

**Kidderminster College**  
**Reinspection of Governance: November 1999**  
**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.*

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## **Kidderminster College West Midlands Region**

### **Reinspection of Governance: November 1999**

#### **Background**

Kidderminster College was inspected in October 1998 and the findings published in inspection report 06/99. Governance was awarded a grade 5.

The only key strength identified was the commitment of the governors to the college. The weaknesses reported were: the ineffective oversight of the college's strategic direction; inadequate monitoring of the quality of the college's academic activities; deficiencies in the procedure for the appointment of governors; the failure to formally record decisions of the corporation; ineffective conduct of corporation and committee business; and the lack of policies for open governance and accountability. The FEFC's audit service concluded that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college was weak. The corporation did not substantially conduct its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It did, however, substantially fulfil its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

An inspector and an auditor reinspected governance over three days from 29 November to 3 December 1999. They examined a range of documents including the new self-assessment report and held meetings with governors, the principal, the clerk to the corporation and senior staff.

#### **Assessment**

The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. 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.

The college has made considerable progress in addressing the areas of weakness identified during the previous inspection. Governors have a better oversight of the strategic direction of the college and this is no longer a weakness. They have recently established a schedule for the regular appraisal of the principal.

The strengths of the governance include the exceptional level of commitment by corporation members to the college. Governors have taken resolute action to initiate improvements including the appointment of an experienced clerk to the corporation and overseeing the restructuring of the management team. They acted quickly to ensure the continuity of leadership at the college when the principal went on long-term sick leave. The search committee has successfully used a number of methods to recruit governors to vacancies. Procedures for openness and accountability are now substantially in place and the corporation has approved standing orders, a register of interests and a code of conduct. Decisions taken by the corporation are clearly recorded in the minutes. Governors' monitoring of the college's finances has further improved. Governors bring a broad range of expertise to the corporation.

Some weaknesses remain. Several of these are being addressed, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the actions taken. Issues still to be addressed include the development of

performance indicators by which governors can systematically assess their performance, and the lack of programmes for the induction and training of governors. The corporation does not yet monitor the college's academic performance with sufficient rigour.

**Revised grade:** governance 3.