

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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# **East Birmingham College**

**January 1996**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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# CONTENTS

	<b>Paragraph</b>
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	9
Governance and management	26
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	40
Teaching and the promotion of learning	50
Students' achievements	62
Quality assurance	77
Resources	86
Conclusions and issues	99
Figures	

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## **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

By June 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.

### **College grade profiles 1993-95**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Inspection grades</b>				
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 06/96

**EAST BIRMINGHAM COLLEGE**  
**WEST MIDLANDS REGION**  
**Inspected February–October 1995**

## Summary

East Birmingham College has good links with the communities in East Birmingham. It offers students an extensive range of courses and a wide choice of attendance patterns. It has particular strengths in its provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and in its strong commitment to equal opportunities. There is a wide range of high-quality personal support services for students. The corporation operates effectively, although clearer financial information is needed to assist its work. Governors exhibit a high degree of interest in the college. College management functions well, particularly in its arrangements for communicating senior management decisions rapidly throughout the college. Teaching is generally well planned and effective, although students' achievements are variable. Extensive facilities reflect a strong commitment to the use of information technology to support students' learning. Quality assurance is well developed but more emphasis should be placed on the use of performance indicators and the collection and analysis of accurate data to demonstrate improvements in students' achievements. There is a need to address unsatisfactory examination pass rates in some programme areas and poor attendance and retention rates on some courses.

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

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science (mathematics, computing and information technology)	2	Health and caring	2
Construction	2	Humanities (English psychology, sociology and Access)	2
Engineering	2	Basic education (including adult education)	2
Business	2		

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 East Birmingham College was inspected in four stages. Specialist inspections took place in two separate weeks in the spring of 1995, the college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the start of the autumn term in 1995, and the inspection of cross-college aspects took place in October 1995. Eleven inspectors took part in the inspections for a total of 55 inspector days. Inspectors visited 162 classes involving 1,523 students and examined a representative sample of students' work. Meetings were held with members of the corporation, the senior management team, teaching staff, support staff, students, parents, local employers, members of the community, and staff from local schools. Discussions took place with a representative of the local training and enterprise council (TEC). Inspectors examined college policy statements, minutes of committees, working papers and documents relating to aspects of college organisation.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 East Birmingham College was built in the early 1950s to a design from the 1930s. Originally planned as a community college, it was instead opened in 1953 as Garretts Green Technical College with a brief to serve the post-war engineering industry. It retained its engineering focus until the 1980s when industrial decline led to loss of students and the college diversified its broad vocational curriculum. In January 1988 the college was renamed as East Birmingham College and it began to extend its campus. By 1991 the college had 12 access centres in the inner city and suburban estates; it now has 16. Though some are based in host organisations, these are not seen as outreach centres but as integral parts of the college, providing a range of courses from basic access to degree level.

3 The college has a strong sense of mission which is shared by all staff. This mission has grown out of its history and that of the East Birmingham communities. The college maintains its post-war roots as an engineering college responding to the automotive and metal industries. In response to high levels of unemployment and deprivation in the area, the college has also recognised the need to develop a wide range of locally-based vocational provision. Two-thirds of its students come from the immediate locality and almost all from the greater Birmingham area.

4 As well as East Birmingham College, Birmingham has 11 other Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) sector colleges and an adult education service. Another 10 colleges are within daily travelling distance and there are several private training groups in the area. There are four sixth form schools within walking distance of the college. Consequently, the environment within which the college operates is very competitive. The college has decided to concentrate on vocational education and training in the locality rather than trying to compete with the non-vocational education provided by local sixth form colleges and schools,

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or to move into the catchment areas of other colleges. It seeks to serve particular markets and many of its courses are customised for specific groups. Its relationships with the local community faced some difficulty in 1994-95 because of competition from other institutions moving into East Birmingham to offer their courses.

5 Birmingham still has a strong manufacturing and engineering base, in large companies and in small supplier businesses and, after a long decline, there is currently an increase in manufacturing activity. The college remains committed to maintaining engineering training and considers its future to be closely linked with local manufacturing industry. It also aims to support the newer industries in Birmingham, especially those concerned with the media, hospitality and finance, and to work with health and social services and other public sector provision.

6 The unemployment rates in the East Birmingham wards served by college centres range from 11.9 per cent to 33.6 per cent, with five out of the seven wards having rates of unemployment above the Birmingham average of 15 per cent. This compares with the United Kingdom average of 9 per cent. The population near the main site is largely white and includes a significant Irish community. The access centres serve areas with high Pakistani and other minority ethnic populations. Most indicators of deprivation place the area within the worst 2.5 per cent in Western Europe. Take-up rates for education and training, and the level of higher qualifications among the population, are low. The college is currently involved in major developments in Saltley and Small Heath, parts of the city served by its access centres, including the creation of a women's faculty to encourage a higher proportion of women, especially young Asian women, to participate in education. These developments are within the regeneration challenge fund project, funded by the government through the West Midlands Government Office.

7 The college enrolled 7,839 students in 1994-95 of whom 1,795 were full time. The college enrolls students all year round. A large number of students were partly supported by the European Social Fund. Enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. There were more men than women, especially among part-time students; the difference is not great amongst full-time students. About a third of the students enrolled in 1994-95 were from minority ethnic groups, which reflects the average population across the college's catchment area. The college enrolls a significant number of students with disabilities, and young people and adults with moderate and severe learning difficulties. The college has 181 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 109 support staff. All the support staff, and all but 10 full-time teaching staff, are on flexible contracts. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

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- 8 The college's mission is:
- to provide excellent education, training, and services for its students, local industry and commerce, and the community, as defined in the quality policy, which includes:
    - involving students in all aspects of development
    - aiming for inclusion: being open to all members of the community and pursuing the equal opportunities policy rigorously, particularly in areas of race, gender, disability and sexual orientation
    - investing in the people who work at the college (associates) and bringing about single staff status
    - giving individual associates control over their working lives
    - commitment to continuous improvement, and having high expectations of students
  - to prioritise the needs of Birmingham citizens, especially in the inner city and East Birmingham
  - to create genuine local access to education and training at all levels, especially for individuals and groups who have found barriers to access in the past
  - to work in partnership with other local providers of education and training in order to create coherent provision.

#### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

9 The college has an extensive range of courses including part-time provision in all 10 FEFC programme areas and full-time provision in all but agriculture. The course profile reflects local needs. Foundation and intermediate level students comprise 50 per cent and 24 per cent of the total full-time equivalent enrolments, respectively, whilst advanced level and higher education students account for 21 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively.

10 The college responds well both to its mission and to the needs of the local adult unemployed. Eighty-one per cent of the students are over 19 years old and 61 per cent are aged 25 or over. The college has achieved substantial growth and exceeded its enrolment targets in each of the last two years. The college has increased its recruitment of full-time 16-19 year old students in the 1995-96 academic year against strong competition from other local providers. Part-time enrolments comprise 77 per cent of the total. The college provides its community with good access to education and training. The college is open all year round except for a week at Christmas. There are long opening hours and Saturday morning classes. A successful initiative provides an alternative start date in January for access and vocational courses.

11 The range of over 250 courses includes extensive access and supported learning provision. There is a wide choice of attendance

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patterns. Opportunities for students to progress to other courses have been established through the development of open college network credits. Vocational provision is good and includes courses leading to foundation, intermediate and advanced General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) awards; other City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G), RSA Examinations Board (RSA) and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) awards; and a range of professional qualifying examinations. Higher education provision includes BTEC higher national certificate and diploma awards; NVQ levels 4 and 5; and franchised professional qualification awards.

