

St Vincent College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION
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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Contents

	Paragraph
<hr/>	
Summary	
<hr/>	
Context	
The college and its mission	1
The inspection	6
<hr/>	
Curriculum areas	
Science	10
Health and community care	17
Modern languages	24
Cultural studies	31
Basic skills	36
<hr/>	
Cross-college provision	
Support for students	43
General resources	52
Quality assurance	58
Governance	65
Management	72
Conclusions	80
<hr/>	
College statistics	

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 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	10	53	30	7	–
Cross-college provision	14	54	23	7	2

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*
Sample size: 104 college inspections

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 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which 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 Vincent College

South East Region

Inspected January 2000

St Vincent College is a community sixth form college in Gosport, Hampshire. The college offers courses in all 10 of the FEFC's programme areas. The inspection covered four programme areas and led to five grades being awarded. The college produced its fourth self-assessment report in November 1999. Evidence to support judgements was clearly presented. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They considered that some strengths had been overstated and identified a few additional weaknesses. Inspectors awarded grades lower than the college in two curriculum areas and in cross-college areas one higher and one lower.

St Vincent College has a strong commitment to its local community; it utilises its extensive range of partnerships to develop innovative projects aimed at enhancing the education, training and leisure provision for the Gosport area. Teaching is effective and imaginative, staff are well qualified and experienced and there is a strong emphasis on celebrating success at all levels and encouraging students to succeed. Tutorial support is comprehensive and students benefit from an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. Students' achievements are outstanding in some areas of the curriculum. Leadership from managers is

consultative and supportive; communications are open and productive and all staff invest significant time and energy in quality assurance. Governors are enthusiastic and demonstrate high levels of commitment to the college. The corporation is efficiently clerked.

Accommodation is much improved since the last inspection and IT and learning resources have benefited from significant investment. The college should: address declining student retention rates in some subjects; consider strategies for overseeing aspects of cross-college work such as basic skills and diagnostic assessment for learning support; continue to pursue its IT strategy so that computers are available in more classrooms; develop the use of its increasingly accurate management information; and continue to improve access for students with limited mobility. Governors should establish clear methods for monitoring the college's academic performance.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science	2	Support for students	2
Health and community care	2	General resources	2
Modern languages	2	Quality assurance	2
Cultural studies	2	Governance	2
Basic skills	3	Management	1

The College and its Mission

1 St Vincent College was established as an open access sixth form college as part of a reorganisation of secondary education in Gosport in 1987. The staying-on rate was significantly below the Hampshire average at that time, and reorganisation was intended to encourage more students to remain in education beyond the age of 16. The college has grown in the last decade. It sponsors adult education programmes in five partner community schools and provides their adult basic education courses. The staying-on rate in Gosport has risen to 70%. From an initial intake of 250 in 1987, the college now has 1,142 full-time and 2,151 part-time enrolments. Over 90% of full-time students are aged 16 to 18.

2 The college is sited on a former naval establishment. The 12-hectare site has an interesting waterfront on a tidal creek which flows into Portsmouth Harbour. A new primary school has been built on the site and has shared use of the playing field. The college continues to run a community leisure centre and has extended its work in the community. It is embarking on a community arts programme.

3 Gosport has a population of 76,700 clustered on a peninsula which has poor road and no rail communications. It is linked to Portsmouth and the railway by a passenger ferry. There are few major employers, apart from the Ministry of Defence. Most jobs in the area are in defence, health care, retailing, catering and business administration. There are fewer employment opportunities for professionals and managers than for semi-skilled manual workers. The loss of major employers and the contraction of defence work have caused hardship in the area during recent years. The current rate of unemployment in the area is 4.7%, which is significantly higher than the regional average of 2.7%. Of the households in Gosport Borough, 20% are on means-tested benefits and over 50% have a gross income of

£15,000 or less. The percentage of adults with low literacy and numeracy is higher than the national average. The college receives no funding under the present criteria for the widening participation factor.

4 St Vincent College has five faculties: cultural studies and languages; business and mathematics; sciences; society and leisure; and performing and expressive arts. There are also three college units for lifelong learning, learning support and vocational and professional courses. The college works with eleven 11 to 16 schools in Fareham and Gosport, and enrolls students from further afield. Students are also enrolled from schools for students with moderate and severe learning difficulties. One Gosport school was given permission to re-establish a sixth form, which opened in 1996. The nearest of six further education colleges in the Portsmouth area is only 4 miles away.

5 The mission states that 'the college will provide a challenging educational environment where everyone can achieve both individual and group potential. The college will continue to value and strive for quality provision building on the best traditions of the sixth form ethos'. The college defines these features as being: a flexible, responsive curriculum; progression opportunities for students; an accessible learning environment for all members of the community; a rewarding learning experience and a social context in which individuals feel valued. The college also aims to offer the local community opportunities for taking part in high-quality leisure, recreational and cultural activities.

Context

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected in January 2000. Inspectors had previously examined the college's self-assessment report and information held by other directorates of the FEFC. The college submitted data on students' achievements for 1999. These data were checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and awarding body pass lists and found to be reliable. Data for 1998 and 1997 were taken from the FEFC's individualised student record (ISR). Data relating to basic skills provision have not been published in this report. Inspectors considered that the ISR data on basic skills did not capture sufficiently the detail of students' retention and achievements. The inspection was carried out by nine inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 46 days. Inspectors observed 60 lessons and examined students' work and college documents. Meetings were held with governors, managers, staff and students.

7 The inspection was carried out in conjunction with three inspectors from the Training Standards Council (TSC). The TSC inspectors concentrated on work-based training funded by Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Areas inspected were foundation for work and construction. They also inspected trainee support, equal opportunities, management of training and quality assurance. The TSC inspectors observed seven training sessions, reviewed student portfolios, and held meetings with managers, seven staff and 16 trainees. Where it was appropriate to the FEFC inspection framework, evidence gathered by TSC inspectors was taken into account when grading college provision.

