

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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**St Mary Roman  
Catholic Sixth  
Form College,  
Middlesbrough**

**March 1996**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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**THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 33/96

**ST MARY ROMAN CATHOLIC SIXTH FORM COLLEGE,  
MIDDLESBROUGH  
NORTHERN REGION  
Inspected March-December 1995**

## Summary

St Mary Roman Catholic Sixth Form College, Middlesbrough is the only college of its type in the northern region. The religious mission of the college sharply defines the limits of its responsiveness and range of provision. Governors and senior managers provide clear strategic leadership. The college is welcoming and friendly and has a caring ethos that is appreciated by its community. It is well known locally for its student enrichment programme. Students enjoy their studies and generally achieve good results. School liaison and careers education are comprehensive and well managed. Teachers and other staff are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and work as a team to support the students. Some areas of the college have been recently refurbished to a high standard. An overarching quality assurance framework is required to ensure the monitoring and achievement of strategic goals. The college's development has been adversely affected by lack of progress in transferring property rights and establishing the terms of a proposed lease. Student and staff commitment to tutorials and religious activities needs to be strengthened. Equal opportunities issues do not have a sufficiently high priority within the college. Some rooms remain cramped and uncomfortable. Insufficient use is made of teaching resources to maintain student interest.

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

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Computing and mathematics	2	Health and social care	2
Science	2	English and languages	2
Business and economics	3	Other humanities	2

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 St Mary Roman Catholic Sixth Form College, Middlesbrough was inspected in four stages between March and December 1995. A team of 10 inspectors was involved for 55 days in inspecting the enrolment and induction of students, specialist programme areas and aspects of cross-college provision. Inspectors visited 94 teaching sessions, examined samples of students' work, studied a wide range of college policies and documents, including the college's self-assessment report, and attended meetings of the governing body as observers. Inspectors sought the views of students, their parents, employers and a range of other people who have a close interest in the college. They also met with governors, managers, college staff, the college chaplain and the chancellor of the diocese. Views were sought from Teesside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), Cleveland Local Education Authority (LEA) and the Cleveland Careers Service, operating as Future Steps Ltd.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 There are 16 Catholic sixth form colleges in England. St Mary Roman Catholic Sixth Form College, Middlesbrough is the only one in the north east of England. It is situated on an extensive site bordering a large residential area of the town. The college's mission and its target client group are distinct from those of other colleges in the region. The college became a designated institution on 1 April 1993 under the terms of *The Further and Higher Education Act 1992*; like other Catholic sixth form colleges, it is currently unincorporated. It is now in the process of seeking incorporated status from the secretary of state for education and employment. The present principal, appointed in 1991, is the first lay principal of the college.

3 The college sees its primary role as providing full-time courses for school leavers from the Catholic community in Cleveland and North Yorkshire. It also provides for other school leavers who wish to continue their post-16 education in a Christian environment. Some of the college's students come from areas of relative socio-economic deprivation. Seventeen per cent of students receive LEA discretionary awards. In the current year, 53 per cent of students travel to the college on buses provided by the LEA and the college because of inadequacies in public transport from outlying areas.

4 Established in 1904 as a boys' grammar school by the Marist Fathers, the college was reorganised as a co-educational sixth form college in 1974. In 1991, on the withdrawal of the Marist Fathers from Middlesbrough, the Diocese of Middlesbrough accepted responsibility for the institution. The college also co-operates with the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle. Within a 12-mile radius, there are three tertiary colleges, two further education colleges, a specialist art and design college, and five sixth form colleges, all of which are non-denominational.

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5 In November 1995, the college had 588 full-time students and six part-time students. 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 proportion of Catholics in the student population is 81 per cent, the highest of any of the Catholic sixth form colleges in England, according to data provided by the Catholic Education Service.

6 The college staff comprises 36 full-time and 14 part-time teachers, five full-time and seven part-time support staff, one part-time aerobics/fitness instructor and two foreign language assistants. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. The senior management team comprises the principal, the vice-principal and the finance and premises manager. Individual subjects are the responsibility of principal teachers who are grouped into curriculum area teams under four curriculum area leaders. Vocational courses are the responsibility of the vocational courses leader.

7 Provision is aimed almost exclusively at 16-19 year old students, though the college has traditionally accepted a small number of adult students, studying mainly foreign languages. The college recruits primarily from the eight partner 11-16 Catholic schools in Cleveland which have supplied 82 per cent of the college's students in the current year. Hartlepool, which is also in Cleveland, has its own 11-18 Catholic school. The college has recently established a special relationship with the Ian Ramsey Church of England School, situated in Stockton, and it recruits students from other non-denominational schools.

8 The college's mission gives priority to providing high-quality non-vocational, vocational and enrichment programmes in an environment that encourages and enables students to grow in the knowledge and practice of their faith. It seeks to build a community based on explicitly Christian values, in which the dignity, integrity and special needs of each individual are respected and in which tolerance, genuine concern for others and mutual respect are highly valued. Students are required to uphold the Catholic ethos of the college. Whenever possible, the college works collaboratively with the parish church, parents, schools, employers and the wider community.

#### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

9 The college is respected by parents for its distinctive religious principles and practices. It responds to its community according to its stated religious mission. A recent admissions policy defines the criteria for entry. Applicants must satisfy the governors that their 'prime reason for applying for a place is to actively experience and identify with the essentially Catholic ethos of the college'. It chooses to make no discrete provision for adults or for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It has no higher education franchised provision.

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The college offers:

- 30 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects, usually taken over two years
- 10 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects
- 13 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level subjects
- vocational courses in business, science, and health and social care, providing General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at intermediate and advanced levels
- the Business and Technology Education Council national diploma in science (sports studies)
- the community sports leader award accredited by the Central Council for Physical Recreation
- a religious education programme accredited by the Oxford Delegacy
- a comprehensive programme of activities to enrich the students' experience, some of which offer opportunities for accreditation
- a careers programme which leads to accreditation by the Northern Partnership of Records of Achievement.

10 The introduction of modular programmes of study is bringing flexibility to the way the curriculum is offered and improving students' achievement and motivation. Courses within the existing GCE A level provision are increasingly taught and assessed in four blocks of time within the academic year. Eight subjects are now fully modularised. Despite the college's commitment to increasing flexible learning, not all staff appreciate what changes they need to make to their teaching to cope with this.

11 The college has responded well to the needs of its local schools and their pupils. For example, GCE A level Spanish is now provided following the decision of three partner schools to teach GCSE level Spanish. New courses are planned in law and media studies to reflect students' interests. The strategic plan indicates an intent to meet the needs of local adult Catholics by providing education in catechetics. However, this will require considerable support from the diocese and may not achieve the necessary accreditation to secure funding from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC).

