its pre-induction programme assists

students in making an appropriate choice of courses. Well-developed links with partner schools include a schedule of visits, interviews and participation in the college open day. Other sources of information about the college include a college website, local advertising and a newsletter. The college provides useful feedback to its partner schools about the progression of their former pupils at the end of their college courses. A carefully structured, comprehensive induction programme enables students to make an effective start on their work at the college.

33 The college offers students a 'core curriculum' which includes tutorial support, key skills development, careers education and guidance, religious education and an enrichment programme. Students' achievements within the programme are accredited. The college underestimated the strength of this integrated model of supportive studies, and its positive impact on students' attendance and achievement. Religious education is provided for students of all backgrounds. This subject provides an important element of support for students.

34 Tutorials are highly effective. They include the setting of personal targets for students to help them to improve their learning. The college has a counselling day set aside each term for personal tutors to meet students to discuss their action plans. Students have daily contact with their personal tutors. When more specialist help is required, students are referred to external agencies or the chaplaincy. A qualified, experienced counsellor comes to the college once a week. The college provides a nursery which is currently used only for the children of staff and members of the local community. Students with children are eligible to use the facility but none are currently doing so.

35 Inspectors agreed with the college's view that the provision of careers education and guidance is outstanding. Significant

Cross-college Provision

developments have taken place since the last inspection. These include the provision of mock interviews for jobs, visits to careers fairs, and individual career interviews for all foundation and intermediate level students on vocational courses. Information on students' destinations is well managed and an effective range of methods is used to collect data. Students appreciate the continued contact with tutors after leaving college. The college enrichment programme offers students numerous opportunities to enhance their learning. The college provides outstanding support for students with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These include students with Asperger's syndrome and students who are dyslexic, or have sensory impairments. Support is offered individually to students, through workshops and also within curriculum areas. Each vocational area has a support tutor attached to the teaching team. Monitoring of students' progress is appropriately detailed and forms part of the college's profiling system. Since the last inspection the service has expanded and 109 students were receiving specialist support at the time of the inspection. The college recognises these strengths in its self-assessment report. All students enrolling at the college are assessed. Those who require additional support in literacy and numeracy are identified and a programme of support is arranged.

36 The chaplaincy is an important aspect of college life and chaplains are always available. They work alongside tutors offering impartial advice. They contribute a 'thought for the day' to the daily bulletin, participate in the enrichment programme and organise masses, liturgies and retreats. They contribute to theme weeks such as Amnesty Action Week.

General Resources

Grade 2

37 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report. Several weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- good access to computing facilities for staff and students
- improved access for staff and students with disabilities to college buildings
- the effective assessment of maintenance needs
- the effective identification of potential accommodation projects

Weaknesses

- insufficient study spaces at peak periods of use
- some overcrowded accommodation

38 The college occupies the premises of a former Catholic secondary school. These comprise two buildings dating from the 1970s, a third from the nineteenth century, and a listed Georgian house which is used for the adult education programme. Overall the college provides a safe and appropriate setting in which students can pursue their studies, a strength noted in the self-assessment report. Improvements have been made to security arrangements since the last inspection.

39 The college assesses maintenance requirements of its buildings well and has identified development projects for the future. To advise on accommodation strategy, it has employed external consultants who have taken into account the college's mission, its strategic objectives and anticipated curriculum

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developments. Other consultants have surveyed the current state of the buildings and identified the necessary improvement work. Progress on specific projects is reported to governors. There is a programme of maintenance and refurbishment which operates within the modest budget available. Most classrooms and other accommodation are in reasonable decorative order, and are well equipped. Developments since the last inspection have included the refurbishment of science laboratories and the replacement of noisy and inefficient heaters. Most teaching staff have their own workspace in a staff room, although some are based in classrooms.

40 Social facilities for students are adequate. They include a common room and cafeteria. There is a well-furnished chapel and an additional room where students can meet informally with the chaplains. Corridors and public spaces are enhanced with students' artwork and attractive displays on noticeboards. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement in its self-assessment report that there is some overcrowding in classrooms and social areas. The number of seats available in the cafeteria is relatively small compared with the number of students. Public areas such as corridors can be congested at peak times. The use of accommodation is subject to continuous review, and beneficial adjustments are made wherever possible.