8 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the lessons inspected, 75% were rated good or outstanding, and 7% were less than satisfactory as compared with national averages of 65% and 6%, respectively, for all lessons observed during 1998-99.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	4	18	2	0	0	24
GCSE	0	4	0	0	0	4
GNVQ	1	4	3	1	0	9
NVQ	0	2	2	0	0	4
Other vocational	2	2	0	2	0	6
Other	2	6	4	1	0	13
Total (No.)	9	36	11	4	0	60
Total (%)	15	60	18	7	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

Context

9 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. The highest average attendance was in science at 88% and the lowest was in basic skills at 72%. The average group sizes observed ranged from 12.8 in cultural studies to 5.9 in basic skills.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
St Vincent College	9.7	82
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

Source for national average: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report

Curriculum Areas

Science

Grade 2

10 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering biology, chemistry, physics and GNVQ courses, and a short course in medical terminology. Inspectors agreed with most of the college's self-assessment report but considered that some of the strengths in teaching and learning were overstated.

Key strengths

- good teaching and practical work
- high achievement rates on two courses
- strong commitment from staff to maintain and improve students' achievements
- excellent specialist accommodation and preparation areas

Weaknesses

- failure to take account of the needs of students with differing abilities in some cases
- declining retention rates on some courses

11 The college offers a good range of science courses at GCE A level, general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate and advanced levels. An environmental science course has been introduced and there are plans to run courses in electronics from September 2000. The faculty of science is well managed. There are regular subject and faculty meetings, which support curriculum development. There is a strong commitment from staff to maintain and improve achievement and retention rates. Subject tutorials are offered to students causing concern in any subject and students are encouraged to book extra tutorial time whenever they need it. As recognised in the self-assessment report, the faculty has few links with industry.

12 Most of the teaching in science is good. In many lessons teachers use a variety of appropriate teaching methods and learning resources to good effect. In a GNVQ lesson the teacher used a short quiz to reinforce an earlier theory session and to check on students' learning. In a GCSE lesson the teacher used a video supported by a question sheet and transparency to introduce a new topic. Many interesting practical lessons are carried out. In one lesson, DNA was extracted from crushed onions in a practical called 'DNA your onions'. This was linked to an earlier session on the role of DNA as a hereditary material. In some lessons, teachers failed to take account of the wide range of students' abilities in the class and did not engage all students in the work. Students' written work is marked well by teachers who provide helpful and encouraging comments. Attention is paid to spelling, especially of scientific terms.

13 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that most of the examination pass rates are close to, or above, national averages. GCE A level biology and GNVQ intermediate science courses both have achievement rates consistently above the national average. The self-assessment report acknowledges that on some courses the retention rates are low. There are declining retention rates in both GCE A level chemistry and physics. Strategies have been developed to address this, although it is too early to judge their effectiveness.

14 Students generally have good practical skills. In all lessons, students wear appropriate protective clothing and goggles. They are aware of the safety implications of the experiments that they are conducting. Most students are able to manipulate the data that they collect in practical lessons into a graphical form. A few students find it difficult to apply their results to scientific formulae in order to calculate outcomes.

Curriculum Areas

15 Students' written work is generally of a good standard. The better assignments are well structured. Physics assignments give students the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in data manipulation, using graphs and tables. Students' work demonstrates that investigation has been carried out using CD-ROMs and the Internet. Extra-curricular activities give students the opportunity to experience science through fieldwork. All students have the opportunity to access the Internet through the networked computers in some of the laboratories and in the learning resource centre. Staff from the chemistry department have started to place resources for the teaching of chemistry onto the college 'Chemweb' site, which is accessed and used by students both at college and from home.

16 Staff are well qualified. This strength was recognised in the self-assessment report. All science teachers have a teaching qualification and a degree. Four have higher degrees. Two full-time technicians offer a good level of support. The science laboratories and preparation rooms are outstanding. The laboratories are constructed with modern octagonal workstations and are ideally suited for theory and practical work. The main preparation room is spacious and well organised. The laboratories all have a strong subject identity with interesting displays of students' work and scientific posters on the walls. The specialist equipment for all courses is good. The biology department has recently purchased 30 new microscopes with a high specification. Some computerised data capture equipment has been bought for use in physics lessons. The learning resource centre has a wide selection of periodicals and CD-ROMs for science students. Some of the text books, while still relevant, are old and worn.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in science, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE biology	2	Number of starters	34	28	30
		Retention (%)	44	82	79
		Achievement (%)	21	43	26
GCSE human physiology and health	2	Number of starters	17	10	12
		Retention (%)	94	90	100
		Achievement (%)	75	67	67
GNVQ intermediate science	2	Number of starters	13	10	11
		Retention (%)	77	80	55
		Achievement (%)	78	83	80
GCE A level biology	3	Number of starters	61	47	31
		Retention (%)	80	77	70
		Achievement (%)	77	92	95
GCE A level chemistry	3	Number of starters	42	36	25
		Retention (%)	90	64	64
		Achievement (%)	89	82	81
GCE A level physics	3	Number of starters	33	26	42
		Retention (%)	76	100	69
		Achievement (%)	87	88	83
GCE A level human biology	3	Number of starters	*	15	9
		Retention (%)	*	47	89
		Achievement (%)	*	57	100
GNVQ advanced science	3	Number of starters	3	9	19
		Retention (%)	100	44	53
		Achievement (%)	67	0	88

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Health and Community Care

Grade 2

17 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in health and social care and childcare. They largely agreed with the college's assessment of the provision in care but identified some additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good quality of teaching and learning
- vocationally well-qualified teachers
- effective use of teachers' professional experience in teaching
- good students' achievements on two courses
- well-managed learning programmes
- effective integration of key skills with the vocational curriculum

Weaknesses

- achievement and retention on two courses below national averages
- unco-ordinated responses to low recruitment, retention and achievement rates

18 The college offers GNVQ at intermediate and advanced levels in health and social care, and the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) certificate in childcare and education as well as the CACHE diploma in nursery nursing. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) in care are also offered through open learning, with additional support through scheduled workshops. There is a very small number of students following NVQ programmes and this area was not covered by the inspection.

