

Broxtowe College, Nottingham

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1998-99**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL**

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also inspects other further education provision funded by the FEFC. In fulfilling its work programme, the inspectorate assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Inspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. A member of the Council's audit service works with inspectors in assessing aspects of governance and management. All colleges are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100
Website <http://www.fefc.ac.uk>*

© FEFC 1999 You may photocopy this report and use extracts in promotional or other material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings are not misrepresented.

Contents

Paragraph

Summary

Context

The college and its mission	1
The inspection	6

Curriculum areas

Science	9
Agriculture (outward collaborative provision)	14
Business administration and office skills	20
Health and social care	27
Humanities	32

Cross-college provision

Support for students	38
General resources	46
Quality assurance	53
Governance	61
Management	70
Conclusions	77

College statistics

Grade Descriptors

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses
- grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses
- grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses
- grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths
- grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1997-98, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	60	29	2	-
Cross-college provision	18	54	24	4	-

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*
Sample size: 108 college inspections

Student Achievements

Where data on student achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in three ways:

- as expected completions, which is the number of initial enrolments on qualifications where the student expected to complete the qualification in a given year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which the students have completed as expected (or are continuing with the prospect of late completion). For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not shown.

Summary

Broxtowe College, Nottingham

East Midlands Region

Inspected October 1998

Broxtowe College, Nottingham, on the west side of the Nottingham conurbation, is a medium-sized further education college. It operates from nine centres that primarily serve the borough of Broxtowe and the neighbouring Derbyshire town of Long Eaton. The college produced a comprehensive self-assessment report as part of its evolving system of quality assurance that covered all aspects of college operations. The weaknesses identified in the report have been addressed by action points that include target dates for their completion. The college has recently introduced a system of lesson observation as part of its self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses reported in the self-assessment although the college failed to identify several key strengths and weaknesses. Overall, inspectors agreed with all the grades the college awarded itself. In a number of curriculum and cross-college areas inspected the quality of the provision has improved since the last inspection.

The college offers courses in all 10 of the FEFC's programme areas. The inspection covered five programme areas, including one which was off-site collaborative provision, and aspects of cross-college provision. To meet local demands over the last three years the college has significantly increased the range of its provision

and the modes of attendance for some courses. Teaching is generally good. There are appropriate and well-organised work placements on most vocational courses. The links with a number of employers are good. Comprehensive and effective procedures exist for pre-entry guidance, enrolment and induction. Strong personal and pastoral support is provided for students. The college benefits from effective governance and management that has steered the college through a period of financial constraint. Significant improvements have been made to the accommodation since the last inspection. Planning is in progress for a major development for one centre. There is a strong commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement. Effective measures are evolving. The college should: improve the retention on agricultural courses; reduce the time taken to provide additional learning support for students; continue to implement and evaluate aspects of the system for quality assurance; and improve the consistency of target-setting and monitoring, and the reliability of some management information.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science	2	Support for students	2
Agriculture (outward collaborative provision)	3	General resources	2
Business administration and office skills	2	Quality assurance	2
Health and social care	2	Governance	2
Humanities	2	Management	2

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Broxtowe College, Nottingham is a medium-sized general further education college on the west side of the Nottingham conurbation. The college is the major provider of education and training for the borough of Broxtowe and the neighbouring Derbyshire town of Long Eaton with populations of 110,000 and 35,000, respectively. Specialist courses recruit from the whole of the Nottingham travel-to-work area. The college operates from nine sites that serve the communities of Eastwood, Kimberley, Stapleford, Long Eaton, Chilwell and Beeston. Opportunities for employment in the region range from large manufacturing organisations to medium and small enterprises. Services and the professions account for 48% of the labour force; further growth in these areas of work is anticipated. Unemployment rates in the region stand at 4.1%; they compare favourably with a national average of 5.5%. The highest unemployment rates affect people in the 16 to 24 and 50 to 64 age groups.

2 Within the large area from which the college recruits students, institutions providing post-16 education include: six other further education colleges; two sixth form colleges; and two sixth form centres and 20 schools with sixth forms which are maintained by the local education authorities (LEAs) in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. School staying-on rates in the region have increased to 68% over the past decade; 35% of all school-leavers choose courses in the further education sector. Adults returning to full-time study now constitute 63% of full-time students in the college; the number of students over the age of 35 is increasing. Overall, the number of students in the college has increased by 24% since 1994; in 1997-98, there were almost 7,500 students funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC).

3 The college offers provision in all the programme areas funded by the FEFC. There has been a considerable expansion in the range

of courses since 1995. Major provision now includes: general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at intermediate and advanced levels in 11 vocational areas and a developing range of courses at foundation level; 23 subjects at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level); 17 subjects for the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE); and a range of full-time national vocational qualifications (NVQs) through a partnership with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. There is a selection of evening courses and, in addition, programmes of study arranged at times to suit enrolling students. Saturday courses and summer schools provide additional opportunities to study part time. Links with eight city technology colleges nationally have enabled the college to develop popular study programmes in the evenings away from the main college centres. Following the withdrawal of LEA funding, the college operates a reduced programme of recreational courses for adults. Through its Prima Training Enterprises division, the college provides extensive opportunities for youth and adult training funded by the Greater Nottingham Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Courses for employers are offered by the college in the Middle Street business centre in Beeston.

4 The college is an associate college of De Montfort University and provides full-time and part-time higher education courses for over 300 students recruited locally. The college also has a close working relationship with the University of Nottingham; many of the 130 students from abroad are recruited through well-established international links and are studying on programmes that offer progression to the university.

