

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Barking College

February 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses. The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 21/95

BARKING COLLEGE

GREATER LONDON REGION

Inspected September – November 1994

Summary

Barking College offers a wide range of vocational courses in all of the FEFC programme areas. It has strong links with the local education authority, the community and industry. Governance and management are good. There are effective links between strategic planning, quality assurance and the allocation of resources. Standards of teaching and the levels of achievement are generally good; in performing arts they are outstanding. The college should ensure that all schools in the teaching faculties are managed effectively and that learning support is co-ordinated and delivered across the college to all students who need it.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	1
Governance and management	2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	3
Quality assurance	2
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Computing	3	Health and social care	2
Construction	3	Art and design	2
		Performing arts	1
Engineering	2	Humanities	3
Business and management	2	Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Leisure and tourism with food studies	3		

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INTRODUCTION

1 Barking College was inspected during the autumn term of the teaching year 1994-95. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the term. Over a two-week period beginning 3 October 1994 six full-time inspectors and eight part-time inspectors spent a total of 40 days on specialist subject inspections. The length of time spent was extended because of industrial action at the college. Five full-time inspectors and two part-time inspectors spent a further 29 days inspecting cross-college provision in November 1994. Inspectors visited 176 classes involving 2,390 students and examined a broad range of students' work. Meetings were held with students, governors, representatives of the London East Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), the chief education officer for Barking and Dagenham, senior managers, heads of schools, teaching and support staff. The inspectors also had access to an extensive variety of documentation relating to the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Barking College is a general further education college located in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. It occupies a single site close to the border with the London Borough of Havering near Romford. It lies in the area covered by the London East TEC. There are five other general further education colleges and four sixth form colleges within 10 miles, the nearest being three miles away. In Barking and Dagenham there are eight 11-18 comprehensive schools. Adult education is provided through Barking Adult College which is partly funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) as an external institution sponsored by Barking College.

3 Barking and Dagenham is the smallest London borough with a population of 144,200. According to the 1991 census only 30.3 per cent of the population were in professional, managerial or technical occupations compared with 39.5 per cent for London as a whole. The labour market review published by the local TEC in July 1994 states that the unemployment rate for Barking and Dagenham was 12 per cent compared with a rate of 10.7 per cent for London as a whole. Unemployment has decreased by 2 per cent since June 1993.

4 Minority ethnic groups form 4.5 per cent of the population of the borough, compared with a figure for Greater London of 20.2 per cent. Barking and Dagenham is the most industrialised borough in London with twice the industrial floor space of the next most industrialised borough, Enfield. The industrial belt along the banks of the Thames includes large companies such as the Ford Motor Company and Telephone Cables Limited.

5 Barking and Dagenham was known until 1992 as a borough characterised by poor educational attainment. It had the lowest post-16

participation rate in the country and had consistently poor General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) results. The situation has been confronted by the local education authority (LEA) and the college with the result that participation rates have increased from 31 per cent in 1988-89 to 65 per cent in 1993-94. Schools have increased the percentage of pupils gaining five or more grade A-C passes at GCSE from 19.3 in 1993 to 27.6 in 1994 but the borough is still within the lowest third of all education authorities in England on this performance measure.

6 At the time of the inspection, there were 5,091 students. About 36 per cent of college students came from the borough of Barking and Dagenham, a further 21 per cent from Havering, 14 per cent from Redbridge, 12 per cent from Essex and 10 per cent from Newham. Percentage enrolments by age are shown in figure 1. The college employed 338 full-time equivalent staff; 191 teaching staff, and 147 non-teaching staff. A profile of staff expressed as full-time equivalents is shown in figure 2.

7 The college is organised into three teaching faculties; business and service industries, general and visual studies, and technology. A fourth faculty of college services takes responsibility for curriculum support and client services.

8 The college in its mission statement aims to be:

- 'a major provider of quality, cost effective, post-16 learning and personal development opportunities
- a learner-centred college promoting equality of opportunity in all that it does and providing a welcoming supportive environment in which to work and learn
- a major contributor to the National Targets for Education and Training, meeting the needs of school leavers, employers and adult returners.'

It is committed to working in a mutually supportive way:

- 'to meet client requirements with courtesy, efficiency and professionalism
- in partnership with other educational establishments to provide progression to further and higher education and employment
- with industrial and commercial partners to create a prosperous local economy.'

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 In line with the college's mission statement, the senior management team and the staff are aware of the national targets for increasing the numbers achieving education and training qualifications and are expanding rapidly the college's provision. Enrolments grew by over 11 per cent in the year 1993-94, just exceeding the college's target. It is

anticipated that this year's target of 8 per cent will also be achieved when all enrolments across the year have occurred.

10 A major strength of the college is its wide range of vocational further education courses which represent 94 per cent of the provision. These are courses in caring, art and design, photography, printing and reprographics, performing arts and media, horticulture and floristry, computing, construction, electrical and electronic engineering, mechanical and maintenance craft, mechanical and production engineering, motor vehicle engineering, business studies, food studies, management, office technology and secretarial studies, and leisure and tourism. Most courses offer students the opportunity to go on to higher level courses within the college. For example, business administration is offered at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) levels 1, 2 and 3 and as a higher diploma in administrative procedures. Students taking the intermediate General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in art and design can progress to a range of Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diplomas and courses, which in turn can lead to a higher national diploma in model making, which is linked to a degree in product design at the University of East London. Part-time students studying for a BTEC first certificate in construction can progress through a national certificate in building to a higher national certificate in building studies. GNVQs are offered at intermediate and advanced levels in art and design, business, construction and the built environment, health and social care, and leisure and tourism. From September 1995, foundation courses will be offered in business and in leisure and tourism. Further provision at foundation level would provide access for a wider range of students.

11 The number of subjects offered at GCE A level has been increased to 25 this year. The provision for GCSE has been reduced to two subjects, mathematics and English, which are offered only on a part-time day and evening basis. Part-time day and evening courses provided access to higher education for about 120 adults without traditional entry qualifications. The college is attempting to improve opportunities for students over 19 by adopting a policy of not charging fees to adult students on full-time courses. In 1993-94, the number of students aged 19 and over on full-time courses was 271. This increased to 517 in 1994-95. Percentage enrolments by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 3 and 4, respectively.

12 Over 40 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are enrolled on specifically-designed courses in the school of supportive education. They may follow one of three courses depending on their need for learning and pastoral support, their basic skills and their likely destination after college. The courses are offered on a one, two or three-year basis according to individual requirements.

13 Course programmes are timetabled flexibly to meet the changing needs and demands of the students and adapted to meet the needs of

industry and NVQ work. Students on business courses can work at their own pace and meet the demands of NVQ in a well-managed, simulated working office, which can accommodate about 50 students. A model travel agency and a kitchen provide simulated work environments for students of leisure and tourism and food studies, respectively. A large computer learning centre is open to students from 08.45 to 21.00, and on Saturday mornings, and is well used.

14 The college is making strenuous and successful efforts to build relationships with other education providers, the local community, the local TEC, managing agents and local employers. Strong links exist between the college and the local TEC. Two main board area directors from the local TEC gave their opinion that the college exercised a key influence in the borough, and played a significant role in enabling the local TEC to meet its targets and help in the economic regeneration of the area. The chair of the college governing body is a local TEC nominee. The principal sits on the Barking and Dagenham area business board, which advises the local TEC on local issues, and has also been invited to join a steering group for the whole local TEC area concerned with basic skills at work. The college hosted a national conference on Investors in People at which a senior manager of the local TEC spoke.

15 Youth training programmes are provided for over 500 students. The managing agents represented within the London East Training Agents forum consider that their relationships with the college are strong, that the quality control of youth training is good and that the college clearly understands its contractual obligations. One of the managing agents is particularly encouraged by the college's involvement with the broadening of the NVQ provision to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

16 Good and productive links exist between the college and the LEA. The education authority expects the college to play a major role in its education plan for the whole borough including the schools, the college and the local university. This plan is designed to link in with the economic development of Barking Reach, the riverside area of the borough. The chair of governors of the college has been co-opted on to the education committee. He also chairs the education business partnership. There is a post-16 strategic group in the borough chaired by the chief education officer and including the principal and curriculum director of the college, the head of the adult college and a representative of the headteachers of the schools.

17 Schools in the borough have expanded their provision of vocational courses. The effect has been to increase the staying-on rate in sixth forms in schools from 18 per cent to 45 per cent over the three-year period from 1990-91 to 1992-93. Despite this increased competition, the relationship between the college and the local schools remains generally productive as illustrated by the Barking and Dagenham Schools/College Compact. This

arrangement is designed to improve progression into post-16 education and is sponsored by the Education Business Partnership, the local TEC, the LEA and BTEC. Relationships with special schools and special needs co-ordinators in schools in Barking and Dagenham and neighbouring boroughs are strong. About 20 school pupils start attending link courses in the college at the age of 12 or 13, and most of these eventually join the college.