19 The quality of most teaching and learning was good or outstanding, although two lessons were less than satisfactory. In most lessons, students were involved in a variety of learning

activities which were appropriately demanding and vocationally relevant. In one outstanding lesson on discrimination, the teacher combined clear coverage of complex material with sensitive challenging of a student's stereotypical views. The teacher used appropriate language, straightforward categorisation and relevant examples. Debate was encouraged, but well-considered arguments put forward by the teacher reinforced messages on equal opportunities. This lesson was followed by an information technology (IT) lesson where students used the Internet to research discrimination and later presented their findings in tabular form using their wordprocessing skills. This example of the integration of key skills characterises the approach in this curriculum area.

20 In a lesson with nursery nurse students, the teacher skilfully used questioning to draw out the rationale for the selection of toys to promote the development of children of different ages. Her positive and thorough exploration of the initial selections by students led to an extension of the scope and quality of the exercise. Students related their choices directly to children they had worked with in practical placements. In many lessons, teachers varied the pace of activities to ensure that all students were engaged in the work. Teachers often gave additional support to individuals with specific needs. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that teachers use a variety of appropriate methods to meet the individual learning needs of students and promote good working relationships.

21 Work experience opportunities enhance vocational provision in health and social care. This strength is highlighted in the self-assessment report. Students are given clear guidance about the expectations of work experience and procedures are well understood by staff. There are clear links between work experience and teaching and learning methods in the classroom. This sustains students'

Curriculum Areas

interest and reinforces their understanding of the vocationally relevant information given in lessons. Students' assignment briefs are well expressed and clear. Students' written work is of good quality, and there is helpful written feedback from teachers. Assessment practice is consistent and supported by effective internal verification.

22 Students' retention and achievement on the GNVQ intermediate and CACHE certificate courses compare favourably with national averages. On the GNVQ advanced programme retention rates are lower than the national average and on the CACHE diploma course both retention and achievement rates are lower than national averages. Some actions relating to marketing and student retention are planned or being implemented, but there is no co-ordinated approach. This is a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed that curriculum teams are well managed. Curriculum planning is clear and students are satisfied with course organisation and the support they receive from their teachers.

23 Staff are well qualified. They have a wide range of experience and expertise directly related to the vocational courses offered. This strength is highlighted in the self-assessment report. Teachers effectively use their experience to illustrate the relationship between theory and practice in care courses. A training programme is in place to meet the needs of staff requiring assessor and verifier awards. Teaching rooms are appropriately equipped. All contain computers with Internet access. These were used by students for information gathering and for work on assignments during lessons. Students and staff expressed satisfaction at this recent development.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in health and community care, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
CACHE certificate in childcare and education	2	Number of starters	19	18	16
		Retention (%)	74	83	81
		Achievement (%)	100	93	100
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	Number of starters	19	19	22
		Retention (%)	68	74	77
		Achievement (%)	85	100	62
CACHE diploma in nursery nursing	3	Number of starters	19	22	12
		Retention (%)	79	64	67
		Achievement (%)	100	92	71
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	Number of starters	41	34	40
		Retention (%)	71	59	58
		Achievement (%)	44	94	100

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Curriculum Areas

Modern Languages

Grade 2

24 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering courses in five different languages: French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but considered that some issues were not examined in sufficient detail.

Key strengths

- extensive use of the language being learned on all courses
- well-planned, imaginative and effective teaching
- good students' achievements in some subjects
- particularly wide range of courses
- effective use of specialist resources and accommodation

Weaknesses

- students' achievements below the national average in French
- retention rates which remain below the national average in most subjects
- few computers in modern languages classrooms

25 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that teaching in the language being learned is sustained at a high level. This strength applies to all language courses. The self-assessment report fails to identify other strengths in teaching and learning. Teachers make good use of teaching aids such as pictures, cue cards, props and overhead projector transparencies as a stimulus to oral work. In many lessons, activities are deliberately varied to provide different ways of consolidating students' understanding of new language items. A Spanish lesson dealing with a difficult

distinction between two tenses ended with the students imagining themselves at the scene of a crime and having to provide an alibi for their whereabouts at the time the offence was committed.

26 In the weaker lessons, teachers failed to spend sufficient time on language practice, which meant that students were asked to build their work on insecure foundations. Some teachers pursued over-ambitious lesson plans despite slower than expected progress. Poor-quality overhead transparencies were a barrier to learning in some lessons.

27 Homework was used well to consolidate work done in class and prepare for forthcoming lessons. This work was thoroughly marked and promptly returned. The introduction of a standard assessment sheet has encouraged students to take greater responsibility for their work by introducing an element of self-assessment into the marking of homework.

28 Inspectors identified good students' achievements in some subjects. Students of GCE A level German and Italian achieved 100% pass rates in each of the last three years. GCSE achievements were almost all above the national average for 1998 and 1999, with GCSE Japanese achieving exceptionally high pass rates. However, GCE A level French achievement rates have been consistently below the national average for sixth form colleges. Achievements in GCE A level Spanish have been significantly below the national average for two of the past three years. The college has identified poor retention rates as an issue for attention. There was some improvement in student retention in 1999 in three out of four GCE A level subjects, but the same is not true for GCSE subjects. Patterns in student retention are complicated by changes to students' qualification aims. For example, some students who choose not to complete their GCE A level Italian course take and achieve a GCSE qualification instead.

Curriculum Areas

29 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that it offers a wide range of language courses. The department has extended the curriculum to offer opportunities to a wider range of full-time students through NVQ language units, to adults through National Open College Network (NOCN) accreditation, and to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are able to achieve external certification for their achievements. The modern languages provision is well managed. There are opportunities for students to participate in international exchanges and cultural events. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that it makes good use of its four foreign language assistants. They provide valuable additional support to students

by helping to build the language confidence of those who are having difficulties and by providing more demanding work for the more able students.

