

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Barnet College

July 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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 the 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.

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

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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.*

By June 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-96

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	59%	29%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	14%	50%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	12%	54%	30%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 79/97

BARNET COLLEGE

GREATER LONDON REGION

Inspected May 1996-March 1997

Summary

Barnet College in North London is a responsive and well-managed college. It offers a wide range of mainly vocational courses, providing clear progression routes from basic to higher education. Students can choose from a variety of modes of study. Many students benefit from the extensive links the college has established with colleges and institutions abroad. The college has productive relationships with other further education colleges in North London and has built effective links with universities, local employers, the North London TEC and community groups. The governors are fully involved with many aspects of the college's work. Communications are good and staff are informed about issues and developments. Management information is extensive and accurate and it is used well. Strategic planning is thorough and involves all college staff. Enrolment and induction procedures are efficient, and there is a comprehensive tutorial support system. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. There is good teaching in all curriculum areas. Retention rates and students' achievements are good across many courses. Quality assurance is thorough, and pervades all aspects of the college's activities. Staff development is an important feature of the college's work. The college has a thorough and effective self-assessment system. The college should: address inconsistencies in tutorial support; improve teaching and learning in some areas; continue to update the industrial experience of some staff; monitor more effectively students' destinations; and improve specialist equipment in some curriculum areas.

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	1
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	1
Quality assurance	1
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	3
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	2	Art and design, performing arts, and media studies	2
Computing	2	English, EFL and modern languages	3
Engineering	2	Other humanities	2
Business	2	Adult basic education, ESOL	2
Leisure, tourism, hotel and catering	2	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Health and social care	1		

INTRODUCTION

1 Barnet College was inspected between May 1996 and March 1997 by 21 inspectors who spent 83 days in the college. Inspectors observed 242 classes and examined students' work and documentation relating to the college and its courses. Meetings were held with students, teachers, support staff, senior managers, governors, employers, and representatives of local community groups, higher education and the local training and enterprise council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Barnet College is the largest general further education college in the North London area, which comprises Barnet, Enfield and Haringey. Since incorporation in 1993, the college has increased substantially the number of its part-time and full-time students. It operates within the area covered by the North London TEC, and occupies three sites in the London Borough of Barnet. The centre at Wood Street, High Barnet, has been used for vocational education for over 100 years. A second centre is at Russell Lane, in Whetstone, and the third, smaller centre is at Stanhope Road, in North Finchley. The college recruits mainly from areas of London north of the Thames and Hertfordshire. Some programmes recruit nationally and the college has recently built an accommodation block for students. The college operates in a competitive environment. Most schools in Barnet have a sixth form and there are another 10 general further education colleges and a sixth form college recruiting in the same area.

3 At the time of the inspection, the college had more than 16,000 enrolments. About 70 per cent of students were over 19 years of age and 57 per cent were female. Sixty-six per cent of the students were from the London borough of Barnet, 13 per cent from Enfield, 9 per cent from Haringey and 5 per cent from Hertfordshire. Approximately 40 per cent of the college's 3,000 full-time students were from minority ethnic backgrounds. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum areas are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

4 The North London TEC area has a total population of over three-quarters of a million people. There are few large employers in the area; over 90 per cent of companies employ fewer than 25 people. The majority of residents are employed outside North London, mainly in Central London. The main employment sectors in the area are in the service industries, which account for half of all employees, the public sector, clothing and textiles, and manufacturing. The number of people employed in finance and business services is expected to continue to increase, as are the number of posts in management, administration and retailing. The level of unemployment in the area is about 16 per cent.

5 The college's courses are organised in seven curriculum areas: art and design; business and management; communications; pre-vocational

education; general certificate of education; social studies; and technology. Courses are offered in nine of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) 10 programme areas. Seventy-eight per cent of the college's income is from the FEFC. The college also has higher education provision funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

6 The college's mission is to 'provide access for all to high-quality education and training that is effective locally, nationally and internationally and to do so in a stimulating and supportive environment'. It aims also to have an accessible and flexible approach to education and training, ensure that resources are efficiently and effectively deployed, and improve the effectiveness of external partnerships. A major development over the next three years is the provision of learning centres at the Wood Street and Russell Lane sites, to increase opportunities for students to study on their own.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 Staff are well informed about national developments in post-16 education. They are briefed through circulars, and in-service education, and training on topics such as FEFC policies, the Dearing report on *Review of Qualifications for 16-19 Year Olds* and national targets for education and training.

8 Over 80 per cent of the college's provision is in vocational programmes, which include engineering, business and management, the built environment, health and social care, sports studies, hotel and catering, leisure and tourism, art and design, media and the performing arts. There are many courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) and national vocational qualifications (NVQs). All curriculum areas offer vocational courses at foundation and intermediate levels. In the majority of curriculum areas, advanced level programmes are offered and clear progression routes exist between all three levels and on to higher education courses. The college ensures that students can develop key skills and have them accredited through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. The college regularly reviews its provision in response to the availability of new courses and changing demand. For example, a semester year structure has been introduced in business studies to enable students to start programmes at two points during the year. The engineering provision now concentrates on electronics to meet demand and complement the courses available in other local colleges. There is a wide range of programmes in English as a foreign language (EFL), which take account of students' individual needs.

9 The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) courses, although only 14 per cent of the college's students are studying subjects at these levels. The range of courses includes some less common subjects, such as science and

technology in society which is offered as a GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subject. The adoption of modular GCE A level syllabuses has led to a steady increase in student numbers, particularly in science where the increase is against the national trend. On many courses, introductory units have been developed to prepare students more effectively for GCE A level study. The college has joined the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network to certificate the acquisition of key skills by students on GCSE and GCE A level courses. The scheme has been particularly successful on GCSE courses. Students on GCE A level programmes are less convinced of its value, although the scheme is recognised in some university application procedures.

10 There is a wide range of options on the modular access to higher education programme. Two hundred students are enrolled across 13 options, 10 of which are available in a form which allows students to study on their own at home if they wish. There is a well-established process which enables students to gain qualifications from a range of part-time, pre-access courses designed to encourage students' progression. Students are carefully screened in order to determine the support they need to develop their study and key skills, and language support is provided for overseas students. The access programme has developed progression routes to an extensive range of courses in a variety of universities.

11 The college has identified a student cohort for whom individual study materials and support are more appropriate than attendance on a college-based course. This includes young mothers, former school refusers, shift workers, those who work away from home for long periods and members of a religious sect who are not allowed to work with computers. Most of the 200 students on this type of programme are studying for GCSE or GCE A level examinations, but some are studying for vocational qualifications. Each applicant is interviewed to ensure that this method of study is appropriate. The college ensures that each student receives regular individual tutorials to support the self-study packs. Students have the opportunity to attend normal lessons, if they wish, in order to consolidate their learning.

12 The college has well-developed relationships with employers who provide a wealth of work experience opportunities for students on vocational courses. The college enjoys a good reputation within the local business community and is regarded as a responsive provider, meeting identified training needs often at short notice. As a major local employer itself, the college has worked closely with the local Chamber of Commerce to provide training to local businesses. The college's policy of working with neighbouring colleges has led to a 'minding your own business' scheme which offers opportunities for local businesses to benefit from a range of learning programmes in seven colleges. The college has also worked with the local borough council on several schemes concerned with the economic development of the area. The college's business unit identifies and meets the training needs of the local business community.

For example, a programme of short courses provided local employers with the opportunity to evaluate the Internet and its potential for use in their businesses.