12 Staff throughout the college have a high level of awareness of further education issues and of community needs. In some subject areas this includes a good understanding of national targets for education and training. Staff are committed to the college's strategic aims, including the provision of flexible modes of study for students. A college bulletin of high quality is used to inform staff about a wide range of internal and national developments.

13 Liaison with schools remains good despite the recognised competition from a number of nearby schools for students aged 11-18. Links have been strengthened since the appointment of a full-time schools liaison co-ordinator. The college is represented at meetings of the Birmingham East Partnership and staff attend careers events for students in years 10 and 11 at a large number of schools. College staff also provide guidance surgeries for students in local schools during lunchtimes and after school. An informative report has been produced about links with schools. There are post-17 education compacts with several schools and the college provides a good range of taster courses for potential students. Link programmes for sixth forms are offered in 10 subjects and have the added value of being accredited by the open college network and with NVQ and C&G level 1 attainment. School representatives spoke highly of the college's liaison activities and of the particular care given to tailor links with schools on an individual basis. A successful ancillary activity has been the college's 'schoolwise' partnerships, which provide family literacy programmes and the opportunity for parents to gain open college network credits in their local primary or secondary schools. The college has undertaken a notable initiative in the provision of a prevocational bridge programme for pupils, who for a variety of reasons, do not attend school. The majority of those students who begin the course are under the official school-leaving age and the college subsidises the cost of the provision.

14 The college has close links with the University of Central England in Birmingham and has a policy to franchise higher education courses from this one provider only. These links have led to the possibility of becoming a constituent college of the University of Central England. The corporation and staff have been kept well informed of the progress of the negotiations between the two institutions.

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15 Last year the college decided not to recontract with the Birmingham TEC for training for work and youth training because of a dissatisfaction with TEC-supported programmes. This has disrupted a recent history of good working relationships. However, communications with the Birmingham TEC remain good and the college maintains a small amount of work with them. The college acknowledges the TEC's assistance with its strategic planning. The college has actively and successfully pursued alternative funding through its links with the local authority, through European initiatives and through contact with other nearby TECs.

16 Strategic planning has been informed by labour market information produced by the Birmingham TEC, by statistical evidence produced by the West Midlands Government Office, the Birmingham Careers Service and the Birmingham City Council. The college has been particularly successful in offering courses in collaboration with the Birmingham City Economic Development Department, the Birmingham Manufacturing Centre, the consortium of the Birmingham Education Business Partnership and with the Employment Service and other public bodies. The activities with Birmingham Education Business Partnership include curriculum development, staff development and links with mainstream and special secondary school in a wide range of subjects.

17 The college places high priority on its links with communities in the whole of East Birmingham. It has 16 access centres established in primary schools, secondary schools and some community centres. The college has been responsive to the particular needs of the communities local to its centres. For example, it offers a care workers course for Mirpuri and Sylheti speakers in a centre within their community.

18 The major full-time provision in engineering reflects the college's history as a former technical college. The increase in courses in information technology, health and community and media studies and in new areas such as hairdressing indicates the response made to students' needs. Well-developed training partnerships with statutory, private and voluntary groups in the care sector have assisted the college's expansion and have been of mutual benefit. The college provides training for care workers and its clients have found reciprocal placements for college students of health and social care.

19 This year the college became the first in Birmingham to give all of its students unlimited access to the Internet. However, the college has yet to develop open and distance learning using these new technologies.

20 The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is one of the strengths of the college. Support for these students is well managed. There are clear structures and communication channels, and staff have a sound understanding of their roles and responsibilities. These include the management and deployment of a team of experienced care assistants and interpreters for deaf students, and close working relationships with local and national agencies. The college has a national

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reputation as a result of indirect involvements with the FEFC's advisory committee on students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with the Further Education Unit, and with the executive of Skill, the national bureau for students with disabilities. The college has successfully gained European funding for the benefit of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are integrated into mainstream courses. A contract exists with the Employment Service for rehabilitation training and a wide network of employer contacts has been established to assist with work experience schemes. There are also close working relationships with the local careers service. A partnership with the nearby Heartlands Hospital School assists the progression of students with moderate learning difficulties into accredited courses at the college. The participation of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities had increased on many vocational programmes.

21 The college enjoys productive long-standing links with some major national companies. For example, electrical apprentices are drawn from the Bristol and Reading areas. The college undertakes regular work and in-house training for some 30 small companies and has worked occasionally with 60 other small to medium-size enterprises. There is, however, no formal cross-college method of assessing the extent to which employers are satisfied with the training offered. In a positive move to extend the range of its vocational programmes the college has successfully subcontracted provision to four training providers. This has achieved new work in community-based horticulture and welding, community-based work preparation and bus driver training, community-based construction crafts, and industry-based foundry and presswork.

22 On its own admission, the college has an unorthodox approach to marketing. There is no marketing department and no director of marketing. Staff are encouraged to take responsibility for marketing and all programme areas carry out specialist marketing activities. The college uses an external agency for its advertising and publicity and has won awards for its advertising. The college publishes a monthly bilingual community newspaper, Community News. Members of the community are aware of the college's marketing activities and consider that the college is active in obtaining publicity in the local press for its students' achievements. Some of the college's publicity materials, including bilingual leaflets, are of good quality. However, the quality of course leaflets varies and some in-house materials, such as the access handbook, are poor. Staff from the college participate in a wide range of informal promotional activities as well as in educational awareness events organised by the local authority and other agencies. College open days are held each term and open days and weekly afternoon drop-in events are held throughout the summer. The college has no formal market research strategy and no analysis or evaluation of marketing has been undertaken.

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23 The college has wide international links. Staff and student groups have visited New York, Pakistan/Kashmir, France, Germany, Holland, Eire, and Belgium, and staff have also visited South Africa, Corsica, Greece and Portugal. The European links have developed mostly through Lingua and Horizon projects. The college is twinned with colleges in New York, Pakistan, and recently, South Africa.

24 In response to a need for single-sex post-16 education provision, highlighted by community groups and local schools, a faculty for women's education has been created. Five of the college's access centres have been designated for women only provision. Marketing for this initiative has included staff addressing worshippers at Friday prayers in local mosques. The faculty portfolio includes programmes for women returners entering training in non-traditional areas, for example, technology and management courses. This provision is attracting a wide interest in some minority ethnic groups. In its first year of operation there have been 268 enrolments on 17 courses.

25 The college has a strong commitment to equal opportunities. It has successfully promoted awareness of equal opportunities issues amongst staff and has moved away from the need to have individuals with identified responsibilities. Monitoring of equal opportunities is the responsibility of a volunteer team which meets regularly and includes a vice-principal and an associate principal. Detailed records of its activities and achievements are kept and these are available to all staff. The team includes in its membership a black staff group. Amongst its activities for the last five years, the team has organised an equal opportunities development day for all of the college's staff. Workshop events and staff-development opportunities are promoted and held by the team throughout the year. Awareness of equal opportunities issues is continually promoted through working groups focusing on the collection and dissemination of information on a wide range of themes. A training need for governors was identified; this met with a positive response from members of the corporation. The information team produces an annual statistical report on ethnicity, gender, age and disability of the student population. Currently this shows that the college recruits about a third of its students from minority ethnic groups, a figure which reflects the ethnic mix of the community.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

26 There are 14 members of the corporation including a TEC nominee, the principal, two staff and a student member. There is one vacancy. Most of the members, including the business members, reside within a few miles of the college. They have strong local connections and are committed to the promotion of further education opportunities for the community. The members provide a breadth of experience and knowledge in areas such as personnel, finance and estates which is matched to the committees upon which they serve. Only one of the corporation is from an minority ethnic group and there are four female members. Several members have

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an interest in promoting the education and progression of under-privileged groups. The corporation regard their role as being strategic rather than operational. There are four subcommittees: employment, policy and finance; audit; estates; and remuneration. The first three meet regularly and are well attended as are the corporation meetings. The last meets only when necessary to advise on the remuneration of the principal. Committee minutes are presented to the full corporation and major recommendations are approved by the corporation. The corporation membership is well publicised and copies of committee minutes are made available in the college library.