18 A marketing unit has been established to improve links with schools inside and outside the borough. The unit visits any schools which provide five or more students to the college, and others on request. Of the school leavers entering the college, 43 per cent are from the borough of Barking and Dagenham. The remainder come from other London boroughs, and Essex. The influx of students from other boroughs has resulted in a student body whose ethnic mix is different from the predominantly white local population. According to the 1991 census about 93 per cent of the borough's population aged 16-24 classified themselves as white and about 7 per cent as black or Asian, while at the college 74 per cent are white students, 19 per cent are black or Asian, and 7 per cent are from other ethnic backgrounds. The relationship with the local adult college is good. The college is starting to establish links to cater for the needs of adults with learning difficulties and through the FEFC funding mechanism it currently sponsors provision amounting to £336,543 in the adult college.

19 There are a number of large national and multi-national companies in the area, including the Ford Motor Company. The college is actively building up links with these companies and has established an enterprise unit to co-ordinate this. Particular areas of success include craft work, health and safety, and management and supervisory training. The Ford Motor Company uses the college to co-ordinate a programme designed to assist its employees to develop skills and interests outside their work-related areas. The success of this programme has led to the piloting of similar provision for a neighbouring local authority. The college also delivers a programme on equal opportunities to employees at the Ford Motor Company and is planning a programme to broaden the skills of mechanical and engineering staff. Staff from the college teach a component on team building on a graduate management course offered by the University of London for a major financial services company. Six external industrial members take an active role on an engineering advisory committee which meets regularly.

20 The college has a number of links with the local community. Staff are actively involved in groups such as the race equality council, the council for education and training of the Chelmsford Diocese, the Young Men's Christian Association, a child protection co-ordination group, a young women's project and a local group to help and support refugees. The college hires out part of its buildings to football clubs, a senior citizens' club and a local rock band. The citizens' advice bureau uses the college to

meet members of the local community. Liaison with the local authority's social services is good and the staff in the school of supportive education work closely with the day centres to ensure effective transfer for students with severe learning difficulties. In their third year at college, these students spend one day a week at the day centre. Staff at the college work with staff at the day centres to devise an appropriate programme for students when they transfer.

21 In an effort to promote European links, the school of construction is arranging an exchange visit with a French college. Staff and students in the faculty of business and service industries are making exchange visits to Denmark and France. Students in the school of supportive education take part in an exchange with trainees in Germany.

22 A college policy deals with all aspects of equal opportunities. The policy covers college ethos and environment; personnel policies and procedures; staff recruitment, selection and appointment; staff development, review and appraisal; students and the curriculum. Implementation of the policy is led by a college steering group chaired by the principal. The students' union is represented on the committee. The committee has developed a series of action plans and deadlines for each section of the policy. These action plans include capital expenditure to improve access for students with physical disabilities, for example, by fitting automatic doors, pavement ramps and a covered way to provide access from one building to another without the use of steps. Training in recruitment and selection of staff has been provided for heads of schools. Other examples from the students' section of the policy include the appointment of a youth worker and support for the students' union. The welcome statement in the prospectus is given in Urdu, Punjabi and Gujarati. The college operates a confidential complaints procedure for students and there is evidence that responses to a number of complaints relating to racist behaviour have been immediate.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

23 The governing body has strong local influence and knowledge. There are 12 members including the principal and the president of the students' union. Three members play an active part in the local community, one of them being the present mayor of Barking and Dagenham and another a member of the executive committee of the Sikh temple in Barking. The six governors from industry all have local connections, some being actively involved with the local TEC or the local Chamber of Commerce. They provide a breadth of expertise on such matters as finance, and personnel and estates management. There are three women members, one of whom has a particular interest in learning difficulties and/or disabilities. One place, held by a member of staff, nominated and elected by the staff of the college, is vacant. There are three subcommittees: audit; personnel and finance; and remuneration. The first two meet regularly, are well attended and effective, and report to the full governing body after every meeting.

The last meets as and when necessary to advise on the remuneration of the principal, which is based on his appraisal which takes place twice a year.

24 Governors' needs for training were analysed and personal programmes devised by the staff-development co-ordinator. Residential training courses have included speakers from the college and external consultants. The first concern of governors has been the monitoring of the college's financial position. They also agree and review the college mission, the draft strategic plan, conditions of service for staff and the achievement of targets for success. This year they keenly debated students' achievements particularly at GCE A level. They receive reports on progress and developments from college managers and attend college social functions. The chair of governors is committed to further education and takes an active interest in the college. Full attendance at governors' meetings has been a problem. However, a register of attendance was circulated with the previous minutes and this resulted in full attendance at the meeting observed by inspectors. The governing body is currently reviewing its role and looking at ways of assessing its own performance. The chair recognises the need for governors to take a strategic overview of the college and distance themselves from operational matters. This issue, together with a proposal to change the composition of the governing body, gave rise to lively discussion at the meeting attended by an inspector. Governors agreed to devote a further special meeting to these issues.

25 The principal was appointed in January 1992. He is closely involved with students and staff at all levels and provides strong leadership. The management of the college was restructured to deal more effectively with the functions required by incorporation. Following full consultation with all staff, three teaching faculties were created, each headed by a director of faculty. The three faculties were divided into 17 schools each managed by a head of school. The intention was to separate the strategic planning role of the directors of faculty from the operational management of the heads of school.

26 Staff feel that the new structure has been instrumental in creating a corporate identity for the whole college. All new appointments were made internally from existing staff. The heads of school have received training, for example, in funding methodology, health and safety, and marketing. They have regular meetings within their own faculties and also as a cross-college group. The aim is to allow them to be autonomous within a clearly-defined framework. This has been only partially successful. Most heads of school feel that they do not have the time or the power to do their jobs effectively. Some do not have the necessary skills. Two of the directors of faculty are still too much involved in operational matters and in closely monitoring the performance of heads of school.

27 The strategic management team of nine comprises the principal, vice-principal, four directors of faculties, one of which is the faculty of

college services, and three directors with responsibility for administrative services and personnel; curriculum planning and quality assurance; marketing, enterprise and hospitality. The vice-principal has responsibility for finance, management information and premises.

28 The strategic management team meets weekly. The meeting observed by inspectors was conducted in a friendly, but businesslike manner. The financial implications of enrolment numbers were considered and the long-term effects of decisions were considered. Capital projects were considered and prioritised in relation to the strategic plan.

29 Communication of decisions is good. Minutes of strategic management team meetings are circulated to the library and to the members of the team. Directors are responsible for disseminating information to their staff and staff feel that this is effectively done. The principal also circulates a principal's newsletter when there are important items of information to be communicated. This is in addition to the regular college newsletter, 'Grapevine', which is produced weekly by the marketing unit. It contains contributions from members of staff and includes information on curricular developments and on the college, job advertisements, news about staff and social events.

30 The academic board which meets once a term, comprises nine ex-officio members and eight elected members. Minutes of meetings are available in the library, but items to be discussed or reports of what has happened are not well publicised or circulated. As an advisory body the board is not effective since there is no formal mechanism for gaining staff opinions or disseminating information. Staff do not see it as a dynamic or useful body. There is a curriculum strategy group, and working parties looking at new curriculum developments such as information technology and college-wide accreditation of prior learning. These are active working groups reporting directly to the principal and this is where decisions are made. Reports from them are sometimes received by the academic board, but the minutes of the academic board meetings indicate that this is for information rather than consultation.

31 Course teams meet regularly and minutes are kept. Attendance at some course team meetings is poor, particularly on courses where there is a high percentage of part-time staff; for example, in computing and supportive education. This makes it difficult to co-ordinate the curriculum.

32 The strategic planning process is a continuous cycle. It starts with the review and planning which takes place within faculties and directorates. All staff to whom inspectors spoke had been involved and consulted. Faculty development plans are submitted to the principal in a common format, which includes a statement of the present position, targets, and strategies and the resources needed to achieve them. The first draft of the college's strategic plan is submitted for consultation to all staff, and to local employers, the LEA and the local TEC. All have made thoughtful and useful contributions.