30 Teachers, many of whom are native speakers, are also qualified as assessors and internal verifiers in line with the development of vocational qualifications. All language rooms have attractive and informative displays, which create a strong sense of place and purpose. The proximity of the rooms to each other and the location of language-specific resources in each of the rooms add to the quality of the service provided to students. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there are insufficient computers in the modern languages area.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in modern languages, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE French	2	Number of starters	19	9	9
		Retention (%)	68	44	44
		Achievement (%)	78	50	75
GCSE Japanese	2	Number of starters	*	3	11
		Retention (%)	*	100	91
		Achievement (%)	*	100	90
GCSE Spanish	2	Number of starters	12	12	18
		Retention (%)	100	67	44
		Achievement (%)	71	80	75
GCE A level French	3	Number of starters	38	30	23
		Retention (%)	74	67	87
		Achievement (%)	74	75	85
GCE A level German	3	Number of starters	15	10	8
		Retention (%)	60	50	75
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100
GCE A level Italian	3	Number of starters	4	7	8
		Retention (%)	50	57	50
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100
GCE A level Spanish	3	Number of starters	19	12	10
		Retention (%)	58	50	80
		Achievement (%)	27	100	75

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Cultural Studies

Grade 2

31 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in archaeology, classical civilisation, history, religious studies and philosophy. They broadly agreed with the self-assessment report, but identified one additional weakness and gave more weight to another.

Key strengths

- stimulating teaching
- good examination results
- enthusiastic and responsive students
- experienced and well-qualified staff

Weaknesses

- low retention rates in most subjects
- failure to differentiate classroom activities sufficiently to take account of varying student needs

32 Cultural studies courses are well planned. There are detailed schemes of work for all subjects. Teachers are committed to the sharing of good practice. They are energetic and enthusiastic, and inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that students respond with equal interest and commitment. In a classical civilisation lesson, the teacher enthusiastically used books, photographs, posters and sculptures to show students how the human figure had been treated and got students to demonstrate the different weight distribution of human figures in examples of sculpture from archaic and classical periods. Students spoke highly of the enthusiasm and commitment of staff. Teachers share classroom objectives with students and ensure that these build on what has been previously learnt. Teachers are skilled at questioning students to check on their learning and understanding. In religious studies, philosophy and history, teachers and students demonstrated a respect for different races, religions and cultures.

33 Teachers ensure that the pace and type of work is varied in lessons and students find this stimulating. Students are encouraged to express their opinions and respect each other's views. Teachers are skilled at explaining complex and often sophisticated concepts clearly to students. Teachers have high expectations of students. In the majority of lessons, teachers used whole-class teaching methods, which did not always take account of the learning needs of either the most or the least able students. This was not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Teachers effectively monitor students' individual progress. Students are offered tutorial support by subject teachers, and appreciate the way in which this enables them to catch up on missed lessons and on work they have not understood. Work is carefully marked with good written feedback and advice to students on how to improve their performance. Errors in spelling and punctuation are corrected. Teachers also check students' files of notes regularly to ensure that they are complete. Regular progress reviews provide reports on students' progress and promote an effective dialogue on the means to improve each student's performance. Teachers also ensure that students understand the assessment demands of examination boards.

34 Students are well motivated, responsive and enjoy their studies. This was reflected in a high level of attendance in the lessons. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that examination pass rates are good. In 1998 and 1999, there were pass rates of 100% in GCSE archaeology, GCE A level classical civilisation and GCE A level history. In GCE A level archaeology, history and classical civilisation, a high number of students achieve grades A to C. Value-added analysis shows that many GCE A level students in history and classical civilisation perform better than predicted by their GCSE scores. While the self-assessment report acknowledged poor retention levels in 1998 it was optimistic about 1999 retention levels. However, in all subjects other than history, retention in 1999 was below

Curriculum Areas

national averages, and in GCE A level archaeology, philosophy and classical civilisation this represented a decline from the 1998 performance. Inspectors identified insufficient rigour in action-planning to improve retention, a weakness not recognised in the self-assessment report.

35 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that teachers are well qualified and experienced. All are qualified teachers, a number have served as examiners in their subjects and the archaeology teacher is an experienced archaeologist. Teachers are skilled in producing learning resources of high quality. Each subject has its own base room with a wide range of books and other materials to supplement those in the college library. In classical civilisation, the base room has been imaginatively decorated so as to immerse

students in the culture, art and literature of the ancient world. Students are encouraged to enrich their studies through the use of the Internet, university visits and conferences and visits to Greece and Italy. The self-assessment report identifies the growing links with universities, which help to enhance the curriculum. Students value subject teachers' advice on applications to higher education in their respective specialisms.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in cultural studies, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE archaeology	2	Number of starters	23	18	20
		Retention (%)	87	78	65
		Achievement (%)	85	100	100
GCE A level archaeology	3	Number of starters	12	25	21
		Retention (%)	75	76	38
		Achievement (%)	100	84	62
GCE A level classical civilisation	3	Number of starters	30	33	23
		Retention (%)	80	70	65
		Achievement (%)	96	100	100
GCE A level history	3	Number of starters	81	84	46
		Retention (%)	83	75	79
		Achievement (%)	98	100	100
GCE A level philosophy	3	Number of starters	15	11	15
		Retention (%)	73	73	60
		Achievement (%)	73	100	88
GCE A level religious studies	3	Number of starters	15	24	10
		Retention (%)	80	58	60
		Achievement (%)	100	79	83

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills

Grade 3

36 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering separate specialist basic skills provision for adults and communications and numeracy support lessons on NVQ level 1 and entry level programmes. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but identified some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- effective community partnerships
- good tracking of individual student progress on adult programmes
- good development of basic skills evident in some students' work

Weaknesses

- some poorly planned teaching
- some ineffective use of support assistants and volunteers in the classroom
- no formal arrangements to oversee basic skills provision across the college
- no computers in basic skills classrooms

37 The college's self-assessment report concentrated on separate specialist short course provision in basic skills for adults. These courses take place both at college and in the community. Other programmes at entry and foundation level which include basic skills are offered as full-time provision. These courses were evaluated within different sections of the self-assessment report. Inspectors used relevant sections of the report to guide the inspection.

