

Burnley College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

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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.

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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 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	10	53	30	7	–
Cross-college provision	14	54	23	7	2

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*
Sample size: 104 college inspections

Student Achievements

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

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college 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 students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. 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 included.

Summary

Burnley College

North West Region

Inspected January 2000

Burnley College is a general further education college serving the borough of Burnley and the wider community of East Lancashire.

Self-assessment is well established in the college and is linked to the planning process. All staff are involved in the production of the annual self-assessment report. Judgements made by staff teams are subject to critical scrutiny by senior managers, governors and external partners. Some sections of the self-assessment report produced for the inspection were too descriptive and lacked sufficient evaluation. Some of the weaknesses identified had been addressed by the time of the inspection.

Inspectors agreed with the majority of grades awarded in the self-assessment report.

The college recruits a significant number of students from disadvantaged areas. It recognises its responsibility to contribute to the social and economic regeneration of the area and works successfully with an extensive number of partners. The range of courses offered is broad, and there is some provision in all of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Since the last inspection, the college has made progress in a number of areas. Teaching standards have improved. The proportion of

lessons considered by inspectors to be outstanding was significantly below the national average. The proportion of lessons judged to be good was slightly above. Accommodation and resources for teaching and learning are outstanding. Support for the majority of students is good. The college is well managed and well governed. Quality assurance systems have improved significantly but have not yet resulted in consistent performance across the college. Students' achievements are improving, but many are still below the national averages derived from FEFC benchmarking data.

Retention is declining. The college recognises this is a major issue and a number of well-considered strategies are in place to address the problem, but these have yet to show significant impact. In order to improve further, the college should: continue to improve its teaching standards and students' achievements; address weaknesses in the use of management information and in its support for part-time students; and ensure that its quality systems lead to continuous improvement, especially in retention.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Computing and information technology	3	Support for students	2
Engineering	2	General resources	1
Child studies	1	Quality assurance	3
Art and design and performing arts	4	Governance	2
Sociology, psychology and English	3	Management	2
Basic skills	2		

The College and its Mission

1 Burnley College serves the community of Burnley and also makes an important contribution to provision in the rest of East Lancashire. The college's main site is located at the edge of the town centre on its original early twentieth century site, which has been extended and developed. Within 100 yards of the main site is the college's higher education centre, housed in a former Victorian grammar school. The college delivers much of its training for local businesses in a suite of rooms in the Burnley Business Centre. Two 'college shops' in Burnley and nearby Padiham give people easy access to the college's provision. The college's strategy for working in the community is largely delivered through its work in 25 centres and schools across the borough. These include the college's new 'Skillspoint' centre located in an area prioritised by the borough for particular support.

2 Burnley has a population of 91,000. As manufacturing has declined, the East Lancashire area has been increasingly dominated by small enterprises and a low wage, low skills economy. However, a high proportion of the workforce, 35% against a national average of 18%, are still employed in manufacturing. Average hourly earnings are 17% below the national average and 9% below the average for Lancashire. Unemployment rates in the borough are around 4%, but this low figure reflects a high level of unskilled, part-time work. The borough contains a number of wards with high levels of social and economic deprivation. The overall level of skills and qualifications are notably below the national average, as they are in East Lancashire as a whole.

3 In 1999, 43.4% of school-leavers from Burnley schools gained five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects at grades A to C compared with the national average of 48%. The staying-on rate in full-time education was 56%, the lowest in East Lancashire, and 12% below the national

average. There are two 11 to 18 schools in the borough, one of which is denominational, and two tertiary colleges within 10 miles of Burnley. Additionally, a number of private training providers make provision in Burnley.

4 The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time programmes in nine of the 10 Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) programme areas, from pre-foundation levels to higher education. There is also a small amount of horticulture provision. The college is a long-standing associate college of the University of Central Lancashire and provides 19 of the university's programmes locally. It is the borough's major provider of youth and adult training funded by East Lancashire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The college works closely with Lancashire County Council to deliver the county's non-vocational programme in the locality.

5 In 1998-99, there were just under 13,000 enrolments on academic and vocational programmes and a further 3,700 on non-vocational programmes. Since the last inspection in 1995, numbers have grown by nearly one-third, across all vocational programmes. In 1998-99, 11% of the college's students were from minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with 7% of the population in the borough. Of the college's total student body, 25% were drawn from wards with high levels of deprivation.

6 The principal is supported by a senior management team comprising three assistant principals, a director of finance and resources and a director of corporate services. Below senior management level, the structure is based on nine teaching divisions, an agency for youth and adult training, an information and learning technology unit, a student services function, a business development unit and a range of business support units. In all, 26 managers meet regularly as the college's management team.

Context

7 The college's development is guided by a mission updated in 1998 which states that: 'Burnley College aims to assure comprehensive lifelong education and training to excellent standards'. The supporting statement identifies the college's clients as school-leavers, employers and employees and the wider community and emphasises the commitment to serve all groups equally. The college's strategic objectives which derive directly from the mission focus on the 'commitment to raising standards, widening participation and contributing locally to social inclusion and economic regeneration, while continuing to improve internal communications and participation and maintain excellent financial health'.

The Inspection

8 The college was inspected during the week beginning 17 January 2000. Before the inspection, inspectors reviewed the college's self-assessment report and considered information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used student retention and achievement data derived from the FEFC's individualised student record (ISR) for 1997 and 1998, and college-produced data for 1999. The college acknowledges some deficiencies in the 1997 data. Inspectors checked a sample of the 1999 data against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The data were found to be largely accurate. The basic skills section of the inspection report does not contain a students' achievement table as it is difficult to disaggregate appropriate data. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately two months before its inspection. The FEFC inspection was carried out by 12 inspectors and an auditor for a total of 54 working days. They observed 85 lessons, evaluated students' work and examined college

documents. Meetings were held with college governors, managers, staff and students, and with a range of external organisations. Eight inspectors from the Training Standards Council (TSC) worked jointly with FEFC inspectors in the inspection of information technology (IT) and basic skills. They also inspected four other occupational areas. TSC inspectors interviewed 108 trainees and made 32 workplace visits. They observed 12 training sessions, 10 assessments and 11 reviews. They carried out interviews with trainers, supervisors or employers, off-the-job management staff and internal verifiers. Where relevant, the findings of the TSC inspectors contributed to the final judgements of the FEFC about the college's provision.

9 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the 85 lessons inspected, 59% were judged to be good or outstanding and 7% were judged to be less than satisfactory, compared with national averages for 1998-99, of 65% and 6%, respectively.