33 Governors, senior managers and college staff realise that they have to exercise careful control of financial resources and use them prudently at a time of growth if quality is to be maintained and enhanced. The growth in enrolments has had the effect of building up college reserves, while at the same time unit costs have been reduced. At the time of incorporation, the college's level of funding was 15 per cent above the median. The average level of funding per funded unit of activity for 1994-95 is £19.16, 5.3 per cent above the median for general further education colleges of £18.17. The college's income and expenditure for the 16 month period 1 April 1993 to 31 July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6 respectively.

34 The budget allocation is closely tied in with the strategic planning. The full-time staffing budget is currently held centrally and decisions on replacing staff are taken by the human resources planning panel consisting of the principal, vice-principal and director of administrative services. Money for replacing equipment, for materials and for part-time staff hours is allocated to directors of faculties based on a formula derived from weighted full-time equivalent student numbers. Directors of faculties are allowed to develop their own practices for delegating budgets. All receive bids for equipment, materials and part-time hours from heads of schools and allocate resources openly. They have each devised their own formula for weighting full-time equivalent student numbers. Heads of schools have considerable freedom to manage their allocated budget. There are differences between directors of faculties in the amount of control they exercise and the amount of money that they retain themselves for curriculum development, faculty administration including photocopying, and contingencies. Bids for new equipment from the capital budget are incorporated into development plans. Decisions on allocations are made by the strategic management team and their decisions on financial planning are administered effectively by the vice-principal. The senior managers recognise the need to make capital investment whilst the college is in a strong financial position. The college is investing in improving access for people with problems of mobility, in computing facilities and learning resource centres. It intends to reduce staffing costs while the number of students increases by giving students the facilities to take more responsibility for organising their own learning. Not all staff, including some heads of schools, are fully aware of the way in which financial allocations are made. Since it is intended that heads of school should have greater responsibility for their own budgets, the vice-principal has been working for the past year to produce a thorough guide to the financial procedures and quality standards.

35 There is a formal system for monitoring the performance of senior managers. The principal has monthly meetings with each manager to discuss concerns. Reasons for the non-attainment of existing targets are sought and strategies for corrective action are devised. The targets arrived at in this way are combined into targets for the management team as a whole.

36 Central management information on students, courses and finance is generally reliable and accurate. All senior managers have access to the computerised management information system, but some staff who need access do not. It is a priority to rectify this. Systems are in place to monitor retention rates and student destinations. Course tutors do not always supply the requisite data, but as the benefits of improved management information become more apparent, they are beginning to realise the necessity for doing so.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

37 Responsibility for students' recruitment, guidance and support lies with the school of client services within the faculty of college services. The school oversees the recruitment, enrolment and guidance of students and co-ordinates the additional learning support for students who need it. The admissions policy commits the college to giving information and impartial advice to all clients; to providing a place, if available, to all potential students who meet the entry criteria; to providing an appropriate curriculum and support system, and to evaluating the policy. The college has appointed specialist guidance and careers staff and a youth worker to support this policy.

38 Information given to students is clear. The college prospectus is of high quality and information about courses includes the target group for whom the courses are intended, the qualifications offered and entry criteria. Informative leaflets on most courses are also available, but in some cases they are out of date. Leaflets containing information on tuition fees, access funds, college services, and a small plastic card stating the college's mission, are available at the admissions unit. The college holds open information and advice sessions on one evening each week. These often attract as many as 10 potential students each evening to visit the college. Open days are held annually and the college advertises its courses locally.

39 Recruitment is well organised. Initial enquiries and applications for full-time courses are handled by the admissions unit which is open every day and one evening a week throughout the year. Applicants are offered an interview with an appropriate member of one of the academic faculties. Students who are unclear about which course to apply for are directed to the vocational guidance officer for a diagnostic interview. After interview, if an appropriate course is available and the student is suitably qualified, an offer of a place is made. However, there was a small minority of students who had been placed at an inappropriate level. Some students on the access course and courses leading to intermediate GNVQs were not able to cope with the demands of the course. A few of those placed on courses for students with learning difficulties would have gained more from a supported place on an appropriate course in the mainstream of the college's provision. Students applying for part-time courses are not interviewed before enrolling and may not receive the same level of guidance.

40 Enrolment is organised by each faculty but is overseen by the faculty of college services. The enrolment observed was efficient and there was good attention to directing clients appropriately. Fee assessment produced some queues, but these were dealt with quickly by assessors placed in each faculty. Most students are happy with the information and guidance they receive. Special attention is paid to the enrolment of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to ensure that they feel welcome and at ease in the college.

41 All students receive a general induction to familiarise them with the college, and some courses have their own detailed and individually-designed induction programmes. Students are given an informative handbook which sets out useful information on the college's services and facilities, rules and responsibilities, policies and appeals procedures. Induction is supported by a number of activities set out in the tutors' handbook, a document devised by a working party of staff across the college and completed in September 1994 to help tutors to devise an appropriate tutorial programme for their students. The most effective induction sessions used participative exercises which introduced students to the style of delivery of courses. For example, some GNVQ students were engaged in a fact-finding assignment which introduced the students to methods of learning and action planning, and involved them in setting their own learning objectives. Some sessions were less successful and involved going through the students' handbook in tedious detail.

42 Students are able to transfer from one course to another during the first half of the autumn term. The process involves discussions between the students and their personal tutors, the vocational guidance officer and parents where appropriate. The college has a policy and system for the accreditation of prior learning and achievement, but this is currently operating only in the area of business studies. The faculty of college services has included in its action plan for the coming year the sharing of this good practice with other vocational areas.

43 All students on courses up to NVQ level 2 (or equivalent) and all students in the business and service industries faculty are given diagnostic tests to assess their need for support in literacy and numeracy. The test used is that devised by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit. The results for 1994 show that nearly 50 per cent of students need some additional literacy support and 55 per cent need numeracy support to help them cope with the demands of their courses. In technology, approximately 60 per cent of students had literacy and/or numeracy skills below the level required to cope with the demands of the course.

44 Learning workshops in literacy, numeracy and information technology are the responsibility of each of the faculties. The faculty of business and service industries has an attractive, well-equipped workshop with a good range of materials. This workshop has been awarded the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit 'quality mark'. This means that the programme of

basic skills delivered in this workshop meets the 12 minimum standards which Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit believes every student or trainee on the programme should expect. Provision in the faculty of technology is in inappropriate accommodation with few materials. There is no learning workshop in the faculty of general and visual studies.

45 Learning support is overseen by a college co-ordinator who works in the faculty of college services, assisted by a learning support co-ordinator in each faculty. The system for referring students in need of learning support is not well established. The faculty co-ordinators are not allocated the same amount of time to fulfil their roles and teaching staff, particularly in the faculty of technology, are generally not yet aware of or not committed to the concept of learning support. Attendance and progress at the workshops are not co-ordinated or monitored centrally. Although times and locations are advertised across the college, at the time of inspection attendance at the workshops was poor. The support being given was sensitive and effective, but the workshops should be improved, the benefits more widely promoted by tutors and used by all those students who have been identified as needing this help.

46 Support for students with physical disabilities is the responsibility of the learning support co-ordinator. The college currently provides staff and equipment to support 28 students with physical disabilities including visual and hearing impairment. An electronic wheelchair has been purchased for use by students with mobility problems. A profoundly deaf student has, with the aid of a full-time communicator been successful on a BTEC first diploma in media and is now completing a BTEC national diploma in performing arts. The student has been offered an unconditional place at Reading University to read drama.

47 All full-time and most part-time students have a personal tutor and are allocated to a tutorial group. Regular, weekly tutorials are timetabled, each lasting one-and-a-half hours. These may sometimes be conducted as whole group tutorials, based on activities in the tutors' handbook. Tutors also make arrangements to see students individually when action plans are agreed and completed. Attendance is carefully monitored and most tutors follow up absence, and involve parents or employers where appropriate. With the exception of some construction courses, levels of attendance were good.

48 Central arrangements for guidance and counselling in the college are extensive and well supported by the senior management. The college currently employs a full-time counsellor, a nurse, a vocational guidance officer and a youth worker. An educational psychologist is seconded from the LEA to the college for one day a week. Some appointments are new and the effects have yet to be felt. A representative of the citizens advice bureau gives a weekly two-hour surgery at the college. The services offered are well advertised to students and appreciated by them. All of the specialist staff report increasing demands for their services. The

secondment of the educational psychologist is a particularly imaginative venture. He currently spends much of his time working with students who need special consideration in examinations and allied follow-up work, but recognised the need to provide the same psychological support work with students and staff which is available to pupils in schools.

49 The vocational guidance officer gives advice related to course and career choice to potential and existing students. The college has well-established links with the Barking and Dagenham Careers Service, and the Dagenham Careers Centre operates in an office in the college foyer, where students can gain access to information on vacancies and youth training opportunities in the local area and across London. Students who require more detailed advice can make an appointment with a careers adviser who visits the college daily. There is a substantial careers library in the college with appropriate books, videos and software packages.

