

Chippenham College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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*

© FEFC 1998

You may photocopy this report. A college may use its report in promotional material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings of the inspection are not misrepresented.

Contents

Paragraph

Summary

Context

The college and its mission 1

The inspection 5

Curriculum areas

Computing and information technology 7

Sport and leisure 14

Health and care including hair and beauty 20

Social science, English and communications 26

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities 32

Cross-college provision

Support for students 40

General resources 47

Quality assurance 55

Governance 64

Management 72

Conclusions 82

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.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision, curriculum areas and lesson observations, for colleges inspected during 1996-97, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	59	30	2	–
Cross-college provision	18	51	27	4	–
Lesson observations	19	42	31	7	1

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report.* Grades were awarded using the guidelines in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*.
Sample size: 122 college inspections

Retention and Pass Rates

Where data on students' achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in two ways:

- as a retention rate, which is the proportion of students who completed a course in relation to the number enrolled on 1 November in the first year of the course
- as a pass rate, which is the proportion of students which passed examinations in relation to the number entered. Pass rates for GCE A level are quoted for grades A to E unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for GCSE courses are quoted for grade C or above unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for vocational and professional awards are for successful completion of the full award.

Summary

Chippenham College

South West Region

Inspected November 1997

Chippenham College is a general further education college serving the education and training needs of market towns and rural villages in north-west Wiltshire. The college prepared thoroughly for self-assessment. Governors, staff, students and members of the local community were fully involved in the self-assessment process. The inspection team agreed with many of the judgements and grades in the self-assessment report. However, they considered that the college understated some weaknesses and in some instances, the evidence in support of judgements was insufficiently quantified. Action plans drawn up by the college to improve provision were insufficiently detailed in the self-assessment report.

The college offers a wide range of courses across all of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Work in five of these was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. Strategic planning is thorough and it is well integrated with financial forecasting. Governors, working well with an effective senior management team, have successfully addressed and resolved difficult problems facing the

college. The majority of the teaching is effective. Students receive good guidance and support. Students' achievements on some courses are good. In general, grounds and buildings are well maintained. The college should improve: less effective teaching; retention rates and students' achievements on some courses; and the accessibility and reliability of management information on students. In addition, the college should ensure that its quality assurance system is implemented with more consistency across all areas of provision.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Computing and information technology	2	Support for students	2
Sport and leisure	3	General resources	3
Health and care including hair and beauty	2	Quality assurance	3
Social science, English and communications	2	Governance	1
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2	Management	2

The college and its Mission

1 Chippenham College was founded in 1947, although its origins go back to adult classes in a Victorian technical school building which is still in use on the main, 12 acre site near the centre of Chippenham in Wiltshire. The college mainly serves Chippenham, but it also has centres in the nearby towns of Calne, Melksham, Malmesbury and Corsham. The area surrounding Chippenham is rural. The town owes much of its growth and prosperity to its good rail and road communications. Agriculture and food processing are important local industries. The main industries are engineering and plastics. The armed forces are also major employers in the area. There are many small and medium-sized enterprises. There are extensive networks of employer organisations such as chambers of commerce, business clubs and business links. The college is involved in these networks and often provides a venue for their activities. Staff work closely with the district and county councils and the college is part of the Wiltshire economic business partnership. Altogether about 130,000 people live in the north-west area of Wiltshire which is served by the college. The unemployment rate is less than 4 per cent compared with nearly 6 per cent for the South West as a whole.

2 There are six comprehensive schools in the area, all with sixth forms. Three of these schools have acquired grant-maintained status. In Chippenham, 76 per cent of young people stay on in full-time education after the age of 16 compared with 78 per cent nationally, and 73 per cent in the county of Wiltshire. The nearest further education college, Lackham College which offers mainly agricultural provision, is three miles away. Swindon College, Trowbridge College and City of Bath College are each about 15 miles away. The college has good relationships with all these institutions and has formed partnerships with the colleges through Wiltshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

3 In 1996-97, 1,197 full-time and 6,595 part-time students enrolled on college programmes. Seventy-five per cent were aged 19 years or over. In recent years, the college has increased its work for employers. The successful provision of accreditation of the prior learning of part-time students from the armed forces who are preparing for new careers in civilian life, helped the college to achieve the Queen's Award for further and higher education in 1994. The college has exceeded its unit targets for the last two years. The college employs 151 full-time equivalent staff who teach, or directly support learning, and 71 full-time equivalent administrative staff. At the time of the inspection, the college had recently completed a curriculum and staffing review and this resulted in a reduction of staff numbers and in a reallocation of responsibilities among the senior managers. The senior management team comprises the principal, the vice-principal, the finance manager, and two assistant principals who each act as one of the heads of the two curriculum faculties, for business, science and services, and for technology and communications, respectively. Within the two faculties, there are 16 teaching sections managed by section heads who have substantial teaching commitments.

4 The college, through its mission statement, is committed to 'community, quality and lifelong learning'. The strategic plan identifies six targets. These comprise: increasing the number of adult students; improving quality, retention and achievement; marketing to achieve growth; improving the effectiveness of staff; improving the efficiency and effectiveness of curriculum management; and increasing non-FEFC income.

Context

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected during the week beginning 10 November 1997. The college provided data on students' achievements for the three years 1995 to 1997. Aspects of these data were inaccurate and some information required by the inspectors could not be provided. The inspection was carried out by 12 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 42 days. They observed 76 lessons, examined students' work and scrutinised a variety of college documents. Inspectors met college governors, managers, staff and students.