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	1	5	3	0	0	9
Basic skills	1	3	1	1	0	6
GCSE	0	1	3	0	0	4
GNVQ	0	6	7	1	0	14
NVQ	2	3	0	1	0	6
Higher education and access to higher education	0	2	0	0	0	2
Other vocational	5	15	14	2	0	36
Tutorials	1	5	1	1	0	8
Total (No.)	10	40	29	6	0	85
Total (%)	12	47	34	7	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

10 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Burnley College	10.3	77
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

Curriculum Areas

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 3

11 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in computing and IT. They agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but found that some had been overstated. Considerable progress had been made in rectifying weaknesses before the inspection. TSC inspectors' work included observations of teaching and learning, reviews of trainees' work, and work-based assessment.

Key strengths

- high levels of effective subject support for students
- systematic planning of the curriculum
- achievements and retention above national averages for general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) students
- good input from industry to courses

Weaknesses

- unimaginative and poorly managed learning in some general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) sessions
- inappropriate use of accommodation
- gaps in the range of provision
- lack of recent industrial experience for staff

12 Effective subject support for full-time students is strong, as indicated in the self-assessment report. Applicants are interviewed by specialist staff and placed on appropriate courses. During tutorials, progress is reviewed against set targets, followed by action-planning. Students who are not making progress have to attend extra classes and are monitored carefully. 'At risk' students are

placed on report, and further action is taken if problems persist. A 'buddy' system ensures that absent students have copies of notes and handouts. Additional support is provided where necessary; for example, a dyslexic student was issued with a laptop for personal use and given course notes on disk.

13 Teachers generally use a variety of activities in their lessons, maintaining a brisk pace and checking regularly that students are learning. In some revision lessons, teachers relied too heavily on the students' own motivation to sustain their interest; they did not manage question and answer sessions effectively; and they failed to check sufficiently that individual students were keeping up. Students were not required to record the explanation for multiple-choice answers. The self-assessment report states that the sharing of good practice supports improvement. This was not apparent in the range of delivery methods observed. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that some room usage was inappropriate. Theory classes were held in practical rooms where students did not have enough space for writing. In practical lessons, some computers were too close together, allowing little room for students' worksheets. Two classes were taught in the same workshop, and the noise produced was distracting to students.

14 Students' work was of an appropriate standard and teachers assessed it accurately. Feedback on assessed work was clear but too brief. Assignment guidelines for students were inconsistent in format and did not include criteria for success. Key skills are not fully integrated with other parts of the course, both on college provision and in the workplace. Internal verification processes are thorough in college-based provision, but to a lower standard in the workplace. Students' own notes were badly organised and formed a poor basis for revision.

Curriculum Areas

15 The curriculum is planned effectively. Lesson plans and schemes of work are clear, showing how the syllabus is covered; the college identified schemes of work as a weakness during the self-assessment process and has taken appropriate action. Assessment schedules are co-ordinated to avoid overload. The management of part-time staff has improved since this was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. There are regular team meetings, and minutes of all meetings are circulated. Students' attendance is discussed regularly and action is taken. There are some significant gaps in the range of provision. There are no courses at foundation level and part-time day provision at levels 2 and 3 is limited. Both computer literacy and information technology, and telematics are available through open learning, and telematics is also on the college intranet. Progression between existing levels is good, as indicated in the self-assessment report. Currently 20 students are funded by East Lancashire TEC to follow national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in IT.

16 Students' achievements and retention are around national averages, except for students on computer literacy and information technology courses, where they are slightly below. The college changed to GNVQ in advanced IT in 1997 from the BTEC national diploma in IT applications. The national diploma figures for 1997-98 were slightly higher than the national average for both retention and achievement but GNVQ achievements for 1998-99 are significantly below the national averages. GNVQ intermediate courses were also below national averages for 1997-98 although they improved in 1998-99. Retention and achievement rates for students on GCE A level courses have been well above national averages for the last two years.

17 The division has 11 full-time staff and 20 part-time staff. Staff are generally well qualified, although many have industrial experience that is out of date. A plan to release staff for industrial updating has been drawn up, but only two staff have been involved so far. However, local employers contribute to learning by giving presentations on topics, and employed NVQ students assist in GNVQ lessons by illustrating current practice in the workplace. Visits also add to the student experience. The computing resources, both software and hardware are suited to the needs of the courses. Students have ready access to computers in computing rooms and the learning resources centre.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in computing and information technology, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Computer literacy and information technology	1	Number of starters	714	631	562
		Retention (%)	82	77	77
		Achievement (%)	80	51	54
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	Number of starters	23	33	49
		Retention (%)	83	67	73
		Achievement (%)	*	59	79
BTEC national IT/GNVQ	3	Number of starters	30	29	24
		Retention (%)	50	83	75
		Achievement (%)	*	87	57
GCE A level computing	3	Number of starters	27	27	11
		Retention (%)	56	93	91
		Achievement (%)	67	92	89

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 2

18 The inspection covered all main areas of engineering provision, including franchised work. Inspectors observed 18 lessons. They agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but found that it overstated some strengths and did not identify weaknesses relating to the franchised provision.

Key strengths

- well-planned lessons and assignments
- most achievement consistently above national averages
- effective apprenticeship scheme
- strong and productive industrial links
- well-managed curriculum
- good specialist computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture resources

Weaknesses

- inadequate questioning in lessons
- failure to comply fully with recognised good health and safety practice
- poor achievement rates on franchised provision
- inadequate monitoring of students' progress on franchised courses

19 The college offers a range of courses from foundation level through to higher education. Enrolments on the majority of courses are good. Inspectors agreed with the strength identified in the self-assessment report that 'the curriculum is steered through consultation with key stakeholders'. The industry link group gave advice on the development of higher education provision and the selection of a new computer numerical control lathe.

20 The curriculum is well managed. Effective curriculum monitoring, review and evaluation ensures internal verification and student tracking systems are in place. Student representatives attend at course meetings and their views lead to action. Students' progress is carefully monitored through the tutorial system. Attendance and achievement of students on franchised courses is monitored in line with college quality procedures, but students' progress on these courses is not reported to the college. The quality of the recording and student tracking systems varies between franchise providers.

21 The self-assessment recognises that there are strengths in teaching and learning. Inspectors judged 11 lessons to be good, but observed no outstanding teaching. Schemes of work, known to students as 'study calendars', play a major role in ensuring lessons are well planned. These are supported by more detailed schemes and lesson plans relating outcomes for the lesson to syllabus content. Teachers demonstrate sound subject knowledge and move between students to support learning. Teaching is clearly linked to assessment and teachers make good use of summarising and recapitulation to reinforce learning. In one lesson, the teacher used professional experience to relate theory to working practice and drew examples from the practical experience of the students. In a welding lesson, the teacher used questionnaires associated with the practical assessments to secure effective learning and testing of underpinning knowledge.

22 In some of the lessons observed, teachers made too much use of undirected questions which failed to check students' learning. In a key skills lesson, students worked to the wrong logbooks and the tutor spent too much time with a few students. Some of the other students resorted to playing computer games rather than continuing with the task. In two practical lessons, recognised good practice in health and safety was not followed.