13 The competitive nature of post-16 education in an area where the staying-on rate is about 90 per cent has resulted in the college having few formal links with local schools. However, the college responds positively to all opportunities for representation at career events in local schools, and has monitored applications from the pupils of each local school in order to assess the demand for particular courses. The college is keenly aware of its role as a local provider and liaison with local careers officers is effective in ensuring that pupils at local schools have access to advice about the college and its courses. Whenever possible, the college works with local schools. For example, it has been involved in exploring ways which would enable schools to benefit from its European links.

14 The main promotional tools of the college are the students' own recommendations and the prospectus. A marketing group, with representatives from each curriculum area, suggests developments in marketing policy and considers the role and content of the prospectuses for full-time and part-time courses. Careful market research has been employed to determine the best format and content. Essential information is provided in eight languages in the prospectus for full-time students, though it fails to make clear that there is also a separate prospectus for part-time courses. An annual open day is supplemented by a series of Saturday information sessions at which the college exploits its high street location to provide local residents with an opportunity to find about the college and its courses.

15 The college has effective links with local universities and has been involved in several co-operative ventures. For example, engineering staff of the college teach the foundation year of an extended degree at Hertfordshire University, which validates the college's higher national diploma course in business. The University of North London validates a college-based counselling diploma. The college has negotiated agreements with Middlesex University and the University of North London, whereby successful students from some programmes are guaranteed an interview for a place on a higher education course. The college has associate college status with Middlesex University, which validates its higher national diploma courses in graphic design and fashion, and has a franchise agreement through which the college provides the university's certificate in education. These links have provided the college with staff-development opportunities for planning and delivering new courses. Provision funded directly by the HEFCE is relatively limited and confined mainly to art and design, business and management, and engineering.

16 Relationships with North London TEC are good. The TEC has signalled its confidence in the college by contracting to it the management of its competitiveness fund and for bidding on behalf of a consortium of seven colleges in the North London area. In 1995, the college managed a

successful bid for funding multimedia and Internet developments within the consortium. Through North London TEC, the college has also funded new initiatives to deliver customer care training and consultancy to local firms. The TEC regards the college as highly responsive because of its involvement in a large number of TEC educational projects. The action taken by the college in developing co-operative working between local colleges is particularly valued by the TEC.

17 International links are a strength of the college and flourish in many curriculum areas. They provide students with opportunities to develop skills and understanding which will assist them in finding employment abroad when they complete their studies. A link developed over several years with a college in Italy has enabled students on a national diploma course in fashion design and promotions to visit Italy and gain experience in silk printing, which is a speciality of the Italian college. The students produce a report of their visit which forms part of their course assessment. The college has now added an Italian language unit. European links, which also include contacts with institutions in Finland and Eastern Europe, are co-ordinated and planned by a consortium of local colleges, called the North London Colleges European Network. The college took the lead in establishing the consortium and is prominent in its management. Beyond Europe, the college has established links which have resulted in exchange visits and the sharing of curriculum materials with colleges in North America, New Zealand and South Africa. As a member of a national consortium of colleges, the college provides training for staff in colleges in Russia to enable them to broaden their range of courses.

18 The college has a thorough equal opportunities policy which reflects its mission statement. The equal opportunities committee has completed a curriculum audit to ensure that the content and teaching of courses conforms to the requirements of the policy. Where necessary, in-service training has been provided, as a matter of priority, to address issues raised by the audit. Another initiative has been to map the college's premises to identify features detrimental to students with physical disabilities or restricted mobility and to recommend priorities for improvement. There is an extensive range of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which includes provision for students who have suffered mental health problems. The college has been careful to locate the separate specialist provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in accommodation which is suited to their needs. There is a well-developed outreach provision of courses located in the local community and good links with community organisations. The college's courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), together with adult basic education courses, are offered at the main centre and at outreach centres where demand exists. The college has received a Beacon Award for its community provision.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19 The college is well governed and well managed. The corporation of 17 comprises nine independent members, a member nominated by the TEC, two co-opted members, two community members, two staff governors and the principal. There is currently a vacancy for a student member. Seven of the members are women and three are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The areas in which members have expertise include the law, finance, personnel, quality assurance, manufacturing, politics and work in the community. Several governors have agreed to continue for a second term of office. The assistant principal responsible for personnel is clerk to the corporation. The search committee maintains a register of suitable candidates to fill corporation vacancies, and has a thorough procedure for their selection.

20 Members of the board are highly committed to the college; attendance at board and subcommittee meetings from January 1996 to January 1997 was over 80 per cent. The board delegates appropriate powers to the principal and the respective roles of managers and governors are clear. Members are active and well informed in their support for the college. They make good use of their experience and expertise in carrying out the business of the corporation. Members have effective links with curriculum areas. They make frequent visits to the college to take part in prize-giving ceremonies, attend college functions, and to update themselves on curriculum developments. The vice-chairman of the corporation has responsibility for monitoring the visits to the college by members of the corporation.

21 The meetings of the corporation board are conducted efficiently. There are five subcommittees which have clear terms of reference: audit; finance; remuneration; personnel; and search. The arrangements made by the clerk to the corporation to support and advise the board and subcommittees are effective. New members receive a comprehensive induction to the college and corporation. Members review their training needs annually; these are addressed by a training programme. Members have a register of interests and have signed a code of conduct. The college holds an annual residential training and development event which is attended by members and senior managers. Other training events have focused on strategic planning, quality assurance and governance. At a recent event, members identified 10 targets against which they will measure their performance in the coming year. Members are well informed through the corporation subcommittees about the extent to which the college meets its targets. There is a productive working relationship between members of the board and the senior management team.

22 The Barnet Educational Trust is a registered charity which was formed primarily to raise funds to assist students facing financial difficulties. Three governors are amongst its trustees. In addition to fund-raising, the trustees invite long-serving staff, governors and others who have given service to the college to become a friend of the college.

The friends of the college receive regular bulletins on developments at the college, and are invited to prize-giving ceremonies and other college functions. Governors hold an annual public meeting to raise the profile of the college locally. The meeting in 1996 attracted only about 50 people; it was addressed by the principal and the chair of the corporation.

23 Management at all levels is effective and co-operative. The senior management team, which meets fortnightly, comprises the principal, the deputy principal, and the assistant principals responsible for curriculum development, programme delivery, personnel, resources and external affairs, respectively. The team has a clear view of the college's aims and an operational plan for achieving them. Teaching staff are managed by seven programme managers who report to the assistant principal, programme delivery. Lines of accountability are generally clear within programme areas. Decisions taken by senior managers are reported to programme managers at a meeting which takes place immediately after the meeting of the senior management team. Course teams meet regularly and report to programme managers. Functional areas, such as student services, finance and marketing are managed by the relevant assistant principal or by the deputy principal. All groups keep clear, concise minutes of their meetings which identify a timescale and responsibility for actions to be taken. Communications between the college sites are good and include electronic mail links to all staff between the two main sites. Minutes of the senior management team's meetings are available to all staff and minutes of governors' meetings are available through the library. Staff receive a monthly newsletter containing useful information about developments at the college and important announcements.

24 The college has a comprehensive strategic planning process which is based on a continuous cycle of review, evaluation and development. The governors, senior managers and middle managers each have an annual strategic planning workshop. A strategic planning group, made up of members of the senior management team, draws together the recommendations of these separate groups, co-ordinates the annual programme and produces the report. Staff are involved in the process through the production of curriculum and functional area operating statements and strategic plans. These statements, together with market research information and the outcomes of strategic planning workshops, combine to determine the curriculum offer. The views of the TEC are sought and the plan adapted accordingly. Governors, teachers, the academic board, the unions and over 300 employers are consulted at various points in the cycle. The governors give final approval to the plan. The published plan is implemented and reviewed at institutional, programme and functional area level prior to the production of the next plan. The strategic plan informs the annual review of staffing and budget allocations, and contributes, with outcomes of the quality assurance systems, to an annual college self-assessment report.