27 Members of the corporation have undergone training since incorporation. Talks on administrative and curriculum matters have been given by college staff and outside speakers. There are regular off-site meetings with senior staff. The corporation, staff and students undertook a development day to contribute to the strategic plan and mission. Although information has been presented to the corporation regarding the financial state of the institution since incorporation, members have only recently felt that they had good knowledge and control of the college budget. A corporation member, a practising accountant, and the college finance director are currently developing more detailed analytical tools. The corporation members receive reports from college staff about the progress and development of initiatives. They attend college social functions and awards ceremonies. Corporation members have visited other colleges both in England and overseas with staff and students. This is seen as a valuable development opportunity and their experience has been fed back to both the corporation and the college. The corporation has developed indicators to monitor its own performance and is now putting them into practice. Examination results are presented to the corporation but no additional information is made available to facilitate national and local comparisons.

28 The principalship comprises the principal and three vice-principals responsible for operations, students, and development, respectively. The principalship and staff share a common aim to provide a supportive environment for all students. A management structure has been developed which is designed to have minimal hierarchy and comprises three levels. The first level comprises the principalship, three advisers responsible for finance, estates and personnel, and three associate principals with designated responsibilities. At the second level there are 14 programme area leaders, 10 centre managers, nine cross-college programme leaders and 10 support team leaders. At the third level there are 227 academic and support staff in teams. Each member of the principalship teaches for about 100 hours per year.

29 There are several groups which all meet on the same day each week. The meetings are structured to enable a rapid response to issues raised by the principalship and also for problems to be conveyed to the principalship

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on the same day. The meetings observed by inspectors were conducted in a friendly manner. Information was readily available as appropriate staff were invited to the meetings. However, there is a need to provide concise support documents for some of these meetings rather than rely upon staff knowledge.

30 A weekly newsletter, *The Bulletin*, has been a valuable means of communication within the institution since 1988. It is produced as a result of the meetings and is distributed the next day. It contains the week's agreed action points and information about the developments in the college. All staff can contribute but the majority of information results from the principalship meetings. Curriculum aspects, job advertisements and news about social events are included.

31 The college has obtained approval from the secretary of state to change its articles/instruments of government so that it does not have an academic board. In its place there is a quality improvement team whose membership comprises 41 team leaders. This team, together with focused subgroups, considers a variety of curriculum and college issues and develops, reviews and monitors college processes and procedures. An observed session indicated that this was an effective way of discussing and developing college policy and procedures. The quality improvement team has a direct link to quality assurance. Course and support staff teams meet regularly and agendas and minutes are circulated to both full-time and part-time staff.

32 The strategic plan has been updated twice a year since 1993. It has evolved as a result of consultation at all levels, from students to the corporation. The plan contains broad targets set out in priority areas which reflect the student-centred focus of the college. However, the strategic plan does not set out clear timescales or identify responsibilities and the incorporation into the document of quotations from other FEFC college inspections only serves to obscure its clarity.

33 Although the majority of staff are associated with specific programme areas, staff are able to offer their time across programme areas in order to utilise their interests and skills. To enable staffing costs to be controlled, discussions take place between the vice-principal responsible and programme area leaders to allocate full-time staff hours before determining part-time staff requirements. The recording of this activity is paper based and checks and controls are undertaken manually. The college could improve this monitoring to ensure more effective deployment of staff and to provide further performance indicators.

34 The college assets have yet to be agreed with the City of Birmingham corporation and at the time of the inspection the college had not received the deeds of any of its properties. There are still disagreements regarding the college's balance on incorporation.

35 The college has become increasingly aware of its difficult financial situation since incorporation. It has made considerable strides, in an

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increasingly competitive environment, to improve its financial situation. Growth targets were exceeded by 20 per cent in 1994-95 and the college expects to grow by a further 10 per cent in the 1995-96 academic year. The percentage of income from the FEFC had risen from 57 per cent at incorporation to 64 per cent at the time of the inspection. The college has targeted a 73 per cent income from the FEFC in the 1995-96 academic year and is well on the way to meeting this target. The average level of funding per funded unit of activity for 1994-95 was £16.05. The median for general further education colleges was £18.17 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 month period to 31 July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6, respectively. The staffing budget is 62 per cent of the college expenditure.

36 Models of costing are undertaken for larger areas of provision such as access centres and these influence decision making. No use is made of unit costing at course level, nor is there any policy to introduce it. There is a need for staff to be more aware of the cost of provision. Budgets are allocated by the principal and finance director as a result of bids from area leaders and individuals. Training sessions are made available to assist staff with the resource bidding process. The college policy is to relate resource allocation to the student numbers. Budgets are allocated in line with the strategic plan priorities. New initiatives are usually funded by this mechanism although contingency funds are made available for unusual cases. The college has reacted well to course and student needs.

37 The college is making good progress to fulfil its commitment to equal opportunities. The equal opportunities policy is well developed and effectively monitored and reviewed. There is an established system for continually assessing and reviewing health and safety, together with the regular auditing of procedures within the college. Although a no smoking policy which restricts smoking to all but one area has been introduced there is no overall college policy on environmental issues. Some efforts are being made to conserve energy and savings have been spent on further conservation measures.

38 Basic computerised management information on enrolment, students' achievements and progression is available to programme managers and senior staff. Individual students' information is available on-line and standard printouts, such as class lists and tutor lists, are available. Efforts are being made to ensure that student information is reliable. Complex searches are undertaken by the information team on request. The college was a pilot for the FEFC individualised student record system and has recently completed its returns to the FEFC. Specialist inspections indicated that for some courses the centrally-held students' achievement information was incomplete. The college has recognised that it needs to improve the accuracy of data if it is to assist in the strategic planning process and the improvement of provision.

39 Enrolment targets are set annually by programme area leaders. These are moderated by senior staff who take into consideration

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college-wide targets and renegotiate programme targets as necessary. These targets are based mainly on historical data. The college believes that the variability of course enrolments prevents programmes from making accurate predictions. The college should consider requiring all teams to provide more detailed information in future years. There is insufficient data collected to enable the college to comment meaningfully on completion rates, retention rates and destinations.

### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

40 Information about college courses is made available to potential students through effective marketing activities. These range from college open days, staff attendance at careers conventions, taster workshops and college links with employers and schools. Staff and students are involved in promotional events. For example, catering and hairdressing skills are demonstrated by students to pupils in partner schools when they visit with the college road show. Existing links with schools are strengthened whenever an opportunity arises. For example, a package provided for pupils at the Sheldon Heath School has involved college staff in teaching the school's GNVQ leisure and tourism course at intermediate and advanced level.

41 There are informative course leaflets to supplement the course directory. A 24-hour telephone line during the week handles enquiries but there is no opportunity at weekends for callers to leave messages. Customer services have a well-managed system to process full-time and part-time student applications. A centralised admissions system effectively monitors students' progress from initial application to enrolment. A trained team of advisers is located in the information centre to assist students in the selection of appropriate courses. This advice is comprehensive and includes specialist information about careers, welfare benefits and financial matters. If applicants are uncertain about their choice of course, an individual interview can be arranged with a student adviser.