6 Strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses in 57 per cent of the lessons inspected. Seven per cent of the lessons had weaknesses which outweighed strengths. According to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*, 61 per cent of all lessons inspected for the year 1996-97 had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. According to the same report, 8 per cent of lessons inspected in all colleges had weaknesses which outweighed strengths. The average level of attendance in lessons

inspected was 78 per cent compared with the average of 77 per cent for all colleges inspected in 1996-97. The highest attendance was on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at 89 per cent, and the lowest was on courses in health and care, at 75 per cent. The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	2	7	7	0	0	16
GCSE	0	1	4	0	0	5
GVNQ	3	5	7	2	0	17
NVQ	2	3	5	0	0	10
Access to higher education	0	2	2	0	0	4
Other vocational*	6	12	3	3	0	24
Total	13	30	28	5	0	76

*includes provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the further and adult education teaching certificate

Curriculum Areas

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 2

7 Eleven lessons were observed covering a range of vocational qualifications at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels, general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). The self-assessment report provided a useful analysis of strengths and weaknesses and inspectors broadly agreed with its findings. However, there was insufficient emphasis on students' progress and achievements.

Key strengths

- a wide range of provision
- effective course organisation
- the skilful management of most classroom activity
- the relevance of the work experience for students
- the high quality of some students' work
- the excellent examination results on the national diploma and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) advanced courses

Weaknesses

- the narrow range of teaching and learning strategies
- the insufficient progress made by students in a minority of classes
- poor retention rates on the national diploma and national certificate courses
- the poor quality of some teachers' written feedback to students on their work
- a shortage of learning materials to help students to study on their own

8 The college offers a wide range of courses to meet local needs and this includes full-time GNVQ courses at intermediate and advanced levels, and day-release courses at national certificate and higher national certificate levels. Students following GCE A level and GCSE programmes at the college are given the opportunity to obtain certification in computer literacy and information technology. There is extensive provision for adults in the evenings and on Saturday mornings. The computing staff have good industrial and commercial links and provide a number of training courses which are specially designed for local firms.

9 The inspection team agreed with the college's assessment of the quality of teaching and learning. Schemes of work and assessment plans are appropriate. Most teachers give clear instructions to the students about the work they have to do and they take care to ensure that students' interest is maintained. Teachers demonstrate good practice. For instance, they provide students with useful guidance to help them improve their performance, and they carry out careful evaluation of students' assignment work on GNVQ courses. In a minority of lessons, students achieve too little in the time available. In some instances, the time in lessons is not used in the most productive way. For example, the students are sometimes expected to complete practical work in lessons instead of finishing it during private study. Excellent arrangements are made for full-time students to undertake two weeks of relevant work experience in each year of their courses. On completing their course, some students go to work for the employer which offered them work experience.

10 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the range of teaching and learning activities is too limited. Much students' assignment work requires students to extract information from recommended textbooks or from handout material provided by the teacher. Students also obtain some information from

Curriculum Areas

external organisations. There is scope for these students to carry out more research on their own in order that they may obtain information from a wider range of sources. Students are seldom required to use their initiative through group work or in the making of presentations. In a minority of classes students make insufficient progress.

11 Computing equipment for students' use is plentiful and the software is up to date and appropriate. However, there is a shortage of paper-based and computer-based learning materials which students may use on their own outside lessons.

12 The quality of some students' written and practical work is high. For example, some adult students on the Cambridge information technology course carry out assignments on actual problems they encounter at work and these help them to improve their performance in the workplace. Most teachers monitor students' progress carefully. Some staff, however, did not monitor students' progress as systematically as others. The quality of some of the written feedback which staff gave students on their work was poor and in some instances, staff gave their students little feedback or none at all.

13 The pass rate in each of the last three years for students who completed the higher national course in computer studies, was 100 per cent. In 1997, the pass rate of students on the advanced course in information technology was also 100 per cent. Pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate course are above the national rate and the retention rate on the course is good. In its self-assessment report, the college acknowledges as a weakness the poor retention rates on the GNVQ advanced courses and on the national certificate and national diploma courses. However, in the last year there has been an increase in the proportion of enrolled students who achieved their final award.

Examples of students' achievements in computing and information technology 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
National diploma in computer studies/GNVQ advanced	Retention (%)	64	50	75
	Pass rate (%)	100	100	100
National certificate in Computer studies (part time)	Retention (%)	62	58	50
	Pass rate (%)	75	57	100
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	*	88	100
	Pass rate (%)	*	43	56

Source: college data

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Sport and Leisure

Grade 3

14 The inspection included observation of 10 lessons covering GNVQ and national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses and GCE A level sports studies. The inspection team agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses which the college identified in its self-assessment report. The college, however, understated some weaknesses in teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- the strong and productive relationships between staff and students
- the well-maintained portfolios of students' work
- pass rates on advanced level GNVQ courses well above the national rate
- greatly-improved pass rates on NVQ courses in 1997
- the modern well-equipped sports centre on the college's premises

Weaknesses

- little variety of approach in theory lessons
- students insufficiently challenged in a range of lessons
- low attendance in key skills lessons
- poor pass rates on intermediate level GNVQ in 1997
- insufficient correction of, or feedback on, some students' written work

15 The college's sport and public services section offers full-time courses for students aged between 16 and 18 who wish to gain GNVQs at intermediate and advanced levels in leisure and sport, or NVQs in sport and recreation at levels 1 and 2. Some students combine their vocational course with study for GCSE physical

education, a GCE A level course in sports studies, or with study for a health and fitness diploma. Staff encourage all students to take coaching qualifications and an increasing number are doing so. In September 1997, the college increased its range of provision by setting up a sports academy. The academy offers those students with proven sporting ability the chance to participate in a specialist sports coaching programme whilst studying a full-time academic course.

16 A strong, enthusiastic team of three full-time staff carry out the majority of teaching on GNVQ and NVQ courses. They have recent experience of the leisure and sports industries and they draw on this effectively in their teaching. Specialist key skills teachers and experienced part-time sports coaches contribute to the work of the section. As the self-assessment report recognises, teachers have good working relationships with their students. In practical lessons, students are encouraged to develop a range of relevant skills. The students' interest is well sustained by lively and good-humoured teaching which encourages the students to give their best. Topics are related to the daily activities of the sports centre. However, some lessons are not well planned and in these, teachers use poorly-presented handouts and transparencies. In some theory lessons, teaching lacks an appropriate variety and fails to engage students' interest.