5 The college employs 269 full-time equivalent staff of whom 144 are teachers. The college management team has been reorganised and now comprises: a principal and chief executive; two vice-principals; a head of finance; and the heads of seven academic schools and six

Context

business support units. Governors and college staff have reviewed the college's mission statement which aims 'to provide high-quality education and training for all in the community', and have set five strategic priorities for 1997 to 2000. The college in its mission statement says that it will:

- 'develop the course programme to meet the needs of core business customers
- implement a financial strategy which delivers an acceptable surplus annually, whilst ensuring that appropriate capital investment continues
- implement a robust marketing strategy that will articulate learning opportunities at Broxtowe College to employers, the community and under-represented groups
- develop the IT and staffing strategies to maximise the college's potential to meet its agreed objectives
- improve the current property assets in relation to proposed future business and develop a strategy that ensures all college accommodation offers a high-quality environment.'

The Inspection

6 The inspection took place during October 1998. Inspectors had previously reviewed the college's self-assessment report and information held by other divisions of the FEFC. Inspectors used some data on students' achievements derived from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns for 1996 and 1997 but some ISR data for GCE, GCSE and NVQs were unreliable and alternative validated data provided by the college were used. The college submitted its own data on students' achievements for 1998 and these were found to be reliable. The inspection was carried out by 10 inspectors working for a total 39 days and an auditor for three days. They observed lessons, examined students' work and evaluated college documents. Meetings were held with governors, managers, and representatives from the college staff, employers and students.

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the lessons inspected, 70% were judged to be good or outstanding and 4% less than satisfactory. These figures are better than the average figures for colleges in the sector inspected during 1997-98.

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level and GCSE	1	10	4	0	0	15
GNVQ	0	7	2	0	0	9
NVQ	1	4	5	2	0	12
Other vocational	1	8	3	0	0	12
Other	1	5	0	0	0	6
Total (No.)	4	34	14	2	0	54
Total (%)	7	63	26	4	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Inspectors noted the number of students attending at observed classes and the numbers on roll.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Broxtowe College, Nottingham	8.3	82
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

Curriculum Areas

Science

Grade 2

9 Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering GCE A level and GCSE science, GNVQ advanced science and a course in veterinary nursing. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses outlined in the self-assessment report. However, there was insufficient comment on aspects of teaching and learning and some of the judgements on examination pass rates were based on inaccurate data.

Key strengths

- good teaching and learning
- good GCSE pass rates
- the high standard of students' written work
- the wide range of courses and modes of attendance

Weaknesses

- the lack of attention in course planning to suit the range of students' abilities
- poor results in GCE A level chemistry for the past two years
- insufficient use of IT in science courses

10 The science curriculum is managed effectively. A broad range of science courses has been maintained by the college over the last four years and includes: the three main science subjects at GCE A level and GCSE; GNVQ advanced science; access to science; and courses in veterinary nursing. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that flexible study arrangements for students was a strength of the provision. For example, courses can be taken using learning materials that are studied away from the college, and attendance at courses during the day or evening can be organised around students' domestic and employment commitments. There are regular team meetings

that are minuted and generate items for action that will then be reviewed on future agendas. There are detailed schemes of work for all courses and particular attention is paid to maintaining continuity between course modules. Homework is set and marked on a regular basis. Many classes have end of topic or end of term tests. The monitoring of the progress of individual students is good. However, the overall statistical analysis of students' achievements is inadequate and sometimes based on inaccurate data. The college has recognised this weakness and has begun an analysis of the value that students add to their achievement between the start and the completion of their course.

11 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Clear lesson plans are written for all classes. Teaching styles are well matched to students' backgrounds and experience. Many teachers use a range of methods to promote learning and maintain interest. In one class, the use of molecular modelling kits gave the students an important three-dimensional understanding of some simple organic molecules. Where teaching aids such as videos are shown, they are carefully linked to the relevant theory sessions. The practical sessions are usually interesting and relevant especially for students taking GNVQ science; appropriate attention is paid to safety. However, in some practical lessons the purpose and method of carrying out the experiments were not properly explained leading to inefficient use of time. Teachers of certain courses do not take account of the differing abilities of their students; aspects of these courses fail to meet the needs of some members of the class. Some assignments do not contain a range of questions that is sufficiently wide to enable all students to make some progress without needing to seek help from their teachers. Students have insufficient access to information technology (IT) equipment in their science courses. This weakness has been recognised and appropriate equipment, for example data loggers, is being purchased.

Curriculum Areas

12 The teaching staff are well qualified and there is excellent support from four enthusiastic science technicians. The preparatory rooms for science are large and well organised, although, as the science laboratories are located on three floors, there are some problems in transporting resources and equipment between them. The laboratories are clean and well maintained, provide pleasant working environments, and benefit from posters and displays which create an effective ethos for the study of the sciences. The laboratories are all equipped to an appropriate standard. One of the chemistry laboratories has been equipped to a high standard for students studying on higher education courses. All science students benefit from these facilities. There have been recent purchases of 11 high-quality bench microscopes with a camera attachment that enables images to be displayed on a television screen for

teaching purposes. This resource was used effectively in a veterinary science lesson.

13 Much of the students' written work is well presented and of an appropriate standard. Many students clearly take pride in their portfolios and class folders. The students' achievements on most courses are good. Most GCE A level pass rates are above or close to the national average for the sector, although in 1997 and 1998 less than half of the GCE A level chemistry students achieved their qualifications. As noted in the college self-assessment report, examination successes for GCSE students in sciences are good, especially for those aged 16 to 18. Aggregated results for these students over the past three years give a pass rate of 58% for the college compared to the national average of 34%.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in science, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE	2	Expected completions	*	*	54
		Retention (%)	*	*	84
		Achievement (%)	*	*	64
GNVQ	3	Expected completions	*	*	12
		Retention (%)	*	*	83
		Achievement (%)	*	*	75
GCE A level	3	Expected completions	*	*	135
		Retention (%)	*	*	67
		Achievement (%)	*	*	67

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*data in the ISR were unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Agriculture (Outward Collaborative Provision)

Grade 3

14 Inspectors observed 10 lessons covering NVQ programmes in forestry, conservation and amenity horticulture. The self-assessment report is not comprehensive. Inspectors identified several weaknesses and strengths not covered in the report; many relate to teaching and learning. Several of the strengths in the self-assessment report were overstated.