12 Students on GNVQ courses now account for 20 per cent of the college's total enrolment, though recruitment to some GNVQ courses is declining. To overcome low enrolments, the first and second-year groups on the advanced GNVQ in science have been combined and this makes it difficult for teachers to manage the work in classes. The absence of foundation provision in the GNVQ in health and social care means that some students are not able to study at the level which best meets their needs. Few students are encouraged to combine non-vocational and vocational courses, though some do. Staff awareness of national further education issues is increasing through their involvement with vocational programmes; up to 60 per cent of staff now teach on these courses.



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13 Liaison with partner schools is generally effective and the college is developing links with other schools from which it recruits. Some foundation units for GNVQ business are taught by college staff in local schools. This helps students who wish to progress to the intermediate course at the college. However, links at curriculum level in other areas are less well developed. An open evening on higher education, offered for the first time this year, was attended by over 100 parents and carers. Although more than one-third of students proceed to local universities, there is no formal liaison with them.

14 In marketing its provision, the college makes extensive use of its close links with the local Catholic network of 52 parishes. External consultants have developed high-quality marketing materials and undertaken a comprehensive audit of students' views of college provision. In response to the audit, the college has taken significant action, particularly to improve student facilities. The principal takes personal responsibility for all marketing activities. However, there is no written marketing policy or strategy for development. Little use is made of labour market information to inform curriculum developments.

15 Eight students who have sensory or physical disabilities attend the college. They are well supported and provided with specialist equipment to assist their learning. Dictaphones and laptop computers are loaned to dyslexic students. No staff have specific qualifications in learning support, though help is sought from local agencies whose staff have the necessary expertise. For instance, a specialist support unit for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, based at Stockton and Billingham College, is used to assist those students with hearing difficulties.

16 The TEC reports that the college is increasingly responsive to local needs. It has funded some college projects, such as training to bring staff who teach on GNVQ courses to the competence standards of the Training and Development Lead Body. Speakers from industry and commerce contribute to vocational courses. Students participate in the annual North East Schools' Industry Project. Those involved this year won a gold medal. No full-cost provision or consultancy services are provided for employers.

17 Religious activity and the spiritual well-being of students and staff are given a high priority in the college. A local priest is college chaplain and he and his team conduct a weekly act of worship which is compulsory for all students. Students participate in monthly religious discussion groups. Some also join the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. Masses are held throughout the year and prayer meetings are held at key points in the ecclesiastical calendar. All students in their first and second years are timetabled to attend classes leading to the award of the certificate or diploma in Catholic studies, accredited by the Oxford Delegacy. Many students feel that the act of worship and religious education should be attended on a voluntary basis.

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18 The college provides a good range of voluntary activities to enrich students' learning programmes. These are well attended by students. This year, 24 different options were offered and 16 successfully recruited students. Sport is the main activity. Students are particularly successful in football and netball events, and college teams frequently represent the county in national competitions. Other activities include music, art, drama and information technology. The orchestra is valued by students and their parents or carers; several students are members of the national youth orchestra. The college chaplain, previously a professional dancer, assists the dance group and choreographs their performances. Students contribute to the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development and help pupils with severe physical disabilities who visit the college from a local school. Opportunities exist, mostly as a result of individual initiative, for student exchanges with similar institutions in Poland, Germany, Sicily and France. There is no formal co-ordination of these links.

19 Though equality is central to the college's mission, the policy for equality of opportunity is not actively promoted. It is not mentioned in the student charter, or staff and student handbooks. Insufficient attention is paid to equal opportunities issues across the college. The policy needs revision to be consistent with the statements made in the college's admissions policy. The member of staff responsible for equal opportunities has no clear remit or time allocation to promote equal opportunities issues.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

20 Governors are committed to the college and to preserving its religious character as stated in its mission and aims. They fulfil their duties effectively and their experience and professional skills in business, finance and company and personnel management benefit the college. Of the 14 governors, eight are foundation governors appointed by the Trustees of the Diocese of Middlesbrough and two have education management experience to add to that of the principal, who is also a governor. Two parents, two staff and one TEC nominee are also members. Only two governors are women. No provision is made for a student member.

21 Members of the board have a good understanding of their strategic role. There are regular meetings of the board and committees for finance and general purposes, health and safety, and audit and remuneration. All meetings are well attended and efficiently run. The committees have clear terms of reference. As the main committee of the governing body, the finance and general purposes committee undertakes much routine background work in an attempt to improve the efficiency of board meetings. Some governors express concerns that this sometimes undermines the work of the board.

22 Frequent contact is maintained between the chair and the principal of the college. Regular meetings of the board and its main committee leave little opportunity for governors to undertake additional training and

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development on strategic issues. With the exception of the audit committee, governors use no formal system to monitor their own performance. They have, however, adopted the standard FEFC performance indicators to measure future college progress and performance. Members monitor the progress of the strategic plan and receive regular reports on its development. The strategic plan draws on consultations with governors and with staff. Annual operating statements with up-to-date priorities are informed by reports from principal teachers, curriculum area leaders and cross-college committees. The strategic plan and review documents lack sufficient detail about targets, and dates and responsibilities for their achievement; this limits the effectiveness with which strategic planning can be monitored.

23 The governing body has been frustrated in its attempts to resolve some complex issues concerning ownership of land and buildings, and how this relates to the college's designated status. Despite considerable efforts on the part of the governing body and the senior management of the college, progress relating to important accommodation developments has stopped. The two trustees who own the land and college buildings, the Society of Mary and the Diocese of Middlesbrough, have failed to reach agreement on the transfer of rights and on the terms of a proposed lease between them. This is adversely affecting development of the college's provision in some areas and consuming an inordinate amount of governors' and senior managers' time.

24 The college has undergone substantial change since 1991 and governors and managers have successfully built on the strong traditions, culture and ethos of the institution. They have efficiently managed the transition to greater delegation within the further education sector. Changes in management structure and in staff roles have led to significant improvements. The college is well led and the management structure introduced in 1995 is clear. The realignment of individual duties is monitored by the principal. Current job descriptions are in place for the majority of staff. There is some confusion over the respective roles of curriculum area leaders and principal teachers, especially with regard to their managerial responsibilities. Insufficient attention is paid to the development of management skills, particularly those relating to people. Some subject teams rely on informal meetings and this limits the contribution they are able to make to planning and strategic development.

25 The college has an effective range of policies to provide guidance and structure to college development. A number of cross-college groups have been set up to support the development and implementation of these policies. They meet on a planned cycle; formal agendas are prepared in advance, but minutes of meetings often lack details of agreed actions and progress made. A more consistent approach to monitoring of college policies is needed.

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26 There have been long-standing difficulties in managing general religious education. The college has taken action to overcome this and recently appointed a new head of religious education who is due to take up appointment in January 1996. However, the temporary staffing arrangements made for the period leading up to the arrival of the new post holder have placed heavy demands on the teaching staff in this area. This work, which is central to the mission of the college, requires significant support by college managers if it is to deliver the intended learning experience and embody the college ethos.

