

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Evesham College

April 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

College grade profiles 1993-96

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

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 51/97

EVESHAM COLLEGE

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected March 1996-January 1997

Summary

Evesham College is a small general further education college which was established in 1970. The governors and senior managers provide effective leadership. A broad range of vocational, and full-cost courses are provided for full-time and part-time students. The college has close links with schools, higher education, industry and the local TEC. The guidance and support given to students during enrolment, induction and on their courses are good. Overall, teaching is of a high standard. Examination results and students' achievements on most courses are good. The teachers and support staff are well qualified. The quality of accommodation is generally good. Some of the specialist equipment used by students and by industry is of a high standard. To build on its strengths the college should address: the limited effectiveness of some of its committees; the lack of strategies to implement and monitor the equal opportunities policy; the limited use and accuracy of management information; the underdeveloped quality assurance system; its marginal failure to reach growth targets; and the limited provision of computers.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision		Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision		2
Governance and management		2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		2
Quality assurance		3
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	3
	accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science including mathematics and computing	2	Health and social care, hairdressing and beauty therapy	2
Engineering	2		
Business and management studies	2	Basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2

INTRODUCTION

1 Evesham College was inspected in four stages. The college's induction and enrolment procedures were inspected in July 1996 and at the start of the autumn term of that year. Specialist inspections took place in March 1996 and October 1996 and they were followed by an inspection of cross-college provision in January 1997. Twelve inspectors spent 44.5 days on the inspection. They visited 94 classes, involving 887 students. Meetings were held with members of the corporation, college senior managers and staff, students, parents, local employers, and representatives from local schools. Discussions also took place with representatives of the local training and enterprise council (TEC). Inspectors examined college policy statements and other documents, the strategic plan, minutes of committees, working papers, documents and students' work.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Evesham College is a small general further education college which was established in 1970. The main campus is about a mile from the town centre of Evesham. The college runs courses for adults in a community centre located in the town and provides programmes in 14 centres in the local community, all of which are within a 20-mile radius. The college serves South Worcestershire and also draws students from the neighbouring areas of Gloucestershire and Warwickshire.

3 The Vale of Evesham is renowned for its orchards and market gardens. Over 80 per cent of the land area is devoted to the production of agricultural and horticultural crops. However, a recent survey undertaken by the Chamber of Commerce Training and Enterprise Council Hereford and Worcester revealed that only 2.3 per cent of the local population are employed in agriculture. Of those who responded to the survey, 16 per cent were working in distribution, hotels, catering, and repairs; 14 per cent in metal goods, engineering and vehicle industries; and 35 per cent in 'other services'. The employment profile is similar in the Hereford and Worcester area. The most common occupational classifications are managers and administrators (17 per cent), crafts and related positions (17 per cent), and professional occupations (16 per cent).

4 In August 1996, unemployment in the Evesham area was 5.1 per cent compared with 7.8 per cent in the United Kingdom. A high proportion of unemployed people, 31 per cent, had been unemployed for more than five years compared with 19 per cent for the Hereford and Worcester area. Unemployed people have identified the main obstacles to gaining employment as transport problems (31 per cent), the necessity of having to look after children (28 per cent) and lack of qualifications (21 per cent).

5 The area from which the college draws its students also has four general colleges of further education, a sixth form college, a horticultural college, and a number of schools with sixth forms. In order to compete

successfully with other local providers of post-16 education the college has rationalised and redefined the scope of its provision. For example, the college no longer offers full-time general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) or general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) resit courses. It provides instead a wide range of vocational courses, and access to further and higher education courses.

6 In 1995-96, of 5,577 enrolments, 702 were for full-time courses. Of all students who enrolled, 51 per cent were male and 49 per cent were female. Of students currently at the college, 68 per cent are over 25, 12 per cent are aged between 19 and 24 and 17 per cent are aged between 16 and 18. Student numbers by age, by level of study, and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. Less than 1 per cent of the local population are from minority ethnic backgrounds which mirrors the current population in the college. The college employs 46 full-time and 267 part-time teaching staff, 37 teaching support and 46 administrative support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

7 In its mission statement, the college states that its main business is 'serving the educational and training needs of the local community'. It is guided in all it does by its commitment to fulfilling three aims which are:

- 'to provide high-quality education and training in the most cost efficient and effective manner
- to promote equal opportunities by developing the college as a community where all are treated of equal worth
- to support each student to develop his or her potential and to aim for the highest personal achievement'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 The college is strongly committed to the provision of learning programmes which meet the needs of individuals, the local community and the country. The strategic plan shows that the college is clearly aware of the importance of the national targets for education and training. It identifies areas where the college will expand its provision. These include training for companies on their premises, courses on employers' premises which lead to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and increased provision in Malvern.

9 The college offers a strongly vocational curriculum. Major areas include business studies, engineering, basic education, caring, access to higher education, provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and hairdressing and beauty therapy. The provision of beauty therapy courses has recently expanded in response to local demand. The college offers a part-time GCE A level programme and a limited full-time programme of GCSE subjects. Twenty per cent of students' enrolments are at foundation level, 25 per cent are at intermediate level, 12 per cent are at advanced level and 4 per cent are on higher education courses.

Courses are offered which lead to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) in five subjects. Of these, all five are offered at advanced level, four are offered at intermediate level and one is provided at foundation level. The college also offers Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first and national diplomas, RSA Examinations Board (RSA) and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) courses. A range of courses leading to NVQs from levels 1 to 4 is offered. There is also a course designed to help women into business careers.

10 The higher education provision includes a higher national certificate and a higher national diploma course in business studies, an engineering foundation degree course which is run in conjunction with Coventry University and degree courses franchised from Coventry and Warwick universities. There are distinctive specialist courses in gas safety, horticultural machinery courses which recruit students nationally and two courses for those who wish to teach students with specific learning difficulties. There is scope for the further modularisation of courses, for example, in business studies and for the expansion of provision for adults in caring and engineering. The college's bridging course for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is designed for school-leavers with very diverse needs. The college has a well-developed community education programme which is offered in 14 centres in the local community. Thirty-nine per cent of all the college's enrolments are from students on this programme. Few courses are offered at weekends.