41 Outdoor facilities include an attractive quadrangle with seating. There are several hard courts for sports such as basketball. There is a large sports hall, which is in need of some refurbishment. The college is negotiating with a private leisure company which plans to develop a leisure centre in the college grounds in return for improving the college's sports hall. Students are able to use local sports facilities to supplement those on site.

42 Since the last inspection, the college has made several improvements to its

accommodation. It has improved access for staff and students with restricted mobility. A lift is currently being installed which will give access to the upper floors of two buildings housing the library, learning resources centre and computer rooms. Lavatories for the people with disabilities have been installed and the learning support centre has been moved from an upper floor to the ground floor. There is no access for people with disabilities to the adult education centre or to the upper floors of the Victorian building, including the chapel.

43 Students and staff have good access to IT facilities, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. A well-equipped IT centre provides a quiet environment for independent study. There are 263 computers for students' use, a ratio of approximately one computer to four full-time equivalent students. Of these computers, 36 are located in the learning resources centre, while the rest are for students' use in classrooms during timetabled lessons. Additionally, 37 computers are provided for students in the adult education centre. There is also a collection of CD-ROMs available for use on dedicated machines in the library. All computers have high-speed links to the Internet, and there is a college website. Students can register for an electronic mail address. There is a college intranet which provides a good range of software and in-house material to support learning. Staff have access to administrative information and electronic mail through the college's intranet. There is a well-defined policy in the college for the development of information and learning technology, which is based on the college's strategic objectives and curriculum initiatives.

44 The Bryan Snalune Library has an appropriate bookstock for curriculum areas. Links between the library and curriculum managers are good, and managers and teachers are consulted to ensure that new purchases reflect changes in the college's curriculum. There are 53 study spaces, which is low for the

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number of students. The college is addressing this pressure on library study space by encouraging use of other areas, for example, by allowing students to study in the cafeteria except during break times. The college has introduced an imaginative scheme to encourage students to improve their use of the library and learning resource centre during off-peak times. A 'smart card' records students' attendance at these times in the form of points. The students with the highest points receive rewards such as computer disks, photocopying credits or book tokens.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

45 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report, but identified a few additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- a commitment to continuous improvement
- the successful impact of quality assurance procedures
- a well-established and comprehensive framework for quality assurance activities
- effective arrangements for self-assessment
- effective staff development policies and practice

Weaknesses

- inadequate monitoring of some quality assurance activities

46 The college's mission statement and strategic objectives indicate a strong commitment to continuous improvement. There is an established, comprehensive framework for quality assurance activities which include: annual self-assessment; lesson observation; surveys of staff and student views; standards of performance for college support services; and

staff appraisal. This area of strength is recognised in the college's self-assessment report. The staff handbook provides clear and helpful guidance on quality assurance arrangements. It includes a calendar of quality assurance activities which have led to many measurable improvements in aspects of college provision and services. For example, the overall achievement of students at most levels has improved over the last few years, and additional IT facilities have been made available to students. Retention rates at some levels of study show improvements. The college's policy on student attendance and punctuality has been revised, and there are early indications that the attendance record of students is improving. During the period leading up to and including the inspection, attendance was significantly above national averages.

47 The curriculum standards committee has oversight of quality assurance arrangements. The vice-principal chairs the committee which both formulates quality assurance policy and thoroughly reviews the information on students' achievements and retention rates. The committee's monitoring of some quality assurance activities is inadequate. For example, the committee rarely reviews: the overall standard of teaching and learning; the views of students sought through course questionnaires; or actions being taken to address issues raised by external verifiers. There are annual review meetings where the principal and vice-principal meet with faculty managers to review students' performance on their courses. At these meetings retention and achievement rates are scrutinised and the reasons for underperformance are discussed and follow-up actions agreed.