27 Communications across the college are effective. There are regular staff bulletins, daily briefings, monthly staff meetings, and frequent meetings of curriculum area teams, subject teams, cross-college teams and college committees. Dissemination of information is good and staff are consulted regularly. The college council, with broad representation from across the college, advises the principal on curriculum development and areas of college policy. The work of other committees and teams contributes to the council's agenda. A student council with a formal constitution and representation from every tutor group is the main official forum for gathering students' views. The vice-principal attends as observer and carries students' views forward to senior management meetings, for example, on a number of issues relating to college catering.

28 Financial resource management policies are well documented and are in operation. Overall financial responsibility is delegated to the finance manager. The college uses the local authority consortium purchasing arrangements to obtain value for money when buying new resources and this has proved effective. Staff understand the process of budget allocation and are able to make bids to support developments. Detailed reports are issued quarterly to governors through the finance and general purposes committee and specific reports are available for budget holders on request. The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 was £24.00 per unit. Its average level of funding for 1995-96 is £23.67 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.

29 The college management information system has been designed by specialist college staff to meet the specific needs of the college. The finance package used by the college is commercial software and integrates with the college management information system. The financial information provided is adequate. However, development of the college management information system lacks direction. Some software is inadequate. A comprehensive range of management information is collected and stored, but it is rarely used. The monitoring of attendance and retention rates is recorded manually. Reports to staff are inadequate and staff have limited access to the information available.

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## **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

30 St Mary Roman Catholic Sixth Form College, Middlesbrough provides a friendly and welcoming environment. Students, parents and the general community appreciate the care and support provided by staff. The college admissions policy is understood by staff, prospective students and parents. Close contact is maintained with the local Roman Catholic community through informal and formal college links with partner schools and through regular reports to parents on students' progress. Helpful and detailed information is provided to schools each year. The prospectus describes the particular ethos of the college and the courses, subjects and levels available. Partner schools and parents welcome the information provided and particularly its publication early in the year. More detailed subject and course-specific leaflets produced in-house are sometimes of poor quality and not all to the same format. Students from minority ethnic groups or those with disabilities do not feature in college promotional materials.

31 Before enrolment day, a full programme of effective recruitment events is organised, mainly with partner schools. Meetings, roadshows, open days and taster days are all part of the regular programme. The majority of potential students have an initial interview at some stage during these activities. One of the two college careers teachers co-ordinates roadshow activities. This year the roadshow went to 13 different schools. Each member of the liaison team is allocated one of the partner schools and has a responsibility to keep in close contact with the designated school. Staff attend parents' evenings in the partner school and careers events for students in years 9 to 11. A large proportion of year 10 students in the partner schools come to the college for an introductory day in the summer term to familiarise themselves with the college and sample specific subjects. Students value this experience and would like it to be extended so that they can sample a larger number of subjects. Open evenings for parents and students are informative and valued, though no formal evaluation of these activities has been undertaken.

32 Enrolment takes place on a single day in late August. Revised arrangements were introduced in 1995, involving appointments for students, in many instances with their parents. Staff provided clear and impartial guidance to help students match their achievements and career intentions to programmes of study. In addition to college staff, two Future Steps Ltd careers service staff were available to give more detailed advice about the qualifications most suited to specific employment opportunities. The event largely confirmed the choices students made while still at school. Few delays occurred and there was little queuing. The college principal interviews applicants from non-Catholic schools and explains the religious requirements of the college to them.

33 Induction of new students to their subjects and courses is generally good, though it varies in effectiveness from one subject to another. Some

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sessions use productive introductory 'icebreaker' activities. Students are also introduced to college facilities and the student charter. Early in the academic year, all first-year students took the Basic Skills Agency screening tests to identify those with basic literacy and numeracy needs. As a result, 61 students were identified as needing extra support to develop these skills. In response, the college is providing eight learning support sessions per week, four for literacy and four for numeracy. However, only 13 students are registered as attending for support in numeracy and none attend for literacy support. All of these students were referred by staff and, with one exception, are either taking GCSE mathematics or studying science. There is no formal monitoring or evaluation of these activities and the process is not effective.

34 The college chaplain is timetabled to be available to support students and staff on Thursday and Friday afternoons. He also leads a liturgical team, comprising four other priests and a sister who is the diocesan youth officer. They support students and staff in their faith and counsel them on other matters. The personal counselling service in the college is inadequate. Three staff are identified as counsellors but they are unsure of their role, and there is no time or specific room allocated for this work. Many students are not aware that this service is available.

35 A restructured tutorial system introduced this year has met with limited success. Students have three half-hour tutorial sessions each week. One of these involves effective one-to-one interviews; the others are used for the new tutorial programme. In the interview sessions, staff use student agreements and individual action plans to help students make best use of their time at the college. They maintain tutorial files for each student, which include student and tutor assessment of progress made. Following from this interview, a national record of achievement is prepared, typed by office staff and returned to the student before they leave college. The new tutorial programme is intended to raise the standards of tutorial activity across the college. Tutors meet in groups each month to plan the next month's work and discuss potential improvement to the process. A staff-development day is planned and the whole programme is to be reviewed at the end of the academic year. Not all tutors see the value of the new arrangements, nor do many of the students. The content and level of the materials used and the rigid structure proposed for tutorials are inappropriate.

36 The college policy on careers education and guidance is good. It is supported by guidance notes on work experience, work shadowing, progression to higher education and progression to employment. Within the first three weeks of term, all first-year students receive a careers guidance interview leading to an individual action plan. First-year students also have a weekly careers education session. Three teachers deliver this programme using well-presented and thorough schemes of work. These specify objectives for each session, the method of delivery, resource needs and assessment methods. Students value the programme. Second-year

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students have a less-structured programme which includes more individual interviews dealing with their specific needs.

37 Students' attendance is rigorously monitored and controlled with regular reporting of problems to tutors. These result in discussions with students and, when necessary, parents are informed. Discipline in the college is good. Students are polite, friendly and take care of their environment. The disciplinary procedures are clear and well understood by students and staff. Student behaviour problems, poor attendance or failure to complete work can result in curriculum area leaders requiring students to complete a record for each class they attend. Individual teachers sign to show that the student is making progress. If problems persist, the student is referred to the vice-principal who negotiates a specific agreement with the student.

38 The college monitors the destination of its students. Eighty-three per cent of the students completing GCE A level and other advanced level programmes progress to higher education. The college does not know the destinations of 17 per cent of the students who left last year.

#### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

39 The standard of teaching is generally good, though practice varies across the college. Strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses in 66 per cent of the 94 sessions observed. Weaknesses outweighed strengths in only 7 per cent of the sessions. The following table shows the grades awarded to the sessions inspected.

**Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE AS/A level		11	26	13	5	0	55
GCSE		1	6	2	0	0	9
GNVQ		5	8	7	0	0	20
Other vocational		0	3	1	2	0	6
Other		1	1	2	0	0	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>94</b>

40 The average number of students in the sessions inspected was 11.2, which is 84 per cent of the total students on the registers for those sessions, though rates of attendance varied significantly between sessions. The best attendance was achieved in business courses, which had a rate of 93 per cent. The lowest attendance was in general religious studies where the rate fell to 19 per cent.