11 Wallace House is described by the college as 'a community-based open access centre'. Through this centre, the college aims to meet a range of specific needs in the local community. Students may use the centre at any time when it is open. It offers guidance and basic education for unemployed adults. The centre assists students from the college's bridging course. It has been successful in helping and recruiting to courses, persons, such as travellers, who may have had restricted access to education and training. Staff at the centre are strongly committed to ensuring that their students progress to further courses and some students go on to courses at the main site of the college. The college's curriculum does not, however, meet the needs of some students who progress from the centre to employment and who wish to improve their skills further through the acquisition of higher level NVQs.

12 The college has no policy on curriculum enrichment. Students have free access to the adjoining leisure centre. They are encouraged to take courses which are additional to their main studies, for example in literacy and information technology. Some students have been involved with the young enterprise scheme and the national skills Olympics. Others have attended outward bound courses. There have been some student exchanges with colleges in Western Europe.

13 The college has been particularly effective in securing contracts from a number of external agencies. It has co-operated with the TEC and it has been successful in its bid for funding from the TEC's competitiveness fund

to establish a manufacturing technology centre. The centre produces computer-designed prototypes which companies can evaluate before putting them into production. Other TEC-related activities have included provision for the training for work scheme, programmes for long-term unemployed adults, pre-vocational courses aimed at unemployed 16 to 18 year olds and the development of modern apprenticeships. The college has also been successful in obtaining funding for job clubs in Evesham and Malvern and, more recently, in Worcester. Members of the job clubs have benefited from the links which the college has established with local job centres. The college provides an education and training programme at Long Lartin Prison. It also runs a family literacy project, which it has developed jointly with social services. The Acquired Brain Injury Unit, jointly funded by the county council and the health authority, is located at the college.

14 The principal is a member of the Chamber of Commerce Training and Enterprise Council Hereford and Worcester strategic forum for education. TEC representatives described the college as flexible and entrepreneurial in its responsiveness. They were satisfied with the college's performance on youth and adult training. The college keeps the TEC well informed about its activities. The college's managing agency, Vale Training, has recently been reorganised to take responsibility for all TEC and other externally-funded work and to provide better co-ordination of the college's links with employers. There is scope for improving the management of staff who work both for Vale Training and for a department in the college.

15 The college has been running vocational courses at Malvern Hills College since September 1995. Malvern Hills College is an adult education centre and a registered charity owned by the Wyvern Trust. The town of Malvern has a population about double that of Evesham and consequently the college regards the expansion of its courses to Malvern as an important development.

16 The college has a good range of links with schools and staff have regular meetings with heads of local schools. There are particularly strong links with a local special school. The college participates in local careers conventions. There is effective liaison with the social services day centre, with specialist careers advisers for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and with the Hereford and Worcester Local Education Authority's (LEA) pupil referral unit. The college works well with local higher education establishments. It is an associate college of Warwick and Coventry universities, has a higher education compact with Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education and has links with Worcester College of Higher Education. The college is also one of the member colleges of a research project, funded by the Further Education Development Agency and led by the University of Warwick, which seeks to define the communities which local further education colleges serve.

17 The quality of links with employers varies. There are a few advisory committees, and the college runs a forum to update employers on training issues in the caring professions. The college is also represented on a local employers' liaison group. A survey, funded by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), which looked at the quality of links with employers, found that many employers were unaware of what the college could offer. The college has begun to create a single database to replace its many separate records of contacts with employers. This database, however, has not yet been completed. In August 1996, the college created a new post for an 'employer links officer' on a one-year appointment. As a result of this appointment, new training programmes have been developed in college and in the workplace for around 20 companies. These programmes are mostly in supervisory management, basic health and safety and information technology. Employers gave inspectors examples of the college's responsiveness to their needs. These included in-company training in a motorway service centre, training in health and safety management and the production of prototypes in the manufacturing technology centre. Several employers commented that the college had done much to raise their awareness of the value of training their employees and, in some cases, had helped them to develop NVQ programmes.

18 The college has an overall marketing plan but there are no marketing plans at departmental level. The plan emphasises the importance of market awareness, includes a useful table of competitors' provision and has a realistic assessment of the college's competitive advantages. It makes good use of labour market information and sets out a programme of marketing activities, such as open days and visits to schools and careers events. There has been some improvement in the quality of the college's prospectus and publicity information. The college is considering ways of improving the publicity it aims at companies. The recent introduction of display boards in the college's reception area helps to increase visitors' awareness of college activities. Some employers commented on the need for the college to have a higher profile in the local community.

19 The college has a statement of policy on equal opportunities. There has been no monitoring of its implementation. Students and staff are given a shortened version of the policy statement. The college has developed a draft policy on harassment. A policy statement in relation to disability has been approved by the governing body. The statement covers most of the key issues relating to disability, but it does not offer a sufficiently clear commitment to meeting the needs of individual students. It is only available in printed form but there are plans to produce a Braille version shortly. The college's part-time counsellor is responsible for providing students with advice on accommodation and benefits available to them.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

20 Governors understand their strategic role. They provide the college with direction and support but allow the principal and senior managers to

manage the institution. Governors have effective links with local industry and the community that the college serves, and they have skills and experience from many areas including finance, personnel management, public service and business. The governing body has 12 members which includes the principal and one staff member. Two members are women. There is no student member and no formal way of receiving information and views from the student body. Attendance levels at the board and its committees are high. The clerk to the governors is the college's head of finance. The clerk fully understands the requirement to offer independent and impartial advice to the governors. The names of corporation members are published in the students' charter and year planner and their photographs and personal profile are contained in a leaflet which is widely available. An induction programme is provided for new members. Governors participate in college staff-development days. Individual governors take an interest in many areas of the college's work and activities, such as engineering, provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, liaison with employers and course promotion. They attend the college award ceremonies.