Curriculum Areas

23 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that achievement rates are a strength. The 1998-99 achievement rate for GNVQ intermediate was 88%; it was 100% for programmes leading to the national certificate mechanical, and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) level 2 and 3 in computer-aided engineering. Student files at college and portfolios on franchised provision are well presented, and some portfolios show good skill development. All work presented was of an appropriate level. Standard assignment sheets inform students of the performance criteria and key skills being assessed. Standard documentation is also used to provide written feedback to students but this sometimes lacks sufficient detail. The Burnley College apprenticeship scheme in engineering encourages high achievement at technician level

through the award of a bursary and work experience to students who pass the rigorous selection process. The self-assessment report recognises retention is above the national average; for example retention on the GNVQ intermediate course has been good for the last three years at above 90%. Achievement is poor on franchised courses, which account for 10% of engineering provision. Franchised NVQ level 2 programmes have particularly poor achievement levels of 9%, significantly below the national average.

24 Accommodation is adequate, and much of the specialist equipment is good. The computer-aided technology laboratory is central to activities and provides impressive computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture facilities. There are stimulating wall displays dedicated to famous engineers. The college uses the mechanical workshop facilities of a partner organisation.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in engineering, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
C&G	1	Number of starters	53	80	92
		Retention (%)	85	73	77
		Achievement (%)	97	50	54
C&G	2	Number of starters	86	184	192
		Retention (%)	85	80	80
		Achievement (%)	98	83	76
NVQ	2	Number of starters	8	39	75
		Retention (%)	75	92	72
		Achievement (%)	0	43	9
GNVQ intermediate technician	2	Number of starters	22	87	73
		Retention (%)	95	95	92
		Achievement (%)	83	90	88
C&G	3	Number of starters	7	24	33
		Retention (%)	86	75	79
		Achievement (%)	100	61	81
Advanced technician	3	Number of starters	17	49	55
		Retention (%)	59	88	80
		Achievement (%)	100	80	82

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Curriculum Areas

Child Studies

Grade 1

25 Inspectors observed 13 lessons in childcare. They generally agreed with the college's self-assessment report but judged that the college had not identified one significant weakness.

Key strengths

- effective planning of courses
- exemplary contributions to widening participation
- outstanding teaching
- rigorous monitoring of students' performance
- outstanding students' achievements
- well-planned, well-managed and well-integrated work experience
- rigorous internal verification

Weaknesses

- low student retention on the childhood studies diploma

26 The division has extended its provision of part-time and short courses and strengthened childcare support to encourage the participation of students previously under-represented on childcare programmes. Courses are offered on main college sites and in community centres. Childcare teachers support the work of other divisions through developing, managing and monitoring the quality of childcare support for students who enrol on courses located on any college site. A successful collaborative bid for lottery funding has resulted in the development of a family support service in an area of high social deprivation. The college also delivers parenting and access to further education courses. These strengths are recognised by the college.

27 Courses are well planned. Work schemes for individual courses with accompanying lesson plans and notes are filed in packs. This enables absent students to catch up on the learning they have missed and ensures teachers substituting for absent staff can deliver planned lessons. Teachers regularly review courses. They use performance indicators to measure and monitor progress towards achieving targets they set to improve student retention, student achievement and teaching. Students' views, lesson observation reports and the results of analysing student achievement data inform judgements on the quality of provision. Improvements resulting from review include the restructuring of work experience programmes.

28 Effective community links enable students to demonstrate their work skills in a variety of childcare settings. Well-prepared assignments link college and workplace learning. Students have individual placement action plans which include short-term targets set to improve their skills. Work supervisors are involved in the target-setting process, and they are encouraged to attend meetings with college staff. They speak positively about the efficient organisation of work experience and the rigorous monitoring of student learning in the workplace.

29 Inspectors agreed with the college that teaching is a strength. In 11 out of 13 lesson observations the teaching was good or outstanding. Teachers relate theory to current workplace practices. For example, in one lively lesson the teacher demonstrated the impact of nature and nurture on child development through a role-playing exercise based on a baby learning to crawl. The demonstration included the impact of different environments and different adult responses on the child. Students clearly understood the implications for child development derived from this activity. The effective integration of vocational and key skills development was demonstrated in another lesson. The teacher asked small groups of students to define a specific type of child abuse and give a short presentation to the class.

Curriculum Areas

Students received feedback on their presentation skills as well as the content of their presentation. Students' progress on courses is carefully monitored and recorded in tutorials. Individual action plans are used to set short-term targets for improvement.

30 Pass rates on all courses are outstanding. For example, all students who entered the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) diploma in nursery nursing in 1997 and 1998 were successful and, in 1999, 98% of the nursery nursing students, 100% of the BTEC national diploma in childhood studies students and 100% of the entry level students achieved their awards. Students demonstrate high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in lessons, in the workplace and in their written work. Teachers provide constructive feedback on practical and written work to help students to improve their work. Internal verification procedures are rigorously applied. All assignments are verified before distribution to students and samples of all marked work are verified. Verifiers provide constructive feedback to teachers on the results of their verification activities. The college recognises these strengths in its self-assessment.

31 Students' attendance in lessons is carefully monitored. Any unreported absence is followed up. Students' attendance in lessons observed was 92%, against national averages for 1998-99 of 78%. The average number of students in the lessons was 13.9, against national averages of 10.9. Retention rates are in line with or above national averages on most courses. The retention rate on the BTEC national diploma in childhood studies fell to 71% in 1999; the college has taken effective measures to address the decline. Enhanced induction, tutorials and monitoring of students' attendance is contributing to improved retention rates for current groups of students. For example, the retention rates on the national diploma course for the 1998-2000 cohort of students has improved to 84%.

32 Accommodation is good. Attractive displays of students' work celebrate their achievements and provide a stimulating learning environment. Effective use is made of visiting speakers to relate college learning to work practice. Learning is well supported with good, clear handouts.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in child studies, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NCFE	Entry	Number of starters	+	+	14
		Retention (%)	+	+	100
		Achievement (%)	+	+	100
NVQ early years care and education	2	Number of starters	*	45	22
		Retention (%)	*	89	86
		Achievement (%)	*	35	95
CACHE diploma in nursery nursing	3	Number of starters	87	53	55
		Retention (%)	70	81	76
		Achievement (%)	100	100	98
BTEC national certificate and diploma in childhood studies	3	Number of starters	25	31	49
		Retention (%)	60	81	71
		Achievement (%)	100	92	100
Advanced diploma in childcare and education	4	Number of starters	+	8	15
		Retention (%)	+	100	100
		Achievement (%)	+	100	75

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*data unreliable

+course not offered

Curriculum Areas

Art and Design and Performing Arts

Grade 4

33 Inspectors observed 11 lessons across a range of courses in art, design, performing arts, music and media. They agreed broadly with the college's self-assessment of its provision but considered that some strengths had been overstated and that the significance of some of the acknowledged weaknesses had been underestimated. The college has taken some action to address identified weaknesses.