41 Most teachers are well organised and keep meticulous registers and records of students' progress. They have a sound knowledge of their subject and regularly assess students' progress and understanding. When commencing their course, students receive useful study information that

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identifies the textbooks required and the assessment methods to be used. Most teachers use coherent schemes of work and lesson plans. The more successful plans, as in English, identify aims and objectives, the resources required, the teaching methods to be used and the core skills to be developed. Teachers often share lesson plans with their students and provide them with regular feedback on their performance. In a few areas, such as business and science, teachers provide few detailed lesson plans and those that are available are of poor quality. Opportunities for teachers to share their expertise across subjects and courses are not fully exploited. Insufficient use is made of overhead projectors, video recorders and other teaching resources to maintain and reinforce students' interest and learning.

42 Teaching in GCE A level business studies and economics is delivered with confidence by staff who are resourceful and helpful to their students. Delivery of the GNVQ business programme is less satisfactory. Effective use is made of specialist teachers in the intermediate GNVQ to develop and assess the core skills of communications and information technology. However, students on these GNVQ courses do not undertake sufficient research linked with local businesses and the wider community. Assignments are frequently poorly presented and not well understood by students or teachers. Feedback to students is often inadequate and they have only limited understanding of what they are expected to achieve. The poor scheduling of assignments and some excessive use of assessments and tests overburdens students on the advanced GNVQ course.

43 Students attending GNVQ health and social care courses develop confidence by working in groups and by presenting the conclusions of their activities to fellow students. Lessons commence punctually and students' work is assessed and returned within agreed deadlines. Students are encouraged to manage their own learning and tasks are frequently linked to real work environments. For example, advanced GNVQ students enjoyed realistic activities in a practical first aid lesson. They formed pairs, one acting the role of an assessor, while the other carried out a mock resuscitation. They also researched a variety of health education issues and maturely and effectively presented their conclusions to the class group. Teachers work together in teams to deliver coursework; while students are undertaking vocational assignments, specialist teachers work alongside to help develop students' communication and numeracy skills. There is some inconsistency in teachers' assessment of completed assignments. The development of information technology skills is inadequate. In one session, a group using computers was split between two rooms with only one teacher and no supporting technician. This considerably reduced the effectiveness of the teaching and the extent of students' learning.

44 At the commencement of sessions in mathematics and computing, teachers clearly identify learning objectives and review work previously undertaken. In GCSE computer studies, students undertake a series of



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projects which help them to develop programming and information technology skills. With the introduction of the project-based GCE A level in pure mathematics with applications, many teachers have improved their teaching styles and strategies. However, computers could be more frequently used in mathematics, especially for statistical analysis of data. A few students lack effective oral communication skills and, because of this, they are unwilling to take part in discussions. Student attendance could be improved in some lessons.

45 In English, the work, including group activities, is soundly organised though teaching varies in its effectiveness. Students work purposefully and are happy to share their ideas with others. Written work in English literature is thoroughly and promptly marked. In GCSE classes, students are encouraged to wordprocess their assignments, to develop keyboard skills and to improve the presentation of their reports. In the less successful sessions, many students do not know the topics they are meant to be studying. Teachers do not check sufficiently students' knowledge and understanding and rely too much on written work to assess students. The selection of set texts for use in lessons does not include sufficient work from modern authors.

46 Teaching of foreign languages is imaginative and of high quality. Meticulous planning of lessons and a range of activities maintain students' interest. Wide use is made of the language being learned to develop students' self-confidence. Students are encouraged to assess their own performance. Action plans help students to improve on areas of weakness. Teachers provide regular formal feedback to students on their progress. The languages team also develops students' French and German language skills in the college's GNVQ programmes, though there is little group work in German. Foreign language assistants work alongside students and teachers in promoting teaching and learning, but little use is made of the college's language laboratory and satellite broadcast facilities.

47 Students studying general humanities are set high standards and encouraged to manage their own learning. In a GCE A level history class, students worked on individual tasks that required considerable research. During this period, the teacher spent time working with each student. The session ended with the whole class reviewing its progress and previewing the next topic of study. Essays and projects are carefully marked and modular syllabuses ensure that teachers give regular feedback to students on their progress. Attempts are made in GCSE classes to meet the learning needs of a wide ability group, though insufficient support is given to students with modest entry qualifications. There is no consensus on a common approach to lesson planning and this leads to discrepancies. For instance, core skills are often clearly identified in the lesson plans, but rarely developed in practice. A minority of classes lack effective introductions and end-of-lesson summaries.

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48 With a few exceptions the teaching of science is good. The enthusiasm of some teachers makes their lessons animated and lively and, where this occurs, students continue discussions after the lesson has finished. Fieldwork and exchange visits are used to build up student camaraderie and to broaden their experience. Information technology is used effectively for practical work. Students undertake wordprocessing and use spreadsheets to present the results of experiments graphically. Records of students' work are well maintained. The assessment methods used by staff are fair and well understood. A potentially useful technique that allows students to make mistakes and then helps them to correct their work was used to excess in some classes, resulting in students becoming unsettled and demotivated. Too many lessons suffered from late starts and early finishes. Team marking of students' assignments requires greater rigour and consistency. To ensure safe operation of student activities, increased vigilance in the use of laboratory safety equipment is required.

49 The college promotes work experience for students and, though it is optional, a majority of those studying GCSE and GCE A level subjects undertake it. Up to 50 per cent of these students arrange their own placements and the liaison co-ordinator then verifies that the placements are acceptable to the college. All GNVQ students are required to have work experience and this is arranged by the GNVQ course co-ordinators who have specific knowledge of employers relating to their specialist areas. The work is well managed, with effective monitoring and evaluation, with some exception in the advanced GNVQ in business where arrangements do not comply with the college's work experience guidelines. The college has contacts with 102 local firms and there are plans to establish a database of employers and work experience opportunities.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

50 Most students develop high aspirations and achieve good results. However, there has been an overall fall in the college's performance in GCE A level subjects in 1995 compared with 1994. Students aged 16 to 18 entered for one subject or more in GCE AS/A level examinations in 1995, scored on average 4.3 points score per entry (where A=10, E=2). In 1994, the average points score per entry was 4.7. This places the college amongst the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 and 1995 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. The number of higher grade passes achieved has also gone down in 1995. The average GCE A level points score per subject rose in 11 subjects, but dropped in 19. The pass rates for the college and all other sixth form colleges are summarised in the table overleaf.