21 Board members take a corporate responsibility for finance. The decision not to form a subcommittee on finance reflects the importance they all attach to financial matters. This arrangement conflicts with the college's articles of government which also precludes staff governors from serving on committees dealing with finance. The number of agenda items are restricted so that sufficient time can be given to discuss finance at each of the 10 board meetings that are held each year. Good documentation to support these meetings is sent out well in advance. When appropriate, college staff make presentations to the governors. There is an effective working relationship between the governors and senior managers. The board receives information about examination results on all courses as part of the annual review of the quality of the college's provision. The information on results does not include year-on-year comparisons and key successes or concerns are not specifically highlighted. The audit and remuneration committees meet regularly and they have clear terms of reference. The corporation minutes are available in the college library. A code of practice and register of interests have been established for corporation members and these are updated annually. A policy on searching for new members has been agreed and all members are involved in their final selection. The board has reviewed and reported on its own effectiveness.

22 The college is well managed. There are three teaching departments: adult and community education; business and management studies; engineering and technology. A fourth department is responsible for prison education and a fifth deals with finance and administration. The senior management structure comprises the principal and five heads of department. Heads of department also have responsibility for cross-college matters such as equal opportunities, health and safety, student counselling, learning support, quality assurance, environmental

issues, the managing agency and marketing. There is some imbalance in the workloads of the staff, particularly across the three teaching departments.

23 The 1996-99 strategic plan includes a major corporate objective in relation to equal opportunities. There is, however, no committee responsible for monitoring the achievement of this objective. Several committees meet infrequently or not at all. There is a health and safety advisory group to the governing body. A comprehensive manual on safety has been produced. Staff are aware of environmental issues. An environmental audit has been undertaken and as a result of this, energy saving measures and a recycling strategy have been implemented.

24 The academic board meets termly and is both effective and proactive. Its 14 members include all staff on the senior management team, the manager responsible for quality assurance and two elected members from each of the three teaching departments. The board discusses and influences the strategic plan, the academic review, aspects of the curriculum, quality assurance procedures, performance indicators and college policies. The supporting documentation produced for the academic board is good. There are subcommittees for the library and computer users. Other committees are set up to undertake specific tasks such as the development of staff appraisal or links with employers.

25 The college's mission, market analysis, risk analysis and major corporate objectives are clearly and succinctly incorporated into the strategic plan. Staff at all levels of the college have contributed to the strategic plan. There are three workshops for staff each year on the planning and review process which specify target dates by which these must be achieved and details of who has responsibility for achieving them. The college's strategic plan specifies targets, however, these are not sufficiently precise and in many cases not measurable. Furthermore, the resource implications of specific targets are not clearly identified in the plan. The strategic plan is augmented by the annual college report, and by departmental plans where targets, dates and responsibilities for implementation are identified.

26 Communication is generally effective throughout the college. A weekly college diary, distributed to all staff, gives information on college events and staff-development opportunities and it lists planned staff absences. There are termly staff-development activities which all full-time staff are required to attend and to which part-time staff are invited. These days provide opportunities for staff to consult with one another and receive specialist training. The principal addresses all staff on the staff-development days and gives them information about important matters such as targets, units of funding and student retention rates. Senior managers, departmental teams and course teams all have weekly meetings. The minutes of committee meetings are circulated and they are made available in the library and in departmental offices. The quality of these

minutes varies. Some lack action points, or dates by which action must be carried out and they do not specify who has responsibility for implementing the action.

27 The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 was £16.03 per unit compared with an average for general further education and tertiary colleges of £18.13. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £16.12 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97. The college is in the lower quartile of colleges in terms of average level of funding nationally and has the third lowest level of funding in the region. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college receives around 60 per cent of its funds from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). In 1995-96, the college marginally failed to meet its own growth targets for the second consecutive year but it did meet the FEFC's target. The college had an operating deficit in 1995-96 which is partly accounted for by the costs of staff restructuring. The college has cash reserves, however.

28 Resources are allocated to courses through a well-understood, open and democratic system which is based on an annual bidding process. The same process is also used to fund new course initiatives. All budget holders receive detailed monthly financial reports which enable them to monitor their budgets. Budgets and financial accountability have been devolved to sections or course teams. Unit costing is undertaken by heads of department. They identify the costing and efficiency of the provision in their departments down to course level and make comparisons of the costs and efficiency of different courses. Costing takes into account student numbers, staff hours, funding units and overhead costs incurred through cross-college initiatives. The benefits of this detailed costing have yet to be evaluated and the information it yields is not always shared with course teams.

29 Management information has yet to be generated and used effectively to assist in the management and development of the courses and to improve the quality of provision. Basic management information is available to senior managers and teachers and the college makes the returns required by the FEFC. Enrolment and retention data are collected. Information on students' destinations and progression has been collected and analysed for several years. Many teaching staff regard data on students' enrolments and on courses as unreliable and they place more reliance on their own data.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

30 The college has effective arrangements for the recruitment, guidance and support of students. During 1995, the academic board set up a temporary cross-college working group to review departmental arrangements for, identify best practice in, and recommend a common

approach to, the recruitment, guidance and support of students. The recommendations of this group have led to new arrangements for students' recruitment, guidance and support. Several staff have responsibility for managing the student support services but there is no forum in which they meet to co-ordinate their work.

31 Students receive sufficient information and advice and guidance to enable them to choose appropriate courses. Liaison between the administrative office and the academic departments works efficiently and the enrolments process is sensitively and effectively handled. A cross-college team of advisers has been set up to try and ensure that the advice which prospective students receive is impartial. Policies and procedures for admissions, enrolments, induction, tutorial support and learning support have been comprehensively documented and effectively disseminated to staff. Shortened versions of these policies and procedures are also available for students. Prospectuses and course literature are informative and attractively presented. They are valued by students.

32 The college is able to promote its courses through the good links it has with local schools and adult centres. Prospective students have many opportunities to become familiar with the college and the courses available to them through a series of open days; they make visits to the college individually and in groups through 'taster' courses. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. They are gradually introduced to the life of the college through carefully-planned programmes which meet their individual needs. Mature students appreciate the help and encouragement they are given during recruitment and the consideration they are shown after enrolment to help them with commitments they have outside college. For example, some course timetables take account of the family responsibilities which students have.