42 Part-time and full-time students benefit from a well-documented induction process which is customised to suit individual courses and access centres. The quality of induction seen was generally good, although the teaching in some of the sessions was mechanistic and there were few opportunities for students to participate. Students are provided with a handbook which gives useful information on their course and college life in general. The handbook also contains a learning agreement which sets out students' entitlements and obligations whilst on their courses. Signature to this document confirms acceptance of the contents and this document has been used in student disciplinary hearings.

43 There is a well-developed tutorial system and staff are trained for their role in this. There is a handbook for personal tutors and detailed policies and procedures for tutorials have been developed to encourage consistent practice. Students are allocated a personal tutor during their induction. There is also the opportunity subsequently to change personal

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tutor. All students have access to regular tutorial sessions and students speak well of the quality of personal support they receive. Each personal tutor is responsible for the selection and application of suitable diagnostic testing. This generally results in effective identification of students who need additional learning support. Provision of learning support to develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy is organised through the learning skills centre. The change of location each year for the past four years has affected the continuity of this resource. Some part-time students do not take part in the diagnostic process and do not receive appropriate learning support.

44 Students benefit from a range of personal support services of high quality, including additional language support, counselling services, financial advice and support, and care assistant support for students with disabilities. Assistance in these matters is handled sensitively and specialist advice is readily available. Impartial advice is given by college staff to students when a transfer between courses or educational institutions is being considered. Students were appreciative of the use made of identity cards by the college to create a secure learning environment.

45 Students initiate their own learning plan with their personal tutor during induction and their progress is reviewed thoroughly during tutorials. There is no formalised college system for the accreditation of students' prior learning; the college holds the view that it is just one of a number of possible responses to students' previous learning and experience. Some courses, for example catering, do accredit students' prior learning. The learning resource centre is popular with students and they take advantage of the study areas, careers information and information technology facilities. Students at the main site commented positively on the multimedia area and its links to the Internet and electronic mail.

46 Students' progress is recorded in accordance with the assessment criteria of their respective course of study. Where students are following a prevocational programme of study, for example students attending the 12-week bridge programme, a college certificate is given when good attendance and punctuality have been achieved. Students' attendance is recorded manually on register by course tutors and reviewed regularly by personal tutors. A few courses include financial rewards for full attendance. There are no year-on-year figures to enable comparison of student retention.

47 There are two well-equipped nurseries at the main site and a playgroup at the Firs Centre. The demand by students for places far exceeds provision. Students on courses lasting longer than one year have priority for the second and subsequent years. As well as providing quality childcare, the nurseries create strong links between nursery and teaching staff, students and the community. For example, the nursery parents'

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committee is working with a group of media studies students to video the children's nativity play. The college also provides financial assistance, through European Social Funding, to enable use of other nurseries.

48 The college has a students' union, and a sabbatical president with part-time administrative support. Students are given a copy of the college students' union handbook. The union has a positive relationship with the college. The union also operates a self-financing shop which allows students to purchase stationery at competitive prices. Several students, for example some studying NVQ level 3 business administration, make good use of their position as committee members to collect evidence for elements of their course.

49 Students have a voice in the running of the college through their elected representative at course team meetings and the use of forms on which they can record suggestions, complaints or concerns. The effectiveness of these systems of communication is evident. For example, following a request from students, a change was made to the date of their end-of-course review. There is no channel for general student communication in the form of a newsletter. The college gymnasium was re-opened in 1994 and offers students a range of daytime activities such as football, basketball, netball, badminton, aerobics and tae-kwan-do. The range of activities is restricted by staff-funding costs. A small amount of income is generated when the gymnasium is used by outside organisations on a fee-paying basis.

#### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

50 Of the 162 sessions inspected, 70 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. Only 3 per cent of sessions were judged to have weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. The following table summarises the grades given to teaching sessions inspected.

##### **Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE AS/A level		0	1	1	0	0	2
Access		4	16	3	1	0	24
Basic education		5	8	4	0	0	17
GCSE		0	2	3	0	0	5
GNVQ		4	13	6	3	0	26
Higher education		1	1	3	0	0	5
NVQ		3	15	13	1	0	32
Other vocational		11	24	9	0	0	44
Other		3	3	1	0	0	7
<b>Total</b>		<b>31</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>162</b>

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51 Coherent schemes of work which had clear aims and objectives effectively met course requirements and the needs of students. Teachers had suitable subject expertise. Some had relevant industrial experience which they employed skilfully to promote students' understanding and learning. Good rapport between staff and students resulted in confident student participation in sessions. On most courses, comprehensive records were kept of students' progress in the personal tutor handbook. Students were regularly informed of their progress. Generally, the teaching effectively challenged students and enabled them to acquire the relevant skills and levels of knowledge required for their courses.

52 The better teaching sessions were characterised by clear aims and objectives. Previous learning was reviewed and expectations clearly explained. The pace of learning was well managed and students' understanding was regularly assessed. A variety of teaching techniques was employed to advance students' understanding. The standard of assessment was mainly good. Assessments contained good briefing details and clear marking criteria. Students' assignments and other work were marked fairly and consistently.

53 In poorer teaching sessions, the pace of learning was slow and teachers used only a small range of teaching strategies. The differing abilities of students were not always sufficiently addressed. The coursework set was insufficiently challenging. The poor punctuality of students, which was a common feature in many courses, affected course management and impeded learning. The poor attendance of students was also a concern on some courses. Some feedback to students on their assignment work was insufficiently informative, failing to indicate errors clearly or explain the allocation of marks.

54 In the majority of computing sessions the students were well motivated, particularly when they were involved in practical activity. In one effective session, where concepts of relational databases were being developed, all the students were actively involved in the discussion. Their learning was further reinforced by useful exercises involving the application of the databases. The quality of feedback to students was good in most cases, but delays in returning marked assignments to students should be addressed. Students showed high levels of skill when using information technology to produce assignment work. They used the learning resource centre and the multi-media centre effectively. Students were encouraged to use compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases and the Internet to research material for their studies. Taster courses in information technology are offered to students during the early weeks of their course and this equips them with the skills necessary for their other studies. A separate facility is available for use by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

55 In mathematics, good examples were observed of teaching using presentations and directed student participation. Purposeful activities led

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to high levels of student participation. Some teachers related effectively the course material to practical applications. Work was regularly and thoroughly assessed. Handouts were informative and lively discussions were generated between teachers and students through the use of well-devised worksheets. A package of worksheets was produced in Braille for a student with sight impairment.

56 Teaching in construction was often demanding and perceptive and students were continually encouraged to advance their knowledge and understanding. The better teaching sessions were characterised by the evident enthusiasm of both students and teachers. Well-structured assignments and tasks provided good opportunities for students to contribute actively to sessions, to work in small groups or work individually. A full range of clear learning materials, including learning support aids, was readily available to students. Assignments contained explicit briefing details and clear marking criteria. Other coursework was marked fairly and consistently. Some craft students were encouraged to appraise and mark their own work before submitting it for marking. In this way students gained a better insight into what was required.

57 In engineering the friendly, supportive teaching was appreciated by students. In the main, teaching was good but some sessions would have benefited from more imaginative use of visual aids and handouts. Tutorials were effective and were valued by students. In some instances, the poor quality of the marking of students' work and its late return impeded the progress of students. The open-learning approach of the computer-aided design office in engineering motivated students and stimulated their learning. Staff were competent in their specialist areas.

58 The sessions observed in business were of good quality, well planned and related to the students' levels of ability. Schemes of work were produced but lesson plans varied in detail. There were good relationships between students and staff. Students benefited from sharing their experiences of employment with staff. Clear assessment criteria for assignments were defined at appropriate levels and students were given oral reports on their progress. Students commented that they found learning enjoyable. They worked well at tasks set. A high standard of work experience was provided for NVQ students through the college business centre. In some cases, poor attendance limited the students' learning.