17 Assignment work is at an appropriate standard. Most students work conscientiously on their portfolios which are neatly presented and well maintained. GNVQ advanced students demonstrate competence in key skills in their work and some show particular skill in the use of computer packages to produce graphs and illustrations. Most students participate in classroom discussion and work well in pairs and small groups. They express their views clearly and these are listened to and respected by teachers. Key skill requirements in assignments are not adequately recorded, though steps are

Curriculum Areas

being taken to remedy this. Some students receive insufficient written comment on their work. Although the low standard of students' written skills has been identified as a problem in the college's self-assessment report teachers sometimes fail to correct errors in grammar and spelling. Attendance and punctuality are poor in some lessons.

18 The modern sports centre is well equipped for indoor sports, although the quality of some classrooms used by sports students is less satisfactory. The sports centre provides a valuable working environment for practical teaching in which NVQ students can learn and practise their skills. The self-assessment report acknowledges the limitations of the outdoor sports facilities. There are no base rooms for GNVQ students. Students are sometimes taught in classrooms that are poorly laid out and which lack display materials. The library stock for sport and leisure is unsatisfactory.

19 Pass rates at GNVQ advanced level have been high for two years. On some other courses they have been less satisfactory. For example, in 1997, the pass rate on the GNVQ intermediate course was low. Students on the recently-developed NVQ programmes have generally achieved good results. The proportion of students gaining additional qualifications is

low and this is recognised in the self-assessment report. Many students gain relevant jobs when they leave the college.

Examples of students' achievements in sport and leisure, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced	Retention (%)	*	100	88
	Pass rate (%)	*	75	87
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	91	71	87
	Pass rate (%)	63	73	45
NVQ level 2 (full awards)	Retention (%)	*	100	92
	Pass rate (%)	*	18+	100

Source: college data

*course not running

+roll on, roll off enrolments

Curriculum Areas

Health and Care including Hair and Beauty

Grade 2

20 Inspectors observed 20 lessons covering health and care, and hair and beauty courses. They agreed with many of the judgements identified in the self-assessment report, but found that some weaknesses were given insufficient weight. The profile of inspectors' grades for lessons did not match that in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- many well-planned courses and schemes of work
- the effective and appropriately-varied teaching methods on some courses
- the good results on GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses in health and care
- the students' good practical and professional skills
- the high-quality accommodation for practical work
- the effective and well-organised work experience programmes

Weaknesses

- some poor lessons
- some lesson plans with unclear aims and objectives
- insufficient links between theory and practical work in hair and beauty
- poor retention rates on the GNVQ advanced health and care programme in 1997

21 The range of courses in health and care currently includes GNVQ courses at all levels, access to higher education courses in nursing and health, as well as nursery nursing and counselling courses. Hairdressing and beauty

therapy courses leading to NVQs at levels 1 to 3 are offered and students may take part in these through various modes of attendance. The introduction of new courses such as aromatherapy has attracted new students to the college.

22 In general, inspectors agreed with the college's judgements that courses and schemes of work are well planned to meet the needs of students. There are regular team meetings of staff which are well attended by part-time teachers. In hair and beauty, staff adopt a uniform and flexible approach to the implementation of the courses and they use a well-designed training portfolio. The college arranges for some students to undergo assessment of their performance in the workplace and they clearly benefit from this. Communication amongst staff is generally effective.

23 There is some good and appropriately-varied teaching involving individual and group activities. In many lessons, topics are fully explained and linked to previous work, sometimes with helpful illustrations or overhead projector transparencies to show how the subject relates to industry. Students are encouraged to contribute in question and answer sessions and to make useful notes to strengthen their understanding of the lesson. On health and care courses, students showed lively interest in some well-designed worksheets. In hair and beauty, staff have developed high-quality learning materials which are well used in theory and practical sessions. Practical sessions are well managed and staff promote, and encourage students to attain, professional standards. Students are able to participate in suitable and well-organised work experience programmes. However, inspectors considered that the self-assessment report overstated the variety and the quality of teaching. In some instances, and particularly in lessons involving large classes, teachers failed to check that the students understood what was being taught.

Curriculum Areas

In health and care classes, there were not enough opportunities for discussion or group work.

24 Staff are well qualified and have relevant and up-to-date professional experience. Many have strong links with industry and have good knowledge of current commercial trends. However, in some practical hair and beauty sessions there were not enough staff to give students the individual help and support they needed for some activities. The new hair and beauty salons are of a high standard and have modern equipment, although noise from the adjoining sports facilities sometimes adversely affects the teaching and learning which takes place in them.

25 There are good pass rates on many courses and most retention rates are satisfactory. Students demonstrate good practical skills appropriate to the level of their course and to current industrial practice. The poor monitoring of students' progress and achievements and the low retention rates on hair and beauty courses were identified as weaknesses in the self-assessment report. The data provided by the college on students' achievements in hair and beauty were poor.

An analysis of students' performance carried out by the inspectors, however, indicated a reasonable standard of achievement. In health and care, the pass rates on GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses have been consistently above the national rate, although the retention rate on the GNVQ advanced courses was low in 1997. There have been consistently high pass and retention rates on GNVQ intermediate courses over the past three years. Two diploma in nursery nursing courses have been run. The small group of students enrolled for the first course all passed and the pass rate for the second course was above the national rate. Pass rates on the certificate in childcare and education course were good in 1995 and 1996, but they declined in 1997.

Examples of students' achievements in health and care including hair and beauty, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced health and care	Retention (%)	84	88	48
	Pass rate (%)	90	71	92
GNVQ intermediate health and care	Retention (%)	75	89	88
	Pass rate (%)	83	100	86
Diploma in nursery nursing	Retention (%)	*	100	72
	Pass rate (%)	*	100	77
Certificate in childcare and education	Retention (%)	57	77	92
	Pass rate (%)	75	100	42

Source: college data

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Social Science, English and Communications

Grade 2

26 Twenty-three lessons were observed across a wide range of humanities and social science subjects. The self-assessment report identified many strengths with which the inspection team agreed, but it failed to identify certain strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors found the evidence supporting some judgements insufficiently robust.