33 A comprehensive range of facilities and benefits is available to staff and students including the service of a part-time counsellor, a college creche, free membership of the adjoining public leisure facilities, subsidised transport from rural areas, and assistance in finding rented local lodgings. Grants from a hardship fund help students with financial problems. Services including counselling and careers guidance are also available at Malvern. These services are clearly explained in a leaflet which is available to all students. The welfare services are highly valued by students but access to them is difficult for part-time evening students. The students' union is ineffective.

34 Students can enrol throughout the year. The college responds quickly to enquiries and the central administration team works closely with departmental administrators to arrange interviews for prospective students. Those who arrive at Evesham without an appointment can usually be interviewed on the same day. All new full-time students are welcomed to their departments through departmental coffee mornings where they have the opportunity to meet staff and fellow students before

their courses begin. Students expressed their appreciation of staff for being helpful and informative.

35 Arrangements for assessing the learning support needs of new students are generally effective. All full-time students have an initial assessment of their key literacy and numeracy skills and additional help with these skills is offered to those who need it. Accreditation of the prior learning of students is available. It is carried out on courses for the training of workplace assessors, but such accreditation is little used on other courses. Fifty students on vocational courses receive additional support for their learning. Students and their parents, and representatives from external agencies and special schools, were all complimentary about the high level of commitment to supporting students shown by staff. They also welcomed the college's policy of integrating students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with students on mainstream courses, and the general friendliness, accessibility and safety of its environment.

36 Induction arrangements work well. There are standard procedures which are adapted to suit the needs of individual students. Students found the induction process helpful and informative. Late entrants receive a shorter and individual induction from departmental heads. Students are advised of their rights and responsibilities during induction. There are established arrangements for students to change their programme of study or transfer to other institutions. The college holds central records of students' transfers but does not analyse them effectively. Records of achievement are generally comprehensive. Most tutors systematically review students' progress and achievement each term. They enter details of students' progress in individual students' records. A few tutors do not follow this standard practice. Course applicants are encouraged to bring their national records of achievement to interviews, and to take an up-to-date record of their progress and attainment with them when they leave college.

37 Tutorial arrangements generally work well and students value the help and advice they are given on personal, vocational and academic issues. All full-time and part-time students are allocated a personal tutor and adults on access courses are offered tutorials. Each member of staff is allocated one hour each week to meet with students. One department has developed a useful student log in which tutors record issues raised in, and actions agreed through, tutorial discussions. A comprehensive pack is available for tutors and staff-development workshops have helped them to extend their tutorial skills.

38 There is a college policy on the provision of careers advice and careers education. The arrangements for the implementation of the policy are comprehensive and thorough. Careers education and guidance are an integral part of access courses and a guidance specialist is available at Wallace House. Advice about higher education is readily available to full-time students and they receive this through briefing events,

information leaflets, the services of a part-time specialist and visits to universities. The college has a service level agreement with Hereford and Worcester Careers Service. All full-time students receive a letter from the careers service detailing the services available to them. Two careers officers are attached to the college. They attend departmental inductions and arrange and conduct interviews with individual students and with groups of students. A similar service is available to students on access courses in Malvern from their local careers office and through the library. Careers education is integral to GNVQ courses. All students are given help to produce a well-presented curriculum vitae before they leave. There is a comprehensive range of careers literature and computer software which is available to students in the library. Staff teach students how to use the library facilities during induction. Local employment vacancies are advertised in the college.

39 Students' attendance is systematically monitored. Standard letters are sent to all students who have been absent for two weeks. Some tutorial staff also contact absentee students or their parents at home. The college gathers some follow-up information on students who leave early, for example to take up employment. There is, however, little analysis of this information. Through assessment at their places of work, a few early leavers have had their skills assessed in the workplace and they have gone on to achieve qualifications. Through their individual success they have contributed towards the college's overall success and they have helped the country to progress towards meeting its national targets for education and training.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

40 The teaching observed was generally of a good standard. Of the 94 sessions inspected, 63 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses, and 33 per cent had a balance of strengths and weaknesses. In 4 per cent of sessions, weaknesses clearly outweighed strengths. The average number of students in each teaching group was 10. The average attendance at the classes inspected was 82 per cent. The following table summarises the grades given to the sessions which were inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programmes of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCSE, GCE AS/A level access to further and higher education	1	4	2	0	0	7
Basic education	3	8	6	3	1	21
GNVQ	2	7	4	0	0	13
Higher education	2	3	2	0	0	7
NVQ	7	7	9	0	0	23
Other vocational*	2	9	6	0	0	17
Other	1	3	2	0	0	6
Total	18	41	31	3	1	94

* includes vocational provision leading to qualifications from BTEC.

41 Staff know their students well and give them all help and support. In return, students are willing to listen to, and respond to, constructive criticism. Mature students in particular commented on the help and encouragement that they had been given.

42 Programmes in engineering are well organised. There is a carefully-constructed framework of courses which is clearly explained in a helpful handbook. Courses are arranged to suit the particular needs and circumstances of students. For example, students may start some courses at various points during the year. Teachers had prepared thorough lesson plans which specified the amount of time to be spent on each topic and the learning activities to be carried out by the students. These activities included group work, demonstrations, experiments, the systematic recording of results, calculations, and tasks involving handouts. Students' progress is effectively monitored. On some courses, students have to carry out over 50 tasks in the workshops and their progress and achievement in these, in particular, are carefully checked by teachers. In lessons, students carried out assignments which required them to collect and evaluate information, write reports and give presentations. In some cases, deadlines were not specified for the completion of assignments. Students were not expected to make use of computers when producing reports. In many lessons, the learning was well managed. For example, students carried out carefully-devised tasks in the horticultural machinery workshop effectively. The task sheets provided students with clear instructions. Most students were able to work effectively on their own and they produced brief but clear reports. A teacher and a technician were available to give the students help when they needed it. In some less effective lessons, teachers used overhead transparencies of poor quality. In some instances, the pace was unnecessarily slow. Other lessons were conducted at too fast a speed and they left some students confused. Many

schemes of work are of limited value and only consist of a list of the topics to be taught each week.