59 Much of the teaching in health and care was of a high standard. In many of the more successful sessions, learning was effectively reinforced by the use of a variety of teaching strategies, including the use of video cassettes. For example, in childcare, videos on child behaviour assisted nursery nurses to develop their observational skills. In project work the use of statistics was competently handled by the students. Topics relating to parenting, drugs, social development and counselling skills were sensitively handled. The wide range of students' abilities was

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acknowledged by teachers, who skilfully developed confidence in those students finding the work difficult.

60 Most sessions in humanities and social studies were distinguished by knowledgeable teachers who used varied teaching methods. They followed clear schemes of work. Good examples were observed of students taking responsibility for their own learning. Teachers intervened skilfully in some sessions by raising new ideas or challenging concepts advanced by students. The commitment of some students undertaking General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects in addition to their GNVQ programmes of study was not strong. On General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and GCSE courses, the oral skills of some students were poor.

61 In basic education for adults and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the standards of learning and teaching were good. The pace of the work was well judged for the abilities of the students. There was regular assessment of students' understanding but not all of the learning objectives were shared with students. An impressive range of core-skills learning materials was being developed for validation through the open college network. The writing or spelling of students who were copying words were not checked and corrected. There was some skilful teaching of individual students receiving learning support on vocational courses. Overall, students' learning was assisted by effective initial assessment and detailed individual record keeping of students' progress and achievements. On a bridge programme, learning was made fun by students making board games to assist them to tell the time using the 24-hour clock.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

62 In many sessions, students are actively and effectively involved with their work and learn to work individually and in groups. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enjoy their studies and are highly motivated. Students have gained information technology skills and can use them effectively in the presentation of their assignment work. In many courses, assessment work is of a high standard.

63 Students achievements vary. There were several examples of students with weak communication and mathematical skills. There were examples on some courses of poor attendance and punctuality by students, and low retention rates, although there was evidence of good retention rates in electrical, childcare and catering courses. In general, practical work was carried out competently and safely.

64 Satisfactory pass rates have been achieved in most computing courses over the last three years. Students' assignment work in computing is generally good and they are able to work effectively with the computer applications software. In the same period, however, there has been a decline in GCSE mathematics pass rates at grades A-C, moving from above

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to well below the national average pass rate for students in further education colleges. Although many students achieved alternative qualifications, these results are a cause for concern.

65 In the construction programme, students demonstrate appropriate levels of understanding, knowledge and skills in their specialisms. Those who complete their courses attain good examination results. In the examinations for electrical installation, the achievements on some courses are above the national average. There were examples seen of students with poor mathematical skills and fundamental mistakes were made by students at all levels. The presentation and communication skills of some students are also weak.

66 Examination results on engineering courses are variable. Pass rates of 100 per cent were achieved in one NVQ level 2 course but the GNVQ level 2 in manufacturing failed to achieve any passes. Students achieved high levels of competence in information technology with examination pass rates of almost 100 per cent on all courses using the computer-aided design centre. Low student numbers and poor retention resulted in the amalgamation of classes on some courses. This was a contributory factor in one area to the poor motivation and progression of students.

67 Examination results in business courses are uneven and the published results of students' achievements were incomplete. In some of the work, some students achieved high standards in information technology and in presentational skills. On several courses pass rates for the last two years have been below 50 per cent. Pass rates in the external GNVQ tests were low.

68 Pass rates on courses in health and care range between 50 and 100 per cent. One notable success was the part-time nursery nursing national certificate where all 28 students passed. In contrast, the full-time first diploma course in health and social care achieved only a 55 per cent pass rate. Students develop good communication and study skills. A significant majority of students progress to employment.

69 Achievements in GCE A level humanities are uneven. The number taking GCE A level examinations was small. In 1995 the pass rate at grades A-C in psychology was above the national average for colleges of further education. In Urdu, a 100 per cent pass rate at grades A-E was achieved. Pass rates in GCE A level English at grades A-E have been below the national average. GCSE pass rates in English and other humanities subjects at grades A-C were significantly below the national average.

70 Access students who complete their course and sit the examination generally reach the appropriate level for entry to higher education. Students achieve a range of core skills, perform well in group work and are competent in wordprocessing their assignments. Students' attendance and retention rates for the access courses are a matter for concern.

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71 Many students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve accreditation. Over 300 students received credits on the West Midlands access federation open college network scheme in 1994-95. In total 1,109 credits were awarded which makes the college, relative to its size, a major provider of these qualifications. Students undertaking basic education courses gain in confidence and personal development. However, a minority of courses gave students few opportunities to develop group-working skills.

72 Students taking GCSE examinations in 1994 achieved an overall pass rate of 52 per cent at grades A-C. The number of entries for GCSE examinations declined from 458 in 1991-92 to 194 in 1993-94 and 207 in 1994-95. Pass rates in some subjects have declined significantly over the last three years. The current college policy is to reduce provision in this area.

73 Only 30 students aged 16-18 were entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1995. They scored an average of 4.2 points per entry. This placed the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the tables published by the Department for Education and Employment.

74 Sixty-six per cent of the 58 students aged 16-18 years in the final year of study on the vocational courses included in the performance tables published for 1995 by the Department for Education and Employment were successful. This placed the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. This statistic is of limited value, however, as the majority of students at the college are over 18 years of age.

75 Vocational results for all students in 1994 ranged from 64 per cent to 100 per cent. Of particular note were the part-time higher national qualifications where five of the six courses had pass rates of over 90 per cent. In several qualifications there has been a significant improvement in results over the previous two years including the full-time higher national diploma where the most recent pass rate was 88 per cent. The NVQ level 2 and 3 courses have experienced significant declines in overall results over this same period. GNVQ pass rates for all students in 1995 were 36 per cent at foundation level, 43 per cent at intermediate level and 63 per cent at advanced level.

76 Statistical information on the destination and progression of students is sparse and unreliable. The college recorded 293 full-time students progressing into employment, further or higher education. These records were by qualification type and no central records were available by course.

#### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

77 The college's quality policy is distinctively etched into the glass of a screen in the main entrance foyer. The focus of the quality policy is the teaching and learning. Teaching and support staff have a commitment to

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quality and its continuous improvement. The responsibility for ensuring quality assurance on courses lies with the course teams. They meet every Friday morning for one hour for this purpose. Students are active members on some of these teams.

78 An effective quality assurance framework based upon a total quality management system has been developed. This was formulated from quality assurance procedures previously developed that included the British Standard EN ISO 9000 accreditation which the college gained in 1992. The quality process is regularly evaluated and amended as a result of internal and external audit. The management review team meeting reports on quality and ensures that there are good quality outcomes across all aspects of the institution. The quality improvement team meetings are an effective means of developing and disseminating information on quality and its application. Quality assurance is followed through into college policies on resources, curriculum and staff development. However, there is no clear evidence that the quality assurance system is improving students' achievements.

79 The quality assurance system has records and documentation that cover all aspects of the institution. The course team handbook is a core document that contains all data relating to a specific course. However, if the quality process is to function successfully these handbooks need to record the preventive and corrective action necessary to maintain good course delivery. Team handbooks contain few performance indicators and they are not reviewed in any systematic manner. The college has no benchmarks at course and college level which could be used as a base for the improvement of its provision. The management information system provides some useful basic data. A wide and practical range of staff and student perception surveys is undertaken. Action is taken on issues arising from these surveys. Employers' views are sought at course team level and they are invited to attend meetings. The college takes the opportunity to ask employers to comment on the provision when enrolment fee invoices are sent. A copy of the college charter which has an employers' section is also sent at this time. The college recognises the need to improve the evaluation of cross-college student satisfaction surveys in order to identify common problems and students' dissatisfactions. The college is aware of some of the shortcomings in its quality assurance and is implementing a series of actions, including staff development for key personnel, to address the issues more effectively.