Key strengths

- improved retention and achievement in level 2 courses in 1998-99
- good teaching and standard of students' work in music and media

Weaknesses

- the failure of many students to gain a qualification in 1997-98
- poor retention and achievement in several courses at advanced level
- insufficiently high expectations of students
- some art and design work at advanced level below standard
- shortcomings in the co-ordination and management of courses

34 In the last two years there have been many changes in staffing, which in some cases, has had an adverse impact on students' learning. An acting head is currently managing the division. A large ratio of part-time to full-time staff, coupled with the long-term illness of full-time staff made effective teamwork difficult. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. The college has taken recent action to address the situation, but inspectors considered that actions taken were still to have effect. There are regular divisional meetings, but little evidence of formal meetings at course team level.

35 This area of the college has extended its provision and increased student numbers considerably since the last inspection. The range of programmes now includes art and design at intermediate and advanced level; foundation diploma studies; and national diplomas in fashion/textiles, performing arts, music and media. There are also first diploma courses in performing arts, drama and music. There are good opportunities for students to progress from one programme to another. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the division has established strong community links leading to live projects. This is especially evident in new course areas, such as performing arts and media. Staff have good professional experience which has assisted this process. Second-year music students produce their own compositions for a college compact disc and are responsible for all aspects of recording and promotion.

36 In the 11 lessons observed the majority of teaching was satisfactory. Only three lessons were good or outstanding and two lessons were less than satisfactory. This compares unfavourably with the national profile of lesson observations for the art and design programme area, according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*. Well-organised schemes of work and lesson plans are available. In the better lessons, teachers directed questions to individuals and activities were varied and productive, particularly in music workshops and media. In other lessons, students were not working to their full potential and parts of the activity continued for too long. Inspectors considered that second-year students' understanding and skills in design development, media and process were underdeveloped. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. In general, project briefs are helpful and well designed. Good practice is not always shared across the courses. Assessment weeks are in place and most students' work has been assessed regularly this year. Teacher feedback is constructive and

Curriculum Areas

students speak positively of the support they receive. In some courses, teachers do not chart the unit coverage and progress of the group.

37 The self-assessment report identified poor student retention and achievement, but it underestimated its significance and did not identify particular courses in enough detail with proposed actions. Many students in 1997-98 failed to gain a qualification: on the first diploma performing arts (music and drama) retention was high, but only 44% of students achieved the qualification. On GNVQ intermediate art and design, the achievement rate was 17%. In 1998-99, achievement rates were below national benchmarks on several advanced courses. Examples include national diploma media at 10% below the national average, and foundation diploma studies at 34% below. Inspectors considered that the improved achievement and good retention on level 2 courses in 1998-99 were an important strength. Other notable students' achievements are the annual exhibition of artwork, the fashion show and drama performances in college, and links with Burnley Youth Theatre. Attendance during the inspection week was 61%, lower than the national average for the curriculum area.

38 The college has made considerable planned investment in accommodation and equipment to support learning and new curriculum areas. Improvements include a sound recording studio and a dedicated specialist computer workshop, video editing suite, a performance area and theatre performance workshop, and refurbished darkroom and studios. The technical areas are in high demand and are well used by students. Additional storage is needed in some areas. Technician support has been increased and access to equipment is managed effectively. Staff are well qualified, and the college has supported their requests for staff development.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in art and design and performing arts, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	Number of starters	*	22	13
		Retention (%)	*	82	85
		Achievement (%)	*	17	80
BTEC first diploma performing arts, drama and music	2	Number of starters	*	27	36
		Retention (%)	*	93	86
		Achievement (%)	*	44	74
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	Number of starters	14	**	17
		Retention (%)	43	**	76
		Achievement (%)	100	**	75
BTEC national diploma popular music	3	Number of starters	+	17	27
		Retention (%)	+	82	52
		Achievement (%)	+	100	57
BTEC national diploma media	3	Number of starters	*	+	12
		Retention (%)	*	+	75
		Achievement (%)	*	+	78
BTEC foundation diploma art and design	3	Number of starters	*	*	11
		Retention (%)	*	*	73
		Achievement (%)	*	*	60
GCE A level media studies	3	Number of starters	15	11	16
		Retention (%)	73	91	69
		Achievement (%)	0	100	91
GCE A level art and design/ photography/graphics	3	Number of starters	+	+	18
		Retention (%)	+	+	50
		Achievement (%)	+	+	33

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*less than 10 students

**data unreliable

+same combination of courses not running

Curriculum Areas

Sociology, Psychology and English

Grade 3

39 The inspection covered provision in sociology, psychology and English. Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report and noted some additional ones. They concluded that the report did not give sufficient weight to some poor retention rates nor to weaknesses in teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- effective curriculum management, planning and organisation
- consistently good teaching in psychology
- examination pass rates mostly above the national average

Weaknesses

- some ineffective management of learning
- insufficient use of IT in the curriculum
- poor retention rates on many courses

40 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the programme area offers a wide range of courses in response to the needs of students. The division is well managed, with clear roles and responsibilities. Inspection confirmed that the use of performance indicators and the routine analysis of retention, achievement and value-added data inform planning. Regular meetings and shared workrooms encourage effective communication. Teachers are fully involved in the self-assessment process. Students' views are sought and lead to action. Courses and lessons are well structured. Students have a year plan which includes a scheme of work for each subject, advice on coursework and explanations of marking and examination criteria.

41 Inspectors considered that the college had been overgenerous in its grading of teaching and learning. Of the 12 lessons observed by inspectors, six had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. This is markedly below the national average for humanities, according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*. In the most effective lessons, teachers begin by sharing the aims and objectives with students. Some teachers make clear the links with previous and future learning and they leave time at the end to consolidate the learning that has taken place. Psychology evening class students were encouraged to think of issues for themselves as they discussed the topic of obedience to authority. Other lessons were managed less effectively. For example, in one sociology lesson, students were given a complex task with insufficient time to complete it or to discuss problems. In other lessons the pace was too slow, there was insufficient attention to students' prior experience, and students were rarely challenged or asked to elaborate on points made during discussion. Opportunities were lost for the development of key skills. Most coursework is well written. Higher level skills are apparent in some students' work. Work is carefully marked and graded according to the criteria of the relevant course.