25 The staffing and consumables budgets are delegated to programme areas. These are calculated using a formula based on student numbers for full-time courses and hours taught for part-time courses. The system is sophisticated; it includes incentives for managers who exceed their recruitment and retention targets and penalties for under achievement of targets. The budget monitoring and adjustment process is continuous and takes into account retention rates and recruitment throughout the year. Additional funds can be allocated to curriculum areas that exceed their targets in the form of additional staffing hours or consumables budget. Annual underspending and overspending is carried over at the end of the financial year. The system is well understood by programme managers. They receive comprehensive financial reports each month and have computer access to budgetary information. All managers have received training in financial management and control.

26 At incorporation the college inherited a deficit. The governors and managers have paid appropriate attention to financial management, and the college produced a surplus last year and is forecasting a surplus in the current financial year. The college monitors and analyses performance indicators, such as recruitment, retention rates and pass rates to inform all financial planning. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £17.38 per unit compared with £17.49 per unit in 1995-96. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit. The college has exceeded its targets for enrolment each year since incorporation.

27 The academic board acts as an effective advisory group to the principal and senior managers on matters relating to the curriculum. It meets twice a term. The membership includes the senior management team, one programme manager elected by the programme managers, seven programme area representatives elected by their boards of studies, one representative of the curriculum support services, two student representatives, two other full-time staff representatives, one part-time staff representative and the chairs of the two staff-development committees. The board has four subcommittees: equal opportunities; health and safety; teaching staff development; and support staff development. The academic board reviews the reports of each subcommittee, attends to relevant issues relating to the curriculum and reports to the governors through the senior management team.

28 The college has policies for health and safety, equal opportunities and many other aspects of cross-college and curricular activities. Policies are reviewed every two years. All have implementation plans and identify the manager responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy. For example, health and safety is managed by the assistant principal responsible for personnel, and the principal is directly responsible for equal opportunities. There is a health and safety committee which meets termly which has representatives from across the college. Its work is

supported by a former inspector of health and safety who works in the college one day a week.

29 There is a management information system group, chaired by the deputy principal, which oversees the strategic development of the system. The college has developed its own comprehensive management information system which produces wide-ranging, accurate and timely information on performance indicators, students and their achievements. Clear, regular reports are provided for managers and governors. The college employs three computer programmers who consult the users of the reports and are able to adapt reports according to needs. All managers have direct access to management information through the networked computer system. Enrolment, retention and achievement targets are set and monitored effectively. Details of registers are entered into the system weekly and managers are able to monitor students' attendance directly. Information on students' destinations is collected and stored centrally for use by managers. A training programme to enable managers to make even more effective use of the system is planned.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

30 Prospective students are provided with extensive information and guidance about the college's courses through prospectuses and course information materials which are well designed, informative and readily available. Simple and easily-completed application forms make up part of the prospectus. Students expressed positive views about the college's response to inquiries and the speed with which they were notified of interview arrangements. The college has an entry and information services team providing an efficient admissions process which co-ordinates reception, course information, guidance interview appointments and enrolment. The roles of team members, who work from adjacent rooms at the two main centres, are thoroughly documented and appropriate service standards are in place. The service is enhanced by a strong commitment to customer care, cultivated through a programme of staff development. The introduction of voice mail has enabled the college to operate a 24-hour enquiry service so that people making enquiries can leave messages outside college opening hours.

31 The entry and information services team is responsible for arranging interviews for initial guidance or course entry. There is a cross-curriculum pool of trained interviewers who provide impartial guidance and advice. These 30-minute interviews help prospective students choose and apply for an appropriate course. Students generally hold this service in high regard and in 1995-96, 560 used it. The number of interviews, and their outcomes, are recorded in the management information system. All prospective full-time students are interviewed by a subject specialist prior to enrolment. The college has clear, written guidelines for such interviews and all those interviewed receive a general introduction to the college and have the requirements, content and demands of their course

explained. The interview process is evaluated and modified in the light of students' comments. There is the opportunity for students to have their prior learning and experience recognised and accredited in all curriculum areas. This service is well advertised in the prospectus and at enrolment, but take-up has been confined to a few areas, such as business administration. Part-time students, not enrolling by post during the summer, are able to receive guidance through interviews provided by a rota of curriculum specialists who are available on specific days of the week. For 1996-97, this service operated throughout July and August, before the main enrolment sessions in September.

32 The main enrolment week in September runs smoothly. Staff are made aware of their specific roles and responsibilities through a programme of in-service training. The process is supported by well-prepared admissions procedures. Students are shown around the building by staff and technicians who act as guides. They also provide a service as car park attendants. Impartial advice and guidance is readily available and given in a friendly manner. A free bus service between the two college centres is appreciated by students. Students returning to the college for a second year are identified on entry at the door and taken rapidly through the process. The whole enrolment process is fast and efficient with minimal queuing. Students' details are entered directly on to the management information system, from which accurate registers are produced which give staff a clear, daily picture of class sizes and enrolment patterns.

33 Induction programmes are effective. All full-time students receive an informative introduction to the college from the principal, student services staff and the youth sports and security team. They are all given copies of the students' handbook, the college charter and a course handbook, all of which are referred to several times during the induction process. Each course has its own induction timetable, varying in length between two days and a week. The content is consistent and well documented. Through a central booking system, students from each course are able to visit cross-college services, such as the learning resources centre and student services, where they are briefed about the use of each service. Each student has an interview with his or her tutor during which they develop a personal action plan. Students are encouraged to review their choice of course, and enabled to transfer to another, if it is appropriate for them to do so. Most of the class induction sessions seen were friendly and effective. There were good induction sessions for health and social care students, especially for adults enrolling on short courses.

34 All full-time students receive tutorial support. The majority of tutorial sessions observed were supportive, informative and productive. In a minority of group sessions, the quality of support provided by tutors was poor. A cross-college group has established a well-documented tutorial framework and procedures for tutors, supported by mandatory in-service training. Staff are encouraged to use the framework but they are free to

adapt it to their own particular circumstances. The time allocated to tutorials ranges from one to three hours a week. Students expressed positive views about the level of support they receive from tutors; the emphasis given to goal setting and review was greatly valued by students. Students are encouraged to maintain computerised records of their achievements, using software designed by the college.

35 The college has a clear policy for careers education and guidance. All full-time students are encouraged to arrange an interview with the careers service. However, the extent to which students take up this opportunity varies. Careers advisers from Barnet are based at the college's two main centres for three days each week. In 1995-96, 244 students aged 16 to 18, were advised. Tutors are able to arrange for an adviser to attend a group tutorial session to give careers advice but, in 1995-96, only 11 such sessions were delivered. A wide range of careers material is available in the student services room and in the resources centres, where students can also use careers advice software packages. To supplement the service, an adult guidance adviser, employed as part of a TEC-funded project, is available to advise students seeking employment.

36 Expert counselling is available at both the college's main centres. Appointments can be made through help desks which have recently been installed. The service is well used; in the autumn term, 1996, there were over 1,500 general enquiries and nearly 400 requests for counselling. Students using the service value the professional and confidential manner in which welfare, financial and personal problems are handled by counsellors. In response to students' comments, the college plans to relocate this service at Russell Lane in order to place it closer to other student services.

37 With the exception of GCE A level students, all first-year, full-time students are tested in numeracy and literacy. Those identified as being in need of additional learning support are interviewed and each student develops a personal action plan. Students receive effective additional support in an appropriate form, such as one-to-one or small group sessions in numeracy, literacy workshops, or workshop sessions in ESOL. Students' attendance at these sessions is monitored and recorded. The diagnosis and support systems generally work well, although in 1996-97 there was a delay in the marking of a few assessments. Over 1,200 full-time students were assessed during induction, and 87 and 144 students, respectively, were diagnosed as being in need of numeracy or literacy support. Additional learning support is provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The needs of part-time students for support are not routinely assessed.