50 The college employs a full-time youth worker, whose job is to help students to develop personal skills and make active use of their recreational time. The youth worker works closely with the students' union, whose officers were involved in drawing up the job description and in the interviews. Both this appointment and the allocation of good accommodation to the students' union have encouraged students to become involved in college affairs. There is a student member on the governing body, on the academic board and representation on a number of course teams. The students' union recently organised a public panel discussion between the principal of the college and representatives of teaching and management unions and professional bodies, chaired professionally, to inform students about the issues surrounding the industrial action in further education colleges. This was well attended and demonstrates the principal's commitment to openness and involvement of students in college matters. The college is currently supporting childcare provision for five students in local creches. It presently has no creche of its own but there are plans to provide one.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

51 The strengths of the teaching clearly outweighed the weaknesses in 56 per cent of the sessions observed; in 34 per cent there was a balance of strengths and weaknesses; in 10 per cent there were weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. Staff were knowledgeable about their subjects and relationships between staff and students were good. The following table shows the grades given to the teaching sessions observed.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCSE A/AS level		3	2	7	1	0	13
GCSE		0	0	1	1	0	2
GNVQ		2	8	9	3	0	22
NVQ		3	9	8	6	0	26
Other		28	43	35	5	2	113
Total		36	62	60	16	2	176

52 The courses and lessons were generally well planned. In the performing arts, programmes were thoroughly prepared. Comprehensive documentation reflecting the syllabus requirements was available for staff and students. In engineering and in construction, there were well-planned schemes of work. Students were issued with course folders or handbooks which contained the syllabus and information on assessment procedures. In business courses, detailed schemes of work were given to students which ensured that they knew what was expected of them. There were well-planned schemes for National Nursery Examinations Board courses, but the planning for NVQ and GNVQ in health and social care was not consistent.

53 Although there were schemes of work in food studies, students were not provided with sufficiently comprehensive information. Some individual lessons were well planned, but courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities lacked a coherent structure. The aims of some lessons did not match the course aims. Schemes of work in humanities were variable and English students had no course handbook.

54 The quality of teaching and the promotion of learning in the performing arts was outstanding. Students were highly motivated and working hard. Teachers had high expectations of their students. All students were making good progress. Many different teaching styles were used and this helped maintain students' interest. There were good examples of differentiated learning, particularly in music. One music class involved separate groups of students composing, using music technology, working on harmony with the teacher while others were learning to read music using an independent learning package. Clear instructions were given in classes. Questions were used well to check on students' learning. The programme was enriched by a variety of outside visits to theatres, museums and galleries and by speakers, workshops and productions by national companies and other groups including a black mime company, a women's group and a company of deaf actors. Since some of these productions were open to all, they served to broaden the experience of all students.

55 In art and design, the learning was set in a clear context. Students knew what was expected of them. There was some innovative work which

enabled them to extend their knowledge and skills, and to develop confidence in their abilities. Students had undertaken commissions which had given them experience of professional work. For example, the production of a Christmas card for the local TEC, the photograph used for the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) calendar in 1993, a leaflet about BTEC first diploma and GNVQ courses designed for distribution to local schools. However, the quality of teaching was not always consistent. In graphic design and technical illustration there was, at times, a failure to extend and challenge students.

56 The teaching in engineering was generally of a high standard, but there was a lack of variety in the methods used. In some lessons the pace of work was slow and there was a subsequent loss of interest on the part of the students. In practical work in engineering, the students' work was of a high standard. Students were given well-prepared assignments with clear assessment criteria and were encouraged to complete their records of practical work during the lesson.

57 In caring courses, teachers used a variety of teaching methods, with an emphasis on practical knowledge and skills. Students on the nursery nursing courses undertook a good range of creative work including the production of soft toys and educational games for use in nurseries and infant schools. Their work placements were well chosen and progress was carefully monitored by teachers.

58 In business studies, there was a good rapport between staff and students which encouraged students' involvement in class activities. Most business studies classes were effective although there were some in which students were not all fully involved in the activities taking place. In office technology and secretarial courses, the practical exercises were well planned and there was effective use of the training office and the information technology suite.

59 There was good practice in much of the teaching and learning in computing, construction, food studies, leisure and tourism, the humanities, and in the courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The work was imaginative and students were actively engaged in a suitable range of learning activities. In one construction class, the contributions of the mainly adult students were encouraged and used constructively by the teacher. In a practical session, computing students were provided with guidance and exercises to suit their differing abilities, and their progress was carefully recorded. In English literature, the best work was lively and combined scholarship with fun. There was a strong emphasis on involving all students, encouraging personal response and developing the skills of critical analysis. This was backed up by solid information on literary techniques. Practical sessions in food studies were effective. Inspectors observed a good session in which students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were planning their own work in cookery, discussing the costs of food and nutrition, and reflecting on the skills they had already acquired.

60 However, good practice, was not consistent. In some classes, there was an over reliance on handouts and the use of the whiteboard as the only visual aid. In others the limited variety of activities failed to sustain students' interests and they occasionally became restless. For example, teachers played too dominant a role in some sessions in construction and humanities. There was some dull teaching in computing, food studies and leisure and tourism which failed to stimulate the weaker students or challenge the more able. Some lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities involved all students in the same activity, although it was not appropriate for all students. Teachers sometimes failed to make good use of the spontaneous contributions made by these students.

61 Students' progress was monitored through appropriate assignments which were marked and returned with helpful comments from teachers. Assignments in the performing arts and media studies were returned with comprehensive comments from teachers. A marking grid enabled BTEC tutors to monitor the students' progress in developing core skills. A good range of assignments was seen in art and design. They had well-defined aims and objectives which were related to the examination and assessment requirements. In engineering, the assignments were well prepared and offered students clear assessment criteria. A careful record of students' competencies was kept in mechanical engineering. Marking in English was very thorough, and there were good internal moderation procedures. However, in leisure and tourism, the teachers' comments on students' work did not always match the grade which had been awarded. Records of achievement were not widely used but were being used to good effect to inform students of their progress in art and design, business studies, computing and construction.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

62 In most sessions seen, students were well motivated and enjoyed their studies. Students were making good progress and applying their developing knowledge and understanding in a range of situations. They were enthusiastic and highly motivated in performing arts where they were able to demonstrate high degrees of knowledge and understanding and were able to express their ideas with clarity and confidence.

63 Students were developing the skills necessary to work in groups in the classroom and workshop and in professional situations through work placements. In the performing arts, students worked in groups to produce creative work of a consistently high standard. They also demonstrated a firm grasp of the realities of arts funding and client groups which they might encounter when they leave college. In art and design, there were opportunities for students to benefit from a range of real projects for external organisations, competitions, partnerships and work placements. Other good examples of students developing their skills of working in groups were found in English, food studies, leisure and tourism, and

business studies courses. All full-time students on vocational courses have work placements as part of their course. Students with learning difficulties have one day a week of work experience during the spring and summer terms. Seventy-five per cent are placed with local employers, including day centres. The remainder, for whom this is not appropriate, undertake work experience within the college.

64 The development of core skills and study skills was inconsistent. In English, the development of study skills was integral to the course planning. The use of information technology was central to the work of students in the BTEC national diploma in media studies. In GNVQ health and social care, there was good use of information technology, but not enough attention to developing communication and numeracy skills. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were given opportunities to develop core skills, but these were not assessed or recorded as part of their vocational options. The assignments set for students in construction did not give them sufficient encouragement to work independently or to use information technology. In food studies, students had little chance to produce written work, other than through recipes and work plans.

65 In all courses, students were given the opportunity to develop their practical skills where this was appropriate. Students in performing arts were able to work independently. Catering students' work, prepared for the presentation of their portfolios in sugarcraft studies and confectionery, showed a high degree of perseverance and skill. Practical work was generally carried out with due regard to safe working practices.

66 Ninety-four per cent of the students are following vocational courses across all 10 of the FEFC programme areas. The students enter for a wide range of external assessments validated by BTEC, C&G, RSA Examinations Board, Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and other examination boards. The major share of awards taken are those offered by BTEC and C&G.

67 Some good results were achieved by students in all vocational areas. Eighty-five per cent of the 247 students in the final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education's 1994 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. In 1992-93, the figure was 90 per cent compared with the national average of 80.5 per cent. The college measures success as the percentage of those enrolled on a course who subsequently gain an award. Using this measure, in 1993-94, 74 per cent of the 840 students enrolled on BTEC courses achieved a full award. Of the 1,640 students enrolled on courses leading to C&G awards, 67 per cent achieved a full award in 1993-94. With an average retention rate across courses of 79 per cent, the pass rate for those successfully completing the course and sitting the examination are in many cases substantially higher than the figures quoted here.