Qualifications	1994			1995		
	Entries	% pass rates	National pass rates	Entries	% pass rates	Provisional national pass rates
GCE A level	526	48 (A-C)	48	548	42 (A-C)	50
		87 (A-E)	83		83 (A-E)	84
GCE AS	14	71 (A-E)	73	66	79 (A-E)	73
GCSE	253	58 (A-C)	49	139	58 (A-C)	48

51 Performance in GCSE examinations in 1995 is good when compared with the performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. Seven of the 13 GCSE subjects offered in 1995 achieved a 100 per cent pass rate at grades A-C.

52 Students in business and economics often work well on their own and in groups. The GCE A level in business studies and intermediate GNVQ business courses achieved excellent results in 1995, with pass rates of 100 per cent and 90 per cent, respectively. Provisional national pass rates for these courses in 1995 are 83 per cent and 50 per cent (for awards issued as at 7 August 1995), respectively. The GCE A level economics pass rate of 83 per cent compares with the provisional national average of 84 per cent. The pass rate for the first group of advanced GNVQ students in business is poor, with only 24 per cent achieving their qualification, as compared with the national average for these courses of 58 per cent. Last year, five of these students failed to complete their assignment work and returned in 1995 to the college to complete their work by Christmas, though they are not aware of their achievements from the first year, as no records have been kept by the college. Student retention rates are good and have improved on previous years: retention in the intermediate GNVQ business course is 90 per cent and on GCE A level courses is 86 per cent. On the advanced GNVQ business course only 59 per cent of first-year students returned for the second year of the course.

53 Substantial improvement on expected performance is achieved by students in mathematics and computing. In GCE A level mathematics, students with B and C passes at GCSE cope with the demands of algebra and confidently express functions as partial fractions. Students handle graphic calculators skilfully. In GCE A level computing classes, students who have no previous experience of programming, and often no computer at home, confidently and competently write programs. Most examination results are above the national averages in GCE A level subjects, but GCSE subjects are below average. Four out of the six GCE A level mathematics courses achieved 100 per cent pass rates in 1995. The college recognises the need to improve results in pure mathematics and mechanics, and in statistics, which had 1995 pass rates of 63.6 per cent and 62.5 per cent, respectively. The national pass rate for these subjects is 79 per cent and

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82 per cent. The new schools mathematics project has improved students' motivation and achievement. However, too many students enrolled in mathematics and computing courses fail to complete their studies. The college has taken action which it hopes will address this.

54 Students in health and social care speak positively about their studies and most enjoy being at the college. They are generally well motivated and work well together, actively questioning tutors and each other on important issues. Students understand the levels of competence they have to achieve and regard core skills as an essential part of their learning programme. In the intermediate GNVQ course, 53 per cent of students registered gained the award in 1995, which is above the national average of 49 per cent for these courses. In the advanced GNVQ, 44 per cent gained the award, whereas the national average is 40 per cent. The retention rate for students in this area is dropping and poor attendance is a feature of intermediate GNVQ courses.

55 In English classes, students are disciplined and show confidence in reading aloud. They are sometimes unaware of the full range of skills they need to develop. The 1995 GCE A level English pass rates vary between language and literature subjects. These were 77 per cent and 96 per cent respectively, whereas the provisional national pass rates for sixth form colleges were 88 per cent and 93 per cent. GCSE results are below the national average. Value-added analysis shows that most students are achieving at or slightly above their anticipated level. The change to an alternative GCE A level English literature syllabus three years ago is justified by the improvement in overall examination pass rates.

56 Students in foreign languages approach their studies with relish and with high levels of commitment. They work conscientiously, whether as individuals or in groups, and submit their work for assessment on time. In their use of language, students display good communication and interpersonal skills. They develop language skills within the social, cultural and economic context of the country in which it is spoken. The GCE A level 1995 pass rates in German are significantly above the national average. In French and Italian they are slightly below national pass rates. Although the number of entries is small, Italian GCSE results show a considerable improvement on the 1994 results. Student retention is good; in most classes there is a 100 per cent retention rate. Most of the foreign language students go on to higher education courses.

57 Most students in general humanities courses are committed to their studies. They participate fully in group work, asking questions, suggesting solutions and taking notes. However, a small proportion of male students, in particular, contribute little to class discussions. Communication skills are emphasised by many teachers, but there is little numeracy skill development. Examination results overall are comparable with those set out in national statistics. The number of students progressing to higher education varies between subjects. In 1994, almost 60 per cent of

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government and politics students went on to study politics at degree level. In history and psychology, the figures were less than 10 per cent.

58 In science, students speak clearly and positively about their work. They find their courses challenging and the majority maintain high levels of interest. Students enjoy the work, especially group activities. Science GCE A level pass rates are generally lower than provisional national pass rates in 1995 and most are worse than those for 1994. Only chemistry results are good, with an 87 per cent pass rate compared with a provisional national average pass rate of 84 per cent. GCSE physics results are well above the national average, with a pass rate of 100 per cent in 1995, whereas nationally it is 44 per cent. The proportion of students reaching the higher grades is lower than national rates in all of these subjects. The GNVQ science results are excellent, with 100 per cent of college students gaining the award. The national estimate for this course is 36 per cent. Core skills are not systematically developed across the subject area and retention rates are poor in some subjects.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

59 The college's mission emphasises its strong commitment to provide high-quality programmes of study. The first quality assurance procedures, concentrating on teaching, subjects and courses, were introduced in September 1993. Curriculum area leaders and principal teachers have clearly-defined responsibilities in their job descriptions for quality improvement. Most teachers are aware of the quality assurance procedures relating to their work. The existing framework does not encompass other areas of college activities, such as support services, though a review of some of these began in September 1995. The vice-principal is responsible for quality assurance across the college. He chairs a quality assurance committee which has seven members representing teachers, principal teachers and curriculum area leaders. A support staff representative is soon to be identified.

60 The subject and course review procedure is monitored regularly by the quality assurance committee. All teachers contribute to annual subject reviews which are overseen by the committee. Principal teachers submit to the curriculum area leader reports on their subjects that incorporate statistical data on enrolment, retention, pass rates, destinations and comments from internal and external verifiers. The college has also recently introduced analysis of national data on examination results to inform the process. The curriculum area leader, in consultation with the curriculum area team, draws up a curriculum area strategic plan which is submitted to and reviewed by the quality assurance committee. Principal teachers speak positively about the process and value the written comments received from senior management. However, these action plans do not enable systematic measurement of improvement by identifying, for example, performance indicators, targets for improvement,

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or actions to be taken. They fail to link recommendations to strategic objectives. There are no formal mechanisms to obtain students' views at course and subject level.

61 In addition to its other duties, the college council also considers and validates proposals for new courses from curriculum area leaders and principal teachers. Little use is made of labour market surveys or market research to inform the validation process.

62 A rigorous new approach to improving teaching and learning was introduced as a pilot in June 1995. It involves the observation of classroom practice by the senior management team, curriculum area leaders and principal teachers. They use a range of criteria relating to planning, preparation, student relationships, teaching classroom management, equal opportunity issues and assessment procedures. A sample group of students also completes an evaluation of the teaching. A clear implementation strategy is required to ensure that the initiative links effectively with other quality assurance processes and with college policies on staff development.