38 A student council, consisting of course representatives, meets regularly. This provides a lively forum for students to express their views, although attendance is sometimes low. The youth sports and security staff, who are appropriately qualified and experienced, work closely with

the student body to provide a range of sporting and social activities, such as football competitions, a freshers fair and a charities week. Their combined roles in activity-based work and college security are carried out effectively, and many students appreciate their efforts. At the Russell Lane centre a nursery provides 32 places for children from two to five years of age. The staff are enthusiastic and appropriately qualified, and the value placed on this service by students, staff and the local community is reflected in the high demand for places.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

39 Inspectors observed 242 lessons involving 2,619 students. In 66 per cent of the sessions, strengths outweighed weaknesses. This is better than the average of 63 per cent recorded for all colleges in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. In 5 per cent there were weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. The average level of attendance in the lessons observed was 77 per cent, which is above the average figure of 73 per cent for similar colleges as recorded in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The following table shows the grades awarded for the lessons inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	9	18	18	1	0	46
GCSE	1	9	6	2	0	18
GNVQ	10	33	14	3	0	60
NVQ	2	3	2	0	0	7
Other*	32	42	30	7	0	111
Total	54	105	70	13	0	242

* includes courses in ESOL and the access to higher education programmes.

40 In the majority of programme areas, the planning and preparation of lessons was good. Schemes and records of work were generally detailed and some lesson plans included the time to be spent on each activity. The use of shared schemes of work by computing staff, and the team planning in engineering to integrate the development of key skills, were strengths. In business, science, and mathematics, the evaluation of lessons was used to inform the planning of successive lessons. A subject review system in humanities led to students receiving clear guidance on the development of action plans. In engineering, course handbooks were comprehensive and informative. Assignment briefs on art and design courses provided detailed assessment criteria, and deadlines for completing assignments. They covered an extensive range of topics and were produced to a common format. The quality of assignment guidance

in performing arts and media, and planning for some lessons in EFL, did not reach the same high standard.

41 Relationships between teachers and students are good. Staff have a clear commitment to the well-being and progress of students. Some outstanding lessons were observed, in which the teaching challenged and stimulated students. The aims and objectives of most lessons were made clear to students, and assistance was readily and effectively given when required. In the best sessions, teachers maintained the work at a good pace and encouraged students to think and develop their own ideas. For example, in one GCE A level class in theatre studies, the teacher skilfully drew insights from students about the characters they were portraying. In computing, science and mathematics, key concepts were explored through careful questioning. Some of the numeracy support sessions were effective, but the co-ordination of mathematics teaching across the college requires further development to ensure that it takes account of the needs of all students.

42 In all the sessions observed in health and social care the teaching was varied and effective. In engineering lessons, the teaching was often lively and stimulating, and in most art and design lessons the work set challenged the students and sustained their interest. Teachers in most business classes delivered well-structured lessons, and achieved their objectives. In most English lessons, students were given the opportunity to talk about the subject. For example, students discussing Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* developed a lively and informed debate, in which the teacher highlighted key issues and referred them to relevant parts of the text. The best lessons in EFL were characterised by a variety of teaching methods, a suitable pace to the work and humour. Teachers of ESOL made effective use of the students' own experiences to produce reading text. In the best modern language classes students were encouraged to contribute in the language being learned. In one German lesson on the topic of cars, the teacher read out a paragraph she had written in German about Rudolph Diesel. Students were encouraged to answer questions about the extract in German. The teacher used the students' replies to emphasise grammar. In most access to higher education sessions the teaching was authoritative and purposeful.

43 In the weaker sessions the work lacked pace and direction. In some science and mathematics classes long periods of copying from the board led to the students losing interest. Teachers used an inappropriate approach to the subject in some English classes. For example, in one lesson, the teacher proceeded to work on the text of a play without the students having access to the text. Modern language teaching was sometimes ineffective and marked by low expectations on the part of the teacher. Although teachers themselves often used the language being taught in lessons they did not encourage students to respond in that language. In one Spanish lesson, Spanish was rarely spoken by the teacher and students' responses were limited. Often, students studying EFL were unaware of the intended aims of the lesson or the content to be covered.

44 Teaching in vocational subjects achieved a good balance between theoretical and practical work. The practical sessions were generally well organised, and carried out with due regard to safe practice. Teachers in health and social care, and in business, successfully drew on their students' own experiences of work to enhance learning, not only in those sessions involving students in full-time employment, but also in those where there were students with part-time work and those returning from work placements. For example, students in one advanced level GNVQ business class were engaged in a lively discussion about employee motivation. Practical sessions for performing arts students were carefully planned and, in one three-hour session, the students were as energetic and eager to participate at the end as they were at the beginning.

45 Some teachers made good use of visual teaching aids, such as overhead transparencies, videotape players and, in a few lessons, compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases. High-quality, detailed handouts were used in computing sessions. A video recording was skilfully used in an engineering session to stimulate discussion about communications within companies. Students' presentations were used to good effect in humanities sessions. In art and design, teachers made good use of visits to exhibitions. For example, students of three-dimensional design drew upon the experience of a trip to Barcelona to enhance a project on household design.

46 Lessons in ESOL were well planned, and integrated the development of language skills with topics of more general interest. Although students would have benefited from more pronunciation practice, teaching was of a consistently high standard, the work was well paced and teachers made regular checks on students' learning. The teachers generally knew their students well and were sensitive to their cultural backgrounds and family circumstances. Adult basic education lessons were often lively and stimulating, and the teachers were supportive and encouraged their students. Language support in other subjects was generally effective, although students of EFL did not make use of the college's language laboratories. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were well integrated with the basic education groups. On separate specialist programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teachers provided opportunities in their lessons for students to become familiar with and use all the facilities the college offers, such as the resources centres and sports halls. However, in many of the sessions seen, teachers did not organise tasks sufficiently to meet the individual learning needs of the students. Some of the projects set were unimaginative and failed to maintain students' interest. The work in basic skills sessions for the least able students often lacked pace and variety. Only a few students were clear about their progression towards accreditation.

47 In most subjects homework was regularly set. Marking and written feedback was generally good, and particularly helpful and constructive on the advanced level GNVQ business programme. Good record keeping by

teachers and well-developed assessment procedures were a feature of programmes in science, computing, and mathematics. Students' written work in English, modern languages and humanities was carefully marked and corrected, although there was some variation in the extent of correction to spelling and grammatical errors.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

48 In most sessions, students were well motivated and enthusiastic. In art and design, and performing arts, for example, in addition to their timetabled hours students spent much of their own time working in the college. Many mathematics students attended additional workshops on a voluntary basis. Most students worked well in small groups, and demonstrated skills of critical analysis. In class discussions, the majority of students were articulate participants. Students of EFL enjoyed talking in English about their own cultures and backgrounds and were generally conscientious learners.

49 The quality of coursework was generally good. In many subjects, students demonstrated a range of knowledge and skills through well-presented assignments. For example, first-year advanced level GNVQ media students produced a broadsheet newspaper to a professional standard. The written work produced by students of English and modern languages was good, although some students had difficulty in organising their ideas. Much of the practical work produced by students was of a good standard, particularly in engineering. Art and design students showed confidence in exploring the creative potential of a variety of materials. Dance students demonstrated excellent ensemble skills, with fine synchronisation and a sensitive response to music.