38 The college has well-established partnerships with local schools and community centres to provide basic skills courses. This provision in the seven centres is managed by three part-time co-ordinators and is responsive to local needs. All centres offer the opportunity

for students to gain accredited qualifications. The college has recently collaborated with local primary schools to offer family literacy sessions. Parents have the opportunity to learn how to support their children in learning to read and write and can also gain a basic skills qualification themselves. The strength of this community provision was recognised in the self-assessment report. Basic skills provision on full-time courses in the college is managed by separate departments. A recent development has been the expansion of NVQ level 1 provision to three vocational areas. The arrangements for basic skills support on these courses are still being developed. Currently, all students have one group session a week of numeracy and communications support. The majority of these students do not attend the 'drop-in' mathematics and communications workshops that are available to all students. Some of the links within, and between, college departments are informal and there is, as yet, no specific cross-college forum to discuss basic skills issues.

39 The most productive lessons were carefully planned to meet the needs of individual students. Teachers provided an appropriate variety of activities and resources which enabled students to learn, develop their individual skills and contribute to whole-class activities. Topics chosen were personally or vocationally relevant for students and enabled all of them to become engaged in the work. Some materials were produced specifically for a particular group. In one lesson in the community, students' experiences formed the basis for discussion and activities. These activities included note-taking from a video, small group discussion, role-play and planning. In another lesson, literacy skills were being developed alongside IT skills. Students were able to develop functional literacy skills, create simple spreadsheets, and share their creative writing with other members of the group. In the weaker lessons, teaching was not well planned and there was less evidence that students were learning. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. In a few lessons,

Curriculum Areas

teachers paid insufficient attention to students' individual needs and the material used or tasks set were too difficult for some students. In some lessons on courses leading to qualifications, teachers were more concerned to get students to complete worksheets in order to meet the requirements of awarding bodies than they were to respond to the individual needs of students. Opportunities were missed to make explicit links with other aspects of the students' programme.

40 Basic education volunteers and learning support assistants work with many of the classes at entry and foundation levels. Students on teacher training programmes also support students in basic skills lessons. In the best lessons, this help was appropriately used to support students and encourage them to progress. In weaker lessons, the involvement of volunteers and assistants was poorly managed and the benefits to students were less clear. There is some confusion about the roles and expectations of those providing in-class support.

41 Inspectors agreed that a specific strength in the provision for adults is students' involvement in setting their own targets for learning. Using their own assessment of need and a more formal assessment, students arrive at key targets. They are responsible for monitoring their achievement of these targets, and this provides the basis for a value-added analysis. Some students' folders showed progression in basic skills. Although all basic skills provision for adults offers opportunities to achieve accredited qualifications, few students choose to enter for them. Inspectors considered that an analysis of students' achievements using only ISR data was not appropriate, and there is no table showing students' retention and achievements in this report. College records show improved retention for adult students and 100% success for those who enter for Wordpower and Numberpower examinations. The development of NVQ level 1 provision will give students opportunities for progression from entry level to foundation level and above.

42 Staff who teach basic skills on adult programmes are appropriately qualified. Staff teaching numeracy and communication on courses at entry and foundation levels do not all have the specialist basic skills teaching qualifications. There is currently no plan to provide this training. The suite of classrooms used for teaching basic skills is not adequately equipped with computers of sufficient quality or quantity to meet students' needs. There are sometimes difficulties for students in accessing computers at community venues. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

43 The self-assessment report was detailed and inspectors agreed with most of its findings. The college had addressed one of the weaknesses identified in the report by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- effective pre-entry guidance
- successful short course enrichment programme
- rigorous monitoring of students' attendance
- strong, well-resourced tutorial system
- effective support for students with disabilities

Weaknesses

- no systematic diagnostic assessment of students who may need basic or key skills support
- poor levels of students' achievements on Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network awards

44 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that effective guidance is provided at a range of events at college and in the community. Publicity materials are well presented and informative and are readily available. Liaison with feeder schools is good. Students found the 'taster' days, open evenings and school-based careers evenings very useful in helping them to make informed choices. There is a team of trained interviewers who provide good advice to students.

45 The college has a well-resourced and effective personal and academic tutorial system which is highlighted as a strength in the self-assessment report. All tutor groups have half an hour tutorial time a day. Students value the levels of support provided by this system

and use the time well. All tutors keep individual students' tutorial files on attendance and progress. Tutors work in pairs to provide mutual support and a mechanism for self-regulating quality control. Tutors are timetabled as pairs in the same room for tutorials. Students are clear about the different ways they can use tutorial time, which includes asking for help and advice from both personal tutors and their subject teachers. Tutors use the time flexibly within a clear framework. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that students' achievements are valued. There is a strong tradition of celebrating success at all levels and supporting and encouraging students to achieve.

46 There is a new computerised attendance monitoring system. This is now providing rapid and accurate information. Unauthorised absences are followed up on a daily basis by personal tutors. There is also a student programme officer who concentrates support on the 30 students with the poorest attendance record. Many students report that absence was picked up immediately by their tutors. Parents confirm that the college has a good reputation for following up non-attendance and providing high-quality pastoral support. This emphasis on attendance and progress monitoring is supporting the college's aim to improve retention, although it is too early to judge its effectiveness. Little analysis of the trends in student attendance has been possible until recently in order to inform management decisions.

47 Inspectors agreed that the short course enrichment programme is a strength and that staff are committed to making it work. The programme is extensive and is used by students to complement their main courses of study. Students appreciate the importance of these activities and find most of the courses well run and stimulating. Occasionally there is frustration when courses are not available, or where the content is not what was expected.

Cross-college Provision

48 The college policy for offering the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network awards to all full-time students, few of whom complete it, has had a detrimental effect on the college's overall achievement figures. Tutors provide help and support to students who want to complete the award but do not consistently follow up students who are less motivated. Students' views of the value of Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network ranged from very positive to 'pointless'. Some students felt that they did not have enough tutor directed time to help them complete their folders and others wanted the option of whether to do the award or not. The college identified this as a weakness in their self-assessment and has implemented action to improve completion of the award. The offer is currently under review for the forthcoming curriculum changes for 16 to 19 year olds.