Key strengths

- generally effective teaching
- a good range of provision
- many GCSE and GCE A level results above the national rate
- consistently good results on teacher training courses
- thorough monitoring of students' attendance and punctuality
- the clear links between strategic planning and curriculum development

Weaknesses

- the lack of systematic procedures for the review and evaluation of provision
- too much exposition by teachers in some lessons
- lack of opportunities for students to develop key skills

27 A comprehensive range of provision is offered including GCE A level, GCSE, access to higher education, teacher training and a number of higher level courses. These are available as one-year, two-year, full-time, part-time, day and evening programmes. The self-assessment report stressed responsiveness of courses to adults' needs. This is evident in the provision for students who have not previously participated in further or higher education.

28 Teaching is generally effective and sometimes good. Effective lesson planning ensures that the syllabus is properly covered. In the better lessons, the teachers display an assured grasp of specialist subjects. Knowledge is shared between teachers and students, and students are given opportunities to generate their own ideas. Students receive good help and guidance from their teachers. In the social sciences, students have a clear understanding of the purpose of their lessons. In less effective classes, there was too much exposition by teachers who failed to identify and meet the learning needs of individual students. The self-assessment report did not identify this weakness. It also failed to recognise that students do not have enough opportunities to develop key skills. Information technology, for example, is used as a means of presenting work but not as a tool for analysis and research.

29 There is clear linking of curriculum development in humanities to the college's strategic objectives but this was not acknowledged as a strength in the college's self-assessment report. Course documentation is detailed and systematic. Schemes of work and lesson plans in particular are thorough. Staff deal effectively with problems related to courses when these arise. The review and evaluation of some aspects of provision are, however, not rigorous enough.

30 Staff are well qualified and they hold relevant degrees. Most have a teaching qualification. In general, the range of resources in terms of books and audiovisual aids is sufficient. The English bookstock in the library is poor, however, and there are few CD-ROM databases available for learning across the humanities.

31 The college rightly recognises the achievements of its students in humanities. Of those entered for GCE A level examinations, over 80 per cent have achieved a pass grade over the last two years. In both GCSE and GCE A level examinations, between 1995 and 1997, two-thirds of all results gained by students

Curriculum Areas

entered for examinations were above the national rate for further education colleges. There were insufficient data on retention rates. Students enjoy their studies. They respond well to their teachers in lessons. GCE A level and adult students are articulate. Their written work is well presented and of an appropriate standard.

Examples of students' achievements in social science, English and communications, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level	Retention (%)	90	91	89
	Pass rate (%)	75	82	82
GCSE	Retention (%)	90	72	80
	Pass rate (%)	56	62	61
Further and adult education teachers' certificate (stage 1)	Retention (%)	94	86	93
	Pass rate (%)	94	86	93
Further and adult education teachers' certificate (stage 2)	Retention (%)	95	100	100
	Pass rate (%)	90	94	90
Access to higher education	Retention (%)	*	60	94
	Pass rate (%)	*	83	83

Source: college data

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Grade 2

32 The inspection covered courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It also included the support provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who were following other college courses. Twelve lessons were observed. Inspectors concluded that the college's self-assessment report identified the strengths and most of the weaknesses of the provision.

Key strengths

- effective and enthusiastic teaching on courses specifically for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the students' punctuality, good attendance and commitment to their studies
- programmes of study for individual students to meet their needs
- regular assessment of students' work as part of the teaching process
- the strong and effective tutorial system
- the students' success in progressing to appropriate employment
- the effective work experience programme

Weaknesses

- the failure to provide sufficiently demanding work for a minority of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on general college courses
- insufficient provision of staff development in relation to providing support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

- insufficient information technology resources

33 The college provides courses for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties, for students with moderate learning difficulties, and for students with severe learning difficulties.

34 There is much good teaching. The core staff team is committed to meeting the students' needs and is enthusiastic and experienced. All staff make efforts to attend team meetings and they feel involved in the strategic planning process. The core team, including most part-time staff, understands the curriculum framework, but many vocational tutors do not. They do not receive sufficient briefing on the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The insufficiency of such briefing was not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

35 The self-assessment report notes the strong emphasis which staff place on students' punctuality and good attendance, and on students' commitment to their studies. Inspection findings confirmed this to be a strength of the provision. Staff have high expectations of their students. All students have their individual needs identified and teaching and learning programmes are designed to meet these. Teachers adapt learning materials to suit the students' requirements and they ensure that their own teaching methods help the students to learn as effectively as possible. Students benefit from taking part in practical projects in workshops. They also broaden their experience through activities on the 'skills for living' course, such as the running of a coffee shop.

36 The curriculum enables students to develop basic skills, build self-confidence and develop self-esteem. Practical tasks enable students to develop literacy and numeracy skills. Staff provide effective and well-managed support. All courses have comprehensive course management files and files for individual

Curriculum Areas

students. The majority of teachers have lesson plans which are consistent with their schemes of work. Most teaching is well planned. Students are set tasks at an appropriate level and these reflect the aims of their individual learning plan. Students' work is marked regularly and staff give students justified praise for their achievements. Some staff are not as careful in their record-keeping and in their logging of students' achievements as others.

37 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on general college courses say that they receive valuable help from the core team and that they are able to make progress. Their timetables are designed to suit their individual needs and learning activities are suitably spaced to ensure that the students have acceptable workloads. The students' progress and attendance are carefully monitored. Where possible, students are placed on courses which lead to a qualification or accreditation of their achievements. Staff are provided with guidelines on ways of helping students who may have particular learning difficulties. The inspectors agreed with the college's judgment that the curriculum is relevant and appropriate and that it meets the needs of individual students.

38 As identified in the self-assessment report, staff within the core team are well qualified and experienced. The report failed to recognise, however, that some staff on vocational courses lack the skills to give all the students in their classes the support they need. There is insufficient staff development in relation to student support. The college has identified that much of the accommodation for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is poor and that they do not have sufficient access to information technology resources.