48 The college recognises in its self-assessment report, that there is some inconsistency in the implementation of its lesson observation scheme. Each department carries out lesson observations in compliance with college policy, and most teachers are observed

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at least annually. However, some lessons are not graded, and in those cases where grades are awarded, evidence is not recorded. There is no moderation process and insufficient training for staff. As a consequence, analysis and evaluation of lesson observation is not thorough.

49 Self-assessment reports are developed by course or subject teams. Many are thorough and self-critical and include targets for the forthcoming year. These reports contribute to faculty-level reports and subsequently to the self-assessment document for the whole college. The self-assessment process uses appropriate statistical data on students' achievements and rates of retention, including detailed analysis of the value added to students' performance on advanced level programmes. At course level, students' views are effective in influencing self-assessment judgements and subsequent action plans. Teams also review performance against national averages. Support teams assess their services against performance standards, although the setting of improvement targets in these areas of the college is underdeveloped. The quality audit group, comprising members from faculties, support areas and the governing body is responsible for moderating and validating the self-assessment reports. The governing body receives the final draft of the college report for consideration and approval. There are clear links between the self-assessment process and strategic and operational planning.

50 Students are issued with the college's charter, which sets out student entitlements and includes a complaints procedure. Complaints which are brought to the attention of staff, managers and the principal are dealt with swiftly and effectively. There is no systematic monitoring and analysis of complaints, nor of the entitlements given in the college's charter. These weaknesses were not noted in the self-assessment report.

51 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the programme of staff development is effective. The college has recently gained the Investor in People award. There are well-documented procedures for staff appraisal and staff development. All staff are appraised by their line manager. Training needs are identified through appraisal and the self-assessment process, and are linked to the achievement of operational and strategic objectives. The college arranges in-house training events, which in the last year have included training on curriculum 2000, key skills, administration, and IT. Staff speak highly of the opportunities available to them. There are comprehensive evaluations of all the development activities that are undertaken. In 1999-2000, the college's staff development budget was approximately 0.8% of the college's payroll expenditure.

Governance

Grade 1

52 Inspectors agreed with the strengths in the college's self-assessment of governance and recognised that progress had been made in rectifying weaknesses.

Key strengths

- governors' commitment to the college's mission
- the extensive involvement of governors in the life of the college
- their effective contribution to the resolution of strategic issues
- the wide range of skills and experience among governors
- the highly effective operation of the audit committee

Weaknesses

- there are no significant weaknesses

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53 The governors are committed to preserving Roman Catholic beliefs and Christian values as described in the college mission statement and as required by the instrument and articles of government. At their meetings they question the principal and other senior managers on how the mission influences college policy and development. They are aware of the college's need to be inclusive and to provide suitably both for Roman Catholic students and for students of other faiths or of no faith.

54 The governing body has a membership of 17, which was redetermined under the revised instrument of government, which came into operation in September 2000. Of these 17 members, 10 are foundation governors appointed by the Archbishop of Southwark. The remainder comprise two staff governors, one student, one parent, one local authority nominee, one co-opted governor and the principal. The governing body currently has two vacancies pending the selection of a parent governor and the nomination of a governor by the local authority. As recognised in the self-assessment report, members bring a wide range of relevant skills and expertise to their work as governors, including experience in the fields of accountancy, law, human resources and education. Of the members currently in post, four are women and three are members of minority ethnic groups.

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

56 The clerk to the governing body is the college administrator. She provides an effective service, which the governors appreciate. She maintains a governors' register of interests which is updated annually, and governors also

reconfirm their eligibility to be governors in accordance with the instrument of government. Governors are aware of the potential conflict of interest that arises from the clerk holding a senior post in the college, and keep the position under review.

57 The governing body has established five committees: appeal, remuneration, audit, finance and general purposes, and staffing. As a matter of routine, the minutes of each committee are circulated only to members of the committee. The chairmen of committees provide oral reports to the full governing body. Governors may see the minutes of all committees on request. The finance and general purposes committee closely scrutinises the management accounts. The governors have set clear financial objectives for the college, and monitor progress against these and other targets in the strategic plan. The audit committee operates in accordance with Council Circular 98/15, *Audit Code of Practice*. It is highly effective in monitoring the work of the internal and external auditors and maintains a rolling action report of recommendations made by the internal auditors.