49 Effective arrangements are in place for supporting students with physical disabilities or sensory impairments. Case reviews inform action plans for each student. The service is designed to help students become more independent in the college as well as providing academic and physical support. Students with specific learning difficulties are identified, assessed and provided with appropriate support. The quality of individual support would be improved if it were offered in appropriately resourced areas.

50 Workshops are available in mathematics and communications as an entitlement for students and are effective for those who attend. The referral system from tutors to skills workshops works well. The arrangements for assessing students' basic and key skills on entry to the college are not systematic and may not identify all those students who need support.

51 A student welfare officer liaises closely with tutors regarding students who have personal difficulties. This system works well and was highlighted as a strength by the college. The

welfare officer has good links with more specialist external agencies offering counselling and other support services.

General Resources

Grade 2

52 Inspectors broadly agreed with the judgements made in the college's self-assessment report, although they considered that some strengths which were identified were not exceptional.

Key strengths

- imaginative refurbishment and use of a wide range of buildings
- major improvements to general and specialist resources
- excellent sports facilities for staff and students
- good working facilities for staff and students
- good and innovative IT provision

Weaknesses

- inadequate ventilation system
- low space utilisation
- difficult access to some areas of the college for people with restricted mobility

53 The college is located in the naval heritage area of Gosport on an unusually extensive 12-hectare site. The main college building was constructed in 1975 and there is, in addition, a number of grade II listed, ex-naval buildings. This presents both opportunities and constraints for the college. Much refurbishment has taken place since the last inspection and new facilities for science, horticulture and the performing arts, as well as improvement of the refectory and the learning resource centre, contribute to an effective learning environment. There has been imaginative refurbishment of the grade II

Cross-college Provision

listed frontage building for English and media studies and a former rifle range houses pre-vocational training programmes. A new pre-school nursery is shortly to be created. Such accommodation developments are based on ideas for improvement, strategic planning and imaginative use of funds. The college 'Art across the Campus' policy is evident: communal areas are visually attractive and there are good displays of students' work. On the first floor of the main building there are significant ventilation problems due to overheating. This is acknowledged in the college self-assessment report and there are plans to improve conditions. Space utilisation in recent years has been low at 22% and at the time of inspection stood at 34%. The nature and use of the leisure centre creates acknowledged difficulties for space utilisation.

54 There are 243 computers in the college, 72% of which are of a modern specification. There is a comprehensive IT strategy for improvement. Inspectors agreed that there is good access to IT facilities for students in the learning resource centre and in dedicated IT base rooms, where computers can be freely used outside of lessons. The college network has recently been extended to all areas of the site. The college website is well-developed and is used for student information, the college prospectus and wider historical information based upon the maritime history of Gosport, which is internationally accessed. The college is leading a Hampshire on-line learning project. There is a college intranet and some curriculum areas are beginning to develop associated learning resources. Other areas of the college are less developed and there is a staff development programme to address staff training needs. Electronic mail is yet to be used as a common tool for college communication.

55 The learning resource centre is centrally located on two floors of the main building. Expenditure on learning resources has increased and there are now some 25,000

catalogued items. However, many books are infrequently issued and the subject coverage is better in some curriculum areas than others, as identified in the self-assessment report. Some departments hold small libraries of their own. The centre is divided into different types of study area which are well used, especially before lessons and at lunchtime. Internet facilities are the most popular resource. Students are able to use the centre for just two evenings a week until 19.00 hours. Two experienced members of the learning resource centre staff are working towards library and information qualifications with support from the college.

56 The sports facilities in the leisure centre are an excellent resource and are well used by members of the college and the community. One sports hall currently acts as an informal student common room and new spaces have been provided in the main building in which students may congregate. The refectory is the main base for students outside lesson time. It has recently been extended, along with the kitchen facilities. There is a minimal service after 15.00 hours, with tea trolley provision for evening students. Access to the older buildings, including the leisure centre, is particularly difficult for those with restricted mobility. The layout of some areas of the main building also presents a problem for wheelchair users, although there is a lift to the first floor. A bid for funds to improve accessibility has been successful and improvements are planned.

57 The central staff room provides an effective base for communication. Staff have appropriate work spaces, although some are too small for the number using them. Workrooms are organised by department and, in most cases, are close to relevant teaching areas. The number of computers in staff workrooms is increasing. There are appropriate arrangements for photocopying and reprographics. Parking is good.

Cross-college Provision

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

58 The college produced a detailed self-assessment report, carefully cross-referenced to plentiful evidence. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths which the college had identified for its quality assurance systems, but identified some additional minor weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-established quality assurance policy and sound procedures
- commitment of teaching staff to quality improvement
- detailed system of reviews and teaching observations
- effective integration of quality assurance with strategic and operational planning
- good staff development arrangements

Weaknesses

- absence of good-quality historic data to inform reviews
- too few measurable targets

59 At the last inspection, the college was acknowledged to have good quality assurance systems, closely linked to the strategic planning process. These strengths remain, and the procedures used by the college have been reviewed and refined over the last four years. The quality assurance policy is a simple statement, supported by a clear calendar of review and evaluation activities. Staff have a disciplined approach to these requirements, and inspectors saw some very well-organised departmental records. The self-assessment reports from each section of the college include action plans and targets which form the basis for the next operational plan. Quality assurance is therefore the basis for college developments,

as the self-assessment report recognises. The college board, which includes governors among its members, considers quality reviews and action plans.

60 The time and energy expended in the college on quality assurance work is evidence of a significant commitment to quality improvement. Quality assurance is supported by departmental reviews, surveys of students' views and a rapidly improving management information system. In addition, there are three types of lesson observation: professional reviews; an external peer review; and reviews by senior managers. Over the last year, the principal and two vice-principals have observed every full-time member of staff in a curriculum review exercise. This provided detailed feedback both to individuals and to faculties. The resulting written reports were shared with all managers. In the process, senior managers gained some important insights into the quality of teaching and learning in the college. Overall, their teaching grades were higher than those awarded by inspectors, but areas for improvement are clearly highlighted, a feature indicated in the self-assessment report. Teaching quality, as measured by inspection grades, has improved since the last inspection, and is slightly above the average for sixth form colleges.