50 Students on GNVQ media programmes make good, confident use of complex desktop publishing and multimedia software packages. The use of information technology in the lessons seen was limited in science, mathematics, and art and design. Students on some programmes make use of information technology to wordprocess their course assignment work, but not all make use of the opportunities offered by the college's open access computer facilities.

51 In 1995-96, about 86 per cent of the college's students were on vocational courses. Students were entered for a wide range of externally-assessed qualifications validated by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G), the RSA Examinations Board (RSA) and other professional examining bodies. All the students aged 16 to 18, in their final year of study on intermediate and advanced vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE's) 1996 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

52 A high proportion of students who completed advanced level courses in 1996, obtained the full award. The percentage of advanced level GNVQ information technology students achieving the full award was twice the national figure, and the pass rate was above the national figure in business. All the students who completed the course achieved the full award in the C&G cooks professional certificate, the advanced level GNVQ in health and social care and all three BTEC national diplomas in design. The pass rate was above 90 per cent on the BTEC national diplomas in art and design, and performing arts, and on the foundation studies programme in art and design. Students have a record of high achievement in engineering at advanced level over the last few years. In 1996, however, after a difficult transition from national diploma to GNVQ programmes, results were poor and only 39 per cent of those completing the advanced level GNVQ achieved the full award. This still compared favourably with the national figure of 27 per cent.

53 With few exceptions, pass rates at intermediate and foundation levels are at, or above, national averages. All students completing one-year, intermediate courses in childcare passed in 1995-96, and pass rates were above 90 per cent in science, secretarial and administrative procedures, food hygiene, leisure and tourism and pre-school playgroup leadership. At GNVQ foundation level in engineering and the intermediate level in business, pass rates were low. Ninety-eight students enrolled on courses leading to NVQ awards in business administration, and catering in 1995. One hundred per cent pass rates were achieved by students completing the business administration level 3 course, and the levels 1 and 2 food preparation and cooking programmes.

54 Pass rates for students taking GCE AS/A level subjects have varied over the last three years. In 1996, GCE A level pass rates in science were at or above national figures, with particularly good results in biology. Students taking mathematics have achieved pass rates, at grades A to E, of around 90 per cent over the last three years. All students taking the GCE A level examination in English literature, in four of the last five years, have achieved grades A to E. In 1996, pass rates were below national figures in English language, computing, and on two-year courses in sociology, geography, law and economics, and were well below national figures in business studies. Students aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1996 scored, on average, 3.4 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2), according to the performance tables published by the DfEE. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

55 In 1996, 40 per cent of the 844 GCSE entries were awarded passes at grade C or above. This was below the further education sector average of 49.9 per cent. The largest single group of entries was in mathematics. Twenty-seven per cent of students aged 16 to 18, and 36 per cent of those aged 19 or over, obtained passes at grade C or above in

mathematics. This is below the national figures of 30 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively, for further education colleges. Fewer than half the 153 students entered for GCSE English obtained a pass at grade C or above. Pass rates for the GCSE in media studies were also below national figures. Pass rates at grade C or above, for students aged 16 to 18, were above the national figures in Italian, German and French, and part-time students did particularly well.

56 Students of ESOL develop sound oral and written skills. They are generally active and confident learners who manage their own learning systematically. Only 22 per cent of the cohort sought external accreditation in 1996, and 76 per cent of those entered gained a Pitmans qualification. Pass rates for students on EFL courses have usually been good in the past, but in the 1996 examinations there was a fall in the pass rate. The number of adult basic education students obtaining formal literacy qualifications increased significantly in 1996. However, the number obtaining formal numeracy qualifications decreased.

57 Most students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities use the college's facilities with confidence and are making progress in terms of their self-confidence. Arrangements for accreditation are complex, sometimes making it difficult for students to progress through nationally-recognised qualifications and gain recognition for all their achievements. Progress in key skills for the least able is unsatisfactory. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on mainstream programmes are achieving well through national accreditation.

58 Student completion rates are good on most one-year programmes. The completion rate in 1995-96 was good on the majority of business programmes, some at 100 per cent, and in health and social care all the students enrolled on year one of the BTEC national diploma in nursery nursing completed the course. When taken across both years of two-year programmes, the student completion rate is far more variable and is poor on a number of programmes. Thirty per cent of the students taking GCE A level English in 1994-96 left before the end of their course, and only half the students enrolled for advanced level GNVQ courses in engineering, and the BTEC national diploma in graphic design, completed the two years.

59 Access to higher education courses had good pass rates in 1996 and the progression rate to university was 100 per cent for students completing the access to teaching, information technology, and business and law courses. The college monitors students' destinations by course and by programme area. However, in some areas there are large numbers of students whose destinations were recorded as unknown, particularly on part-time programmes. In 1996, of the students from full-time, further education courses, 19 per cent, 17 per cent and 10 per cent went to further education, higher education and employment, respectively. Fifty-four per cent of the destinations were unknown.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

60 The college has a comprehensive quality assurance system that has developed over several years. The system covers both the curriculum and cross-college services. The quality assurance policy, procedures and relevant strategic objectives are documented in a quality assurance handbook. This provides essential information on the implementation of the system, describes the cycle of activities and defines performance indicators and service standards. It also identifies lines of responsibility and accountability. The performance indicators described in the 1996-97 quality assurance handbook include targets for enrolments, completions, achievements and destinations of students. Quality assurance has a high profile in the college with overall responsibility resting with the deputy principal who is supported by a quality assurance co-ordinator. Reports on quality assurance are considered by the curriculum strategy group and the senior management team. Progress reports relating to the college's charter, quality cycle, performance indicators and self-assessment are presented to the academic board and governing body by the deputy principal. The quality assurance system is subject to thorough monitoring and review.

61 A quality assurance group chaired by the quality assurance co-ordinator is effective in managing the quality assurance system. The group includes curriculum and support service managers. It makes recommendations to the curriculum strategy group and senior management team. In 1993, the college set up a quality forum for all relevant staff from across the college. The forum has been instrumental in encouraging a self-critical culture and in helping staff to understand and set service standards and targets. Staff speak positively about the opportunity the forum provides for the sharing of good practice. For example, in one curriculum area, there is a large proportion of part-time teachers whose involvement in target setting has been small. Through the work of the forum, the college is now addressing this with a programme of training in quality assurance and target setting for part-time teachers.

62 The college has an established quality assurance cycle that is linked to strategic planning. There is a calendar of activities carried out by curriculum areas and support services. The calendar identifies staff responsibilities, and deadlines for action. It is designed to ensure regular review and development of service standards. Targets are set for each of the key performance indicators and achievement is evaluated against these.

63 Within each programme area, course teams, together with the programme manager, have responsibility for the review and evaluation of their courses. Throughout the year, a programme management handbook is maintained. This includes minutes of meetings, schemes of work, information on students, teaching and learning methods, assessment strategies, feedback from students' surveys, and external moderators'

reports. Teams also document the outcomes of termly programme reviews, including performance against agreed targets, and prepare an end of year action plan. The reviews have addressed a variety of issues, such as the timing of students' assignments to prevent bunching, the identification and dissemination of good practice in integrating key skills with course content, and alternative teaching methods. An assistant principal carries out random checks on handbooks and follows up on issues with programme managers. Strengths and weaknesses identified by the reviews are fed into the programme areas' self-assessment reports, annual operating statements and the strategic plan. Overall, the reviews are well managed and there are measurable improvements resulting from the process.