80 A self-assessment report based upon the college's quality assurance procedures was produced in September 1995. It was not produced in a form that the college would normally use. The format follows the headings found in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* and identifies some strengths and weaknesses within each area. Strengths are clearly identified but there is less rigour in recognising weaknesses. Key examples of evidence to support the assessment are given in the report along with the grades for each of the areas. The college gave grades that in the majority

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of cases agreed with the inspectors' findings. Course teams in most areas have discussed the weaknesses found in the specialist inspection visits and have plans in place to correct them. In a number of instances identified weaknesses have been acted upon.

81 Staff manuals are comprehensive. Each college employee has an employment portfolio which is well produced. The portfolio contains comprehensive information that relates to the individual's employment on new contractual conditions. It includes well-structured sections on terms and conditions, contractual benefits, general college procedures, health and safety, and the college quality system. The portfolio forms part of the college's quality system documentation and is updated in line with other staff manuals. It is distinctively focused on the individual and supports the corporate strategy of requiring the staff to be responsible for their work.

82 New members of staff are invited to take part in an induction process which takes about half a day at the beginning of term. They find the experience well presented and useful but some felt that a further update session on an individual basis would be beneficial to assist them directly with their working role.

83 The college charter is part of the quality assurance system and is evaluated at regular intervals by quality groups and course teams which include students and governors. The quality improvement team ensures that the standards and targets contained in the charter are well scrutinised and modified to meet changing client requirements. Staff are made aware of the college and the further education charters, and their implications, in specific development meetings. Students are well informed of the college charter and have easy access to copies. Students are aware of the curriculum appeals procedures and know that staff will assist them with any appeal.

84 The college does not have a staff-appraisal system. It has developed over the last seven years a staff planning and evaluation process which has the support of staff and is effective in developing team and individual potential. Staff development for teams is identified by each course or support team during their review meetings. Individual professional development is determined by staff through an annual interview with a member of the principalship. There is an extensive and coherent staff-development programme for both full-time and part-time staff and the staff participation rate is high. However, there is no overall evaluation of the effectiveness of staff development to ensure that it meets institutional priorities. A useful course is being devised for middle managers which should address the changing needs and procedures of the quality assurance system. There is effective dissemination of information about staff development through a variety of communication channels that include meetings and college literature. Staff undertaking external training activities are required to evaluate them and carry out dissemination where it is appropriate.

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85 The budget for staff training and development allows each staff member a personal staff-development budget of £100 for individual training needs. An effective mentor system, called 'care pairs', has recently been introduced. This allows staff who need support or development to select their mentor. Some useful industrial secondment of staff has taken place. The college has a commitment to achieving the Investors in People award but this is unlikely to be completed for some time.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

86 Teachers from minority ethnic groups form 16 per cent of the staff but few are represented at senior level. Female staff form 52 per cent of the total employees and hold most of the senior posts at the college. Two-thirds of the staff are aged between 30 and 50 years old. All but 5 per cent of staff are on flexible contracts and the college is moving towards harmonising conditions of service for all staff. Staff are well deployed and numbers are appropriate for teaching and support. There are professionally-qualified staff within the senior management team in personnel management, accountancy, and estates management. The expertise of part-time staff is suitably used and there is sufficient administrative support. Representatives from industry valued the flexibility of the college staff and their availability to respond to their requirements and needs.

87 Teachers are generally well qualified with relevant experience. The majority have a first degree or similar professional qualification. Eleven have postgraduate degrees. Staff without a teaching qualification are encouraged to obtain one. Eighty-three per cent are already qualified. The college has recently made considerable headway in staff training to achieve appropriate Training and Development Lead Body assessor awards: 92 per cent of staff have achieved awards, 30 per cent have an internal verifier award and 10 per cent have an external verifier award. Several staff are bilingual or multilingual and draw on their language skills and cultural understanding to enhance provision and support for minority ethnic students.

88 Staff working with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are generally well qualified. Technician and support staff associated with information technology are able to offer sufficient support throughout the day and evening. Support and part-time staff are well motivated, well qualified and flexible in their duties. There is a need for further training for some staff to broaden the knowledge and skills in careers and general guidance. The college has identified the need for an appointment at senior level to support the mathematics provision across the college.

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### **Equipment/learning resources**

89 There are sufficient equipment and materials to support teaching and learning. Furniture throughout the college is of good quality. In some rooms whiteboards are too small and not all rooms have overhead projectors and screens. Good learning resource facilities have been developed in the construction and engineering areas and students have immediate access to information technology and printed learning materials. The specialist equipment in the construction area was upgraded about four years ago to a high standard. The quality and care of hand tools in the craft area requires improvement. The engineering area is well resourced although more up-to-date equipment is required in some workshops. The range of mechanical workshop equipment is good. Equipment in access centre workshops for garment making, knitting, woodwork and motor vehicle courses is sufficient and up to date. Teaching and learning in core studies is assisted by the wide range of open college network materials which have been produced by college staff.

90 The college has made considerable progress in providing a range of appropriate equipment and resources for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Specially-designed equipment enables those students undertaking mainstream courses to participate fully. An independent living area is being developed as a separate facility with work surfaces and equipment at appropriate heights and with a range of special knives, holders and bowls. An information technology area has been equipped with computers which, although old, enable appropriate software packages to be used. Special switching and operating devices have been installed. Braille equipment and a large television screen are available to support students with poor sight and individual audio and loop systems are available for those with hearing difficulties.

91 A proportion of the capital investment by the college in up-to-date information technology equipment has been devoted to facilities in the learning resource centre. Forty-six networked computers linked to four laser printers have been installed in the open-access area. An excellent reference and research area is provided in a bookable area equipped with 20 machines having CD-ROM and unlimited access to the Internet. The range of CD-ROMs provides current reference, engineering and construction material. The book and journal stock is limited. It is dated in some technology areas but satisfactory for English and humanities. Access to library or book loan arrangements was absent in some access centres.

92 The capital investment by the college in information technology has resulted in a total of 695 machines for student use and 70 machines for staff use. The ratio of machines to full-time equivalent students is better than 1:5. Computing students' work is carried out in a suite of four rooms resourced with networked or stand alone computers and printers. Some of this equipment is becoming dated and there are insufficient printers. The number of computerised design workstations associated with

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multi-media courses has been increased from 7 to 15 to meet student demand. Digital sound recording and video studios are good and provide students with practical activities in media that are approaching industrial standards. An impressive computer-aided design suite to support engineering and construction courses is situated adjacent to the multi-media area and students are encouraged to use it freely. Eight of the access centres have sets of up to 14 modern machines and printers.

### **Accommodation**

93 The college occupies one main site and 16 access centres. Six of the access centres have pre-1940 buildings and four of those are pre-1914. All but one of the access centres are leased and all provide facilities which are immediately accessible to the local community. They have been established successfully in areas with the highest levels of deprivation and provide for some 30 per cent of the work of the college. There is a lack of road direction signs in the vicinity. Car parking at the main site is inadequate but modifications to the car park have improved access to the site for visitors and changes in the reception areas have improved service to the students.