61 Departmental self-assessments were moderated by senior staff, and validated by a group which included governors and an external consultant. Inspectors broadly agreed with the college's curriculum assessments, although in a few cases targets set for improvement were not sufficiently specific. In two areas inspectors found that the college had underestimated some weaknesses. Cross-college sections of the self-assessment report were produced by managers; the departmental review system does not readily produce the same wealth of evidence for these aspects. Nevertheless, inspectors agreed with most of the conclusions.

Cross-college Provision

62 Similar quality assurance systems apply to franchised courses, TEC-funded programmes, and classes for adults run in conjunction with other providers. Inspectors found instances where issues about quality had not been identified. For instance, the absence of qualified NVQ assessors hampered the progress of trainees in one area of TEC-funded provision. The self-assessment report identifies that there are some support sections of the college which have not yet considered their quality standards. Administrative difficulties encountered by students enrolling for adult education classes were set out at some length in the analysis of the post-enrolment questionnaire, but had not yet been resolved.

63 The college has significantly improved its management information within the past year, and this improvement has now started to support target-setting. As a result, areas of under performance have been more clearly identified. Student retention has declined over three years. Departments have recognised this and begun to take relevant action. There are early signs of improvement in the current year. Value-added information has improved considerably since 1996, and most GCE A level students are now doing as well as should be expected from their GCSE results. Using these measures, only two subjects had significantly above average results in 1999, and two subjects below. Overall, students' achievements at the college, as measured by the FEFC's performance indicator, are slightly below the median for sixth form colleges. These figures are particularly affected by poor achievements on the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network award.

64 Inspectors agreed that the well-established professional review system has recently been revised and strengthened. As well as appraising performance, it helps to define staff development needs. There are good systems for the administration of staff development, and an adequate budget. This is supplemented by

many uncosted training and development activities, such as the well planned training days and curriculum groups in which staff meet colleagues from other schools and colleges. Events are evaluated and some staff pass on their training to their colleagues. In preparation for the Investors in People assessment, senior staff produced a helpful evaluation of staff development in September 1999. The award was achieved the following month.

Governance

Grade 2

65 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses recorded in the governors' self-assessment report. However, the report failed to identify two significant weaknesses.

Key strengths

- involvement of governors in strategic planning and operational review
- enthusiasm, openness and commitment of governors
- proficient clerking and administration of corporation business
- good attendance at corporation and committee meetings
- thorough implementation of modified instrument and articles of government
- valuable work undertaken by a wide range of committees

Weaknesses

- insufficiently independent monitoring of academic performance
- inadequate systems for appraising senior postholders

Cross-college Provision

66 Governors are fully and appropriately involved in strategic planning and operational reviews. Well-attended annual 'away days' enable governors to focus on a wide range of relevant issues. The self-assessment report identifies this strength. Corporation meetings consider the minutes of corporation committees and papers from college management. Meetings are well chaired and members are encouraged to contribute to discussion. Governors are enthusiastic and demonstrate a strong commitment to the college. The relationship between governors and senior managers is good.

67 Governors' monitoring of the academic performance of the college can be further improved. Some governors attend college board meetings where target-setting, planning and quality are discussed by managers and staff. The full corporation receives detailed information on curriculum quality and students' achievements. However, governors do not take a sufficiently critical independent view of academic quality. They could have made more demands for explanations of the college's performance compared with other institutions, and sought further information to enable them to assess the college's progress. The self-assessment report identified as a weakness the absence of a corporation committee dedicated to the oversight of academic performance. The corporation has since established a curriculum and quality committee which met for the first time in November 1999.

68 During the past year, the corporation, through its search committee, has debated the impact of the modified instrument and articles of government. The revised structure comprises six business and three co-opted governors, one local authority and one local community governor, two staff, two students, two parent governors and the principal. There are three vacancies. The corporation has carefully adhered to published guidance on transition arrangements, including determining the

process by which nominations are to be sought for various categories of membership. The search committee has yet to undertake a skills audit to inform future appointments. Although encompassing a reasonable range of skills, the corporation currently lacks a member with the necessary expertise and experience to provide an independent view of the college's academic performance. There is a balance of newer and longer-serving governors. Arrangements for the induction of new governors are well established and have recently been revised to include the use of a 'buddy' system. The self-assessment report identifies this strength. Training of governors is limited in scope and has not been informed by a detailed assessment of need. Governors' commitment to the college is demonstrated through a level of attendance at corporation and committee meetings averaging 85% in 1999.

69 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. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the clerking of corporation business is good. The corporation has recognised the importance of the role of the clerk. A well-qualified and experienced clerk has been appointed on a part-time basis and is independent of management. Corporation and committee agendas, supporting papers and minutes are produced on a timely basis and to a consistently high standard. The minutes provide a clear record of the passage of debate and decisions taken. Copies are kept in the learning resource centre and are also being made available on the college intranet. Governors are aware of the need to improve their accessibility and contact with staff and students. To address this, all governors will in future be attached to a

Cross-college Provision

department of the college. The corporation operates properly within a defined set of policies and procedures that are regularly updated to reflect current good practice. There is a register of interests covering all governors and staff with significant financial responsibility which is updated annually.

70 The corporation has a wide range of committees in addition to the statutory requirements for audit and search committees. In total, there are nine committees. The audit committee substantially operates in accordance with Council Circular 98/15, *Audit Code of Practice*, including producing an annual report of its activities for the corporation and using performance indicators for monitoring the effectiveness of internal auditors. Appropriate arrangements have been put in hand to separate the college's internal and external audit services, which are currently provided by the same firm.

71 As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, the corporation has not formally reviewed the way in which it conducts its business. Whilst the self-assessment process is thorough, insufficient consideration has been given to the continued relevance of established practice. The system for appraising senior postholders is inadequate. The principal has never been appraised by the corporation. Currently, the principal appraises the other two senior postholders. However, this responsibility resides with the corporation. The corporation has recognised this weakness and instigated plans to address the issue in the near future.