63 The college charter is distributed to all students on enrolment. It emphasises the importance of the religious dimension in college life. It is divided into sections that deal with student, parent, employer and local community matters. The charter was produced by a member of the senior management team in line with the guidelines provided by the former Department for Education. Governors, managers, support and teaching staff are aware of the charter. Students were not involved in developing the charter and their awareness of it is low. College performance commitments outlined in the charter are too general and not easily measurable. The quality assurance committee has not yet addressed how the charter will be reviewed.

64 College management is committed to a systematic process of staff development for all staff, based on individual and college strategic needs. Approximately 2.3 per cent of the college staffing budget is allocated to staff development. Individual needs are identified through a series of discussions at curriculum area meetings and through the staff-appraisal process. The college's strategic plan is also used to identify development priorities. A significant feature is that the college has enabled six teaching staff to undertake recent industrial secondment during college time. In 1995-96, a further two staff will be seconded to a major local employer. Two of the three technical support staff are studying for degree qualifications supported by the college. Teachers and support staff speak positively about the development and training opportunities provided. Each staff-development activity is evaluated, but the outcomes of the activity are not systematically disseminated across the college.

65 The staff-induction programme is good and those who have undertaken it appreciate the support provided to them. An induction pack produced recently is available for newly-appointed staff. It clearly outlines

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the help available to them, including the opportunity to have the assistance of experienced members of staff through a one-year mentorship programme. There are no measurable targets for monitoring staff progress on the induction programme. Not all recent recruits received the induction pack.

66 A formal college staff-appraisal process is now in its fourth operational year for teachers and its first for support staff. It incorporates self-assessment; an appraisal interview, for which staff are able to negotiate the agenda; and a follow-up review within one year of the appraisal interview. Training in appraisal interview techniques, initially undertaken by the LEA, now involves the vice-principal. Staff regard the process as non-threatening, supportive and ensuring their professional development. There is no formal system of appraisal for the principal.

67 The college's self-assessment report was produced before the main inspection in December 1995. It helped inspectors by setting a context for the inspection. The report was developed by nominated senior staff and followed an extensive process of consultation and revision in the college. All staff, governors and the quality assurance committee contributed to its development. The report matches the college house style and follows the framework outlined in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It was comprehensive but glossed over some important weaknesses identified by inspectors. The college found the process of producing the report invigorating and informative. It has decided to make the annual review and updating of the report a key element of the college's evolving quality assurance process.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

68 Teaching and support staff are equally valued by the college. This is reflected in the use by all staff of a joint staff common room. Staff are enthusiastic and work together as a team with openness and trust. Teachers are efficiently deployed, well qualified and have sufficient experience for the work they undertake. More than 90 per cent have both a degree and a teaching qualification and nearly 30 per cent have a higher degree. More than half the staff participate in the students' enrichment programme and undertake other additional activities linked to their teaching. One teacher is a chief examiner in computing. Nearly one-fifth of the staff are working towards accreditation to assess student competence in GNVQ courses. A few teachers lack recent relevant industrial or commercial experience. Some new teacher appointments bring valuable experience to courses, for example, a state registered nurse teaches health and social care. Part-time teachers account for nearly one-third of the total staff; they are well supported. Nearly two-thirds have a degree and more than half are qualified teachers.

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69 Technical support staff are suitably qualified and efficiently deployed, but specialist support for information technology is inadequate. Expertise in the learning resource centre has been strengthened through the appointment of a chartered librarian and an experienced assistant. Administrative and technical support staff work flexibly as a team and respond favourably to requests for changes in role when required. They have undertaken training where necessary to develop their skills, but in administration, this has been mainly limited to wordprocessing.

### **Equipment/learning resources**

70 Specialist teaching equipment and classroom furniture is good in the newly-refurbished areas. The languages area has an 18-place language laboratory and recording facility, though it is underused. The art area is well equipped with drawing stands and other equipment which provide a professional ambience for the work. There is a small but well-equipped machine workshop for design and technology. However, other parts of the college lack basic teaching equipment. Several rooms have no blinds. Much of the furniture is old and is beyond its useful life. Some equipment, for example in physics, though technically adequate, is outdated.

71 The recently-opened learning resources centre is of high quality. It comprises a library, a drop-in information technology facility, a quiet area and study carrels. An adjacent careers interview room has good resources. The bookstock is slowly growing, and is supplemented by the books held in curriculum areas. A computerised library management system is intended to be operational following the inspection. Formal links between the library staff and curriculum managers are at an early stage of development and it is not possible to assess whether resources are used effectively.

72 The college has introduced new cross-college facilities for information technology, though more development is required. The applications software used is adequate and of industrial standard. An information technology advisory committee brings together curriculum team representatives, some with good technical expertise. The information technology facility in the learning resources centre has modern computers providing basic wordprocessing and other relevant software but the printers are inadequate. No multi-media facilities and only five compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases of newspaper text are available to support students. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is poor at 1:15. Access to some computer facilities is also hampered by their location in timetabled teaching rooms. Staff do not have ready access to dedicated machines for preparing learning support materials. There are no desktop publishing facilities. The information technology committee is mainly reactive in its advice to senior management. There is no forward-looking strategy for the development of information technology in the college.



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73 Maintenance of equipment is generally carried out effectively by college staff. Systems for regular checking and maintenance are being developed, often linked to the local authority's support service. These are not always adequate; for instance, there is no record of safety checks on science fume cupboards. Performance specifications are not used for the purchase of furniture. The replacement and procurement policy could be improved.

#### **Accommodation**

74 College accommodation is in reasonable condition overall. It comprises early 1960s' flat-roofed buildings with some more recent extensions. General maintenance is well managed and of good quality. Security has been improved by the installation of new fencing on the perimeter of the extensive playing fields. The grounds are kept in good condition by an outside contractor. The recently-refurbished caretaker's house is on-site, and this assists site security. A mobile unit used for teaching needs to be replaced. The long-term corporate vision for development of college accommodation is being hindered by the failure to resolve property ownership.

75 Nearly half of the college's property has been recently refurbished to a high standard. The professionally-designed dining hall is visually attractive and well used by students. The main hall which is used for acts of worship is spacious and has good soundproofing. The college's attractive and peaceful chapel, adjoining the learning resources centre, is available for private use throughout the college day. Even though substantial improvement has been achieved, a significant number of teaching rooms remain too small for the size of the groups using them. Ventilation of rooms is often poor, and because of this, some become unpleasant to use.

76 The college is generally kept clean and tidy and students respect their environment. An exception is the dining hall, which becomes very untidy towards the end of the day, with litter on the floor and in nearby areas. Buildings are markedly free from graffiti and vandalism. Corridors and base rooms often have suitable displays of students' work, but in some places, for instance in religious education, these could be better co-ordinated. Several classrooms, even where refurbished, are cluttered with books and files. The gymnasium changing rooms, designed for smaller children, are inadequate. A wide variety of internal signs is used, but some are ineffective and detract from improvements made to the environment.