Key strengths

- the practical relevance of the work
- the high pass rates
- the good range of sites for practical work

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to meeting the needs of individual students
- weak management of classes
- low retention rates

15 The agricultural provision is offered at three centres in collaboration with a subsidiary of a large national charity which supports conservation and related activities. Programmes at NVQ level 1 in forestry, conservation and amenity horticulture are available. The college has very little other agricultural provision but the courses complement the college's foundation level work in other vocational specialisms. Co-operation with specialist agricultural colleges enables students to progress to higher level courses. Students are able to join the programmes at any time of the year and to study each week for any two-day period that is convenient for them. Inspectors agreed with the strength noted in the self-assessment that this flexibility over

attendance arrangements removes a barrier to study for some students, particularly the unemployed. Most of the work is practical which is a significant factor in attracting students to the programmes. The lack of first-hand experience of the agricultural industry among college staff is recognised as a weakness; a consultant is being appointed to provide the college with specialist advice.

16 In a few cases, the practical lessons which last all day are effectively structured to develop the students' skills. In these sessions clear demonstrations are followed by careful supervision of the students working on their own or in groups. Most students work enthusiastically and there is some effective teamwork. The self-assessment did not identify that in many other practical lessons weaknesses in the organisation and management of learning result in the students' needs being insufficiently met. Students were not fully occupied because they were unclear what was expected of them. Tutors were not able to provide the level of support required because they were occupied with other tasks. The wide dispersion of students on some sites made supervision difficult. There was little involvement of students in discussion and few checks were made on the level of understanding of all students in the group.

17 A strength of the practical teaching is the realistic locations that are used for most of the work. The college's partner (BTCV Enterprises Ltd) has long-standing links with a number of organisations which make available a wide range of sites close to the three study centres. The sites provide good opportunities for students to develop their practical competence. A few tutors use the visits to broaden the students' understanding by discussing the different examples of habitat and their maintenance. Teachers have high levels of practical skill, are knowledgeable and demonstrate considerable enthusiasm for the subject area. These attributes are not always

Curriculum Areas

used effectively because of a lack of understanding of the underlying needs of the students. The college has provided few opportunities for staff to address this shortcoming.

18 There are effective arrangements for assessment. The students are well-informed about the overall requirements. The assessments are timed to suit the needs of the students. A full record of overall achievement is maintained and is monitored by the college. The provision is also monitored through periodic visits to centres when the views of students are noted and discussions are held with centre managers. The monitoring does not effectively cover the teaching and learning. There is no assessment of key and basic skills to identify individual learning needs. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-

assessment. From early in 1998 the centre managers have been fully involved in self-assessment; this process is providing a clearer framework for monitoring the provision. Targets and other indicators are currently being established in a checklist of standards which is intended to contribute to an improved system for quality assurance.

19 A high proportion of forestry and conservation students and a reasonable number of amenity horticulture students who complete their studies achieve the award. However, as the self-assessment identifies, the overall retention rate is low; about half of the students complete their studies. Insufficient attention has been given to the potential impact on retention of the learning programmes and the way they are taught. There has been a low response to surveys of students leaving the programme.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in agriculture (outward collaborative provision), 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
NVQ	1	Expected completions	*	*	179
		Retention (%)	*	*	48
		Achievement (%)	*	*	79
NVQ amenity horticulture	1	Expected completions	*	*	75
		Retention (%)	*	*	53
		Achievement (%)	*	*	68
NVQ conservation	1	Expected completions	*	*	63
		Retention (%)	*	*	49
		Achievement (%)	*	*	88
NVQ forestry	1	Expected completions	*	*	41
		Retention (%)	*	*	39
		Achievement (%)	*	*	84

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*data in the ISR were unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Business Administration and Office Skills

Grade 2

20 Eleven lessons within the school of administration and office technology were observed covering administration, secretarial and office skills, and the GNVQ intermediate business studies course. The strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report largely matched those found during the inspection. There were additional strengths and weaknesses not identified through self-assessment.

Key strengths

- well-planned lessons
- the effective use of work experience
- flexible study arrangements for mature students
- good academic and personal support
- a helpful system for action-planning by students

Weaknesses

- delay in provision of additional learning support
- a lack of purpose in some of the teaching
- low achievements by some students

21 The college provides a wide range of opportunities for students to acquire skills and qualifications in this curriculum area. The inspection team agreed with the statement in the self-assessment that the curriculum is organised to meet the needs of its adult customers; the hours of full-time classes match the timetables of local schools and courses are available on Saturdays and weekday evenings.

22 The majority of lessons were well planned, pitched at an appropriate level and effectively

supported by relevant materials. In these classes, staff met the wide range of learning needs of the students. This strength was not mentioned in the self-assessment. In one class an effective brainstorming session enabled NVQ students to draw on their experiences in the workplace to identify possible sources of evidence for portfolios. In a class where students were learning how to use the internet, the tutor had devised a website specifically for the group, who then proceeded to use it to gain access to course materials and assessments. A minority of lessons lacked a sense of purpose and insufficient demands were made on students. The training office gives opportunities for students to act as receptionists and supervisors and produces work at a professional standard. However, it lacks the dynamism of a commercial office and some work is 'manufactured' to keep students occupied. Students on the GNVQ intermediate course in business do not have access to an appropriate range of specialist teachers to cover individual units. This weakness was not acknowledged in the self-assessment.

23 All full-time students have the opportunity of work experience; they are visited by teachers during their work placement. This strength was noted in the self-assessment. There are a number of strategies which maintain the vocational relevance of the curriculum. There is an established link with a large local pharmaceutical company and staff visit the company to assess day-release students. Close links are maintained with the employers of day-release students so that their attendance at the college is carefully monitored. Staff have benefited from taking short secondments to industry to maintain their expertise and to assist in the development of new courses.