58 Governors are committed to the work of the college. There is a good level of attendance at governing body and committee meetings. As recognised in the self-assessment report, governors are involved in a wide range of college activities and are represented on four college committees including the strategic planning committee and the vision and values working group. Some governors attend college liturgies and celebrations. Governors have assisted in mock interviews for students, and sponsor an award to students. They regularly attend college events and exhibitions and share in the work of appointments committees. Governors are well briefed about all aspects of the work of the college by the principal and other staff. They monitor the college's progress in meeting targets. Governors discuss the reports made to them, seek clarification where

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necessary and ask for information about the steps being taken to address any weaknesses.

59 Governors contribute to the college's strategic planning process. Some governors attend all or part of the college's annual strategic planning conference. The draft strategic plan, and subsequent updates, are discussed at the governing body before approval. Governors also monitor the implementation of the plan through reports received from the principal on the operating statement. On a number of occasions governors have used their professional expertise to help resolve strategic issues facing the college. An example was the decision not to proceed with the possible merger of the college with a local training provider.

60 There is a training and development policy for governors. The principal's reports contain regular briefings on the development of national policies that affect the college. Governors also keep abreast of current developments by attending local and national conferences. The self-assessment report on governance was initially drafted by a working group of governors which was led by the chair of the audit committee. The full governing body discussed the text thoroughly and some amendments were drafted. By the time of the inspection, steps had already been taken to rectify the weaknesses that had been identified.

61 Governors have begun to exercise their responsibility for the formal appraisal of senior postholders. The principal was appraised by two governors, including the chair, for the first time in 2000. The clerk has also been appraised.

Management

Grade 1

62 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They considered that a few of the strengths that had been identified were no more than normal practice but that a few other strengths had received insufficient emphasis.

Key strengths

- the maintenance and development of Roman Catholic identity
- effective lines of responsibility
- good internal communications
- a thorough evaluation of students' achievements and rates of retention
- reliable management information
- strong external links
- a very effective approach to equal opportunities

Weaknesses

- failure to reach some retention targets

63 Managers have successfully developed the Roman Catholic identity of the college. The principal makes clear to students the college's beliefs and philosophy and leads a committee on 'vision and values' which pursues issues relating to the college mission. Inspectors agreed with the college's own assessment that there is strong support from staff for the values and character of the college.

64 The management structure and lines of accountability in the college are clear. The three senior postholders meet regularly and ensure that the actions which they agree are followed up. They, and other managers, make themselves readily available to staff to discuss

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queries or matters that are causing concern. Oversight of the college's work is also exercised effectively through the college management and development committee and the curriculum standards committee. Both have clear terms of reference and an appropriate cycle of meetings and their minutes are posted on the college intranet. Staff reported that internal communications are good and that they are encouraged to be partners in the life and management of the college.

65 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The college's budget-setting process is based on input from all budget holders. Management accounts are prepared monthly for budget holders. Accounts are presented to each meeting of the governing body's finance and general purposes committee, and to each meeting of the governing body. These follow the format of the annual financial forecast which the college submits to the FEFC. The college is in a strong financial position, having achieved increasing surpluses in the last two financial years. The college's financial regulations are comprehensive. The college has been unable for some time to recruit an appropriately experienced finance manager.

66 The college has effective arrangements for strategic and operational planning. Each year a strategic planning day is held, devoted largely to reviewing and updating the strategic plan. Action points incorporated in the annual operating statements become the responsibility of managers and progress against them is monitored regularly. At the heart of strategic planning is a concern for the welfare and progress of students which is the main focus of the work of managers.