77 Access for wheelchair users is good at ground floor level, where there are ramps and adjacent car parking. A ground floor toilet with wheelchair access is also available, though it is not kept tidy and there are no hand-drying facilities. However, much of the accommodation is located on upper floors and the absence of a lift hinders access for those with restricted mobility. All science laboratories and languages rooms are inaccessible to wheelchair users.

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## CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

78 The college has made significant progress towards achieving its mission. Its particular strengths include:

- governors and managers who are committed to the college and have a clear understanding of their strategic role
- a clear management structure which has well-understood delegated responsibilities
- teachers who have a sound knowledge of their subjects and set high standards for their students
- the extensive enrichment activities programme
- the caring and supportive ethos of the college
- a comprehensive and well-managed school liaison and careers education programme
- a college-wide commitment to providing high-quality teaching and learning
- the well-qualified teaching and support staff who are enthusiastic and work well together
- the high quality of the refurbished accommodation.

79 In order to improve further the quality of provision, the college should:

- overcome the lack of incorporated status and resolve its property ownership issues
- specify clear targets, actions and responsibilities to ensure achievement of strategic goals
- strengthen student and staff commitment to tutorial and religious activities
- improve the use of teaching resources to maintain students' interest
- raise the priority given to issues associated with equal opportunities
- attend to the shortcomings in college accommodation and consider options for longer-term development of the estate.

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## FIGURES

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

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

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

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

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  - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

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  - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

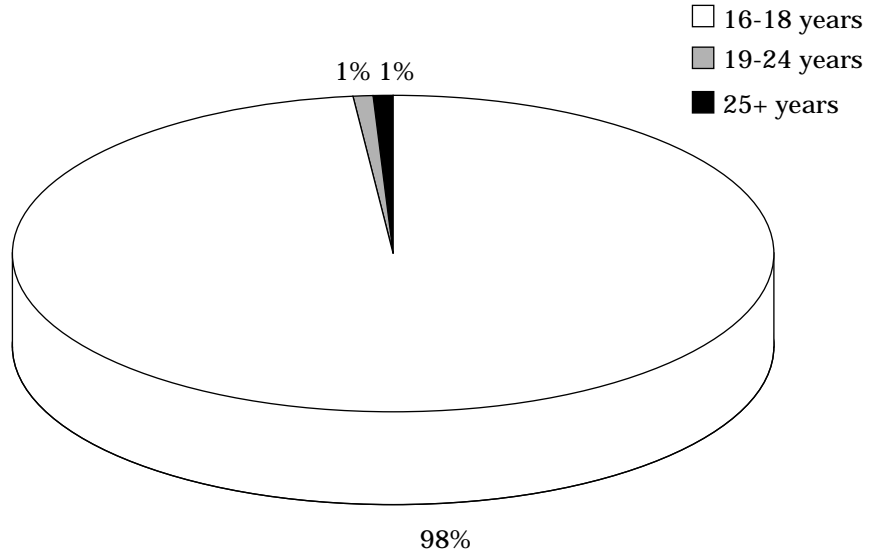
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**Figure 1**

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**St Mary Roman Catholic Sixth Form College, Middlesbrough: percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1995)**



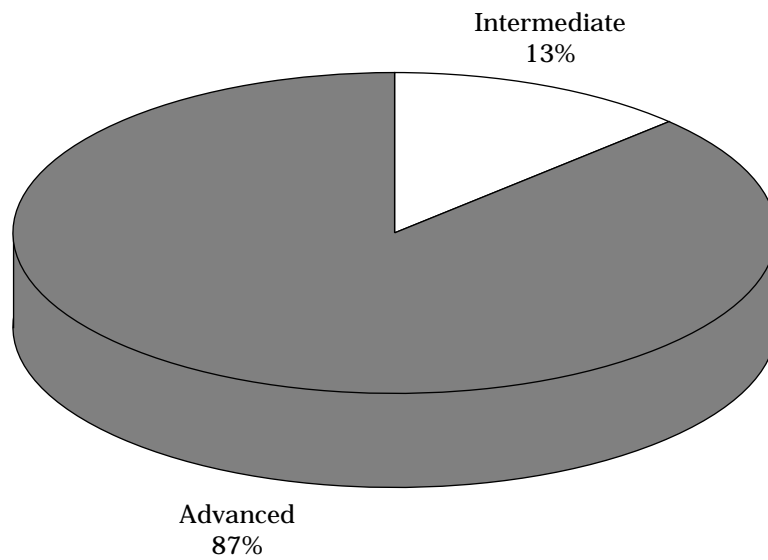
Enrolments: 594

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**Figure 2**

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**St Mary Roman Catholic Sixth Form College, Middlesbrough: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1995)**



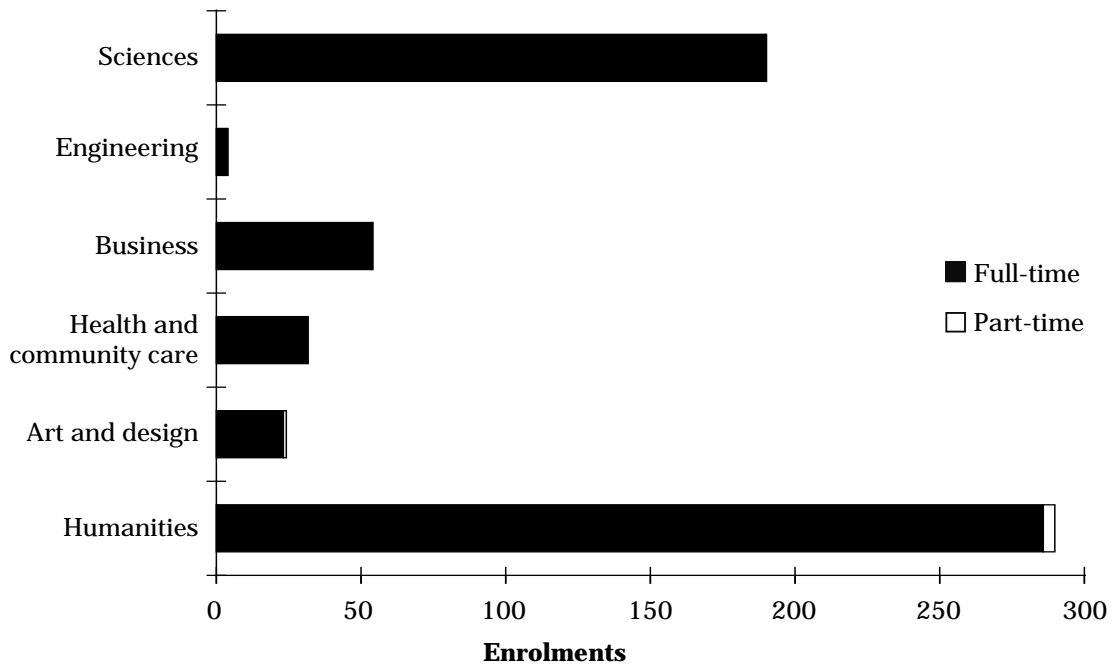
Enrolments: 594

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**Figure 3**

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**St Mary Roman Catholic Sixth Form College, Middlesbrough: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)**