24 All students are interviewed and diagnostically tested at the start of their course. The school has a pilot scheme whereby a number of achievement criteria are established for each course. These are used as the basis of action-planning by students as they progress

Curriculum Areas

through the course. However, additional learning support, for those students requiring it, is not introduced into students' programmes sufficiently early. All full-time students maintain a record of achievement. Students speak highly of the support received from all the staff in the school. A student forum enables students to bring their concerns to the attention of the management of the school and is used by higher diploma students to generate evidence on the management of meetings.

25 Resources are generally satisfactory; rooms are properly equipped and machines are well maintained. In most cases equipment is fit for its purpose, although the industry-standard software runs slowly on the older computers. The training office has the appropriate equipment to enable students to gain relevant competencies and this provision is supplemented by the school's own equipment where necessary.

26 The standard of work achieved by students is appropriate. The work of students undertaking the NVQs in administration and the full-time secretarial courses is generally high. Portfolios of work are well presented. Evidence from part-time students that relates to their own employment is comprehensive. Students' work is marked fairly and returned promptly. In a minority of instances comments are insufficiently detailed to enable students to improve. Retention is satisfactory or good on most courses and the difficulties in the reporting of absences, which were identified in the self-assessment, have largely been resolved. Students' achievements are more variable although generally at or above national norms for the sector. There has been a drop in achievement in the GNVQ intermediate in 1998 to 61%. The inspection confirmed the weakness acknowledged in the self-assessment that results in the GNVQ in business are below average for the sector.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in business administration and office skills, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Short course – single skills	1	Expected completions	1,137	934	972
		Retention (%)	98	93	97
		Achievement (%)	82	44	54
NVQ short course – single skills and administration	2	Expected completions	660	552	676
		Retention (%)	94	94	98
		Achievement (%)	64	61	62
GNVQ intermediate, certificate in administration and secretarial procedures, reception diploma	2	Expected completions	52	48	57
		Retention (%)	92	85	79
		Achievement (%)	85	98	69
NVQ administration and short course – single skills	3	Expected completions	203	222	154
		Retention (%)	92	89	100
		Achievement (%)	22	59	59
Diploma (1996 only) and higher diploma in administration and secretarial procedures	3	Expected completions	30	15	12
		Retention (%)	77	80	92
		Achievement (%)	100	75	73

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care

Grade 2

27 Inspectors observed 11 lessons across a range of courses and levels in health and social care. They found the self-assessment report to be comprehensive in its judgements. There was a limited focus on teaching and learning and some additional weaknesses were identified that were not in the report.

Key strengths

- sound and effective teaching
- well-motivated students
- the high rates for retention and achievement
- effective tutorial support meeting individual students' needs
- well-managed systems for monitoring students' progress

Weaknesses

- the lack of appropriate detail in lesson plans and some schemes of work
- insufficient specialist accommodation and facilities to support vocational training

28 Students are offered a range of provision at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels; there are appropriate opportunities for progression. New courses in nursery nursing and caring services are being offered in response to demand; they complement existing courses in caring, childhood studies, health and social care and counselling. Provision for students attending part time is developing well but evening provision to upgrade skills is still limited. Some sections of the community in the areas from which the college recruits are under-represented on the courses that are offered. These shortcomings are acknowledged in the self-assessment report and have resulted in a

recommitment by the school to widening participation. Effective systems have been established within the school for monitoring students' progress and records are well maintained.

29 Teaching is effective. Teachers display sound knowledge and show confidence in their subject. However, a lack of appropriate detail in lesson planning and in schemes of work sometimes results in inefficient use of class time and difficulty over continuity of topics during teacher absences. In many classes, changes of activity maintain students' interest and motivation; they enjoy their studies. In a GNVQ group, students were given the task of researching a topic and presenting their findings to the class. Presentations were informative and improved by the use of visual aids. Students responded well to this demanding task. Within lessons, handout materials are clearly written and are effective in helping students to learn. Case study materials stimulate student interest, they provide an opportunity for students to apply their learning to realistic and practical situations. Worksheets allow students to work at their own pace and enable teachers to concentrate on and meet individual students' needs. Additional support workers are available in some classes to assist students who have learning difficulties.

30 All of the health, social and childcare training is offered at the Arthur Mee centre which is scheduled for redevelopment and refurbishment. At present there is a lack of specialist accommodation to support practical care training. Few rooms contain displays of high-quality work by students. Students' recreational facilities and social areas are also inadequate at this centre. There is a committed and stable staff team with an appropriate mix of academic, vocational and teaching qualifications.

31 Students value the support which they receive from tutors. Tutorial support is effective in meeting individual and group needs.

Curriculum Areas

Individual action-planning is documented and there is a supportive relationship between tutors and students which is identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Students' assignment work is of a good standard. Key skills are integrated with other aspects of coursework and students have sufficient access to computers at the Arthur Mee centre. During individual work on assignments, students demonstrated confidence and competence in using computers. Work placement opportunities are an essential part of the programmes and are timetabled for all full-time groups except the GNVQ foundation course. There are good links with employers and the work experience placements are well managed; they are valued by students. Inspectors agreed with the self-

assessment that the work experience is a strength. There are effective links between work experience and in-college programmes. In one assignment, students were asked to consider the suitability of children's books and were able to draw examples from work placement experiences and to apply their learning in a realistic context. Retention and pass rates are high on all courses and are above the national averages for general further education colleges. Data on students' destinations show that in 1998, all students completing the national diploma in childhood studies found employment or progressed to higher education. The monitoring of students' progress is seen as a strength within the self-assessment report.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in health and social care, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	Expected completions	8	12	11
		Retention (%)	100	67	70
		Achievement (%)	88	85	95
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	Expected completions	18	22	13
		Retention (%)	89	85	95
		Achievement (%)	89	96	98
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	Expected completions	20	21	16
		Retention (%)	72	93	90
		Achievement (%)	65	71	80
National diploma in childhood studies	3	Expected completions	20	21	22
		Retention (%)	95	95	95
		Achievement (%)	90	95	95

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Humanities

Grade 2

32 The inspection of humanities covered GCSE, GCE A level and aspects of access to higher education courses in economics, geography, history, psychology and sociology. Eleven lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. A few additional strengths and weaknesses were highlighted by inspectors.