39 The self-assessment report recognises the overall successes of students. Most students attain their primary learning goals and their retention rates are high. Many progress to suitable employment or training. Students are

clearly gaining in confidence and they acquire skills and knowledge. Most of those completing the first year of the course for students with emotional and behavioural difficulties progress to the second year of the course. About one-third of them progress, with suitable support, to other college courses. Students on the 'skills for living' course acquire qualifications and they make significant progress in learning to live independently without care and supervision. They are also provided with work experience. Some students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on other college courses, however, are not given sufficiently demanding work.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

40 The self-assessment report on support for students was based on a wide range of appropriate evidence which supports clearly-written judgements. The report specifies the actions needed to address the weaknesses. There was a close correlation between inspection judgements and those in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- productive links with local schools
- the impartiality of the advice to prospective students, including careers advice
- a strong, effective and flexible tutorial system
- good learning support for students
- ample guidance for students on career and educational opportunities
- accessible and well-used support and counselling services

Weaknesses

- inconsistency in the implementation of induction procedures across the college
- insufficient rigour in some tutorial action planning
- the low take-up of learning support
- some opportunities for careers guidance not taken up

41 The college provides sound guidance to potential students. There are productive relationships with local schools. Regular events such as open evenings and 'taster' days attract potential students. Publicity material is comprehensive and informative. Impartial advice, including initial careers advice, is offered to most course applicants. A careers adviser is also available to assist students wishing to

change courses but few students make use of the adviser's services.

42 Well-structured induction programmes are provided for most students. The content of induction varies from course to course and there is some inconsistency in the way induction procedures are carried out across the college. Some students find the induction process too intensive. The effectiveness of the induction process is monitored and modifications to it are introduced as appropriate. In some parts of the college, the accreditation of students' prior learning has been carried out with considerable success. There are, however, no college guidelines on the accreditation process.

43 The inspection team agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the tutorial system is strong, effective and flexible. Most students find staff approachable and supportive. Personal tutors are provided for all full-time students and for part-time students who attend for substantial periods. The personal tutors also teach the students in their tutorial groups and they establish good relationships with them. Tutors meet their students regularly. Annual programmes of tutorial activities are produced for each course. On most GNVQ courses, students take additional units on personal development as part of the tutorial process. Through discussion with their tutors, students agree personal development plans and action plans for improving their performance. In some instances, the action plans are insufficiently precise and they do not specify deadlines by which objectives must be fulfilled or targets reached. Progress towards the attainment of students' goals is monitored regularly and students' objectives are reviewed and then revised if necessary. In general, students' attendance is well monitored, although some staff are aware that they need to be more rigorous in checking students' absence. Tutors have clear job descriptions and they receive regular training for their role. The effectiveness of the tutorial process is monitored by the

Cross-college Provision

college tutorial review group. There are close links between the tutors and learning support staff.

44 There are clear arrangements for providing students with support to help them to learn more effectively. Most students on vocational courses and GCSE programmes have their learning needs carefully identified. They are given numeracy and literacy tests which are specifically related to the subjects or vocational areas which the students are studying. Tests are also available to ascertain whether students are dyslexic. All learning support services are promoted through the college teletext system. When students have had their learning needs identified, tutors advise them of the learning support which is available. The decision on whether to receive learning support or not is left to the students, but tutors encourage them to use the learning support services if they need them. Tutors can also refer students to the learning support team at any stage during their course. However, less than one half of students assessed as needing learning support receive it. The self-assessment report points out the need for the college to evaluate the effectiveness of learning support. No clear objective performance indicators for learning support have been established.

45 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the college's self-assessment report that the guidance available to students on completion of their course is good. During tutorials students consider careers opportunities and the tutorial programme includes talks by representatives of industry. All students are entitled to advice and guidance from the careers staff and 80 per cent of those about to leave college seek it. An adult guidance worker often works with tutors to help adult learners. Students are encouraged to use the well-resourced careers information in the library, but there is little monitoring of its use or effectiveness.

46 Students have easy access to a professional counsellor to discuss personal matters. She

refers them to other specialists if necessary. The student services manager offers advice on financial matters. Personal tutors also provide general advice. As identified in the self-assessment report, reception staff provide a useful service in informing students on sources of advice available to them.

General Resources

Grade 3

47 The self-assessment report includes a thorough analysis of cross-college and general resources and an evaluation of their effectiveness. Inspectors agreed with its findings.

Key strengths

- the pleasant main site close to Chippenham centre and its easy accessibility by public transport
- the good-quality sports and hair and beauty centre
- many adequately-furnished and well-equipped classrooms
- the appropriate arrangements for the maintenance and improvement of accommodation
- the well-designed and welcoming reception/information area
- the accessibility of most accommodation to wheelchair users

Weaknesses

- some poor-quality temporary classrooms
- some poor general classrooms on the main site
- the poorly furnished students' common room
- the insufficiency of some bookstock and inadequate seating capacity in the library

Cross-college Provision

- poor ventilation and some inadequate information technology equipment in the learning resources centre
- the inaccessibility of the first floor of the sports and hair and beauty centre to students with impaired mobility

48 The college's main site is pleasant and spacious and it is located close to the centre of Chippenham. The site contains sports fields. The buildings on it are of differing age and style. In general, the grounds and buildings are well maintained. The college's reception and information area provides a modern, welcoming focal point for visitors. Some corridors and circulation areas are in need of redecoration. Three separate buildings stand apart from the main site: the Godown sports and hair and beauty centre; the Tynings Training Restaurant; and the consultancy unit. The sports and beauty centre, opened in 1995, provides good-quality accommodation. At present wheelchair users can only use the ground floor, but the college plans to install a lift in 1998. There is a group of temporary classroom huts on the main site. Most of these huts are worn out and they do not provide a satisfactory environment for teaching and learning.

49 Buildings used by the college for adult classes in the community include a refurbished Victorian former school in Calne, nine miles from Chippenham which has an attractive new information technology room; a single-storey eighteenth-century former school with three classrooms in Corsham, five miles away; part of a school in Malmesbury 12 miles away; and a hut near the library in Melksham nine miles away. Most of this accommodation is of a suitable standard.