43 In science lessons, the teaching was good. Teachers had prepared their lessons thoroughly. They gave appropriate assistance and clear instructions to their students. In the better lessons, students were given well-produced handouts, tasks which helped them to study effectively on their own, and appropriately-designed assignments and project work. On science courses, students were provided with carefully-chosen work placements. Students on GNVQ advanced courses in science were enabled to acquire greater knowledge and understanding of their subject through industrial visits. In addition, these visits enabled students to see aspects of technology which the college could not be expected to provide. In lessons held in the laboratory, both staff and students paid due attention to matters of health and safety. In a minority of instances, the pace of lessons was inappropriate and it impeded successful learning; the teachers' expectations of their students was too low; and teachers took too little account of the differing abilities of students. Some marking of students' work was insufficiently constructive and, in some instances, teachers failed to correct inaccurate grammar and incorrect spelling.

44 Teaching on courses in business and management is thorough and effective. Teachers work together as a team, they have shared aims and objectives, manage classes and lessons well and they use a variety of appropriate teaching methods. There is a good match between the aims of courses and the teachers' schemes of work. A few schemes of work are insufficiently detailed, however, and they fail to show how the students will be assessed. A system of lesson planning has been introduced whereby teachers set out their lesson plans on standardised forms but this has not been adopted by all staff. Teachers recognise, and adjust to, their students' varying abilities. The students respond well to the teaching. They maintain a strong interest in their work and know how to obtain additional help when they need it. During lessons, teachers questioned students well to check that they understood what they were learning. Work experience is well planned. Teachers ensure that students learn key skills and they make sustained efforts to teach these skills as an integral part of the students' main course. Assessment strategies are generally appropriate. In order to ensure that students have a sensible and reasonable workload, their assignment work is spread out across the year, according to a timetable.

45 Most work in the health and community care programme is of high quality. There are clear schemes of work for all courses and these are distributed to students. Lessons were generally well structured and were based on a lesson plan. Some lesson plans contained insufficient detail on, for example, objectives and learning strategies. Teachers' knowledge was up to date. In the best lessons, they ensured that all students were involved in discussions, that their contributions to these were given careful consideration, and that where possible, they were used as a basis for

further development of the subject. In a minority of instances, lessons were not well structured or managed and they lacked a clear focus. The briefings which students on GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses receive for their assignments make clear the criteria for grading their work. The teachers' assessment of assignment work is fair and accurate. The commentary, however, which many teachers give to students on the quality of their assignments is insufficiently detailed and it does not offer them guidance on ways of improving their work.

46 On courses for hairdressing and beauty therapy, well-qualified staff demonstrate a thorough knowledge of their subjects. Their course programmes and lesson plans are clear. During lessons, teachers made frequent references to commercial practice and these helped to broaden and deepen their students' understanding of the subject. In practical lessons, teachers demonstrated professional standards of practice and they stressed the importance of safety. Students planned ahead, recorded their achievements systematically and were encouraged by their teachers to assess their own progress and potential. Teachers had high expectations of their students. They challenged them with demanding work and they made regular checks to ensure that learning was taking place.

47 Basic education includes courses in literacy and numeracy and foundation and access programmes. Literacy and numeracy courses have been organised for particular groups such as travellers and parents from a family centre. Students are encouraged to develop study and communication skills and to use information technology skills to improve the presentation of their work. Teachers demonstrate considerable expertise and are generous in the time they give to support their students. A few lessons were ineffective as a result of poor planning or the absence of assessment criteria. Some teachers gave students insufficient opportunity to make contributions in discussions. Some basic skills students worked largely on their own and they were not given the opportunity to work together productively in pairs or groups. Nevertheless, the individual programmes in basic skills were skilfully constructed and took account of the varying levels of ability and rates of progress of different students.

48 Most teachers are responsive to the needs of students with learning difficulties. They encourage students to develop their own interests and in some instances, courses are successfully based on these. Students respond to their teachers with enthusiasm. They benefit from their work experience. Much of the teaching is, however, insufficiently demanding for the students. Basic skills are taught as separate subjects and students do not develop these skills within the context of practical and vocational activities. Teachers keep records of their lessons and of the students' work but these are unsystematic. A few teachers have inappropriate expectations of their students, both in relation to the standards of their work and their behaviour.

49 The college is committed to providing work experience for students on vocational courses. In many instances, this work experience is an integral part of the course. Where this is not the case, the college has sought accreditation of work experience modules by the Open College Network. Employers in the travel and banking industries said that work experience arrangements are well handled by the college. Employers in the care sector, however, had experienced some difficulties liaising with college staff. Students operate a travel agency on the college premises. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities run a coffee shop. A full review of work experience is being undertaken. The early indications from this review are that the college will build on the current strengths, and improve the administration, monitoring and assessment of its provision of work experience.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

50 In 1995-96, the college's success rate in vocational examinations was 95 per cent and 3,381 students gained vocational awards. The performance tables for 1995-96 published by the DfEE record that 94 per cent of the college's 49 students aged 16 to 18 in their final year of study on GNVQ advanced courses were successful. This places the college in the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. The same tables record that of the college's 52 students aged 16 to 18, 63 per cent were successful in the final year of study on their GNVQ intermediate courses. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

51 In 1995-96, students on full-time vocational courses achieved success rates of 100 per cent in; 11 out of 12 courses in the business and management department, 13 out of 17 courses in the engineering and technology department and 17 out of 22 courses in the department for adult and community education. These good success rates were achieved over a considerable range of provision. This includes foundation and access to higher education courses; hairdressing and beauty therapy courses; five degree courses taught jointly at the college and university; two GNVQ courses at advanced level; higher national diploma courses in business; and agricultural and motor vehicle national diploma courses. Results on a few courses were less successful including GNVQ in health and social care at advanced level (pass rate of 56 per cent), certificate in childcare, (63 per cent), GNVQ health and social care at intermediate level (63 per cent).

52 Students who completed part-time courses in 1995-96 also achieved good results. Pass rates of 100 per cent were achieved on courses in childcare, first aid, basic food hygiene, health and safety, boat safety, gas safety, introductory welding, computer programming and use of software, and courses for the higher national certificate in business studies and the

national certificate in motor vehicle engineering. There are also good results on most NVQ programmes across the three departments. Results on some part-time courses are more variable. Pass rates in courses at four levels of European languages which are validated by the open college network, average 68 per cent and range from 38 per cent to 100 per cent. GCE A level provision is limited. GCE A level pass rates over the last three years average 70 per cent and are below the national average; they range from 54 per cent in law in 1995 to 100 per cent in English.