Key strengths

- courses designed to meet a range of individual students' needs
- good teaching
- close supervision of students' progress
- high retention rates on GCSE courses

Weaknesses

- insufficient variation of activity in a few classes
- time spent on transcription from overhead projector slides in a few classes
- declining retention rates on access to higher education courses

33 Inspectors agreed with the college's own assessment that there is a wide range of humanities courses which allows students to study in ways and at times which suit their abilities and personal circumstances. The provision also offers opportunities for progression to employment and further study. Courses are effectively organised and well planned. Targets are set for attendance, retention and pass rates and their achievement is monitored.

34 As identified in the self-assessment report, teaching and learning are good. Teachers convey their enthusiasm for a subject and use

appropriate methods to sustain students' interest and stimulate them to achieve high standards in their work. For example, in a sociology class, the teacher used a group quiz to enliven a revision session and successfully encouraged students to recall, review, consolidate and strengthen their learning. Teachers generally have high expectations of students and in the best classes adjusted their methods to meet the needs of different students. Occasionally lesson plans and actual teaching failed to take account of the different abilities of students or relied too much on a single teaching method. Some activities continued for so long that students found it difficult to maintain their concentration and occasionally excessive time was spent on transcription from overhead projector slides. Most teachers regularly check that students are learning and are ready to adapt the planned lesson when students have difficulty in understanding the work.

35 Most students are punctual, well motivated and are prepared to contribute to discussions and to answer questions. Whenever assignments involve group work, students co-operate on the required activities. Surveys indicate that most students are highly satisfied with their courses. Their progress is closely supervised. Action plans are made to meet the individual needs jointly identified by teachers and students; their outcomes are monitored. Students generally receive good guidance on how to improve their written work, but occasionally opportunities are missed to encourage those who have done very well to do even better.

36 Teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects. Learning is supported effectively by a suitable range of equipment and materials. Handouts are carefully prepared and well presented. Teachers made good use of audiovisual teaching aids. The library has a useful and relevant stock of books and other sources of information; material in all subjects is up to date. However,

Curriculum Areas

the stock is unevenly distributed and does not always match the number of students studying a particular subject. Classrooms designated as subject base rooms are well equipped and have displays which are effectively used in lessons.

37 The self-assessment report acknowledges the marked difference in retention rates on a number of courses. For example in 1997-98, all students completed their GCSE courses in economics, geography and history. However, retention rates on the day access to higher education course fell from 80% in 1997 to 71% in 1998. Pass rates have generally been close to or above the national average for the sector. For example, rates for students of all ages taking GCE A level in economics have exceeded

national norms over the last three years. Pass rates in GCE A level history have improved steadily over the same period and those for other subjects have fluctuated around the national average. On the access to higher education course, most students who complete the course pass. Successful students from GCE A level and access to higher education courses have progressed to a wide range of university courses. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that a significant number of students who complete the access course enter higher education. In 1998, all 22 of the students who completed their day access course went on to higher education.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in humanities, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE	2	Expected completions	*	*	47
		Retention (%)	*	*	100
		Achievement (%)	*	*	50
GCE A level (A to E passes)	3	Expected completions	*	*	88
		Retention (%)	*	*	78
		Achievement (%)	*	*	82
Access to higher education day course	3	Expected completions	*	*	26
		Retention (%)	*	*	71
		Achievement (%)	*	*	85

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*data in the ISR were unreliable

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

38 Three separate self-assessment reports, each containing a detailed list of strengths and weaknesses, contributed to the overall judgement in this area. Inspectors agreed with the college's overall judgement; some overarching strengths and weaknesses were not identified by the college from the three reports.

Key strengths

- good access to student services and learning support
- effective pre-entry guidance, enrolment and induction
- strong personal and pastoral support
- a good counselling service

Weaknesses

- inconsistent recording and monitoring of students' progress and achievements through tutorials
- delays in providing learning support
- systems to monitor support services

39 A major strength, not identified specifically by self-assessment, was in the provision of student services and learning support. Appropriate guidance and the full range of student support services is readily available at all centres. Students know how to make use of the opportunities and facilities. The central team effectively supports staff in centres. Students are aware of the charter and its commitments, some of which contain quantifiable targets. The student guide and diary is a handy reference booklet which describes the services available and contains a summary of the charter.

40 Arrangements for pre-entry guidance, enrolment and induction, as was identified in

the self-assessment report, are comprehensive and effective. As a part of the admissions procedures students are sent a useful checklist to help them prepare for their interview. Induction to the college is thorough and prepares students well for college life. Those who enrol early benefit from an initial two-day course and social induction in June that culminates in a barbecue. At the start of each course there is effective coverage of the general induction to the college, augmented by specific information on the course and team building activities. Induction procedures have been modified in the light of students' feedback.

41 The college has effective links with local schools, is represented at school careers conventions and provides 'taster' programmes for pupils. Schools are regularly updated on courses available and are invited to college information evenings. In collaboration with Derbyshire County Council and Nottingham schools, the college provides the *'Flexibility Course'*, a growing and successful service for the education of pupils excluded from, or refusing attendance at school. A high proportion of these students progress to other college courses.

42 A productive relationship with Guideline Careers, the Nottinghamshire careers service, ensures students have access to individual careers interviews and group workshops in addition to support when making applications for higher education courses. There is an easily accessible and comprehensive careers library for students' use. The college is working towards Careermark. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that students and staff benefit from a constructive, pro-active professional counselling service operating across all centres. Comprehensive records of usage of the service are kept under coded headings to preserve confidentiality for individuals. The records have provided useful information leading to college initiatives, for example, policies to address bullying and mental health issues and the creation of a new post for a mental health worker.