42 The self-assessment report recognises that examination pass rates are above the national average for further education colleges on several courses. For example, GCSE and GCE A level English results are frequently above national benchmarks. In 1998, the pass rate for the one-year GCE A level sociology course was 20% above the figure for comparable colleges, and for the two-year course, it was 30% above. GCE A level psychology results in 1998 were 16% above benchmarks. However, retention rates are frequently poor and sometimes well below sector norms. For example, GCE A level retention overall in sociology, psychology and English was below the average for further

Curriculum Areas

education colleges. Only 51% of GCE A level sociology students completed their course in 1998, compared with a national average of 68% for one-year students and 75% for two-year students. These weaknesses are acknowledged in the self-assessment report and the curriculum managers have implemented a range of appropriate strategies to improve retention. These include the introduction of an additional study hour for GCE A level students, closer attendance monitoring, more and earlier contact with parents, and changes of syllabus to meet student need. The college sets targets for individual students and their progress against targets is monitored at least termly. Value-added measures form part of the course review and evaluation process. Students value the individual action-planning which supports their studies.

43 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects, and keep up to date with developments. Lessons take place in dedicated classrooms which are well furnished, bright and airy. There is a good supply of journals, newspapers and CD-ROMs. Bookstock is adequate. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, there is too little use of IT in lessons.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in sociology, psychology and English, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE English (grade C or above)	2	Number of starters	133	*	173
		Retention (%)	77	*	68
		Achievement (%)	52	*	50
GCSE psychology (grade C or above)	2	Number of starters	47	35	26
		Retention (%)	74	50	50
		Achievement (%)	50	72	62
GCSE sociology (grade C or above)	2	Number of starters	*	33	30
		Retention (%)	*	76	50
		Achievement (%)	*	36	64
GCE A level English (one and two year)	3	Number of starters	85	81	93
		Retention (%)	64	68	70
		Achievement (%)	83	80	83
GCE A level psychology	3	Number of starters	65	40	38
		Retention (%)	51	60	66
		Achievement (%)	64	88	76
GCE A level sociology (one and two year)	3	Number of starters	*	37	25
		Retention (%)	*	51	68
		Achievement (%)	*	79	80

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)
*data not reliable

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills

Grade 2

44 The inspection covered courses and support provided in numeracy and literacy. Eleven lessons were observed. These included specific courses in these subjects, individual support provided within vocational classes, and classes which were a part of other courses. The self-assessment report identified most of the strengths and weaknesses but inspectors found others. TSC inspectors observed four training and assessment sessions in the workplace.

Key strengths

- effective use of individual learning plans on specialist basic skills courses
- good progress and achievement by students
- students developing new skills and achieving suitable qualifications
- a broad range of learning opportunities in the community and the workplace
- well-resourced basic skills workshop

Weaknesses

- inadequate monitoring of basic skills support on vocational courses
- underdeveloped co-ordination between basic and key skills
- too much emphasis on meeting accreditation requirements rather than individual students' needs

45 The college offers a good range of specialist literacy and numeracy courses in a wide variety of settings. Within the main college site, it provides good opportunities for students at different levels of basic skills. These courses are also offered successfully within local communities in locations such as nurseries and family centres as part of the college's strategy to widen participation. In one nursery, a group of Asian women have achieved numeracy

qualifications and some are moving on to courses related to employment. Opportunities to build basic skills through IT and parenting classes are also being developed. Some tuition is provided for employees in the workplace.

46 In specialist basic skills courses an individual programme is agreed with each student and progress is carefully monitored. The student's preferred learning style is taken into account in planning learning activities for literacy. Clear goals are set and recorded for each six-week period. These are then reviewed with a tutor. The effectiveness of these individual action plans is a strength which was identified in the self-assessment report. In literacy, students are encouraged to base their work upon their own experiences and interests. Most worksheets and other stimulus materials enable them to do this. Some learning materials are less appropriate for adults. Students value the supportive environment very highly. Many who were reluctant to return to learning are now highly motivated and developing confidence beyond their expectations.

47 Students on specialist basic skills courses respond with enthusiasm and produce work of high quality. They demonstrate a thorough grasp of new skills and concepts. These are often applied within the courses to meet real needs and develop independence. For example, one student wrote an extended letter to a government agency to clarify issues related to her benefits. Many achieve their short-term targets and go on to acquire further skills or qualifications.

48 The specialist basic skills workshop contains a good range of learning materials. IT is also available and is well used. Staff in the workshop have relevant specialist qualifications. They develop excellent relationships with students and provide an environment in which learners with little self-confidence are prepared to take risks and make mistakes. Accommodation for community-based courses is also good.

Curriculum Areas

49 Delivery of basic skills support on vocational courses is not sufficiently monitored. Screening tests identify the students who need extra help to achieve key skills in communication and application of number at the level needed within their course. Good links between central student services and curriculum areas enable this information to be used to arrange support. The screening tests do not adequately identify the broader numeracy and literacy needs of some students, for example in reading or spelling. Inclusive learning officers provide extra help in lessons and this is valued by students. However, it is not their role to provide specialist literacy and numeracy teaching. Basic skills support workshops are available for students on any course but few students use them. This problem has been addressed in some vocational areas. In construction, the broader literacy and numeracy needs of students have been given a high priority and good use is made of tutorials and specialist support staff to develop basic skills. Good practice such as this has not been extended to other curriculum areas. The self-assessment report recognises that the organisation of basic skills across the college is not yet fully developed. A 'foundation panel' has recently been established to develop a more integrated approach. It is too early to judge its effectiveness.

50 On work-based courses, some key skills classes meet the basic skills needs of individual students. In others, however, there is little attempt to do this and little evidence of learning taking place. In these classes, students complete a series of worksheets or activities simply to meet the needs of accreditation.

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Support for Students

Grade 2

51 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but identified additional strengths. Some of the stated weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- carefully devised and comprehensive induction procedures
- good management of student services
- effective tutorial support
- improved links with the community
- well-planned careers advice

Weaknesses

- low take-up of learning support services by part-time students
- unequal access to enrichment activities

52 Since the last inspection, the college has made substantial improvements in the range and quality of services to support students. A new post within student services has been created to enhance liaison with schools, and the college provides a useful and popular range of open days and ‘taster’ sessions. Publicity materials, whether general or course specific, are clear, informative and attractively presented. The two college shops in town provide ready access to information for members of the community. Work-based trainees also have access to the whole range of college support services. The opening hours of the student service centre have been extended, and this is a positive step towards increasing student access. Initial applications are processed without undue delay and college arrangements for interview are good. Inspectors agreed with the college’s judgement that induction processes are largely successful in placing students on suitable courses. The system for work-based trainees is equally effective.

53 Inspectors found a comprehensive and systematic approach to personal support for all full-time students, as described in the self-assessment report. The tutorial programme is well managed. There is effective communication between tutors and the staff in student services. This strength was not noted in the self-assessment report. Tutorials play a pivotal role in identifying students requiring support. They also serve as a forum for reviewing progress and for developing the necessary study skills. There is a systematic tutorial programme, which is designed to meet the needs of different groups of students on different courses. Tutors follow an approved scheme of work and the programme is monitored. Tutorials are observed as part of the college quality assurance processes. The inspection team observed a sample of tutorials and judged three quarters of them to be good. Classroom teachers and tutors closely monitor students’ attendance.