53 As a result of college policy, only a limited range of GCSE subjects is provided. Full-time courses in GCSE mathematics and English language are available during the day and part-time courses in these subjects are provided in the evenings. In 1996, the proportion of students who gained grades A to C in English was 98 per cent. In mathematics, grades A to C were gained by 75 per cent of students on the evening course and by 30 per cent of students on the daytime course.

54 In 1995-96, the average retention rate for part-time students was 83 per cent. There were differences in the overall retention rates of courses offered by the three teaching departments. These rates were 89 per cent, 81 per cent and 77 per cent on courses offered by the departments of adult and community education, business and management studies, and engineering and technology, respectively.

55 Of the 374 full-time students who completed their course in 1996, 28 per cent progressed into higher education, 37 per cent gained employment, 19 per cent continued their studies in further education and about 16 per cent failed to provide information on their subsequent destinations.

56 At this year's special awards ceremony, presentations were made to 54 students to recognise their outstanding progress, effort and achievement. The occasion was jointly sponsored by 26 local firms. All 16 students on the degree course in combined studies jointly taught with Sheffield University, gained honours degrees. Four students were awarded first-class honours and six gained upper-second honours. A part-time student who gained a grade A in GCE A level in history was awarded the highest marks out of 700 candidates. An engineering student has recently become the BTEC student of the year and has received a bronze award for outstanding achievement. A student on the higher national diploma course in business studies was awarded a bursary by a local university in recognition of his achievement in obtaining distinctions in all units. Another student received a bronze award from C&G for high achievement on his course in agricultural machinery. A third-year horticultural apprentice received an award from the British Agricultural and Garden Machinery Association which designated him as 'United Kingdom apprentice of the year'. An agricultural engineering student was a national champion in the skills Olympics.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

57 The college has a commitment to assuring the quality of its provision and to the continuous improvement of the quality of all its programmes and services. In 1994, a 'quality manager' was appointed to develop and co-ordinate quality assurance arrangements. A quality assurance statement, based on some useful research and an analysis of the effectiveness of existing quality assurance practices at the college, was approved by governors in 1995. The manager responsible for quality assurance presents reports to the academic board three times a year. The setting of targets and standards, and the measurement of performance against these, are intended to be central to the college's quality assurance system. However, targets and standards are not set for many areas of the college's work.

58 There is no quality assurance manual and little guidance is given to staff on implementing the procedures in the college's quality assurance system. The implementation of quality assurance procedures is not monitored systematically. The college has made plans to introduce a 'quality review panel', as a subcommittee of the academic board. The panel will review groups of courses and it will audit course reviews. The college has found the International Standards Organisation (ISO) 9002 quality assurance system useful as an exemplar for its own quality assurance of externally-funded provision. The detailed manual of procedures for the quality assurance of this provision is currently being revised. In 1994, the Basic Skills Agency awarded its quality mark to the college for its basic skills provision. In 1995, the college gained the Investors in People award.

59 Course review procedures are not fully effective although they have led to improvements on some courses. Criteria have not been agreed for reviewing and evaluating the success of courses. Reviews pay insufficient attention to the quality of teaching and students' learning. They rarely include any analysis of students' achievements or destinations. End-of-year course reviews do not systematically draw on the views of other agencies, such as awarding bodies or higher education institutions. For example, recommendations in moderators' reports have not been acted upon or incorporated into course reviews. Reviews include the responses by students to questionnaires about the quality of the college's provision but in some cases, these responses are not analysed. There are standardised forms for course reviews but some staff complete the documentation incorrectly and other staff do not use the forms at all. Occasionally, courses are not reviewed. There are a few examples of teachers carrying out their own thorough and effective course reviews in addition to the prescribed review. Action plans are usually drawn up for each full-time course and for some part-time courses. The quality and relevance of the action plans vary.

60 The college's reporting on its overall performance is not yet sufficiently rigorous or consistent. Three out of the four departmental

reports do not refer to the quality of teaching and two do not analyse students' achievements. Two reports review progress against objectives set the previous year. Other college services such as the creche, the computer centre and the library review progress they have made during the year. Priorities for the following year, some complemented by detailed action plans, are identified in cross-college service and departmental reports. The review of the college's externally-funded training makes useful comparisons with the performance of other TEC-funded initiatives in the region. An overall review of the college's work is set out in the annual report using each of the headings in the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The report lists the college's successes in meeting some of the objectives set out in the strategic plan. It contains little critical evaluation of the college's work.

61 The college prepares reports on students' achievements. These do not contain any significant interpretation, or analysis of students' achievements. Retention rates for the college as a whole, but not for courses, are reported and set against targets. Students' destinations are recorded and some analysis of trends is carried out. The college does not analyse the destinations of students who left courses before completion. Performance indicators are not widely understood or used by staff. Some of the performance indicators identified in the strategic plan are neither precise nor measurable.

62 Surveys of students' views on the quality of all aspects of the college's provision have been undertaken regularly since 1992. Currently, surveys of the views of students on full-time courses are carried out three times a year and surveys of the views of students on part-time courses are carried out once a year. The surveys are detailed and form part of the course review process. There is scope for improving the use made of findings by analysing the ratings given by students to various aspects of teaching, and also the students' views on college facilities. The college conducts reviews of particular college services each year. The opinions of students on these services are sought through course review questionnaires but little or no use is made of the relevant information provided by the students' responses. As part of the recent review of refectory services, students' views on these services were obtained through a specifically-designed questionnaire and through panel discussions. The students' comments were acted upon and the refectory services have improved. The views of employers, higher education institutions and the local community are sought and are taken into account by the college in its planning. However, the views of external bodies and agencies are not gathered systematically.

63 The academic board sets up useful task groups to review, develop and improve the quality of particular areas of the college's work. In 1995-96, task groups were set up to review the quality and effectiveness of students' induction, the tutorial programme and leisure and sports services. The work of these task groups has led to improvements. For example, helpful procedures and materials were produced for students'

induction. Arrangements for the internal verification of courses are generally effective. Several cross-college working groups, for example on GNVQs and key skills, have enabled staff to share good practice and to improve provision.