Cross-college Provision

43 Since the last inspection, the college has increased considerably the provision of effective learning support. All full-time and most part-time students are screened to assess their needs for additional support. Appropriate arrangements are made to provide either support for individuals or support in vocational lessons where support staff team teach with subject tutors. The support is generally effective and is appreciated by students. However, the time taken to make a start on learning support is a weakness of the provision. The progress of individual students receiving support is not systematically reported to tutors. The self-assessment report recognises the need to improve liaison with tutors. There is little collation of the management information available on, for example, trends in overall numbers of students referred for learning support, attendance levels and students' perceptions of the service. The college is appointing an additional support manager to address this weakness.

44 Strong personal and pastoral support is provided for individuals by course, personal and learning support tutors and student services staff. This strength was identified by the college self-assessment. The academic tutorial support provided for students is generally good. A handbook outlines the role of the tutor and the systems to be followed and suggests activities for group tutorials. The responsibility for implementing the tutorial guidelines rests with schools which has led in practice to different standards being adopted. There is no overview of the overall effectiveness of tutorial provision across the college. The college has recognised the need to improve the effectiveness of strategic monitoring of tutorial activities; in this context the responsibilities of senior staff have been reviewed.

45 The students association represents students' views through the student council. Notice is taken of student opinion. A programme of social events is offered.

Childcare facilities for children over two and a half years old are provided at the Chilwell, Manor, Chewton Street and Arthur Mee centres; each has places for about 20 children.

General Resources

Grade 2

46 Inspectors agreed with some strengths identified by the college. Many of the college strengths and weaknesses are contained in detailed operational points. They are based on separate reports from a number of teams which have not been combined into a coherent self-assessment. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- the nine centres support the college's mission
- clean and well-decorated accommodation
- good social and catering facilities
- appropriate library and computing provision

Weaknesses

- limited monitoring of space utilisation
- aspects of access for students with physical disabilities
- deficiencies in the learning environment

47 The college operates from nine centres. Eight are sited throughout the large geographic catchment area of the college. The college did not recognise the dispersion of sites and accessibility by local communities as a strength in support of its mission. Five of the centres are owned by the college and the remainder are on short-term leases. The style of buildings ranges from Victorian to the present decade. Some centres have inadequate development opportunities because of lack of space or

Cross-college Provision

planning restrictions. Following incorporation, the priority was to make the buildings owned by the college weather-tight and to achieve an acceptable standard of decor. A strategic priority for the period 1997 to 2000 continues this work. Other objectives, linked to curriculum needs, were intended to improve accommodation, for example, provision of computing and library resources. Future plans include the redevelopment of the Arthur Mee, the Manor and the Chilwell centres.

48 Inspectors agreed that there has been a comprehensive programme of redecoration over the last four years. The teaching and public areas are clean and bright. The exterior of buildings has been repainted although the visual appearance of many remains unappealing. Many classrooms are equipped to an appropriate standard with carpets, and modern desks and chairs. Plans exist to upgrade others to the same standard. The temporary classrooms that are to remain in the short term provide acceptable teaching environments but lack a specialist identity. Efficiency measures include improved heating systems and energy efficient lighting. Approximately £50,000 is allocated annually to the planned maintenance programme. Students on the 'workability' course carried out a thorough suitability survey of the college environment for students with disabilities. Access for students in wheelchairs is generally good although a small number of areas remain inaccessible and mobility can be hindered in others by, for example, heavy access doors.

49 The lack of systematic monitoring of the utilisation of teaching space was not identified in the self-assessment. A utilisation survey based on actual student numbers was carried out in 1997; it is planned to repeat this survey three times each year starting in November 1998. The total floor area is approximately 14,000 square metres which is a reasonable match to the current number of students. Some curriculum areas have been transferred to other

centres to improve their utilisation and to allow for anticipated increases in student numbers.

50 All centres have a common room facility. Students have access to suitable refreshment facilities combined with either a cafeteria or vending facilities, or can use local cafes and sandwich bars.

51 The library service operates across four college centres. Opening hours at the various centres are suited to local needs. In total there are nearly 26,000 books and non-printed items, and approximately 200 journals. A public library adjacent to the Arthur Mee centre houses stocks relevant to college courses; it is open on Saturdays. There are 70 CD-ROMs although the availability of these is sometimes restricted and they are not always adequate for student needs. At the Chilwell and Manor centres there are good levels of study spaces, but spaces at the Arthur Mee centre are insufficient. The catalogue is computerised and is accessible to students over the computer network. The college acknowledges that access to the libraries at the Chilwell and Manor centres is difficult for students in wheelchairs.

52 There is a three-year rolling IT strategy which includes the upgrading of the college networking and hardware facilities. The main centres are linked by separate academic and administrative networks that are to be extended to the skills shops. Over £450,000 has been spent over the last three years on hardware and software upgrades and replacements. There are now approximately 380 modern computers available for teaching and a further 170 for administration. Fifty computers, sited in libraries and a computer room at Chilwell, are available for use by students throughout the day and evening. Overall this provision meets current demand although at some centres, such as Manor, timetabling of computer rooms restricts access. Staff and students have access to the internet through the college network. Security software has been introduced to prevent access to certain internet sites.

Cross-college Provision

An intranet is being developed to support teaching and college administration. An IT users group has been formed to consider issues of academic and business computing. A helpdesk has been established at the Chilwell centre, and good technician support is available at the Arthur Mee, Chewton Street, Manor and Middle Street centres.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

53 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment but differed from the college in the importance which they attached to some of the strengths and weaknesses. Action has already been initiated to address all of the identified weaknesses.