68 Students' achievements in the performing arts were excellent, and examination results were above the national average. In art and design, especially photography, graphic design, technical illustration and printing the achievements were good. A high proportion of students gained the BTEC national awards in business studies, leisure and tourism and engineering. There were good results on the C&G information technology course. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved success in a variety of externally-accredited awards. The results in construction were variable. In 1993-94, good results were achieved in some construction technicians courses, plumbing, carpentry and joinery. In some courses, such as the BTEC first diploma in engineering, the national diploma in construction and some computing courses, the overall success has been marred by poor retention rates. Students' achievements in external tests for parts of the advanced GNVQ business course have been poor.

69 About 5 per cent of the college's students are entered for GCE A level and GCSE examinations. Students entered GCE A level in 17 subjects. The pass rates achieved in GCE A level have improved significantly over a period of three years from 1991-94, rising from 44 per cent to 75 per cent of entries. The college's average points score for students aged 16-18 sitting two or more subjects for 1992-93 was 8.0 (where A=10, E=2) compared with the national average of 14.7 for all schools and colleges. The figure for 1993-94 for the 45 students in this category was 10.3. The results for 16-18 year old students are better than those for students aged 19 or more. Students aged 16-19 entering General Certificate of Education advanced/advanced supplementary level (GCE A/AS level) examinations in 1993-94 scored on average 3.4 points per entry. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. In 1993-94, 75 per cent of the 192 GCE A level examination entries obtained a pass at grades A-E; 33 per cent at grades A-C. In 1992-93, the comparable national averages for further education colleges, excluding sixth form colleges, were 66 per cent and 34 per cent. All students taking film studies, art and design, biology, chemistry and photography achieved a pass at grade A-E, although the numbers taking the examination were small in some cases. Good pass rates were achieved in English literature, English language, law, economics and theatre studies. Some 50 per cent or fewer students achieved a pass at grade A-E in computing, physics, mathematics sociology and accounts. There is poor retention in some of these subjects. For example, the completion rate in chemistry was 27 per cent and of the nine students enrolled for physics, only two completed the course and only one was successful in the examination.

70 The GCSE pass rates have been poor for a number of years. In 1993-94, 64 of the 201 entries made by 120 students led to a pass at grades A-C. Because of the poor results gained in the past, the college no longer offers GCSE in subjects other than mathematics and English. In 1993-94, the

results in English language were satisfactory with 51 per cent of the 45 students sitting the examination achieving a pass at grades A-C. In mathematics, only 29 per cent of the 77 who sat the examination achieved a pass at grade A-C.

71 The retention rates vary a great deal across the college. In 1993-94, the overall retention was 79 per cent. Some two-year courses had retention rates of over 90 per cent: nursery nursing, BTEC national diploma in design, graphics, GCE A level theatre studies, carpentry and joinery NVQ level 2. The overall retention for 1992-93 was better at 86 per cent. The college recognises the need to improve retention rates and has put quality assurance procedures in place to help address this issue.

72 The college records students' progression to employment and further and higher education by course and by faculty. In 1993-94, 21 per cent of the 748 students who returned questionnaires entered higher education and 32 per cent continued in further education. There was a good record of progression from BTEC national diplomas to higher education in 1993: graphic design (88 per cent), industrial design (87 per cent), industrial model making (100 per cent) and construction (100 per cent). Students successfully completing National Nursery Examinations Board courses and computing courses go on to further and higher education and employment. Of the 104 students enrolled on access courses in 1993-94, 67 successfully completed the course and 58 progressed to higher education. On the courses for students with learning difficulties, over the past two years all students enrolled have completed their studies. In 1994, of the 39 completing the courses about half continued in further specialist provision, five went into mainstream vocational provision, five went into youth training and five to day centres.

73 The college generally has a good record for its students finding employment. In 1993, 33 per cent of all full-time students got a job, including 67 per cent from construction crafts, 83 per cent from nursery nursing and 90 per cent from legal secretaries.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

74 The strategic plan commits the college to develop quality systems for all aspects of its work. A senior staff member was appointed in January 1993 as director of curriculum planning and quality assurance. A quality assurance committee comprises heads of schools and managers from all areas of the college, including support staff. A new quality assurance system was introduced in the spring of 1994. A clear policy statement explains the rationale of the new system, outlines its purposes and gives broad guidelines for their achievement. There is a well-produced manual for middle managers dealing with all matters concerning quality assurance, which contains documentation to support all aspects of the process.

75 Under the previous system of course review and evaluation, course teams were required to review courses annually and a formal review of

each course was conducted at college level every five years. These reviews were useful exercises for the course team, but lacked the rigour and clarity required to make real improvements. The new system involves course teams conducting an annual audit against standards in the form of written statements of expected achievement. The college has adopted a grading system based on the criteria used by the FEFC inspectorate. Grades are allocated to each aspect of work and these are confirmed or amended through internal verification by the director and members of the quality assurance committee. The new system has not yet run its first full cycle.

76 The new quality assurance system was introduced following extensive consultation with teaching and support staff. There is a clear operational plan setting out the tasks necessary to achieve implementation during 1994-95. This identifies the staff responsible, timescales and success criteria. Standards are being devised for all areas of the college's activities for the three phases of students' experience in the college, namely entry, on-programme and achievement. The standards for the entry element are now in place. These are measurable and relate to the objectives in the strategic plan and the commitments made in the college charter. Fifteen teams, including personnel as well as course teams, audited those procedures which apply to the start of the students' experience of the college against the standards in the manual. They allocated grades, which were then verified by the internal verifiers. As a result, improvements were made to the entry phase in September 1994. These included changes to the students' induction, amendments to the prospectus and course leaflets, and the introduction of the tutors' handbook.

77 There is a direct link between the new quality assurance process and strategic planning. The audits of courses and services result in action plans which include proposed action, the staff responsible for ensuring that action ensues, and the timescale. These plans are used by the strategic management team to identify issues applicable to the whole college and by directors of faculty or directorates in formulating faculty development plans.

78 Students' views of college provision are regarded as central to the quality assurance process. The results of questionnaires are used as part of the team audits. A survey of students' perceptions of entry procedures has been carried out, although the results were not available at the time of the inspection. Surveys were carried out during the 1993-94 session and the results were prominently displayed around the college on well-presented posters and leaflets. The surveys revealed that nearly 90 per cent of students responding were satisfied or very satisfied with both the quality of the teaching and the help they received from their teachers. Action arising directly from these student surveys includes improvements to the enrolment system and to the college refectory.

79 There is a systematic response to reports from moderators and external verifiers and from awarding bodies. All such reports are monitored centrally by the director of curriculum planning and quality

assurance. Where necessary, the course team is required to comment on the report and any concerns raised by the moderator or external verifier. The team must identify the action to be taken and the timescale over which it will take place. A BTEC moderator's report revealed significant problems in the management and quality assurance on the national diploma computer studies course. A rigorous action plan with specific targets was produced. Its implementation is being closely monitored by the director of faculty.

80 Information on students' achievements and retention rates, broken down to give statistics for each school within the college, is published annually. This information, along with details of students' progression and destinations, was already being used in the former course review and evaluation system. These indicators are now also used as the basis for the review of performance between the director of curriculum planning and quality assurance and the heads of school, between the principal and the directors of faculties, and between the chair of governors and the principal.

81 A project for the improvement of GCE A level courses was initiated in 1993-94 because of the poor results being obtained. As a result, a series of recommended changes were carried out. A thorough review of business subjects was carried out as a pilot project, including the observation of teaching and learning. There was a marked improvement in the GCE A level pass rates in those subjects, and an improvement overall in GCE A level pass rates in 1994. The recommendations are applicable to other subject areas and are to be extended across the whole GCE A level programme.

82 A scheme for staff development, review and appraisal for all full-time teaching and support staff was introduced in January 1993. The scheme is also open to part-time hourly-paid teaching staff on a voluntary basis, and two are currently taking part. The aims of the scheme are to establish a clear link with institutional review and strategic planning, as well as providing individual review and development for members of staff. The appraisal process is not linked to pay. At the time of the inspection, 68 per cent of the full-time staff had received their initial two-day skills training for appraisal and 27 per cent had completed the review process. The scheme is falling short of its target, which was to have taken all full-time staff through the first year of a two-year review cycle by December 1994.