64 The college feels that evaluative comments by students on all aspects of provision are an important measure of quality. Surveys of students' opinions are carried out three times a year. An initial questionnaire is sent out in October to all first-year, full-time students and a sample of part-time students. Their views on aspects of recruitment and induction are collected. A second survey, sent out in February, to full-time, second-year students focuses on teaching and learning, assignments and coursework, progression and careers advice. A similar, end of year survey is sent out to all full-time and a sample of part-time students. Surveys of students' views are also conducted in subject areas. The information is analysed by the quality assurance co-ordinator who produces a report for each programme area. Summaries from questionnaires, including areas for action, are considered by the academic board and the senior management team, and displayed on noticeboards and published in the college newsletter.

65 A college charter is issued to all students during induction. It defines the college's aims in improving its services to students, and includes a commitment to high-quality teaching and learning. The college has a highly effective complaints procedure. All complaints are logged and acknowledged by letter within three working days. The letter states who is dealing with the complaint and the college goes to great lengths to ensure all complaints are dealt with fully. All complaints are monitored by the academic services manager. There is a clear commitment to customer care, and the quality assurance co-ordinator carries out spot checks of customer satisfaction through questionnaires. The quality assurance group regularly revises and, when necessary, amends the charter after discussion at academic board and by the governing body.

66 The college has significant experience in appraising staff. It has a sound and tested system of appraisal for teachers which includes observing them teaching. The procedure for teacher observation is documented and all observations are recorded within an agreed format. Observations are carried out prior to an appraisal meeting. An essential part of the subsequent feedback is discussion and resultant action planning. A similar

scheme for support staff is also well established and the consistent approach to teaching and support staff is a notable strength. Appraisal is understood by all staff who regard it as a supportive process. Staff believe it provides them with an opportunity to identify individual training and development needs, and agree ways in which they can be met. As part of the quality assurance process, senior managers have introduced an internal inspection process which involves them in observing teachers and identifying training and development needs. This process is separate from appraisal, and feeds into the self-assessment report.

67 The commitment to quality assurance and staff development has been recognised by the attainment of the Investor in People award. The budget allocated for staff development in 1996-97 is £105,000. This figure, which is 1.2 per cent of the college's staffing budget, does not include staff costs nor the substantial amount of staff training carried out in the college. Staff development is available for all staff across the college. There is a well-developed system for assessing the staff-development requirements in all areas of the college's work. The in-service training management team has clear procedures for identifying training priorities through appraisal and reviews. Strategic priorities for staff development are listed in the college's strategic plan and include training in the use of the management information system, preparing staff for changes in curriculum, assessor and verifier training, and raising awareness of major developments, such as the implications of the Dearing *Review of Qualifications for 16-19 Year Olds*. One strand of staff development has been to train support staff for teaching posts. Several technicians have taken up this opportunity. All new staff are subject to a thorough induction programme during their first term and are allocated a trained mentor to support them during their first months in college. A professional tutor has responsibility for the induction of new staff.

68 The college has produced self-assessment reports for many years and they have been continuously reviewed and refined. The self-assessment report for 1996-97 is based on information gained from a range of quality assurance activities. The report assesses all aspects of the college's work against the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It describes strengths and identifies priorities for action, and provides evidence to support its findings. It contains action plans which allocate responsibilities and deadlines for achievement. The report provides a comprehensive overview, and the grading of cross-college and curriculum areas, in general, accords with the grades given by inspectors.

RESOURCES

Staffing

69 The college employs 255 full-time equivalent permanent staff and 89 full-time equivalent part-time staff. Of these, 164 are full-time teachers and 45 are part-time teachers. Approximately 65 per cent of the teachers

are women and, of the seven members of the senior management team, five are women. Twenty-one per cent of the staff identify themselves as being from minority ethnic backgrounds which is representative of the student population profile. The college rigorously operates its recruitment code of practice and monitors all appointments to ensure equality of opportunity.

70 Teachers are generally well qualified and effectively deployed. Seventy-five per cent have first or higher degrees or an equivalent professional qualification, and 70 per cent have teaching qualifications. Seventy-four teachers have gained assessor or verifier awards and a further 76 are working towards the accreditation of prior learning award. Many of the staff have relevant, up-to-date experience of industry or commerce, although a minority of engineering teachers would benefit from some updating of their industrial experience. A few teachers in art and design lack appropriate experience of new technology. Some numeracy teachers do not have specialist qualifications. Part-time teachers have enabled the college to broaden its curriculum offer, and many enhance students' learning by bringing current industrial and commercial practice to their lessons. The college recognises the importance of integrating part-time teachers with course teams and, in most cases, has done this successfully, particularly in engineering, and art and design courses. In one area, where this has been less successful, the college has put a programme of staff development in place to address the issue.

71 Learning is aided by competent and well-qualified support staff. The commitment of teachers and support staff is evident in the good relationships between them and their students. Students expressed positive views about the support given to their learning, and the general availability of teachers and support staff outside timetabled classes. Corporate services are managed by a strong team of staff qualified in accounting, finance, personnel, property services and management information.

Equipment/learning resources

72 The standard of equipment and furniture in classrooms is generally satisfactory. Most rooms are equipped with whiteboards and overhead projectors. Trolleys containing video players are located in each teaching area. The provision of specialist equipment is satisfactory in most curriculum areas. There has been significant investment in equipment for art and design programmes and a suite of computers is dedicated to their use. The media production unit includes a television studio, radio/audio control room and specialist editing equipment which is of a professional standard, although it is now showing signs of its age. In some areas, such as dance, basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there is a lack of modern specialist equipment. The college has recognised the need to replace dated equipment, and has developed an equipment replacement strategy.

Excluding information technology equipment, the college spent only £20,000 on equipment replacement in 1995-96.

73 The college has 329 computers to support 4,474 full-time equivalent students, giving a ratio of students to computers of 14:1. Access to computers at peak times is difficult for some students, but the college has a policy of allowing students to use any spare computer, even in a room where a class is in progress. At the two main college centres, computer facilities are available on an open-access basis and a learning centre where students can study on their own is being commissioned with an additional 80 workstations at the Wood Street centre. The provision of information technology at the Stanhope Road centre is unsatisfactory for students who use the centre, but a link to the main centre provides staff with access to the management information system. There is a network linking the Wood Street and Russell Lane centres. A link to Middlesex University gives access to their specialist careers software. With the exception of a computer facility in Graseby House, all academic and administrative computers are linked by a wide area network. Subject to security controls, the system provides universal access to all facilities on the network. All students have access to the Internet on this network.

74 There are resource centres at Russell Lane and Wood Street. The centres are open five days a week, providing wide access to students, including part-time and evening students. They are heavily used. Resources staff work closely with teaching staff to support learning and ensure regular updating of appropriate bookstock, periodicals, audio-visual, and CD-ROM materials. The library stock of 35,874 books is adequate to support learning in most subject areas, but insufficient to meet the demand in science. There is good management of resources across the three centres and a well-chosen range of 177 newspapers and periodicals, together with 3,265 audio-visual items, help enhance students' learning.

Accommodation

75 The college has three centres within a four-mile radius. The main centre at Wood Street comprises a number of buildings of differing ages and construction. The oldest is an Elizabethan Tudor Hall, built in 1573 as a school. The centre is adjacent to the main thoroughfare in High Barnet, and has a public right of way through the middle of the site. The two adjacent buildings, the Hyde Institute and Graseby House, which was completed in 1995, provide teaching space and residential students' accommodation. The Russell Lane centre was built as a secondary school and comprises a main building and a number of satellite buildings, sited in a residential area close to Whetstone. The college extended the capacity of this centre in 1993, building a teaching block providing 14 classrooms and a students' common room. The Stanhope Road centre is a converted Victorian primary school built on one level and located off the main road in North Finchley.