50 Most items of classroom furniture and general purpose teaching aids are adequate. Some classrooms are too small for the classes using them and they become overcrowded. Other classrooms have fixings or furniture which cannot be easily moved and this restricts

the use of learning activities which require the students to move about freely. The problems associated with some of the classrooms are acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Classrooms which are mainly used for a particular subject are usually close together with staff workrooms nearby. Most rooms are equipped with an overhead projector and screen, whiteboard and closed-circuit television. Some of the hatted rooms which are used for practical work by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are inappropriate. Learning materials are often displayed in classrooms to give them a clear identity with a particular subject. Some rooms are carpeted and furnished to a good standard. Others are shabby and contain basic furniture, some of which is deteriorating.

51 There are appropriate arrangements for the maintenance and improvement of the accommodation. Priorities in relation to accommodation are established according to the college's strategic plan and operational objectives. Existing space is adapted creatively to new uses. A site liaison group meets weekly to monitor the state of the buildings. The college's maintenance team carries out small repairs and it is responsible for the upkeep of the grounds. Furniture is gradually being replaced and rooms are undergoing refurbishment. Room usage is monitored.

52 The views of students on resources are sought and acted upon whenever feasible. In response to demand from students, a first aid/baby changing room has been established and the quality of service in the students' cafeteria has been improved through the purchase of modern food preparation equipment. As recognised in the self-assessment report, the cafeteria is adequate although it is poorly furnished and has old-fashioned seating arrangements. The student common room is some distance from the cafeteria. It is drab, poorly furnished and in general, it is not well used.

Cross-college Provision

53 The library is overcrowded at peak times. Its seating capacity is low for the number of students who regularly use it. There are attractive new comfortable chairs in the journal area. Although the library is adequately equipped in some respects, it has some defects. The bookstock needs improvement and expansion. The new librarian has begun to strengthen links with curriculum managers. Eighteen study spaces are available in the private study room close by the library, but they are little used. Near the library is a learning resource centre with 35 modern computer workstations. It provides students with a pleasant and modern environment in which to work but it is poorly ventilated. Resources include a good selection of CD-ROMs. The computers are not networked to others in the college. Some software programmes used elsewhere in the college are not available in the centre. The majority of the strengths and weaknesses of the library and the learning resources centre identified by the inspectors were also recognised in the self-assessment report.

54 Wheelchair users have good access to most of the main site. Where feasible, classes involving students with restricted mobility are timetabled to use ground-floor accommodation. Provision is made for students with hearing impairments through induction loops in some rooms. Some computers in the college's computer rooms have been adapted for use by visually and hearing impaired students but none in the learning resource centre has been similarly modified.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

55 The self-assessment report for quality assurance was detailed, thorough and well presented. It provided an analysis of strengths and weaknesses and a summary of planned developments.

Key strengths

- clear quality assurance procedures covering most aspects of the college's provision
- good arrangements for gathering students' views on the quality of provision
- the effective and developing work on the value-added factor in students' achievements
- the clear policy on and successful management of staff development
- the effective induction and mentoring system for all staff

Weaknesses

- insufficient analysis of performance indicators
- a failure to implement the quality assurance procedures with consistency in some areas of the college
- no quality assurance procedures for a few aspects of the college's provision
- inconsistencies in the implementation of course reviews across the college
- the weak links between staff development, course reviews and staff appraisal
- delays in carrying out staff appraisal

56 The college is strongly committed to ensuring that its provision is of high quality and that it is subject to continuous improvement. The strategic plan and its annual operating statements set out this commitment for all levels, for all curriculum areas and for nearly all aspects of the college's work.

57 The college has clear procedures for quality assurance. These are well documented. They are understood by most staff and they cover franchised provision. A quality assurance subcommittee monitors the implementation of the procedures. It is chaired by an assistant

Cross-college Provision

principal and has a wide membership drawn from all curriculum and most cross-college areas, including members of the academic board to which it is accountable. The subcommittee has, however, focused on the development of quality assurance processes rather than the analysis of performance indicators. Insufficient use is made of data on students' retention in the quality assurance process.

58 There is an annual cycle of programme reviews. Through these reviews, staff consider students' responses to a wide range of questionnaires, take action on external verifiers' reports and require section leaders to comment on students' achievements, retention rates and the efficacy of previous action plans. Policy on quality assurance is well documented and understood by most staff. A common approach to internal verification throughout the college is still being developed. The quality assurance procedures include arrangements for course review and the systematic use of students' views in the planning of future provision. The self-assessment report recognises that the procedures are inconsistently applied in some subject areas. Course review arrangements are managed across the college by the monitoring and evaluation co-ordinator. In a number of areas, however, reviews are insufficiently detailed. The self-assessment report acknowledges that more use should be made of performance indicators for monitoring students' achievements and retention rates and that action from previous reviews should be checked more consistently. The provision associated with separate GCE A level subjects is only formally reviewed once every three years. GCE A level subjects are, however, included within the annual review of the programme area to which they belong. The college is carrying out work on identifying the value-added factor in the achievements of GCE A level students by comparing the grades students obtain in their GCE examinations with the GCSE grades they held on entry to the college.

59 The college's approach to self-assessment was thorough and systematic. There was a comprehensive programme of action in preparation for self-assessment. Governors, staff, students and members of the local community were involved in the self-assessment process. A wide range of staff and managers at all levels contributed to the production of the self-assessment report. The self-assessment process was overseen by the college self-assessment review group. The review group included a member of the college board. Criteria for identifying strengths and weaknesses were established. The findings of the external consultants who inspected 85 lessons provided evidence for the assessment of teaching and learning. Staff in each curriculum section and those staff responsible for aspects of cross-college provision produced subsidiary reports with grades. These contributed to the overall self-assessment report. Staff felt fully involved in the self-assessment process although they did not necessarily agree with the grades awarded. All grades were moderated and sometimes adjusted by the review group. Arrangements were made to ensure that judgements were properly supported with evidence. The final report was presented to the corporation for approval.