83 One of the strategic and operational objectives in the strategic plan was to achieve Investors in People status by December 1994. An action plan for the achievement of the award was drawn up in conjunction with the local TEC. The delay in implementing the scheme for staff development and review has hindered progress in achieving this objective.

84 A staff-development group is chaired by the director of the faculty of college services. It comprises managers representing the administrative and curriculum functions of the college, as well as a member of the strategic management group. In the period from April 1993 to July 1994, £155,000

was allocated to staff development, which represented 1.8 per cent of the staffing budget. The same percentage of the budget has been allocated to staff development for 1994-95.

85 A college-wide programme for the development of staff is related to priorities identified in the strategic plan. In 1993-94 this programme included skills training for the staff-development, review and appraisal process; training for heads of schools; training in the recruitment and selection of staff for all those who are involved in interviewing new staff; and sessions open to all staff on the funding of further education. Participants evaluate all staff-development activities and a report was published in 1993-94, giving a brief summary of comments on the successful or unsuccessful aspects of programmes. Most were judged to be successful.

86 The induction programme for all new full-time teaching and support staff gives a comprehensive introduction to the college through a series of sessions throughout the first term of their employment. Part-time staff are invited to attend. There is also a handbook and a self-study pack, which includes an individual action plan, and there is the opportunity for individual support. Evaluation of the 1994 programme shows that new staff found it useful. There is good practice in the faculty of technology which provides an induction session for its part-time staff, although this practice has not been followed in the other two faculties.

87 A programme of training and accreditation is in progress for staff who assess candidates' work for NVQs and GNVQs, or who verify the judgements of other assessors. The college is an accredited centre for this work. All relevant full-time staff, including some technicians, are now registered on a programme of assessment for one or more units. The programme is also open to part-time staff. Evening, Saturday and half-term sessions are planned to meet their needs. Provision is well planned to ensure an appropriate spread of expertise in each area of the college's work, including internal verification and assessment of prior learning as well as vocational assessment. Approximately one-third of the programme is providing for external clients on a full-cost recovery basis, including 35 staff from a local consortium of employers providing caring services. Specialist subject inspections revealed that some heads of schools had failed to recognise the need to train staff to develop new methods of teaching, especially in the introduction of GNVQs. The introduction of a systematic approach to identifying training needs, together with a planned approach to internal verification, should improve this.

88 The first college charter was produced for the autumn term of 1994, and has been circulated extensively. This followed consultation with all full-time staff, employers, governors and students. The charter sets out what students are entitled to expect from the college, as specified in the national charter for further education. It is presented in an intelligible style and attractive format. The college has cross-referenced the charter with its quality assurance standards. There already exists a range of

procedures which can be used to monitor the charter in its first year. Further development will be needed to integrate the monitoring of the charter with the rest of the quality assurance system. Since some students were not aware of the implications of the charter for them, a series of practical activities based on the charter have been devised and will be introduced into the tutorial programme.

89 The college produced a self-assessment quality report as required by the FEFC. All faculties and directorates held a review day for all their staff in the summer term 1994. This provided an opportunity for course teams to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their provision against a framework which contributed to the college's report. The report assesses the college using the headings used by the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*, without including the grades. Each faculty and directorate was also required to produce a 'position statement', which described each school or section under the headings: students; staffing; accommodation; equipment; industrial, commercial and community links and an outline of intended developments.

90 The inspectors found these documents useful starting points. The position statements provided succinct factual information in a clear, consistent form. The self-assessment report was clear and concise, but it included too much detail of developments and future plans of the college which could be found in the position statements and other documents. Judgements were supported by evidence from performance indicators and surveys of students' perceptions. The college identified many of the strengths which were identified in the inspection. The weaknesses were generally those where plans to address them were already in hand. The college had failed to identify the weaknesses in middle management described in this report and had not addressed weaknesses in teaching delivery and learning support.

RESOURCES

Staffing

91 The college employs 338 full-time equivalent staff. It is seeking to address a number of imbalances in the staffing profile in respect of gender, ethnicity and disability. Two of the nine senior managers are women. Since 1991 there has been an increase in the number of women appointed to management posts. Almost 30 per cent of heads of schools are women. Of the 133 full-time teaching staff currently in post, 75 per cent are male and 25 per cent are female. Among the 142 full-time support staff, 39 per cent are male and 61 per cent are female. Five per cent of teaching staff and 4 per cent of support staff are recorded as being from minority ethnic backgrounds. This does not reflect the proportion of students in the college from minority ethnic groups, although it is equivalent to the borough statistics. The college has been active in supporting staff with disabilities and there has been an increase in the number of known registered disabled staff from two to five since 1990.

92 Teachers hold appropriate academic and/or professional qualifications, and are deployed effectively. Seventy per cent of full-time teachers have a teaching qualification, 45 per cent have degrees and 54 per cent hold professional and technical qualifications. Most teaching staff have relevant industrial, commercial and vocational experience for their current work, although this is now dated in some areas. There are skill shortages evident in a number of areas where new work is being considered or planned; for example, in catering (GNVQ hospitality and catering), caring (GNVQ health and social care) and motor vehicle work (heavy vehicle work).

93 Learning is supported by appropriately-qualified, technical, administrative and support staff. Support staff are represented on a number of cross-college committees and contribute to the strategic planning process. There is a shortage of technician support in computing and in motor vehicle engineering. In addition, a review of the deployment of technicians is needed in engineering and construction. In construction, workshops are well supported by technicians during the day, but there is inadequate support in the evenings. In engineering, the role of technicians should be reviewed in the light of NVQ developments.

94 One of the college's aims in its development strategy is to achieve greater flexibility in its use of teachers. It has achieved its target to have 30 per cent of the teaching hours delivered by part-time teachers. Part-time teachers provide a wide range of additional expertise and specialist skills and enable the college to deploy staff more efficiently. There is a heavy reliance on part-time teachers in motor vehicle engineering, catering, computing, caring and provision for students with learning difficulties. Many part-time teachers are not teacher-trained and a few are not well qualified. Some have support from the school in which they are based and are working towards teaching qualifications. All part-time staff should receive the same level of induction, training and support. In 1993-94 a high proportion of overtime was being undertaken by some full-time teachers. This is now discouraged and only exists in one or two cases where it has been difficult to recruit suitable teachers. There has been quite a high turnover of staff, especially in administrative services. The college has taken advantage of this to review the distribution of support staff and to increase the number of qualified people to fulfil new functions in, for example, finance and estates management.

95 The personnel section is well staffed. It is developing policies and procedures for personnel and recruitment, including policies on retirement, redundancy, maternity leave and the employment of staff with disabilities. There is a comprehensive personnel policy and development plan which identifies key areas involving human resource planning, pay systems and staff development, and the progress being made on each of these. Generic job descriptions exist for heads of school and senior managers, which will be reviewed and revised during the staff-development, review and appraisal process. Staffing trends are analysed

by age, ethnicity, gender, disability and category of staff and priorities have been established in line with the strategic plan.

Equipment/learning resources

96 Specialist equipment is generally of a high standard, and it is well maintained. Good equipment is available in photography, engineering, music, theatre and media, and construction. The workshops for motor vehicle engineering are well equipped and the quality of vehicles available for students to work on is particularly good. In catering, the kitchens provide an adequate resource, although some of the equipment is ageing and no longer reflects that which is available in a modern commercial kitchen or bakery. One kitchen has been refurbished recently and the new equipment helps to create an effective simulated work environment.

97 Equipment for information technology is good. The college's strategic plan recognises the need to develop facilities for students to work individually with the aid of computers. A task group was set up early in 1994 to implement an information technology policy. As a result, about £150,000 has been spent on hardware and software. This was used to develop specialist facilities which, in business studies, are of a particularly high standard. It also financed the conversion of three rooms into a computer learning centre, equipped with 70 workstations and a good range of up-to-date software. Across the college there are 262 workstations, which provide a ratio of one workstation for approximately 9.5 full-time equivalent students. There is an absence of large screen displays for computing classes.

98 In most teaching areas, the furniture is of an acceptable standard. Most classrooms are equipped with whiteboards. In some cases, visual aids, such as overhead projectors, were either not available or were not used when their use would have been preferable to students taking dictated notes.

99 The decision on whether to provide students with core text books is left to the faculties and, as a result, policy varies. In the English department there are adequate collections of set books. In health and social care, a good range of books on childcare, health and disabilities (both class sets and individual reference books), have recently been obtained. In motor vehicle engineering there are class sets of modern and relevant text books.