76 At incorporation, the college inherited 20,259 square metres of property across the three sites. The building stock had numerous problems. Some of the buildings were old, in a poor state of repair and ill-suited to present-day needs. The college commissioned a full, professional survey and obtained further advice to inform its estates strategy. This indicated that substantial expenditure was required to bring the accommodation to a suitable standard and cited leaking flat roofs, asbestos which needs replacement and defective mechanical building services as priority areas for remedy. A subsequent, more limited survey commissioned by the FEFC indicated that works totalling £2.1 million would be required, of which £255,000 was identified for essential work. Since 1993, the college has spent over £950,000 on condition survey work and long-term maintenance of its buildings.

77 A recent premises benchmarking exercise, commissioned by the college, showed that accommodation is efficiently-used. The allocation of accommodation is controlled centrally by the estates manager. A process by which curriculum and support services managers are allocated space, introduced in March 1996, follows procedures agreed by the senior management team and seeks to ensure equitable and efficient use of accommodation. An accommodation review group is responsible for ensuring efficient timetabling and room use. Programme areas have control of teaching spaces and vacant accommodation is made available for reallocation on a daily basis.

78 The teaching and specialist accommodation at Graseby House is good and at the Wood Street, Russell Lane and Stanhope Road centres is generally adequate. Planned refurbishment, and some limited development, is in process. Both the Wood Street and Russell Lane centres have a gymnasium and, at Russell Lane, there is a large sports hall capable of accommodating indoor cricket. Classrooms are generally clean and light but vary in the quality of decor and ambience. Access to accommodation for students using wheelchairs is adequate in most parts of the college. There are ramps at the Wood Street centre and a lift in the main block at Russell Lane. Student common room facilities are adequate at the three main centres.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

79 Barnet College is making good progress towards the achievement of its mission. The strengths of the college are:

- an extensive and productive range of international links
- successful co-operation with other further education colleges, higher education institutions, the TEC, local employers and community groups
- effective management
- governors who bring a wide range of professional expertise to the board, and have a high degree of involvement in the college

-
- good communications
 - an effective management information system which is well used
 - a continuous and comprehensively-documented process of strategic planning and review
 - effectively-planned, efficient enrolment and induction processes
 - high-quality guidance and support services
 - good teaching in many curriculum areas
 - good retention rates, particularly on one-year courses
 - high pass rates on several vocational programmes
 - an established and comprehensive quality assurance system
 - a comprehensive process of staff development available to all staff
 - a high level of commitment to customer care across the college
 - good sports facilities at the two largest centres
 - effective quality assurance, including self-assessment.

80 If it is to build on these strengths, the college should:

- continue to build links with local schools
- improve the consistency of tutorial support
- improve teaching and learning in some areas
- continue to update the industrial experience of some staff
- raise retention rates on some two-year courses
- improve students' achievements on some courses
- improve the monitoring of students' destinations
- improve specialist equipment in some curriculum areas.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1996)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1996)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at March 1997)

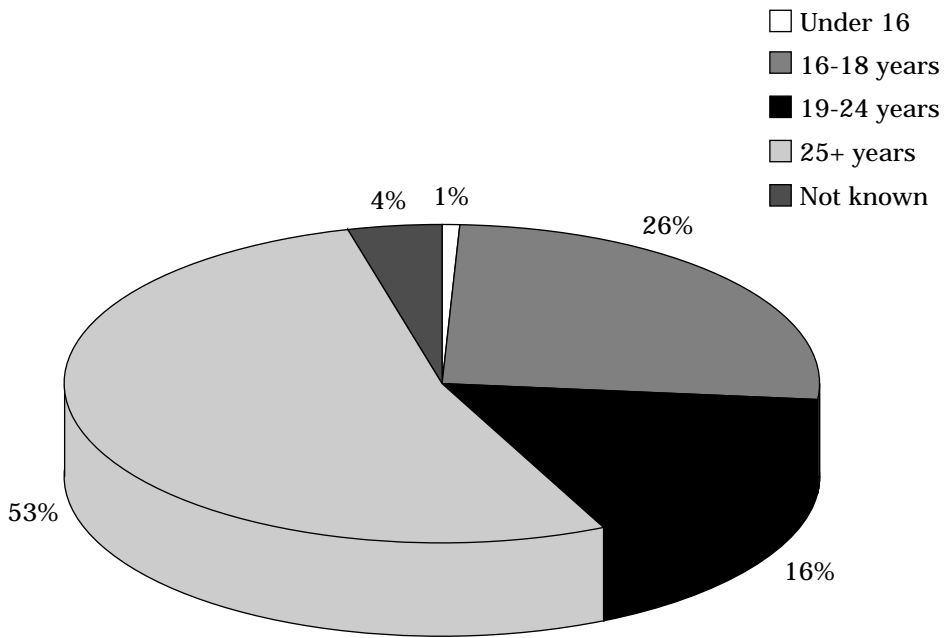
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

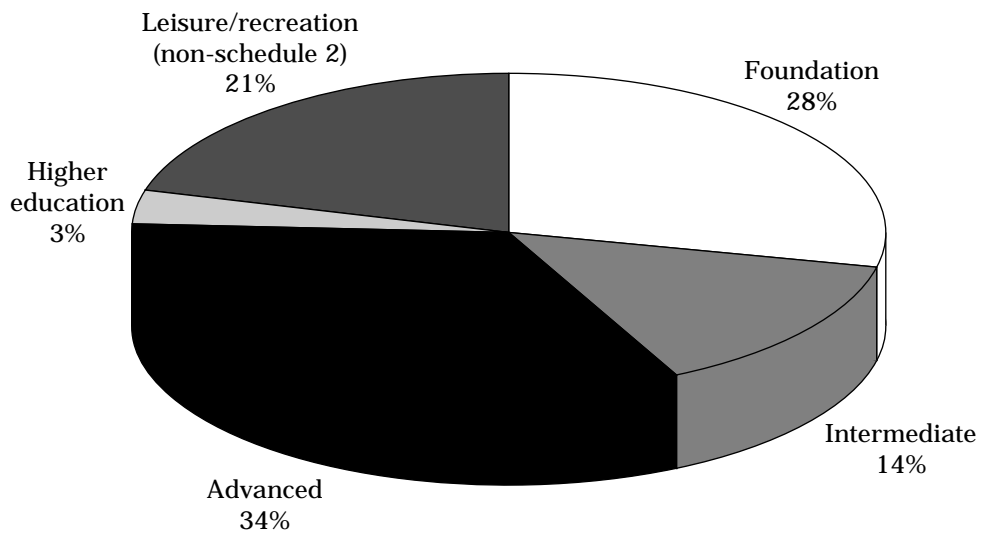
Barnet College: percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 16,239