Key strengths

- the comprehensive system for quality assurance
- effective procedures leading to improvement in standards
- thorough arrangements for checking procedures for quality assurance
- the arrangements for monitoring and addressing students' perceptions
- the thorough arrangements for identifying and meeting staff development needs

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped aspects of self-assessment procedures
- insufficient use of employers' views
- failure to use some targets and performance indicators in self-assessment

54 The college is committed to quality assurance and continuous improvement. In

recent years it has developed a number of effective measures for improving the quality of its work. Inspectors found examples of improvements in students' learning experiences as a direct result of these procedures. The current self-assessment system is generally well understood and supported by staff. Inspectors agreed with the college that the quality reviews cover all aspects of college activity, including business support functions, partnerships and business development. Good practice, developed within the previous review and evaluation system, has been carried forward to the revised quality framework. Some aspects of the revised procedures have yet to be fully implemented and evaluated.

55 Inspectors confirmed that the college has developed thorough arrangements for monitoring and reviewing quality procedures. Responsibility for developing and monitoring systems for quality assurance rests with a working group drawn from across the college. Internal audit of quality is carried out by a team of business support staff. Effective self-assessment checklists are used by all areas to assist in producing self-assessment reports.

56 A set of nine college performance indicators is used at school and course level with varying degrees of effectiveness. The unreliability of student data produced by the college management information systems has affected some curriculum judgements. This has been recognised and resulted in the introduction of revised systems. National benchmarking data are used for comparison of achievements on individual courses. Many areas of the college used a variety of quantitative data as evidence in their self-assessment. The use of targets, performance indicators and statistical analysis to inform self-assessment is underdeveloped in some areas.

57 The college systematically collects students' views on courses and facilities. The main avenues for students to communicate their views is through their representation on various

Cross-college Provision

committees and the comprehensive perception surveys. The results of surveys are analysed by college, centre and course. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that the monitoring of employer perceptions is a weakness. While a number of schools obtain formal and informal feedback from employers, there is a lack of central co-ordination and analysis of the data.

58 The college has undertaken a number of self-assessment reports of various types over the last three years. The report prepared for inspection was the first to bring together judgements on all aspects of college provision. Procedures for producing self-assessment reports are modified to meet the requirement of the various business units and partnerships of the college. Some past weaknesses in the quality procedures in these areas have been remedied by the revised self-assessment procedures. The individual reports produced by academic and business support managers are moderated mainly by the vice-principals. The academic board reviews the report before it is considered and approved by governors. Feedback on the report is sought from the county council and local TECs. The sections of the self-assessment report lack a common format. Some sections identify the majority of key strengths and weaknesses. Other sections are not comprehensive; some do not draw together overarching issues; and there is a lack of emphasis on teaching and learning in a number of curriculum areas. Action plans have been produced in all areas. Some early progress has been made to implement the action points.

59 A scheme to observe teaching was introduced to provide information for the most recent self-assessment report. All staff were observed at least once. The system had been operational for only a short time before the writing of the self-assessment report and was not used as evidence to support self-assessment in all areas. Staff are positive about the benefits of the scheme which resulted in some sharing of

good practice within schools but no outcomes have been disseminated across the college.

60 The systems for identifying and satisfying staff development needs are comprehensive. They include: information gathered from self-assessment; reports from course teams; business plans; and the performance management appraisal scheme. Staff expressed a high level of satisfaction with the arrangements for staff development which support the college's strategic objectives. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that a more thorough evaluation of staff development is necessary. The college is recognised as an Investor in People and was revalidated in July 1998. The performance management scheme provides effective arrangements for appraising staff. Inspectors agreed with the college that the third phase of the performance management scheme, which applies to all staff who do not have management or team leader responsibilities, requires review; in its present form it is proving unacceptable to some staff.

Governance

Grade 2

61 Inspectors agreed with most of the findings in the college self-assessment. However, the self-assessment report failed explicitly to recognise the comprehensive set of personnel policies as a strength.

Key strengths

- the range of governors' skills and expertise
- the efficient management of the business of the corporation
- the comprehensive register of interests extending to management and staff
- the contribution to strategic development
- policies that encourage high job performance by employees

Cross-college Provision

Weaknesses

- no system to monitor the curriculum
- limited reporting on the standards of achievement in the college

62 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

63 The board comprises the minimum number of governors permitted by the instrument of government. There is no student governor although representatives of the student union are invited to attend board meetings. The board of governors recently amended its membership to include a staff governor. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that governors have a wide range of skills of value to the college. The range of expertise on the board includes finance, property, personnel, marketing, general management and legal skills. The governors are committed to the college. Average attendance at meetings has been high and there has been an extremely low turnover in membership.

64 The audit committee and remuneration committee have operated within their terms of reference. The board of governors has in the past had no finance committee, preferring to deal with finance matters at board level. An employment and finance committee has now been established to allow more time for the corporation to consider educational issues. The board monitors the college's financial position; it receives the college's management accounts frequently. Inspection confirmed the self-assessment judgement that effective and appropriate clerking arrangements are in place. The quality of agendas and minutes is good. A set of standing orders is in place. The clerk to the board of governors left the college shortly

before the inspection and after detailed consideration by the board a successor was appointed.

65 A code of conduct has been adopted and is being updated to reflect the latest guidance. The agenda and minutes of the board of governors are available within the college library and supporting papers are available from the clerk. However, these do not include information on financial matters which the board considers to be confidential. A register of interests which has been completed by all governors and members of the senior management team reflects best practice. All other college staff are invited to complete a declaration of interests. The board has approved a 'whistleblowing' procedure to enable staff to raise any concerns whilst protecting their confidentiality.

66 The self-assessment report recognises that governors are effectively involved in the strategic development of the college. The governors discussed and shaped the strategic plan for the period 1997 to 2000. After devoting much of their time to achieving financial stability, governors recognise in the self-assessment report the need to give more consideration to educational matters. The college acknowledges that there are no formal links between governors and curriculum areas. The self-assessment action plan proposes devoting time to receiving a formal presentation from each curriculum area over a two-year period.