100 The two libraries have a stock of 26,000 volumes, numerous newspapers and magazines and a small quantity of videos, tape-slide programmes, slide sets and audiotapes. They also hold a very small quantity of data on a compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database. Students can access careers information on a computer and one library has a careers room, stocked with leaflets about higher education and job opportunities. In addition to items which have been bought, the library has also built up subject files, using cuttings from newspapers and magazines. These and other similar files are regularly updated and form useful learning aids.

101 The libraries' budget for the current year has been increased by 23 per cent to £35,760. Purchases are normally made as a result of requests from staff or after consultation with students. In most areas, heads of school report that the provision of books is suitable for their students' needs, although there is a poor range of books on computing and an inadequate range of books relevant to motor vehicle coursework which students can borrow to pursue their own private study.

Accommodation

102 The accommodation at Barking College comprises 17 buildings, on a single site of 7.3 hectares. The site is attractive, with the prospect of enhancement as the adjacent country park matures.

103 The college corporation owns the freehold of the site and no longer has an interest in any other sites, having vacated three annexes prior to incorporation. There is ample space for car parking and for the construction of new buildings, should they be required. An increasing amount of the college's work is carried out off site on employers' premises. The question of the ownership of an area of adjacent land, previously owned by the local authority and used as playing fields by students, is currently unresolved but appears to be drawing to a satisfactory conclusion.

104 The college has developed a detailed accommodation strategy based on surveys carried out into the condition of the buildings, space utilisation, management of the premises and security. The overall gross floor space of 18,924 square metres is adequate for the number of students, and for planned expansion over the next three years. According to the accommodation strategy, 16,614 square metres are required, and buildings, containing 89 per cent of the useable floor space, are worthy of long-term maintenance. It is planned to replace the timber buildings that provide the remaining 11 per cent of floor space with semi-industrial buildings within five to 10 years. The survey has also formed the basis of a 10-year planned maintenance programme adopted by the college.

105 Many of the specialist teaching areas are of a high quality, including the computer learning centre, the specialist business studies rooms, the accommodation provided for photography and printing, the engineering area, the motor vehicle workshops and the new construction workshops. The music block, the television and drama studios, and two design studios are also very good teaching areas. The utilisation of the graphic design studio; the layout of some electronics workshops; the cramped accommodation for construction; the lack of rehearsal space for drama, and the lack of changing facilities for catering staff and students are all issues the college should address.

106 Most non-specialist teaching areas are bright, spacious and well maintained, although some classrooms are slightly shabby and at times were overcrowded. The accommodation used for the school of supportive

education is central and accessible, but bare of any display. Some theory classes are taught in unsuitable practical areas.

107 The ventilation in the newest block, which was completed just before incorporation, is inadequate. Rectifying the problem will involve the college in considerable expense. Although there are lifts in the newest of the buildings, much of the site is not currently accessible to people using wheelchairs.

108 There are two libraries on the site. The East library contains the bookstock and has 18 quiet study places and 70 spaces for group work. The West library contains journals and periodicals and has 96 places for group work, along with two computer workstations, drawing boards, three typewriter places and one audio-visual place. When the inspection took place there was a number of spare places for study always available, even at peak times. There are detailed proposals in the 1996-97 capital programme to move both libraries into a new learning centre equipped with materials and equipment for independent study on the ground floor of the main building. There are two smaller specialist learning centres which will remain on other parts of the site to enhance the provision for technology and business studies students.

109 The accommodation provided for most of the non-teaching staff is satisfactory. The finance office is a light, airy room. The standard of the workrooms provided for teachers varies. Some rooms are comfortable and spacious, but others are overcrowded. The staff canteen has recently been refurbished and, though small, is a pleasant, comfortable place to eat. The staff also share a bar with the students who are over the age of 18.

110 There are no student common rooms, although the students' union room is of a generous size, is well decorated and has an area for relaxing. Designated classrooms in each block are open during the breaks for the use of students. There are two student canteens adjacent to each other. The newer of these is open from 08.00. Negotiations are in hand with an outside contractor to convert the older one into a food mall. This will have the advantage of providing a range of eating places on site, since local high streets are not within walking distance. The students also have the use of a purpose-built gym, which is marked out for a variety of different sports. There is a bookshop in the business studies area, another shop sells art materials, and stationery is available from the canteen.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

111 Barking College is making good progress towards achieving the aims set out in its mission statement. The particular strengths of the college are:

- a good range of vocational courses with provision in all 10 of the FEFC programme areas

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- strong links with the LEA, the local community, the local TEC and industry
 - the involvement of all staff in the strategic planning process
 - effective links between strategic planning at college and faculty level, quality assurance and financial allocations
 - the extensive range of specialist guidance and careers advice available to potential and existing students
 - generally well-planned and effective teaching, outstanding in the performing arts
 - good achievements in most vocational courses and the significant improvement in GCE A level results for 1994
 - adequate gross floor space on a single site and a high standard of specialist equipment.

112 If the college is to maintain and improve standards it should:

- extend its range of foundation level courses
- address the inconsistent quality of management at school level
- develop effective co-ordination and delivery of learning support across the college
- tackle the weaknesses in teaching identified for 10 per cent of lessons
- speed up progress in implementing schemes for staff development, review and appraisal
- provide opportunities for staff to update their professional experience
- deploy technicians more effectively.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

 - 2 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

 - 3 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

 - 4 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

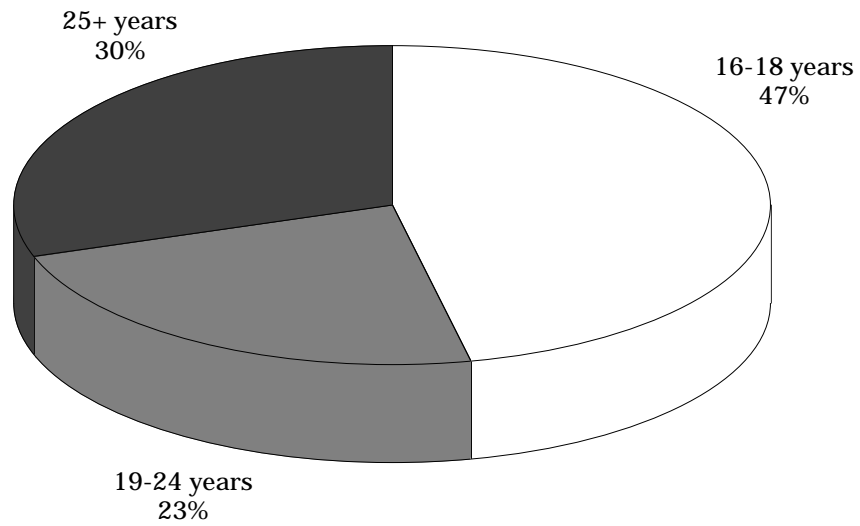
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

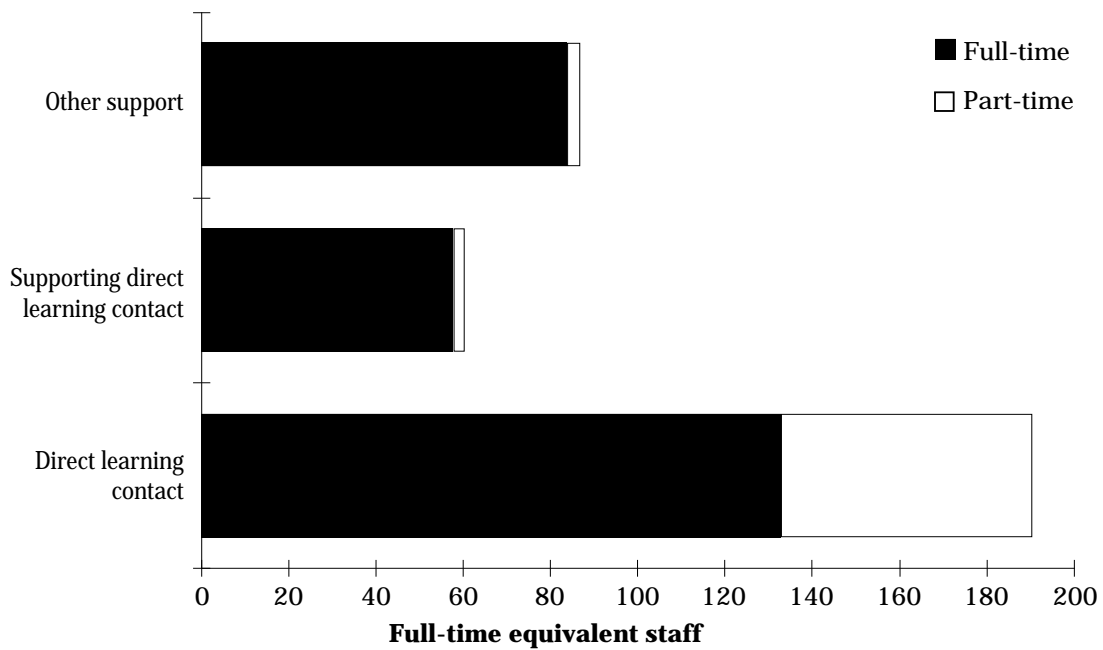
Barking College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)