64 The college's staff-development plan is linked with the strategic plan. Priorities for staff development are identified through the quality assurance processes. Staff have the opportunity to identify their training needs through appraisal, and in discussions with their line manager. The staff-development programme is generally effective. All staff are invited to a series of training days and a training week which takes place at the college once a year. These training events are devised after consultation with staff. Part-time staff are invited to these events and the travel expenses they incur in coming to them are paid by the college. Many part-time staff, however, are unable to attend the training sessions because they have other commitments. In 1995-96 about 70 staff attended externally-organised training events and over 40 staff attended courses organised by the college. These included courses in computing and courses for training and development lead body awards. This year, eight staff have benefited from short industrial placements. The usefulness of staff training is evaluated. Staff disseminate the key messages they have received from their training, and distribute relevant materials, to colleagues. The staff-development budget for 1995-96, excluding the in-house programme, was £45,000 and represents about 1 per cent of the college's recurrent expenditure. The staff-development budget has been reduced to £40,000 for 1996-97. The staff-appraisal scheme, introduced in 1994, has recently been reviewed. It has been found to be generally effective but in need of further development. Two significant changes to it have been made. Teachers are now appraised annually, rather than every two years, and part-time staff working 10 hours a week or more are now included in the scheme. The college has recently reviewed the arrangements for inducting new staff. It has found some weaknesses in these and it is addressing them.

65 The college's charter is contained within a useful compact student diary which is available to all students, although a few of those interviewed had not received it. The charter outlines students' rights and responsibilities and it refers to other relevant college documents. However, parts of the charter are written in complex language which is not easily understood by all students. The rights of employers, and of people in the community are referred to but the student diary is an inappropriate place to record these rights. The charter sets few specific standards. No arrangements exist for monitoring whether the standards which are specified are monitored. No analysis is made of the kinds of complaints made by students or the action taken to redress them.

66 The college produced a self-assessment document which identified strengths and weaknesses and awarded grades under each of the headings

in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The self-assessment report was produced by the senior management team. It draws on the college's strategic plan and the college's 1995-96 annual report. A copy of the self-assessment report was sent to governors for their information, prior to the inspection. Many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment were confirmed by the inspection. Some weaknesses identified by the inspectors were not identified by the college. About half the grades awarded by the college were not confirmed through inspection. The college has not yet developed a sufficiently rigorous and self-critical approach to self-assessment.

RESOURCES

Staffing

67 The staff of the college are well qualified and suitably experienced. There are 46 full-time and 267 part-time teachers and this establishment of teaching staff is sufficient for the college's purposes. Part-time teachers represent 50 per cent of the staffing in terms of full-time equivalent numbers. The work of part-time staff is highly valued and it is seen as vital to the success of the college. Most part-time staff are involved in curriculum development. Around 68 per cent of the teachers have degrees and, of these, 37 per cent have higher degrees. Ninety-one per cent of the full-time and 74 per cent of the part-time teachers have a teaching qualification. Unqualified teachers are encouraged to study for a teaching qualification. A total of 50 staff hold the training and development lead body assessor award and 21 hold the internal verifier award; only one member of staff currently holds the accreditation of prior learning award. The number of specialist support staff is adequate. There is, however, some ineffective deployment of specialist support staff. Some support staff are not deployed to those areas of work where their services are most needed. The college has adopted a flexible approach in determining roles for support staff. For example a number of support staff are employed as instructors in practical skills. The college employs some part-time technicians. There are sufficient, suitably-qualified and experienced administrative support staff.

68 The college's staffing profile is regularly analysed in terms of gender, disability, age and ethnicity. The analysis shows that 63 per cent of staff are female and that 37 per cent are male. Two of the five members of the senior management team are women. Five of the staff, one full time and four part time, are registered as disabled.

Equipment/learning resources

69 The college is generally well equipped. Much of the machinery and equipment is up to current commercial or industrial standard. The college has an unusual and valuable resource in its manufacturing technology centre which has state-of-the-art rapid phototyping facilities, a suite of

networked computers and computer-aided design software. It was funded through a successful bid for £200,000 to the TEC competitiveness fund. This facility has enabled the college to take on a challenging range of commercial design and prototype work with industry. Employers praised the excellence of the centre and the ability of the college to meet their requests rapidly and flexibly.

70 The college has been successful in obtaining industrial sponsorship for other equipment such as that in the modern hairdressing salon and the equipment for the horticultural machinery courses. There are also adequate amounts of good equipment for science, electronics and gas safety courses. The number of cars available for motor vehicle courses is satisfactory but some of the vehicles are old. Some equipment, notably in the engineering workshop, while still serviceable, is becoming dated. In horticultural machinery, the fitting benches are of poor quality. Audio-visual equipment is generally very good. The general classrooms are well furnished.

71 The ratio of full-time equivalent students to computers is 14:1 which compares with an average of 10:1 for the sector, given in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. There are good up-to-date computers and software in some classrooms at Evesham and in rooms used for information technology classes at Malvern. Access to computers is severely restricted at times. Students report that development of their key skill on information technology is being adversely affected by a lack of access to computing equipment. The college network is limited to the main teaching block. Access to the Internet has only recently been established.

72 The college library, which is integrated with the careers library and a learning support area, has been reorganised in order to make more efficient use of its space. It has sufficient suitably-qualified staff. There is a quiet room but there are no facilities for group work. The overall bookstock is relatively small. There are insufficient suitable books for hairdressing and access courses and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The bookstock for computing needs updating. The library has a substantial number of compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases but these can only be accessed by three machines which are not networked. All learning resources are centrally catalogued. Recent improvements which relate to the management of the library include the entry of most stock onto the computerised catalogue and better liaison between the library and teaching staff. Helpful library guides are provided for library users. The library is open at appropriate times. It has insufficient study places and it is overcrowded at busy times. The automation of the records of loans is incomplete. Recently, the library has introduced fines for overdue borrowers and the number of overdue books has fallen. There are arrangements for students at Malvern to use the local public library. The librarian has recently prepared a plan for the future development of the library at the Malvern site.