54 The range of learning support is good. Careful monitoring, employing well-tried and sensitive methods, helps to identify those requiring learning support. All full-time students, but only about 10% of part-time students, complete a diagnostic assessment to identify basic and key skill levels. Students are encouraged to take up the available help. Support includes reading and writing help in examinations; one-to-one tutorials; workshops; in-class support of various kinds; the provision of technical equipment for dyslexic students; and the availability of signers for those with impaired hearing. The proportion of full-time students attending learning support activities has now reached 29% but few part-time students are taking up the opportunities available. Students on franchised engineering courses do not receive diagnostic assessment to check whether they need additional learning support. College data show that retention rates for those students receiving learning support are about 7% above the overall college retention rate.

Cross-college Provision

55 The college recognised in its self-assessment report its much improved links with the parents of younger students. Relationships with the community as a whole are good. Specific support services are well used by students from minority ethnic groups where appropriate. The college provides bilingual translation and interpreting services. The prayer room is valued and well used. The college led the way nationally in employing an imam to complement its chaplaincy services. Recently, the college went to the considerable trouble of changing the dates for a GNVQ examination to avoid a clash with Eid week.

56 A strength not identified in the self-assessment report is the improved careers advice available to students. The time and effort invested in extending and updating careers library resources and the specialist advisory input by the regional careers service have made this provision efficient and effective. College staff provide students progressing to higher education with good-quality advice regarding choice of institution, and timely guidance through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). The small number of GCE A level students not applying to higher education are referred for careers guidance and further assistance. Good use is made of the partnership arrangement with the careers service to offer help to job-seekers on a range of courses. The self-assessment report noted as a weakness the lack of staff qualifications for adult guidance, and this is being addressed.

57 Counselling services are widely available to college students and work-based trainees. The college uses access funds and additional resources to help students financially. Student services give useful advice on financial issues. Good crèche facilities are available.

58 The college policy is for enrichment activities to be organised by teaching divisions, not centrally. Many students are involved in sports activities. There is a wide range of other enrichment activities but access to them is uneven.

General Resources

Grade 1

59 Inspectors agreed with the main strengths identified in the self-assessment report but considered some were understated.

Key strengths

- high quality of accommodation resulting from improvements
- imaginatively refurbished and carefully maintained buildings
- extensive IT facilities
- a spacious, well-equipped learning resources centre
- good access for students with restricted mobility
- well-resourced work areas for staff

Weaknesses

- overcrowding in the refectory

60 The college's main buildings are situated near the town centre on a pleasant site which runs alongside a river and is adjacent to park land. Since the last inspection the college has made substantial investment in its accommodation. It has implemented its accommodation strategy with careful regard for curriculum needs. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the building programme has transformed the main site into a modern and secure working environment for students and staff. Key improvements include: the conversion of nineteenth century weaving sheds into a spacious learning resources centre, the creation of a bright and comfortable student services area and the re-modelling of the reception area to provide a welcoming and attractive first impression of the college.

61 Building work has been carried out with sensitive regard both to the character of the buildings and the needs of their users. For example, the decision to remove old paint in the corridors of a Victorian building on the main

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site revealed the striking art nouveau tiles beneath and created an unusual visual stimulus for students. The classrooms of this and other buildings provide students with an up-to-date learning environment. The three science laboratories have been refurbished to provide smart and contemporary working areas. As the self-assessment report recognises, the rooming arrangements have given a subject identity to most of the accommodation. Staff work areas are well equipped and generally adjoin the suite of rooms in which they teach.

62 As noted in the self-assessment report, external and internal signposting is clear and there are good arrangements for publicising the location of key college facilities. Students with restricted mobility have access to 95% of the college. Effective arrangements are in place to keep the college clean and tidy at all times. Students have responded well to the 'keeping up appearances' poster campaign. Staff and students talk with pride about their environment and it is virtually graffiti free and litter free.

63 The buildings on outlying college sites are also well equipped and decorated to a high standard. The Burnley Business Centre provides courses to local businesses from a suite of rooms in a town centre building. Up-to-date computers and the high standard of furnishings and social facilities promote its business-like atmosphere. The college shop in Burnley provides a bright and well-equipped facility for members of the local community to learn in a small and friendly setting. There are three open access computers at the shop and 10 with Internet access that are used mainly for evening courses. The college has set up a 'Skillspoint' centre in a deprived ward of the borough and provides courses for the unemployed in a well-maintained and comfortable building.

64 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that students and staff on all sites have access to extensive IT facilities. The excellent ratio of one modern computer to 5.4

students provides ready access to machines that are fit for their purpose, and in many cases state of the art. There is a good level of technical support, and faults are repaired promptly. All computers have Internet access. The college uses computers to support remote learning in community centres, in the workplace and in the home. It has 63 computers currently based in local businesses. Inspectors observing work-based training noted staff in two residential homes using computers lent by the college.

65 The spacious and well-equipped learning resources centre is well regarded throughout the college, a strength recognised by the self-assessment report. Computer technicians are based in the centre and provide ready support to students using its 76 computers. A few students and staff complained to inspectors about the high levels of noise in the centre. Although there is a quiet area, it is underused. The bookstock of 25,000 provides a good range of material for most courses. There is an excellent collection of 200 periodicals and specialist journals which is valued by students. Higher education students make good use of an electronic inter-library loan service.

66 The refectory provides a wide range of good-quality food at reasonable prices. It becomes overcrowded at peak times, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report, and students on the late lunch break sometimes find there is little choice of food left. A coffee lounge has been established to ease the pressure on the refectory. The college has made the decision not to provide other rooms for social purposes. Adult students in particular regret the lack of a quiet space. Sporting facilities on the main site are limited to a fitness centre, but the college has made arrangements for its students to have free access to facilities in a local leisure centre.

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Quality Assurance

Grade 3

67 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report and were able to confirm that significant improvements have been made in quality assurance arrangements since the last inspection.

Key strengths

- clear systems and procedures for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating courses
- thorough self-assessment process
- effective links between quality assurance and strategic planning
- staff development carefully linked with quality processes

Weaknesses

- college overestimation of the quality of teaching and learning
- uneven implementation of quality assurance procedures in curriculum areas
- insufficient impact of quality initiatives on standards

68 Since the last inspection, the college has made progress in the development of its quality assurance arrangements. The quality framework covers the academic provision and business support functions of the college. A quality manual provides comprehensive detail of college policies and procedures and related quality control documentation. Business support areas have developed customer service standards. Monitoring, review and evaluation of courses forms the core of the quality system and promotes self-assessment. A range of performance indicators on enrolment, attendance, retention, achievement and progression are provided to course teams. Although detailed statistical monitoring of

courses is at an early stage of development, inspectors identified examples of good practice in their use in a number of curriculum areas.