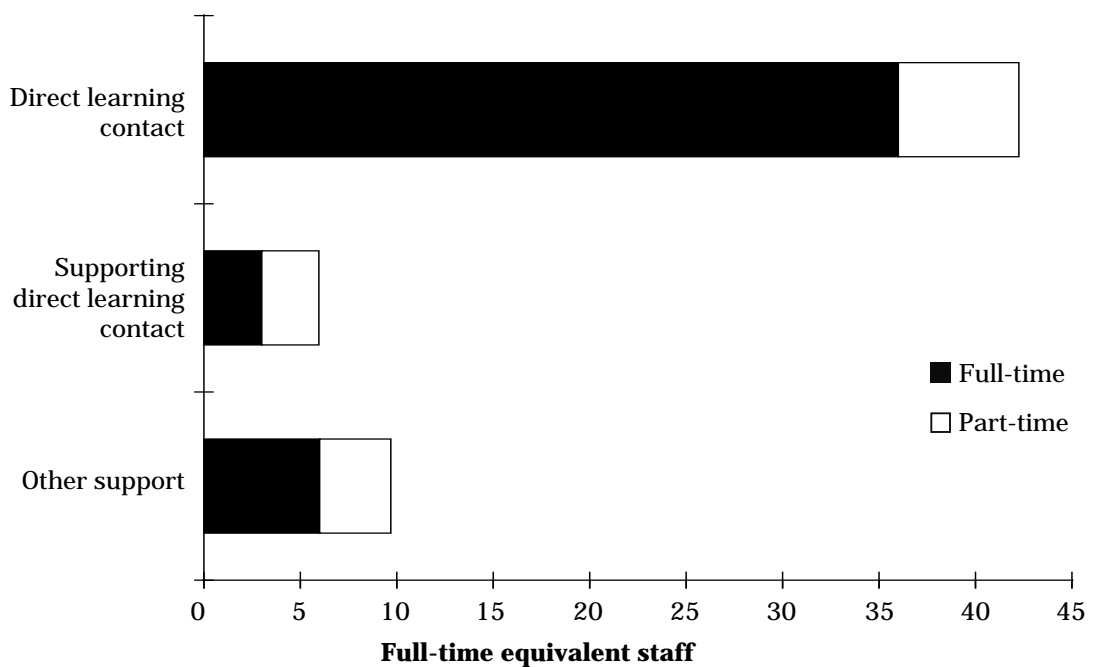


Enrolments: 594

**Figure 4**

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**St Mary Roman Catholic Sixth Form College, Middlesbrough: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1995)**



Full-time equivalent staff: 58

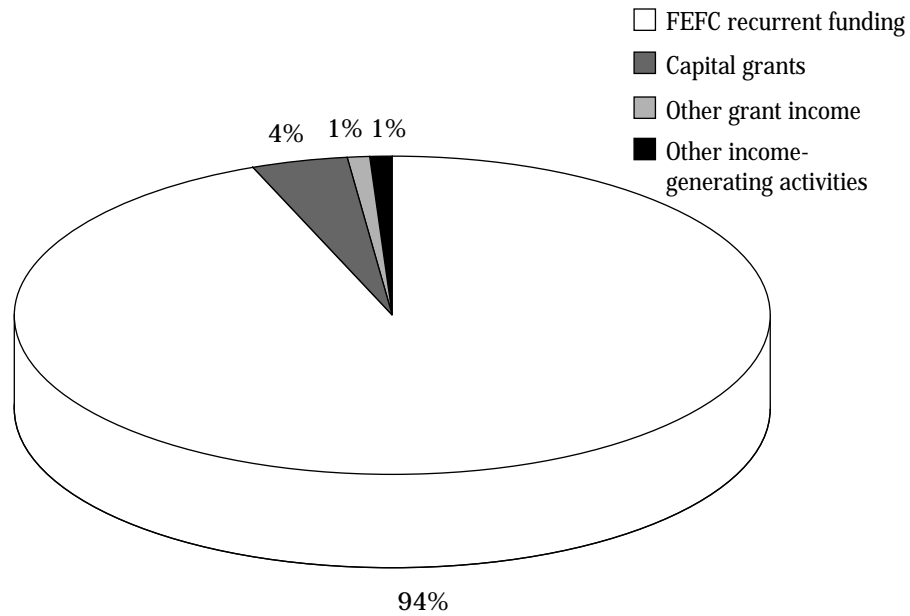
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**Figure 5**

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**St Mary Roman Catholic Sixth Form College, Middlesbrough: income (for the 12 months to July 1995)**



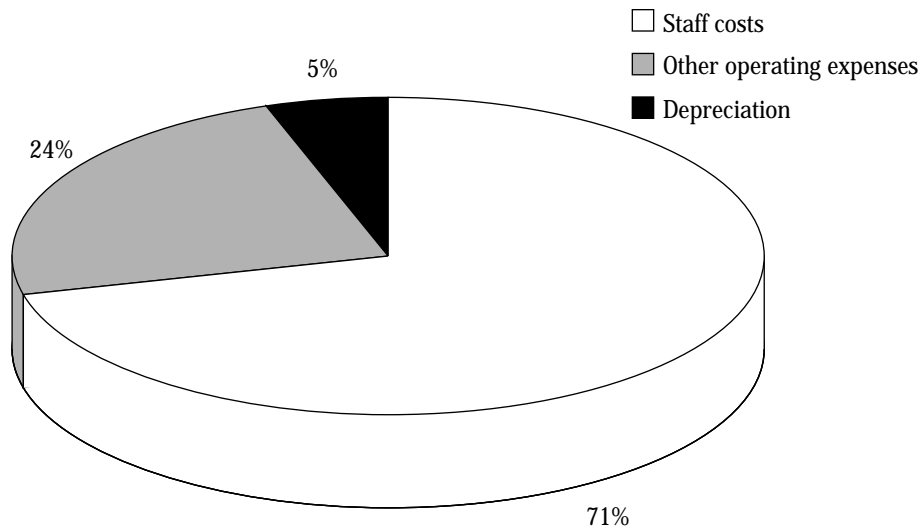
Income: £2,010,000

*Note: this chart excludes £7,000 other operating income and £8,000 education contracts.*

**Figure 6**

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**St Mary Roman Catholic Sixth Form College, Middlesbrough: expenditure (for the 12 months to July 1995)**



Expenditure: £1,961,000

*Note: this chart excludes £3,000 interest payable.*

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