

**Matthew Boulton College of Further and Higher Education  
Reinspection of Governance: February 2000  
Report from the Inspectorate  
The Further Education Funding Council**

## **THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL{PRIVATE }**

*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.*

## **Matthew Boulton College of Further and Higher Education West Midlands Region**

### **Reinspection of governance: February 2000**

#### **Background**

Matthew Boulton College of Further and Higher Education was inspected in November 1998 and the findings published in the inspection report 18/99. Governance was awarded a grade 5.

The only key strength identified was the relevant business background of governors. The weaknesses were: the ineffective conduct of corporation and committee business; governors' receipt of inadequate and inaccurate financial information on which to base decisions; insufficient governor involvement in preparing and monitoring the college's strategic plan; the absence of criteria for assessing the college's performance; governors' lack of systematic oversight of student activities and achievements; and insufficient monitoring by governors of franchised provision. The FEFC's audit service concluded that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college was weak.

Reinspection took place in February 2000. Inspectors and auditors met with governors and managers and scrutinised a range of minutes and documents.

#### **Assessment**

The governors have vigorously tackled the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. Clear improvements can be identified in many areas; in others initial steps have been taken to address the problem.

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 of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

An independent clerk supports the corporation and its committees; their business is now conducted effectively. Management accounts are issued to all governors. These accounts are considered in detail at meetings of the finance and estates committee and at least termly by the full corporation. The corporation considers the financial impact of its decisions, on recommendation from the finance and estates committee. Reports on franchising are regularly provided to governors and after recent improvements these reports are now comprehensive. Whilst governors were aware of the extent of franchised provision, they were not sufficiently aware of the number of providers involved. A number of weaknesses were identified in the operation of the audit committee.

The corporation has been closely involved in the development of plans for the future, and has specific objectives designed to improve the overall performance of the college. Progress in meeting financial targets has been closely monitored. The corporation has received regular reports on retention and achievement. A recent audit has identified training needs but no formal training plan has yet been adopted by the corporation. The college has made considerable progress in improving the openness and accountability of its operations. An open annual general meeting is planned to take place shortly after the inspection.

Communication with staff is good. The chair has addressed the whole staff on several occasions and all governors have links with designated areas of the college.

The corporation should: develop further its training programme; improve the monitoring of academic performance and scrutinise students' results in more detail; strengthen audit committee procedures.

**Revised grade:** governance 3.