Figure 2

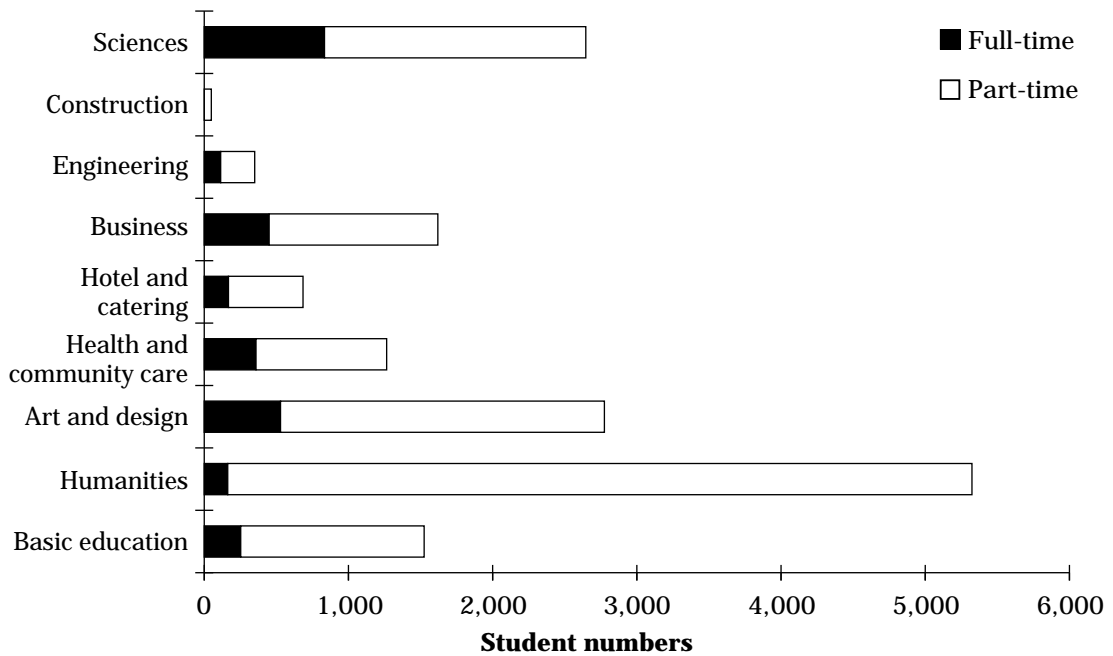
Barnet College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 16,239

Figure 3

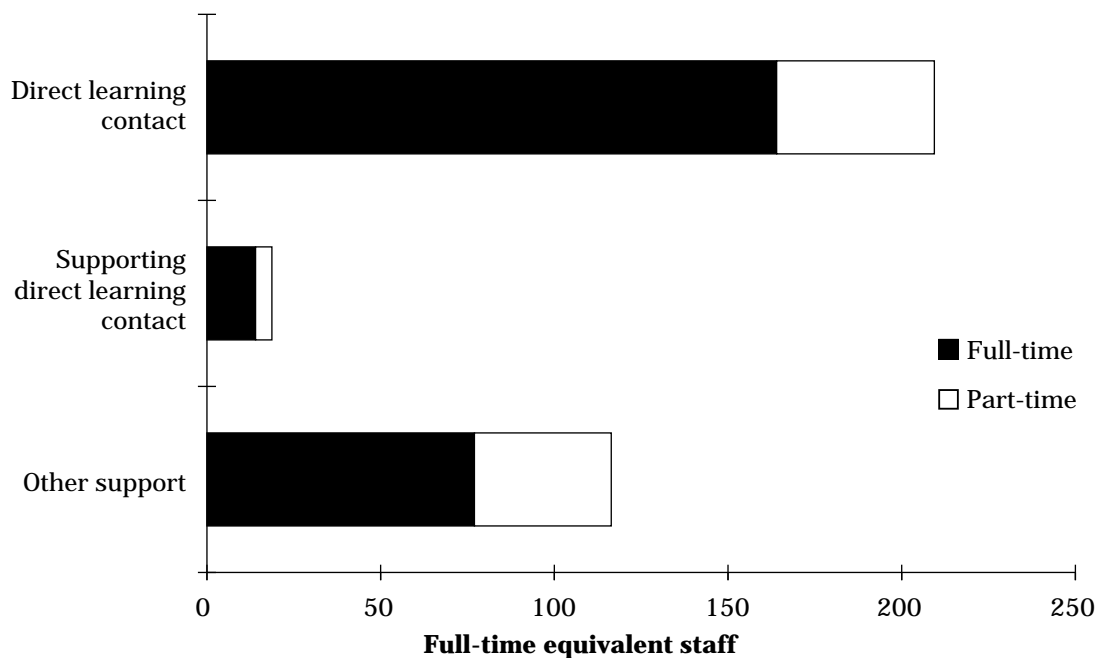
Barnet College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 16,239

Figure 4

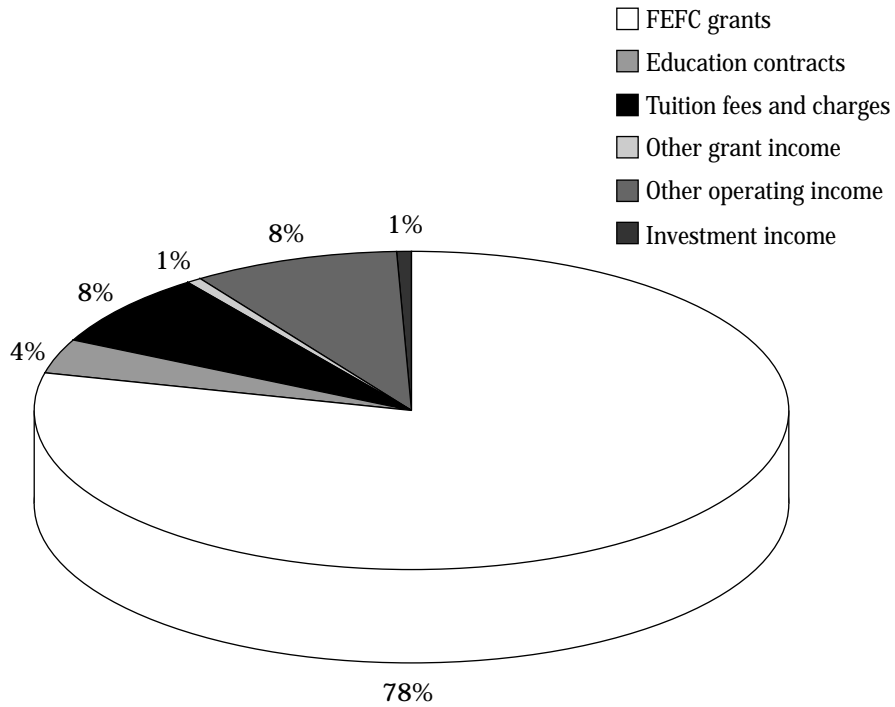
Barnet College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at March 1997)



Full-time equivalent staff: 345

Figure 5

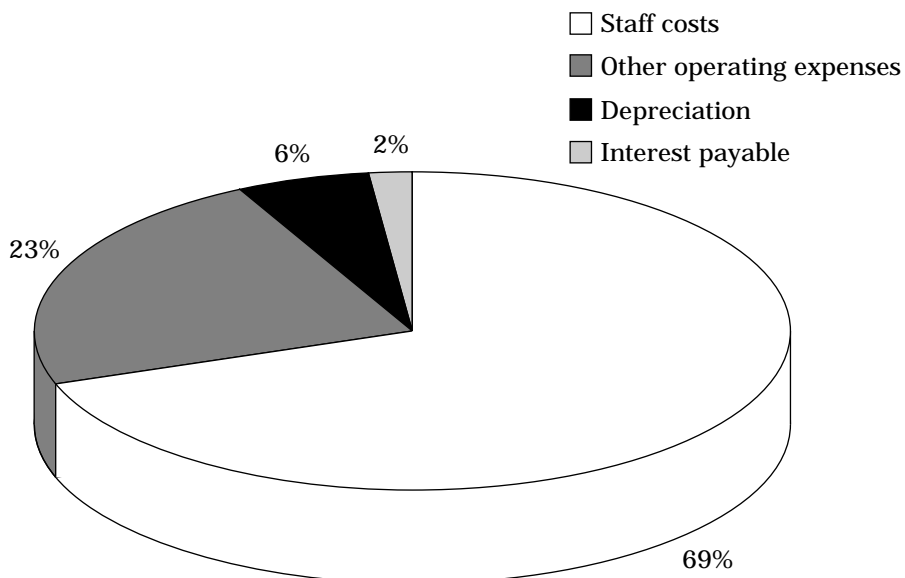
Barnet College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £12,685,000

Figure 6

Barnet College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £12,418,000

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