69 A quality committee has responsibility for overseeing quality issues. Its membership represents all parts of the college and provides an effective mix of direction and consultation. Accountability for quality is clearly allocated in job descriptions and well understood by staff at all levels. A cross-college audit team undertakes compliance checks on the implementation of college policies and customer service standards. The quality calendar clearly specifies the cycle of course review, self-assessment and quality audit activities. The quality cycle, self-assessment and strategic planning processes have been carefully synchronised. Arrangements for internal verification are well defined. An internal verifiers' forum meets once each term to monitor the consistency and coherence of verification procedures. Internal verification is generally robust, but there are instances in work-based training and franchised provision where arrangements lack consistency.

70 Feedback from students, parents and employers is gathered in a number of ways, including perception surveys, continuous improvement reviews, focus groups and 'mystery customer' activities. Students' perceptions are extensively surveyed at both division and college level. In some programmes these are supplemented by more customised surveys. Findings are systematically collated, analysed and incorporated into course reviews and action plans. Outcomes from these surveys are not always routinely fed back to students. Student representatives attend course team meetings and there are periodic meetings between students and divisional and senior management. The college maintains good links with employers and community organisations. The arrangements within the quality framework for securing feedback from employers are less systematic. Employer perception surveys are currently being reviewed to address this issue.

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71 A college internal inspection team is in place to undertake lesson observation and to promote sharing of good practice. A sample of 180 lessons was evaluated and the grades allocated were used as evidence to underpin judgements on the quality of teaching and learning in the self-assessment report. In general the inspectors found the college had overestimated the quality of teaching and learning. Whereas the college had graded 71% of lessons as good or better, the inspectors judged only 59% to be so. Inspectors do not fully concur with the college's statement in its self-assessment report that its quality assurance systems have resulted in significant improvement in achievement rates. Overall, achievement rates have improved between 1997-98 and 1998-99, but they are generally below the national averages in FEFC benchmarking data.

72 The self-assessment process is thorough. There is good staff ownership of the process. Judgements are subject to detailed review and validation. Some sections of the self-assessment report are not sufficiently evaluative. The findings of inspectors largely confirm the college's judgements in its report. However, in some areas strengths were overstated and some weaknesses were not identified.

73 Staff development is well planned and closely linked to the quality process. Part-time staff are fully involved. The staff appraisal system covers all full-time and substantive part-time staff. Staff are appraised annually by their line managers. The system is well established and respected by staff, who comment positively on its constructive stance and relevance to their professional development. Outcomes from course reviews, lesson observation and appraisal inform staff development activities, which directly contribute to quality initiatives. The college achieved the Investors in People award in 1995 and was re-approved as a centre in 1997-98.

74 The college has developed well-considered strategies to address retention, classroom teaching practice and achievement. However, at the time of the inspection, there was limited evidence that these had had demonstrable impact on standards and retention, and that they assured a minimum threshold of quality in all programme areas.

Governance

Grade 2

75 Inspectors and auditors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified an additional weakness linked to the operation of one of the corporation's committees.

Key strengths

- the broad range of governors' skills and expertise
- significant involvement in strategic planning
- regular reporting of strategic performance
- effective operation of the corporation
- close involvement of governors with college activities

Weaknesses

- the late introduction of timely monitoring of students' achievements
- underdeveloped performance measures for governance

76 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.

Cross-college Provision

77 Following re-determination in accordance with the modified instrument and articles of government, the corporation now has 18 members. There are currently no vacancies. Inspectors agreed with the strength in the self-assessment report that governors possess a broad range of skills and expertise, including finance, human resources, disability, community relations and other aspects of public service. This expertise is used effectively by the college. For example, one governor with a trade union background has contributed to discussions about personnel issues and two appointments of education professionals have been made in order to strengthen governors' expertise on student achievement issues. Links between governors and the college are strong. For example, governors regularly attend academic board meetings and college presentation evenings, as well as making programmed visits to the different teaching divisions.

78 The corporation has established an appropriate range of committees comprising finance, search, curriculum and standards, audit, remuneration and personnel. Most committees operate effectively. For example, members of the finance committee receive management accounts on a monthly basis and meet to consider them formally at least once each term. The personnel committee has been active in monitoring the effectiveness of communication across the college. Until recently, reports on vocational students' achievements to the curriculum and standards committee were presented relatively late in the academic year; they are now considered in the autumn term. Governors are clear about the priority to raise overall levels of retention and achievement in the college, although they are less clear about which specific aspects are currently unsatisfactory. The terms of reference for the audit and search committees are not comprehensive. At the time of the inspection, although the corporation had acted upon the recommendations of search committee reports,

it had not approved the minutes of any search committee meetings. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. The appointments procedure for governors requires updating to reflect the composition of the new corporation.

79 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that agendas and papers for corporation and committee meetings are prepared to a high standard and distributed in a timely manner. A calendar of corporation and committee meetings has been established. The most recent corporation and committee minutes, with the exception of those for the search committee, are displayed in the learning resources centre. Additional information is available on application to the clerk. The clerk to the governors is also the director of corporate services. In order to assess the adequacy of the time allocated for clerking duties, the corporation has recognised it needs to review the clerking role. The corporation has implemented a 'whistleblowing' policy. The code of conduct, recently reviewed by the corporation, still requires some updating to incorporate the recommendations of the Nolan committee on openness. The register of interests is updated annually. Governance matters are reported in the college annual report and in the fortnightly staff newsletter. The annual meeting of the college is open to the public.

80 The self-assessment report appropriately recognises the significant involvement of governors in strategic planning. A special corporation meeting is devoted to debating the draft plan in May of each academic year; a second draft is presented to the full corporation in June for final approval. The broader objectives of the college linked to social inclusion and widening participation are discussed at these meetings. As part of the work of the committees during the year, relevant sections of the draft plan are presented for comment. Governors were instrumental in contributing to

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the development of the revised college mission statement in 1998. The principal presents a detailed written report to governors each term in order to demonstrate the progress made towards achieving the annual goals outlined in the strategic plan. The achievement of these goals and the broader strategic objectives form an important element in the performance criteria used by the remuneration committee to appraise the principal.

81 Governors are closely involved in the writing of their own self-assessment report at the annual residential conference. The judgements are subsequently endorsed at a full corporation meeting. The self-assessment report acknowledges that more formal performance measures for governance are at an early stage of development. It also recognises that the training needs of governors are not systematically analysed although members are provided with opportunities to attend external training events. There is currently no induction checklist to ensure a consistent experience for new members although the governors' handbook is comprehensive in its coverage of required information.