67 Senior managers ensure that progress against targets for student retention and achievement is monitored rigorously. The college has met its main targets for students'

achievements and for funding units for the last two years. During this period it has achieved better results than most colleges of its type in GCSEs, GCE A levels and vocational qualifications. Retention targets for students on advanced level courses have not been met. Action is being taken to address this weakness. The college acknowledges in its self-assessment report that it has not systematically analysed its overall need for information. However, there are well-managed systems which enable accurate, relevant and timely reports on students' qualifications, attendance and achievements to be produced.

68 The college has an established presence in the Roman Catholic community which it serves through its extensive liaison with schools and links with parishes. There is an annual cycle of activities, managed and delivered in conjunction with partner schools, to ensure that each new cohort of year 11 students is well informed about the college. The college collaborates effectively with two local further education colleges to share good practice. It has sound links with South Bank Careers, with Wandsworth Local Education Authority and with the local training and enterprise council. Recently a contract has been secured from the government regional office to deliver the new UK online programme in computer training for unemployed adults.

69 The college has a distinctive equal opportunities policy, which embraces the particular values of the college as well as national initiatives on inclusive learning. Inspectors agreed with the college that effective steps have been taken to implement the policy. The principal chairs the equal opportunities committee, on which governors, staff and students are represented. The committee promotes debate on how issues of equity and individual dignity impact on all procedures and practices in the college. It undertakes its work reflectively and self-critically and is a positive influence on the way the college runs its services for its students.

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Conclusions

70 The self-assessment report prepared for the inspection was the sixth one produced by the college. The report was the result of a process of assessment involving all staff and corporation members. The inspection team found that the self-assessment report provided a useful basis for planning and carrying out the inspection. There is good use of evidence to support judgements. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the report, although they considered that some strengths were no more than normal practice. Inspectors agreed with all of the grades awarded for the four curriculum areas. In relation to cross-college areas, inspectors agreed with three grades and decided two grades were to be higher.

71 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 (September 2000)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	63
19-24 years	10
25+ years	27
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (September 2000)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation) and entry level	14
Level 2 (intermediate)	11
Level 3 (advanced)	52
Level 4/5 (higher)	0
Level not specified	0
Non-schedule 2	23
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (September 2000)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision (%)
Science	431	147	32
Business	140	37	10
Hotel and catering	83	38	7
Health and community care	51	5	3
Art and design	138	98	13
Humanities	303	308	35
Total	1,146	633	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1998-99 ISR data, the college recruited 80% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1999)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	65	1	0	66
Supporting direct learning contact	10	0	0	10
Other support	25	0	0	25
Total	100	1	0	101

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1998	1999	2000
Income	£3,784,000	£3,948,000	£4,268,534
Average level of funding (ALF)	£19.34	£17.60	£17.47
Payroll as a proportion of income	75%	72%	71%
Achievement of funding target	104%	102%	100%
Diversity of income	11%	10%	13%
Operating surplus	£18,000	£103,000	£117,000

Sources: Income – college (1998, 1999 and 2000)

ALF – Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999), college (2000)

Payroll – college (1998, 1999 and 2000)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1997-98 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Diversity of income – college (1998, 1999 and 2000)

Operating surplus – (1998, 1999 and 2000)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
1	Number of starters	19	32	35	1	0	0
	Retention (%)	63	75	74	100	0	0
	Achievement (%)	63	83	81	100	0	0
2	Number of starters	728	500	609	0	18	27
	Retention (%)	83	80	81	n/a	89	81
	Achievement (%)	89	85	84	n/a	6	81
3	Number of starters	932	1,252	1,296	9	10	5
	Retention (%)	82*	63*	60*	33	30	80
	Achievement (%)	83	81	92	100	67	75
4 or 5	Number of starters	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Retention (%)	0	0	0	n/a	0	0
	Achievement (%)	0	0	0	n/a	0	0
Short courses	Number of starters	0	10	13	248	284	86
	Retention (%)	0	100	100	81	98	97
	Achievement (%)	0	0	82	35	6	30
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	0	1,090	1,083	21	28	32
	Retention (%)	0	89	92	81	68	78
	Achievement (%)	0	75	87	100	75	87

Source: ISR

*ISR data may not be reliable

n/a not applicable

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