

Isle of Wight College
Reinspection of Science and Mathematics: March 2000
Report from the Inspectorate
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 assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

REINSPECTION

The FEFC has agreed that colleges with provision judged by the inspectorate to be less than satisfactory or poor (grade 4 or 5) should be reinspected. In these circumstances, a college may have its funding agreement with the FEFC qualified to prevent it increasing the number of new students in an unsatisfactory curriculum area until the FEFC is satisfied that weaknesses have been addressed.

Satisfactory provision may also be reinspected if actions have been taken to improve quality and the college's existing inspection grade is the only factor which prevents it from meeting the criteria for FEFC accreditation.

Reinspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Reinspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports and confirm that actions taken as a result of previous inspection have improved the quality of provision. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. The opinion of the FEFC's audit service contributes to inspectorate judgements about governance and management.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

Assessments use grades on 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 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.

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 02476 863000
Fax 02476 862100
website: <http://www.fefc.ac.uk>*

© FEFC 1999

You may photocopy this report and use extracts in promotional or other material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings are not misrepresented.

**Isle of Wight College
South East Region**

Reinspection of science and mathematics: March 2000

Background

The college was inspected in February 1999 and the findings published in inspection report 52/99. Provision in science, mathematics and computing was awarded a grade 4.

The key strength was effective use of practical work. Provision in computing was judged satisfactory. The major weaknesses in science and mathematics were: the failure of a significant number of lessons to make appropriate demands on students; very poor retention and achievement rates for students on GCE A level courses; achievements below the national average on GCSE courses; and inadequate procedures for risk assessment.

Since the inspection, the college has restructured the management of the college and its courses. There have been staffing changes affecting mathematics and sciences.

Reinspection took place in March 2000, and concentrated on science and mathematics provision. Inspectors observed 11 lessons, examined a range of documents, scrutinised students' achievements and retention data, and had meeting with managers, teachers, learning support staff and students.

Assessment

The college has made some progress in addressing weaknesses identified in the original inspection. The percentage of grades A to C in GCSE mathematics and physics courses is more than 20% above the national average for further education colleges in both these subjects, which are studied by over 200 students. Standards fund money has assisted the college to install good facilities for the use of IT in science. These are being well used. Schemes of work have improved but are still not fully developed; the assessment of students' work is thorough and constructive detailed feedback is given in most cases; the tutorial system is addressing attendance monitoring more effectively and individual target-setting is perceived by students as a positive factor in their motivation and progress; the introduction of study skills is valued. The changes in personnel, procedures, curriculum delivery and learning support have not been in place sufficiently long for their effectiveness to be demonstrated in improved achievements. Procedures for risk assessment are now in place, supported by the appointment of a well-qualified laboratory technician. Teaching standards still remain well below the level quoted in *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*. Of the lessons observed, 36% were graded 1 and 2 compared with 65% nationally. Performance data for 1998-99 are not entirely reliable, but retention and achievements on GCE A level courses are still poor. For two-year GCE A level courses, for example, retention in human biology was 29% compared with the national average of 67%; chemistry had retention of 29% and achievement of 0%, compared with national averages of 74% and 71%, respectively; mathematics retention was 44% and achievement 50%, compared with national averages of 73% and 74%, respectively. Students' attendance was only 63% compared with a national average of 78%. Some of the courses have very low numbers of students.

In order to effect further improvements, the college should: conduct a thorough review of its GCE A level science provision; improve teaching at GCE A level; maintain ambitious targets for retention and achievement, and develop ways of meeting them; investigate the reasons for poor attendance; and set higher expectations among staff and students.

Revised grade: science and mathematics 4.