94 The main college building has been recently redecorated internally and externally, and is well maintained. Students respect the environment provided for them and there is an absence of graffiti and litter. Internally, the building is well signposted; rooms are appropriately numbered and some corridors have interesting and attractive wall displays. New facilities such as the hairdressing salon and the information centre have further improved the learning environment. There is an appropriate balance of general classroom, specialist and workshop space. A few areas are bleak and lack display material to support the learning process.

95 Communal space on the main site is limited. The cafeteria which serves staff and students is a large, well-furnished, open, clean and attractive area. Careful attention has been given to the needs of smokers and non-smokers and those of restricted mobility. However, there is no common room and the need for the cafeteria to double as a social area leads to overcrowding at peak times. A small gymnasium is available for recreational purposes but there are no open spaces on the main site or at access centres.

96 The main hall has been successfully adapted to provide a learning resource centre. The area has been divided into open and bookable information technology sections and individual and group study areas. However, the combination of the group study area and the library has produced a cluttered environment which does not encourage student use. At present the number of places is sufficient to meet the demand of the mainly adult student population. In the open computer area there is seat occupancy of about 80 per cent over a large proportion of the day.

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97 The college provides well for the needs of students with disabilities. The main site and four of the access centres have wheelchair access. Reserved car parking spaces are available at the main site. The completion of an appropriately-designed covered pedestrian bridge has provided access to the computer-aided design and multi-media centres. Nearly all areas on the main site are now accessible to wheelchair users. A significant investment in a lift was made a few years ago. Rooms and facilities including life skills and information technology areas, provided specifically for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are generally adequate. They are centrally located and integrate well with the college environment. The college has appropriate equipment for the safe evacuation of wheelchair users.

98 An accommodation survey of the main site carried out in November 1994 showed that levels of space and seat occupancy had not improved. Appropriate steps for improvement have been taken to increase use by dividing over-large spaces and by relocating courses. Space utilisation is monitored on a day-to-day basis. The college has sufficient accommodation to meet present student demand and has scope for expansion.

#### **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

99 East Birmingham College is making good progress towards achieving the aims set out in its mission. The particular strengths of the college are:

- an extensive range of courses with a full range of attendance opportunities
- good links with communities in the whole of East Birmingham
- the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- strong governance and management
- a strong commitment to equal opportunities
- rapid and good communication channels at senior levels
- the wide range of high-quality personal support services for students
- the generally well-planned and effective teaching
- a strong commitment to using information technology within the college and extensive facilities to do so
- the quality assurance process.

100 If the college is to continue to strengthen its provision and raise standards it should:

- improve the financial information supplied to the corporation
- improve the documentary information provided for management meetings

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- improve the accuracy of data
  - address the examination results in some programme areas
  - increase the number of performance indicators used.

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## FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

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

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

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  - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at October 1995)

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  - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

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  - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

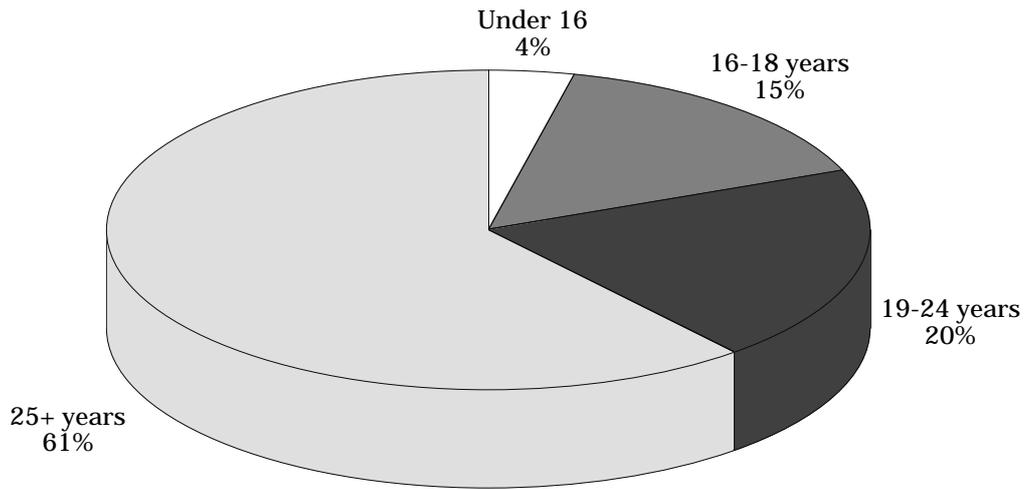
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**Figure 1**

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**East Birmingham College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)**

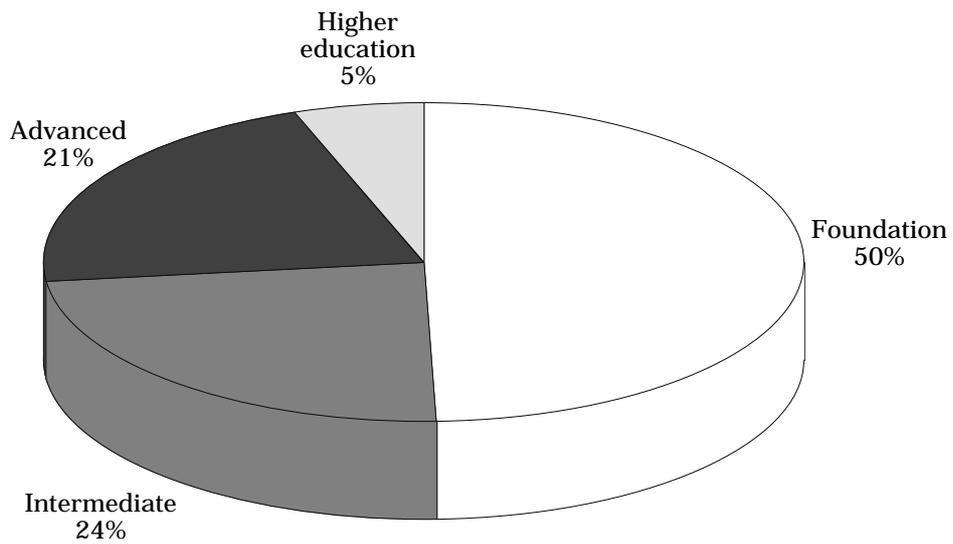


Enrolments: 7,839

**Figure 2**

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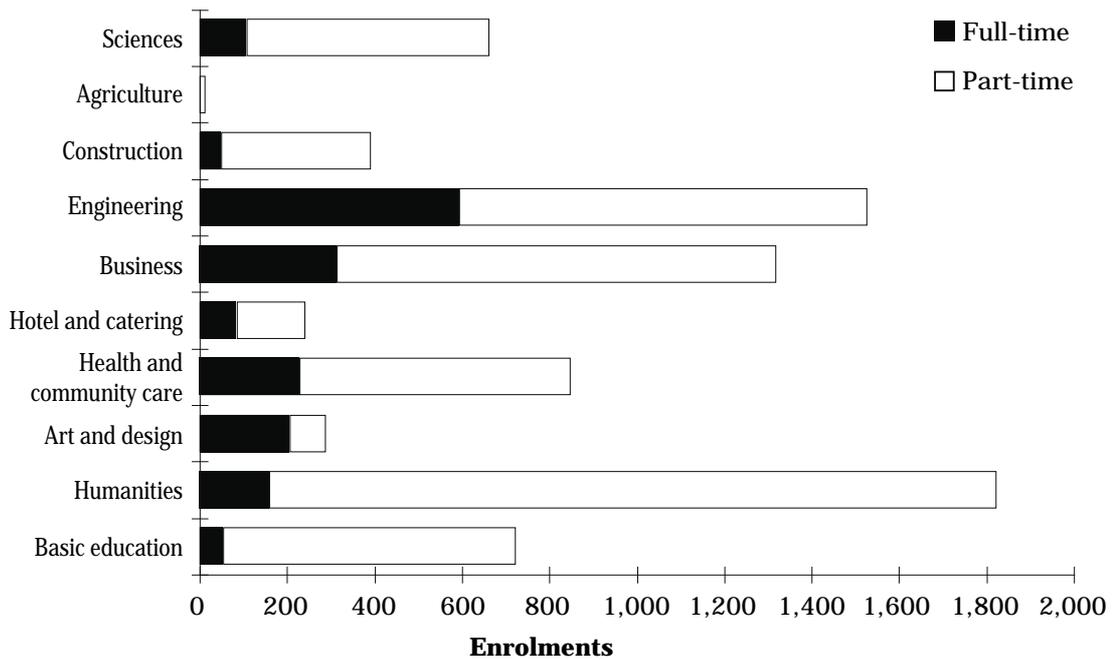
**East Birmingham College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)**