Management

Grade 1

72 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses recorded in the college's self-assessment report. However, a few additional strengths and one weakness were identified.

Key strengths

- open and consultative style of management
- highly effective operational planning
- good internal communications
- strong links with external agencies
- good management information systems
- comprehensive and timely financial reporting

Weaknesses

- idiosyncratic financial forecasting procedures

73 Since the last inspection a new organisational structure has been introduced. It is well conceived and is clearly understood by staff. All staff support the college's mission and values which place the student at the centre of the organisation. Senior managers work in an open and consultative style. There is a real sense of community. Communications are very good. Information is disseminated using a variety of media, including the staff intranet. However, it is the informal contacts that are the most effective in supporting the working of the college. A common timetable enables full-time staff to meet frequently in the central staff room. Part-time staff find it harder to stay informed. This weakness is identified in the self-assessment report. Staff are effectively deployed and care is taken to use teachers' contracted time as effectively as possible. The college primarily employs full-time teachers who are increasingly expected to teach on different types of courses in order to retain flexibility in the use of the staffing resource. This is a strength not identified in the self-assessment.

Cross-college Provision

74 Inspectors agreed that the college's strategic and operational planning cycle works well. Although the three-year strategic plan has yet to be updated, the operational plans for all areas of the college deal with current issues. The majority of staff contribute to the review and updating of plans. College managers agree clear retention and achievement targets for all curriculum areas, although targets for cross-college areas are less well developed. Central to the process is the college board which receives and reviews development plans from across the college. A new operational plan, together with the updated self-assessment report, is agreed at each November meeting. The cycle of board meetings is well established and understood by staff. Membership of the board is drawn from across the college and includes three governors.

75 The college is developing an extensive range of management information tools. Software developed by the college, which was recently FEFC kitemarked, enables managers to access a range of detailed reports. A monthly analysis of funding units based on enrolments and students' attendance is now helping the college to plan and respond to changing circumstances. However, owing to the absence of reliable information until recently, the college has been slow to respond to the need to improve retention rates, which remain below the average for sixth form colleges.

76 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. Monthly management accounts are prepared promptly after month-end and are discussed in full at the management's finance and business meeting. The content of the management accounts reflects current good practice. Although performance indicators, such as solvency ratios, are included, these are not yet compared with the targets set out in the commentary to the current three-year financial forecast.

77 The college has adopted an unusual approach to financial forecasting, which is potentially unsound. The forecast has been prepared as a risk indicator, and highlights aspects of the college's finances which need to be addressed in its next strategic plan. It does not forecast the costs of the current strategic plan, and cannot therefore be used as a marker in judging actual performance. The college did not recognise this as a weakness.

78 The college has an appropriate range of policies and procedures, including those for equal opportunities and health and safety. The college operates a large number of committees and meetings. Staff are positively encouraged to participate and contribute ideas. There is an effective system of project groups which take responsibility for particular developments and then disband once their work is done.

79 The college has developed a productive range of working partnerships with a wide variety of organisations. To extend its curriculum offer, the college has worked with local employers through the millennium project to develop work-based training. Other external links include working with Gosport Borough and Hampshire County councils to develop arts, leisure and childcare opportunities and with the University of Portsmouth for higher education links. Market research is based on labour market reviews, local networks and national initiatives. The self-assessment report identified that some of this research could be used more extensively and systematically to inform strategic planning. Inspectors agreed with this judgement.

Conclusions

80 The college produced its fourth self-assessment report in November 1999. The report provided a very helpful basis for planning and carrying out the inspection. The college provided useful contextual information on progress made against action plans, staffing and student numbers. Evidence to support judgements was clear, comprehensive and carefully referenced, particularly for curriculum sections. Staff across the college and governors were involved in the process of self-assessment. Governors and an external consultant subjected the report to scrutiny prior to validation. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but considered that some strengths had been overstated and identified a few additional weaknesses. In curriculum areas, inspectors awarded lower grades in two areas and the same grade in three areas. In cross-college areas, inspectors awarded one higher and one lower grade.

81 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 (December 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	33
19-24 years	9
25+ years	57
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (December 1999)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation)	18
Level 2 (intermediate)	20
Level 3 (advanced)	38
Level 4/5 (higher)	3
Non-schedule 2	21
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (December 1999)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	222	245	14
Agriculture	6	7	0
Construction	1	102	3
Engineering	13	13	1
Business	83	307	12
Hotel and catering	73	66	4
Health and community care	87	136	7
Art and design	134	342	15
Humanities	501	561	32
Basic education	22	372	12
Total	1,142	2,151	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 1% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the *Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions*.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (January 2000)

	Per- manent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	72	21	2	95
Supporting direct learning contact	15	3	0	18
Other support	40	1	0	41
Total	127	25	2	154

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£4,354,000	£4,066,829	£4,445,722
Average level of funding (ALF)	£17.91	£17.43	£17.02
Payroll as a proportion of income	71%	73%	72%
Achievement of funding target	101%	99%	100%
Diversity of income	12%	15%	19%
Operating surplus	£175,000	-£171,473	-£200,486

Sources: Income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

ALF - Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999)

Payroll - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

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

Diversity of income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Operating surplus - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	1,149	238	499	617	116	237
	Retention (%)	94	62	66	87	70	82
	Achievement (%)	95	84	94	46	92	99
2	Number of starters	782	1,635	584	227	376	257
	Retention (%)	83	83	68	76	77	81
	Achievement (%)	84	25	95	87	47	94
3	Number of starters	1,183	1,369	1,919	246	241	340
	Retention (%)	87	74	73	70	73	73
	Achievement (%)	83	84	61	66	61	64
4 or 5	Number of starters	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Retention (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Short courses	Number of starters	142	248	179	923	1,563	966
	Retention (%)	94	80	94	95	96	97
	Achievement (%)	90	96	100	95	100	100
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	781	72	81	357	438	473
	Retention (%)	97	83	70	93	75	72
	Achievement (%)	76	100	98	95	99	100

Source: ISR

n/a not applicable

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