60 Evidence was provided to justify the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Curriculum areas were required to provide evidence for judgements in relation to curriculum content, organisation and management; staffing and specialist resources; students' achievements; and teaching and learning. Evidence to support judgements was not always sufficiently quantified. Action planning for the improvement of provision was limited to brief lists of action points in respective parts of the report. There was no indication of who was responsible for carrying out the improvements or any specification of timescales within which action had to be completed. The inspection team found some of the data on students' achievements presented by the college

Cross-college Provision

to be unreliable. Some additional information provided by curriculum sections during the inspection differed from that originally provided. There were particular difficulties in relation to the information on students' achievements in a few areas where students were working towards obtaining NVQs at their own pace.

61 The college has an effective staff development management system, linked to a clear policy which staff understand and support. Staff development is managed by the college's professional tutor. There is an induction and mentoring system for new full-time and part-time staff and this is well regarded in the college. There are three training weeks for all staff at the ends of the autumn and summer terms. The inspectors agreed with the judgment in the self-assessment report that training activities for staff arise from individual requests rather than a coherent plan for staff development. There is some evidence, however, that staff development activities relate to priorities in the college's strategic plan but there is no systematic process for ensuring that they do. Priorities for training are seldom identified as a result of course reviews or the staff appraisal process.

62 Staff appraisal arrangements are well documented and the appraisal process is regarded positively by staff. This year, however, there has been insufficient monitoring of the staff appraisal process across the college. Delays have occurred in the implementation of the staff appraisal programme. The delay in completion of appraisals is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The college holds the Investor in People award. Preparatory work for reassessment for the award has indicated that managers give insufficient attention to discussing the training needs of individual members of staff with them before and after they undertake training.

63 Student representatives are involved in the work of some course teams. All students are aware of the college charter although not all are

aware of the college's complaints procedure. The charter is summarised in the student handbook. Arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the charter have yet to be established.

Governance

Grade 1

64 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses described in the self-assessment report. Inspectors concluded that in some cases weaknesses were overstated. The weaknesses identified by the college are being addressed.

Key strengths

- the determination and ability to resolve difficult problems
- the productive working relationships between governors and senior managers
- the detailed and informed knowledge of the college and its activities
- the wide range of business skills and relevant experience
- the close involvement in strategic planning and financial forecasting
- the regular updating of governors' knowledge of further education and governance
- the induction for new members including briefings on local and national developments
- the high quality of the agendas and papers for and the minutes of governors' meetings
- the code of conduct for governors and the complete register of their interests

Weaknesses

- the lack of recent meetings of the search committee despite the need to fill a vacant post on the board

Cross-college Provision

- formal governor training programme at an early stage of development

65 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. The self-assessment report identified appropriately evidenced statements which are in accordance with the audit findings. The corporation receives highly effective support from the clerk. Meetings are supported by timely, clear and concise agendas and minutes. The clerk's job description is, however, insufficiently detailed. Governors have adopted a code of conduct and they have completed a comprehensive register of interests.

66 Governors use their wide range of skills and experience to conduct the college's business effectively. They clearly distinguish between their role and that of senior management. They have worked well with senior managers to support the college successfully through a difficult period. In the last three years the board recognised the college's potential future financial and structural difficulties and successfully addressed them with resolution and determination. Membership comprises the principal, one community member, three co-opted members, one staff member and nine business members including the TEC nominee. There is currently one vacancy for a co-opted member. The board has identified the need to strengthen the legal expertise of its membership and to increase the number of women on the board, although this has not yet been addressed. Governors take note of students' views through the students' liaison committee which is chaired by a governor who also chairs the governors' audit committee. This enables information to

pass freely from the students' liaison committee to the corporation.

67 A committee structure has been established which includes both the necessary statutory committees and a large number of advisory committees. All have approved membership and terms of reference and their meetings are well attended. The search committee has not met recently despite a continuing vacancy on the board. Non-statutory committees, each chaired by a governor, focus on a specific aspect of the college. This enables individual governors to understand thoroughly a part of the college's work and to monitor it closely. Governors have identified the need for more detailed reports to the board on students' achievements to strengthen their knowledge of specific areas of the college. Inspectors agreed with this judgement in the college's self-assessment report.

68 Governors are closely involved in the development and monitoring of the college's strategic plan. They bring to these tasks an understanding of wider industrial and economic trends, entrepreneurial skills, familiarity with local needs, and an appreciation of current issues in further education and its funding. The 1997 to 2000 strategic plan has been skilfully integrated with the formal financial forecasting. Links with staff and students inform governors' understanding of the impact of strategic decisions on the life and work of the college.

69 Governors have introduced a thorough system of self-evaluation. They have completed a detailed questionnaire which requires each of them to evaluate all aspects of their work. Their responses have been summarised and they were used in the compilation of the college's self-assessment report. The working group which compiled the report included a governor, thereby ensuring that governors' views were sought and expressed on the self-assessment report.

Cross-college Provision

70 The budget is thoroughly debated by governors and is considered initially under four different ‘risk scenarios’. Governors are well aware of the college’s financial position which is closely monitored by the finance and general purposes committee, particularly with regard to cashflow reporting and forecasting. Financial forecasts and plans are well integrated. Monthly financial reporting is concise and clear and it provides essential financial information. Of particular value are the budgetary comparisons between actual income and expenditure to date and the forecast of expenditure to the end of the year. The provision of financial information and the way it is considered and interpreted has allowed governors and managers to make early strategic and operating decisions. The college has moved from a difficult financial position to one in which it has generated surplus funds.

71 New governors are provided with induction training and there are briefing sessions for all governors at the start of some of their meetings. These have included presentations from staff and students regarding college developments and topics such as FEFC reports. The board is strongly committed to ensuring that it keeps up to date with issues and developments in further education and with emerging national policies. A formal governor training programme is at an early stage of development.