Enrolments: 7,839

**Figure 3**

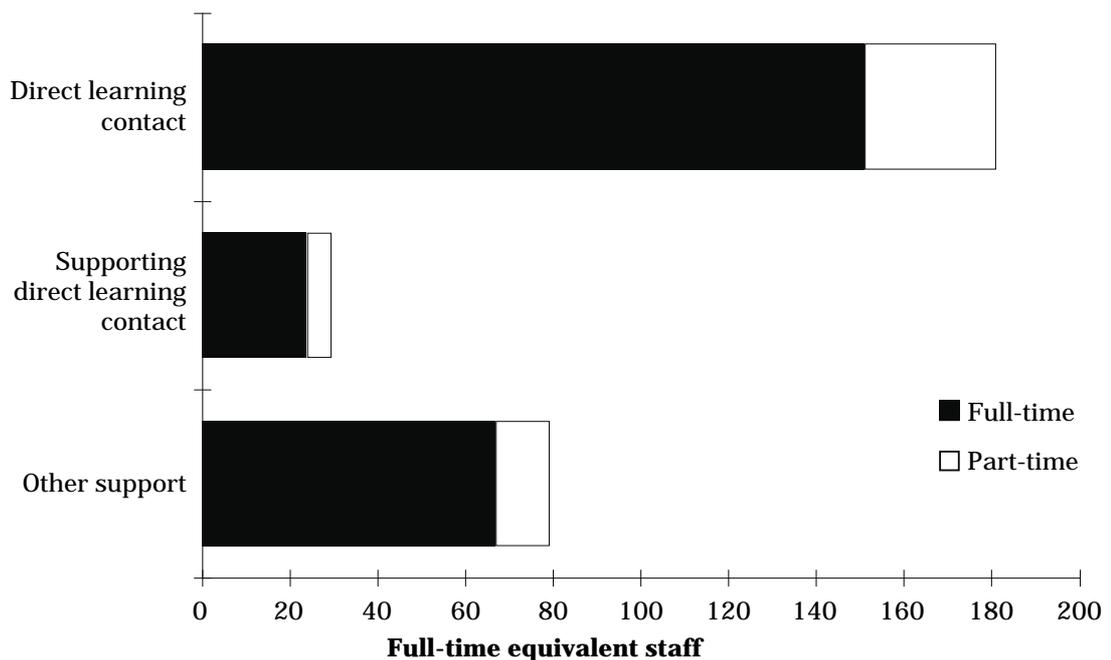
**East Birmingham College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)**



Enrolments: 7,839

**Figure 4**

**East Birmingham College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at October 1995)**



Full-time equivalent staff: 290\*

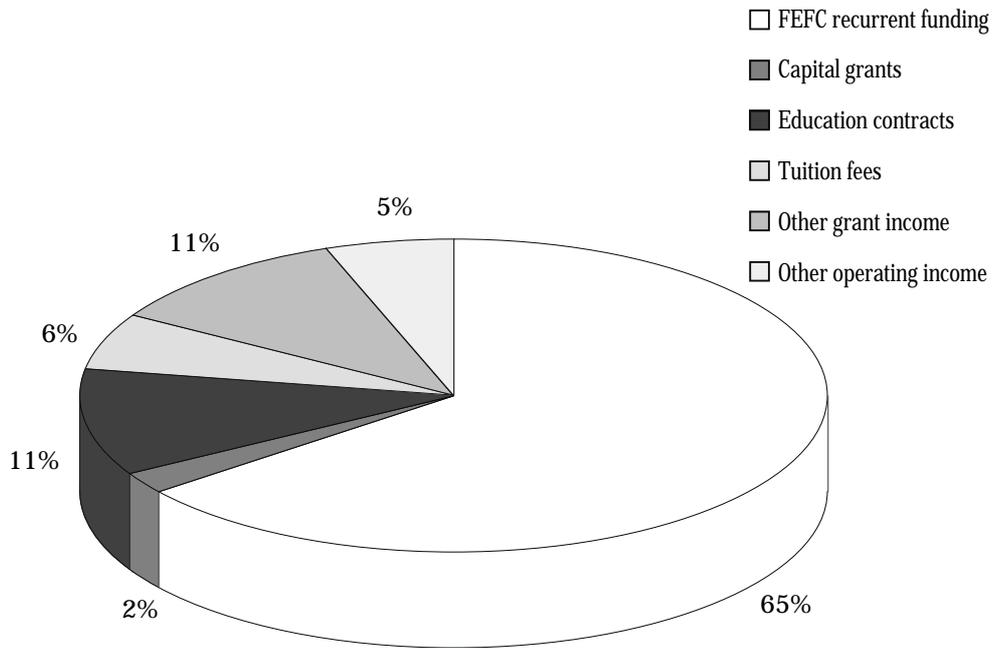
*Note: \*includes visiting teachers.*

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**Figure 5**

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**East Birmingham College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)**



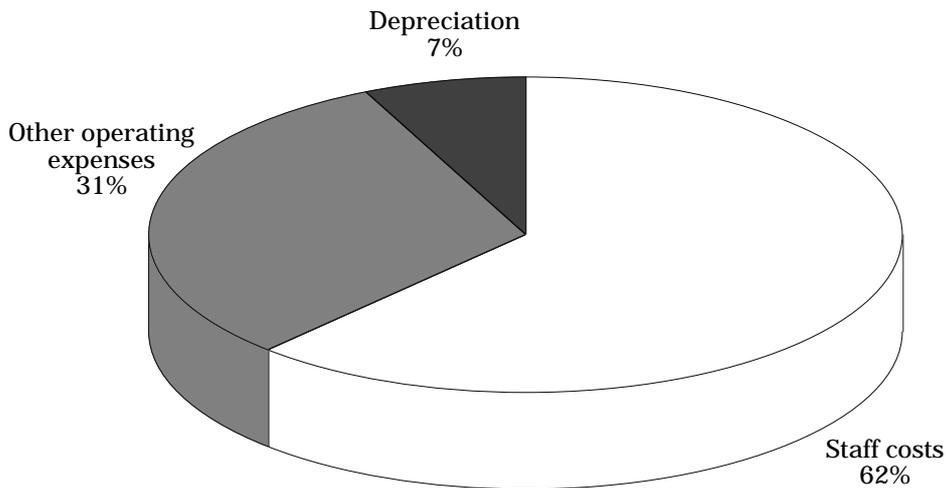
Income: £8,811,000

*Note: this chart excludes £7,000 other income-generating activities.*

**Figure 6**

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**East Birmingham College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)**



Expenditure: £9,522,000

*Note: this chart excludes £13,000 interest payable.*

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