Management

Grade 2

82 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but found additional strengths and weaknesses. They considered that one of the weaknesses identified by the college had been substantially addressed by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- clear strategic planning process
- effective communications
- good financial management
- widely based and well-used market information
- productive links with a wide range of external partners

Weaknesses

- insufficient analysis and use of management information by curriculum managers
- inconsistent impact of strategies to improve retention

83 All staff are involved in the strategic planning process. A published calendar sets out key stages in the development of the plan. There are structured opportunities for staff and governors to be involved in this development. Strategic objectives inform the divisional business plans. As identified in the self-assessment report, the college's clear management structure is well understood by staff. The five senior managers, each with cross-college and line manager responsibilities, and the principal work well together.

84 Inspectors agreed that effective channels of communication keep staff well informed. There is a detailed meetings schedule to disseminate information and brief staff. The academic board

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is an effective means of consulting staff on key issues. Meetings are structured to enable members to consider items in small groups. Minutes are clear and they go to all staff, as do the minutes of governors' meetings and the weekly senior management team meetings. The principal holds three meetings a year with all staff to report progress on the college's strategic objectives. There are good arrangements to enable part-time teachers to attend meetings. The improved electronic mail system is now on the web and staff have been trained in its use. All full-time and most part-time staff can access the system from home. Staff consider that they have many opportunities to put forward their views.

85 There are good arrangements for implementing and monitoring key college policies such as health and safety, and personnel policies. Commitment to equal opportunities is strong. A range of activities has improved access for those groups who do not usually participate in further education. Promotion of equal opportunities is a discernible strand in marketing. However, responsibility for monitoring the impact of these and other aspects of equal opportunities is not clearly allocated. The equal opportunities policy has not been reviewed for four years.

86 Improvement of retention rates is a major strategic objective for the college and, over the past two years, a number of strategies have been implemented at both course and college levels. The impact of these activities has been limited, a weakness not mentioned in the self-assessment report. The college calculates that its overall in-year retention rate was 80% in 1998-99. This includes non-FEFC funded provision and represents an improvement on the preceding year. However, between 1997-98 and 1998-99, course retention rates have declined on level 1, level 2 and level 3 courses for both 16 to 18 students and those aged 19 or over, though they rose on higher education courses and remained fairly static for short courses.

87 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The college is currently in a sound financial position. It has recorded operating surpluses for the last three years. The annual accounts for the year ending July 1999 reported that the college had significant reserves. Senior managers and members of the finance committee review monthly management accounts. Termly financial reports to the corporation could usefully be expanded. The budget planning process is well documented. The college maintains a comprehensive set of financial regulations that are regularly updated. The college recognised these strengths in the self-assessment report.

88 The marketing unit effectively gathers and analyses information from a wide range of sources. Managers use this to inform the strategic plan and the comprehensive marketing plan. In drawing up its strategic objectives, they also take account of government priorities and targets set by local and subregional partnerships. A range of information, including postcode analysis, perceptions of students and views from community groups informs promotional materials and activities. The impact of these is evaluated and the results are used in updating and revising publicity materials. These strengths were not identified in the self-assessment report.

89 The college has made systematic and determined efforts over the last 18 months to improve its management information system. Following a consultant's report which identified a wide range of inadequacies, the college drew up an action plan to address these. It has made good progress in its implementation. Extensive measures are in place to ensure that the information on the system is accurate. However, curriculum managers are only able to use the system to a limited degree. Every month, they receive paper reports of numbers of students enrolled. These do not indicate retention rates, so managers cannot easily identify trends and

Cross-college Provision

poor performance. Managers do not have on-line access to data, other than information on students such as class lists and personal details. The college recognises that the system needs further development and intends to train managers to help them use the system as a review and planning tool.

90 Inspectors agreed that the college has extensive and effective links with a wide range of external bodies. It has good relationships with the local TEC and is the main provider of full-time New Deal training in East Lancashire. The college is involved in a number of developments with a range of partners in Burnley and East Lancashire. It is a member of the East Lancashire 'higher skills' task group. In partnership with other colleges in East Lancashire, it has made successful bids for European funding. It is undertaking a number of activities to develop good links with local employers. There are strong and productive links with the local community through schools and through community groups and associations.

Conclusions

91 Inspectors found some sections of the self-assessment report were more incisive than others. In the more effective sections, good use had been made of performance indicators. Cross-college sections took appropriate account of the findings from curriculum areas. Evidence to support the judgements made was readily available in the college. Inspectors agreed with most of the college's judgements, but they identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors did not agree with the lesson observation grade profile that underpinned some of the judgements on teaching and learning. Inspectors awarded a higher grade to one cross-college aspect, and a lower one to another. They awarded a lower grade to two of the curriculum areas.

92 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 (November 1999)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	4
16-18 years	23
19-24 years	13
25+ years	60
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1999)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	36
Level 2 (intermediate)	25
Level 3 (advanced)	24
Level 4/5 (higher)	3
Non-schedule 2	12
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (November 1999)

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	310	1,084	14
Agriculture	18	0	1
Construction	88	448	5
Engineering	101	841	10
Business	263	1,323	16
Hotel and catering	107	22	1
Health and community care	423	760	12
Art and design	261	823	11
Humanities	273	2,030	23
Basic education	46	646	7
Total	1,890	7,977	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 25% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1999)

	<i>Per- manent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	164	1	0	165
Supporting direct learning contact	56	1	4	61
Other support	88	4	8	100
Total	308	6	12	326

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£9,158,000	£9,267,000	£9,698,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£16.71*	£16.22*	£16.20*
Payroll as a proportion of income	62%	57%	64%
Achievement of funding target	104%	100%	99%
Diversity of income	33%	37%	38%
Operating surplus	£330,000	£349,000	£7,000

Sources: Income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

ALF - Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999)

Payroll - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Achievement of funding target - Performance Indicators 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Diversity of income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Operating surplus - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

*provisional data

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	-	635	684	-	1,468	1,436
	Retention (%)	-	79	76	-	77	75
	Achievement (%)	-	56	63	-	64	58
2	Number of starters	-	737	954	-	1,130	1,326
	Retention (%)	-	80	75	-	80	77
	Achievement (%)	-	48	64	-	57	60
3	Number of starters	-	908	1,012	-	977	986
	Retention (%)	-	84	73	-	85	81
	Achievement (%)	-	68	68	-	51	53
4 or 5	Number of starters	-	7	21	-	50	135
	Retention (%)	-	100	95	-	86	96
	Achievement (%)	-	100	17	-	81	64
Short courses	Number of starters	-	583	400	-	1,175	727
	Retention (%)	-	84	82	-	86	72
	Achievement (%)	-	59	74	-	69	85
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	-	326	558	-	2,093	2,131
	Retention (%)	-	94	93	-	92	92
	Achievement (%)	-	58	85	-	71	75

Source: ISR

-ISR data not collected

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