Management

Grade 2

72 Inspectors agreed with many, but not all, of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- the strong and effective executive team
- effective communications across the college
- the staff’s understanding of and support for the college’s strategic purpose

- the consultative nature of the strategic planning processes
- good financial reporting
- good external links, locally and nationally
- the college’s success in meeting and exceeding its funding targets
- the reliable financial data for budget holders

Weaknesses

- the poor accessibility to and unreliability of management information on students
- the inadequacy of the reporting, analysis and monitoring of students’ achievements
- the lack of clear references to required resources in operating plans

73 The executive team is well established and it provides effective leadership. Together with governors, members of the team have successfully managed the college through considerable difficulties during recent years whilst retaining the support of staff. Clear strategies have been used to improve the college’s responsiveness to meet funding targets and to improve the financial position of the college. The management structure is understood by staff. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the college’s self-assessment report that managers support staff effectively and are readily accessible. Curriculum management is generally effective. Staff are clear about their own roles and responsibilities and about their links with their line managers.

74 The strategic plan clearly expresses the college’s direction. Inspectors agreed with the college that the plan is based on sound analysis of market information and takes account of the ideas of staff. Staff feel that they are given good opportunities to contribute and comment on the strategic plan. The central themes for the plan

Cross-college Provision

are decided by the executive and they are then presented to groups within the college which include staff, governors and employers, for discussion. From such discussion, most middle managers and their staff create high-quality operating plans to support the strategic plan. Operating plans do not make sufficient reference to the resources needed to support the fulfilment of the objectives specified in them.

75 Staff feel well informed about developments in the college. There is a wide range of internal communications including a staff newsletter which goes to all staff with their monthly salary notice. Many staff serve on committees such as the boards of study or the consultative committees which meet regularly. The academic board is generally seen by staff as the committee which confirms the executive's decision-making. Staff generally support the academic board, although some are unclear about its function. During the last two years, reports to the academic board on students' performance have not been extensive enough and they have been produced late.

76 Management information on students and their achievements is not sufficiently accurate or accessible. Monitoring of students' performance is undertaken by the course teams, boards of study and consultative committees. The quality of some of their analysis of students' achievements is poor. These bodies do not receive sufficient data from the college's management information system to enable them to monitor students' achievements properly. This weakness is partly recognised in the self-assessment report. The executive has agreed a detailed strategy to improve the provision of information on students and their achievements during the current academic year.

77 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The finance team is led by a qualified accountant who is assisted by an appropriate number of experienced staff. Management accounts are

produced more quickly than is normal within the sector, within four working days of the month's end and they are closely monitored and minuted by the executive at its weekly meetings. The financial regulations have been recently updated. Budget holders receive detailed monthly information which shows both actual and committed expenditure. The internal and external auditors have not identified any significant weakness in the college's systems of internal control.

78 Middle managers, who are responsible for engaging part-time teachers make bids to their line managers for budgets to cover expenditure on part-time staffing. The need for part-time staff is clearly reflected in the college's strategic plan and part-time teachers have an important part to play on some of the courses offered. The rationale, however, for the allocation of other resources to sections across the college is not always clear.

79 The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 was £16.83 per unit. The median in 1996-97 for further education and tertiary colleges was £17.97.

80 The principal chairs the equal opportunities group which keeps policies on equal opportunities up to date and introduces new ones when these are needed. The group has received reports on the accessibility of the college's buildings to students with restricted mobility. The health and safety committee meets regularly and reports to the governing body.

81 The college has formed extensive links with the local community in various ways. These include the participation of staff in consultative groups, the college's membership of local organisations and the use of the college premises for meetings of local business and community groups. Links with local communities are supported by area advisory committees which are chaired by governors.

Cross-college Provision

Conclusions

82 The college's self-assessment report was concise, detailed and well presented. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements reached by the college. The introduction to the report contained a useful summary of the college's mission and the context in which it operates. Inspectors found that they were able to use the report easily to plan and carry out their inspections. Strengths and weaknesses were specifically evaluated against the quality statements contained in the Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. As the report was written before the release of Council Circular 97/22, *Joint Working: Audit and inspection*, the college took the initiative to include suitable statements of its own on the quality of financial management. The report's judgements in curriculum and cross-college sections were generally supported by sufficient evidence. However, inspectors considered the evidence provided was not always sufficiently quantified or robust. In a minority of areas, weaknesses in teaching and learning were given insufficient weight and some strengths of both curriculum and cross-college areas were not recognised. The profile of grades for lessons observed by the college in preparation for self-assessment was, in several subjects, better than that found by inspectors. Inspectors agreed with all except one of the cross-college grades awarded by the college but they did not agree with several of the curriculum grades.

83 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 1997)

Age	%
Under 16	2
16-18 years	18
19-24 years	11
25+ years	64
Not known	5
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1997)

Level of study	%
Foundation	12
Intermediate	27
Advanced	28
Higher education	5
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	28
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 1997)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	108	711	11
Agriculture	7	13	0
Construction	0	39	1
Engineering	179	540	9
Business	222	1,151	18
Hotel and catering	128	52	2
Health and community care	185	413	8
Art and design	148	233	5
Humanities	176	3,152	42
Basic education	44	291	4
Total	1,197	6,595	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1997)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	86	33	0	119
Supporting direct learning contact	29	3	0	32
Other support	65	3	3	71
Total	180	39	3	222

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£5,662,000	£5,915,000	£6,406,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£16.57	£16.18	£16.83
Payroll as a proportion of income	76%	73%	65%
Achievement of funding target	93%	103%	*
Diversity of income	28%	25%	*
Operating surplus	-£217,000	-£296,000	*

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), Funding Allocations 1996-97 (1996-97)

Payroll – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96)

*data not available

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	118	130	116
	Average point score per entry	3.7	4.6	4.4
	Position in tables	middle third	top third	middle third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	197+	106	110
	Percentage achieving qualification	66%+	85%	65%
	Position in tables	bottom third+	top third	bottom third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	65	57
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	85%	75%
	Position in tables	*	top 10%	top third

Source: DfEE

Note: the majority of the college's students are 19 years of age or older

The achievements of these students are not covered in published DfEE performance tables

*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

+college data

FEFC Inspection Report 20/98

**Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
March 1998**