67 The governors accorded a high priority to establishing a coherent set of personnel policies. Elements of this policy included: the introduction of flexible employment contracts; the substantial delegation of management responsibilities; and the introduction of a performance management system for employees at all levels. Through a period of financial constraint governors have been steadfast in supporting arrangements that aim to reward adequately employees in relation to their individual job performance.

Cross-college Provision

68 The use of information on non-financial performance and target achievement is not yet fully developed. The board of governors receives annual reports containing aggregated information on college performance. The reports cover, for example, attendance rates, completion of courses, achievements, and results of student satisfaction surveys. Achievements are also published in the college annual report. As identified in the self-assessment, performance indicators have not been systematically compared with benchmarks or disaggregated by curriculum area. Governors have not required regular reports on performance during the year. Targets associated with indicators were not ready for the start of the current year. Some aspects of these issues have been addressed in the action plans in the college self-assessment report.

69 The board of governors receives an annual report reviewing the arrangements for college governance. There are no explicit criteria with which to assess their own performance although attendance of governors has been analysed and reported to the board. Self-assessment is now helped by a questionnaire and one result has been the development of action plans.

Management

Grade 2

70 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They concluded that some strengths and weaknesses had been overstated or duplicated whilst others had been omitted.

Key strengths

- an effective management structure
- the comprehensive and effective strategic planning processes
- the constructive links with external organisations

- the efficient and effective deployment of staff
- the detailed and timely information on financial management

Weaknesses

- insufficient rigour and consistency across the college in the setting and monitoring of targets
- unreliable student data from the management information system
- lateness of some returns to the FEFC

71 Inspectors agreed with the college that there is an effective management structure. Recent changes have improved the clarity of lines of accountability and communication. The senior management team comprising the principal, two vice-principals and the head of finance meets weekly. There are good systems for reporting outcomes. Management of the college is strengthened by a well-defined structure of committees and working groups which have clear executive or consultative functions.

72 The college has adopted a devolved style of management which is generally welcomed by staff. However, there are some inadequacies in the systems for co-ordinating and disseminating good practice. These shortcomings have resulted in inconsistencies in the quality of management of the curriculum.

Communications on general routine matters within the college are good. There is a weekly newsletter and regular staff meetings. The staff consultative committee provides an opportunity for representatives of all college staff to receive information and make representations to the principal on any issue directly affecting staff.

73 There are comprehensive and effective procedures, which include the involvement of the staff, for the development of the strategic plan. The process is informed by thorough market research gathered from a variety of

Cross-college Provision

sources that includes: Greater Nottingham TEC; Broxtowe Borough Council; Guideline Careers; and college advisory groups. The strategic plan is circulated widely within the college and is complemented by an excellent summarising leaflet. Staff support the strategic direction of the college. The strategic plan is underpinned by annual operating statements prepared by each school and by the business support units. Although all operating statements contain targets, the college recognises in its self-assessment that there are inconsistencies within the detail. Whilst some elements of the operating statements are specific and quantifiable others are vague and general. Overall, there is insufficient rigour and consistency in the monitoring of targets and performance indicators across the college.

74 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that staff are effectively and efficiently deployed. Subject to central controls, budgets for staff are allocated to heads of school and business support units which have considerable discretion in making staff appointments. Job descriptions are clear and staff understand their roles within the context of the college management structure. Appropriate policies ensure that staff skills and availability match the curriculum needs of students.

75 The college recognises that the management information system does not meet the needs of all managers. Information on students' achievements is often incomplete and unreliable. There are inadequate processes for the tracking of students and some college managers keep duplicate sets of information. Procedures for the collection and processing of a range of information are inadequately defined and implemented. The college is currently revising its procedures and systems in order to provide more reliable management information.

76 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The college has a low average level of funding. Solvency

levels have been maintained. An experienced and suitably qualified accountant leads the finance team of five experienced staff and is a member of the senior management team. The financial reporting system is not fully integrated with the accounting system. Management accounts are comprehensive and include actual information on the college's income and expenditure, balance sheet and long-term cashflow. The finance team provide appropriate support and advice to budget holders. The college's final funding unit claim and its financial accounts for 1996-97 were severely delayed due to problems producing student data. The final funding unit claim was only subject to subsequent minor amendment.

Conclusions

77 The college's self-assessment report covered all aspects of college operations including partnerships and collaborative provision. It was a useful document for planning and carrying out most aspects of the inspection although there were some errors in the presentation of evidence. In the cross-college and curriculum sections of the report the inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college. However, in two sections there were several rather than a single coherent self-assessment report. This approach reflected the organisation of responsibilities within the college, but resulted in some more general judgements being overlooked. In some instances the inspectors disagreed with the emphasis given by the college to the strengths and weaknesses. Overall, inspectors agreed with all the cross-college and curriculum grades awarded by the college.

78 Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of this report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	1
16-18 years	13
19-24 years	13
25+ years	72
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	41
Intermediate	33
Advanced	18
Higher education	3
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	5
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 1998)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	135	1,301	19
Agriculture	308	90	5
Construction	3	7	0
Engineering	17	223	3
Business	216	1,627	25
Hotel and catering	74	216	4
Health and community care	125	364	7
Art and design	48	260	4
Humanities	144	1,530	23
Basic education	104	643	10
Total	1,174	6,261	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 12% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	84	25	35	144
Supporting direct learning contact	28	18	0	46
Other support	45	19	15	79
Total	157	62	50	269

Source: college data, rounded to nearest full-time equivalent

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£7,627,000	£7,910,000	£8,322,000
Average level of funding (ALF) Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£14.69	£14.57	£14.21
Payroll as a proportion of income	68%	63%	62%
Achievement of funding target	112%	116%	93%
Diversity of income	36%	31%	35%
Operating surplus	-£241,000	-£30,000	-£63,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), college (1997 and 1998)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998)

Payroll – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), college (1997 and 1998)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), college (1997 and 1998)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), college (1997 and 1998)

FEFC Inspection Report 11/99

**Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
January 1999**