Enrolments: 5,091

Figure 2

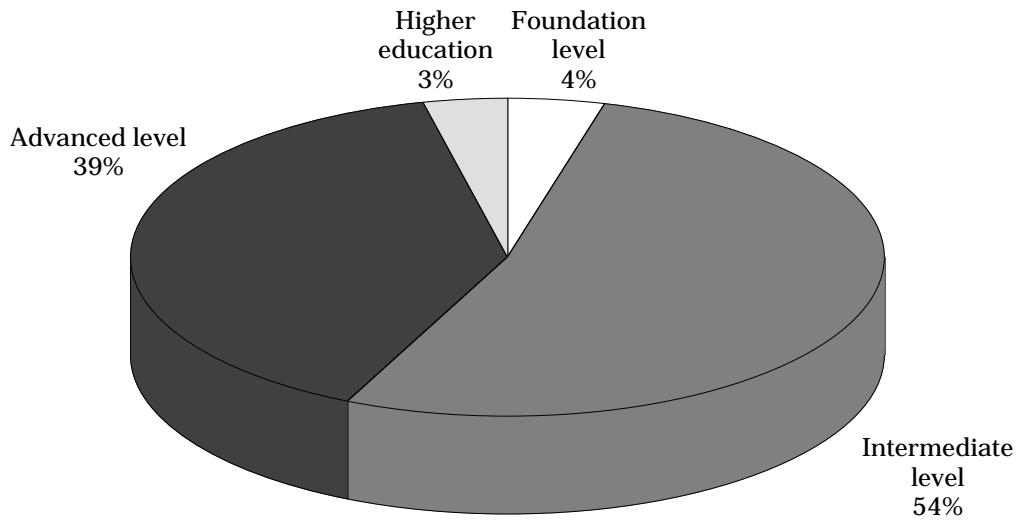
Barking College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 338

Figure 3

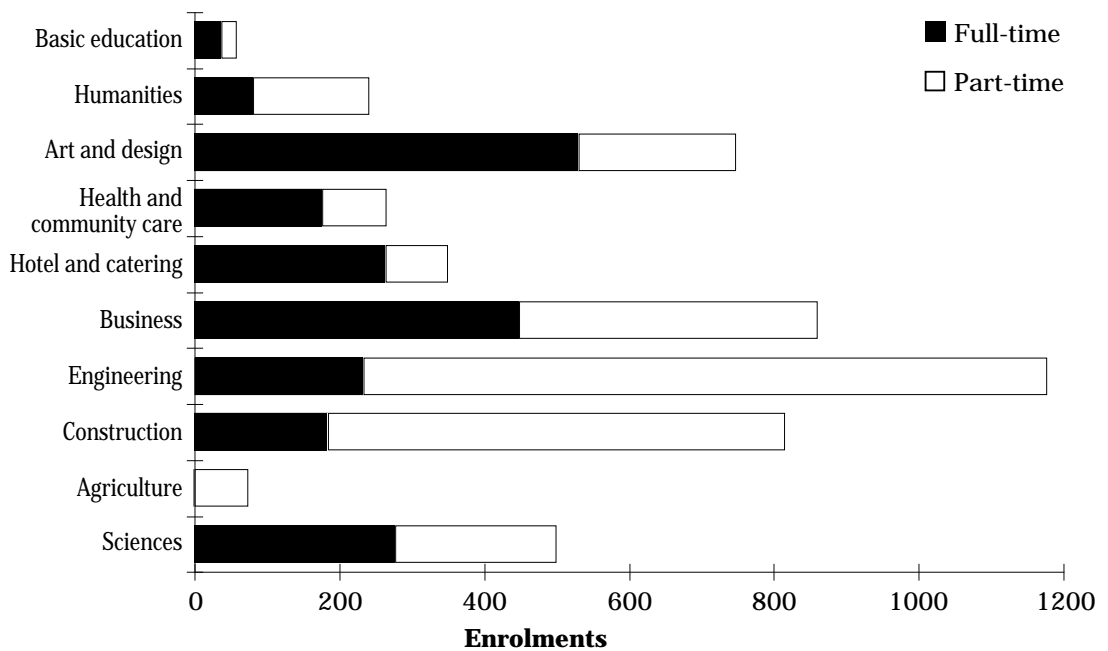
Barking College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 5,091

Figure 4

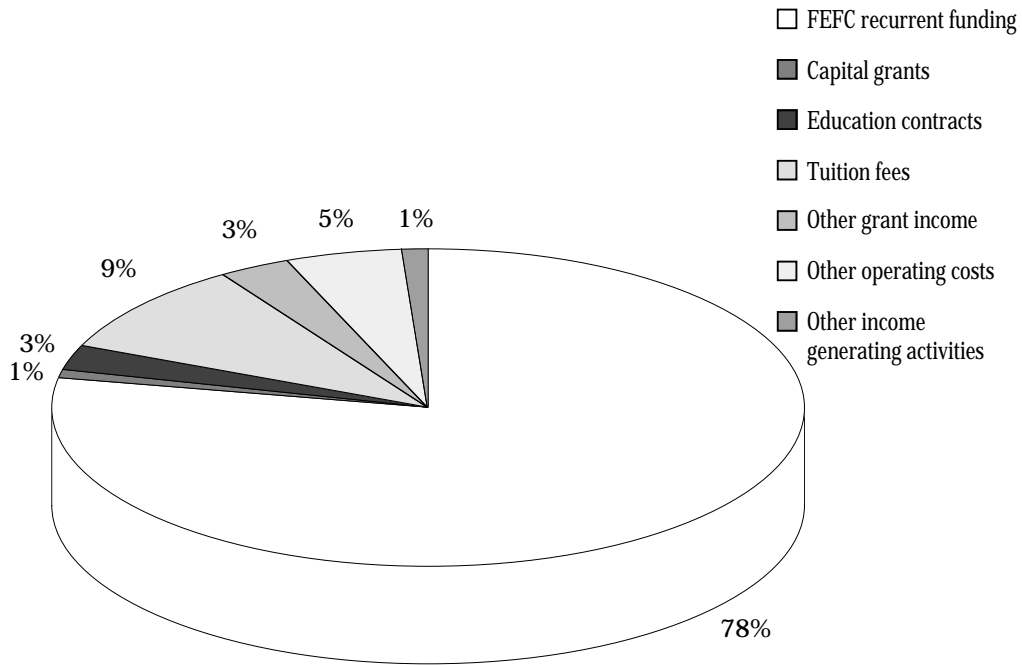
Barking College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 5,091

Figure 5

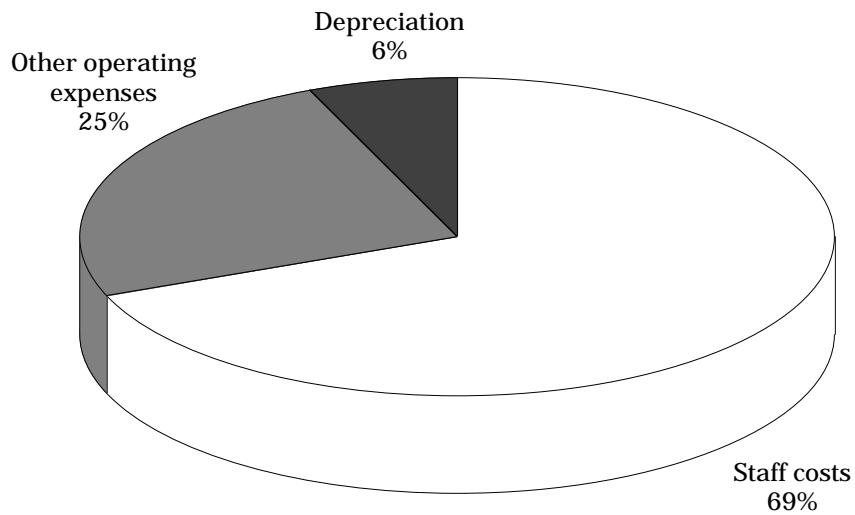
Barking College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)



Income: £13,296,000

Figure 6

Barking College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £12,707,000

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