Accommodation

73 The majority of the college accommodation comprises modern, purpose-designed buildings which are properly maintained, well decorated and fit for their purpose. The campus is free from litter. The college is set in very pleasant and attractive surroundings. The grounds are carefully landscaped although their trees and bushes have not fully matured. The site is fully accessible for those with restricted mobility. An audit has been undertaken on the quality of the college's environment. There is, as yet, no college policy on environmental awareness. The grounds are used as a valuable teaching resource for students with learning difficulties. There is a leisure centre adjacent to the college with which the college has good working links. The college and the leisure centre, have jointly installed security cameras to improve security on the whole site. Signposting to, within and around the college is inadequate. Working in collaboration with their respective owners, the college improved the quality of accommodation at Wallace House and the Malvern site. The college has raised the quality of teaching rooms and learning centres at these sites to match the quality of accommodation in the rest of its premises.

74 The college has an accommodation strategy which includes a rolling 10-year programme of maintenance for its buildings. The college perceives a shortfall in accommodation and has identified what is needed to remedy this. The college calculates that it has a room utilisation rate of 85 per cent. Such a high rate was not, however, in evidence during the inspection. The college has few large teaching rooms in which combined classes might be taught.

75 The specialist accommodation for horticultural machinery, engineering and motor vehicle technology is good although there is an inadequate exhaust extraction system in the motor vehicle workshop. There is no common room or lounge for students and they use the library and the refectory for general social purposes. There is unsatisfactory access to some classrooms and laboratories and students may only reach them by passing through other rooms where lessons may be taking place. The relatively new art and design block does not have sufficient storage space and/or display areas.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

76 The college is making good progress towards its aim to provide high-quality education for all its students. Its main strengths are:

- the leadership given by the governors and the senior managers
- its broad range of vocational courses
- its effective full-cost work
- the large and diverse range of initiatives funded by external agencies
- its close links with schools, higher education, industry and the TEC

-
- the guidance and support given to students during enrolment, induction and during their course
 - the high standard of teaching in most classes
 - the good levels of achievement of students on many vocational courses
 - its well-qualified teachers and support staff
 - the good quality of its accommodation
 - the industrial-standard equipment in the manufacturing technology centre.

77 If the college is to build on its strengths it should address the following weaknesses:

- the limited effectiveness of some committees
- the lack of strategies to implement and monitor the equal opportunities policy
- the limited use and accuracy of management information
- the underdeveloped quality assurance system
- the marginal failure to reach growth targets
- the low number of computers and their limited accessibility to students.

FIGURES

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

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

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

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1996)

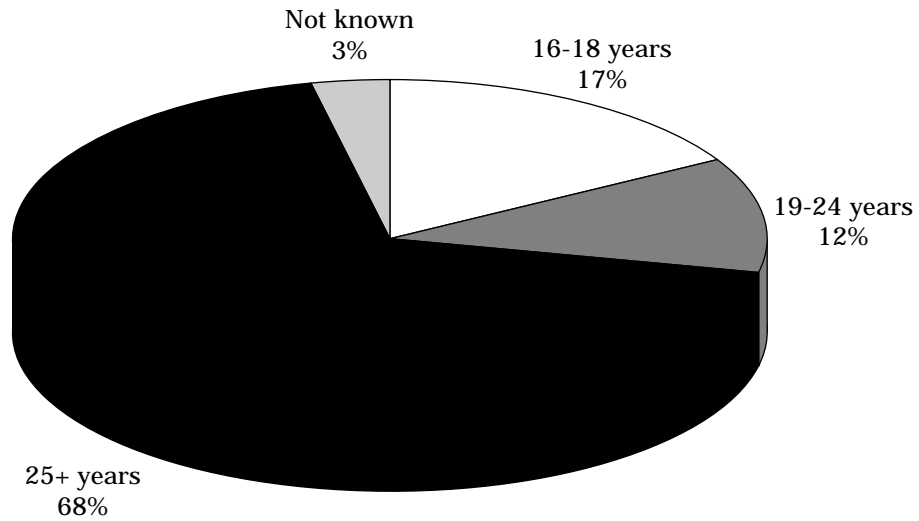
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

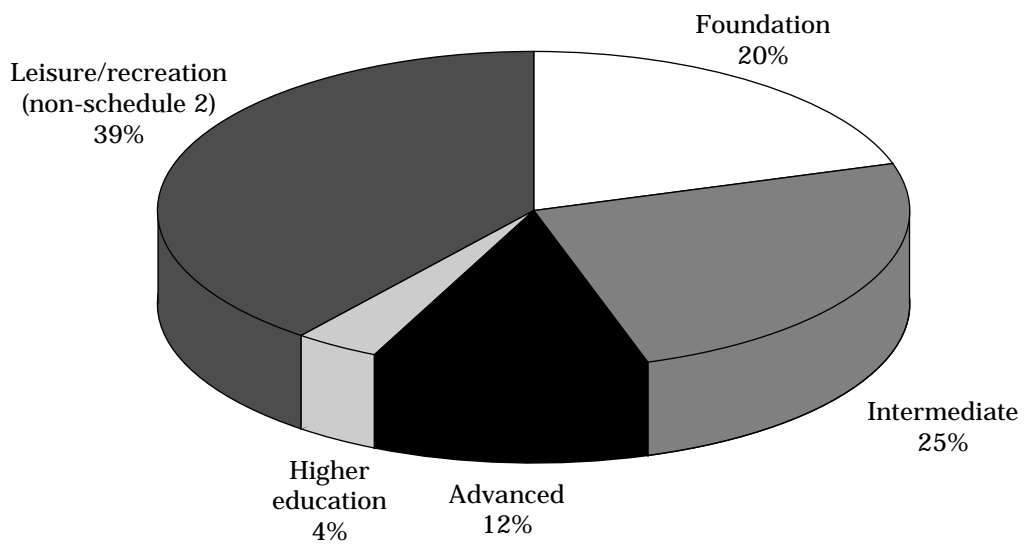
Evesham College: percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 5,577

Figure 2

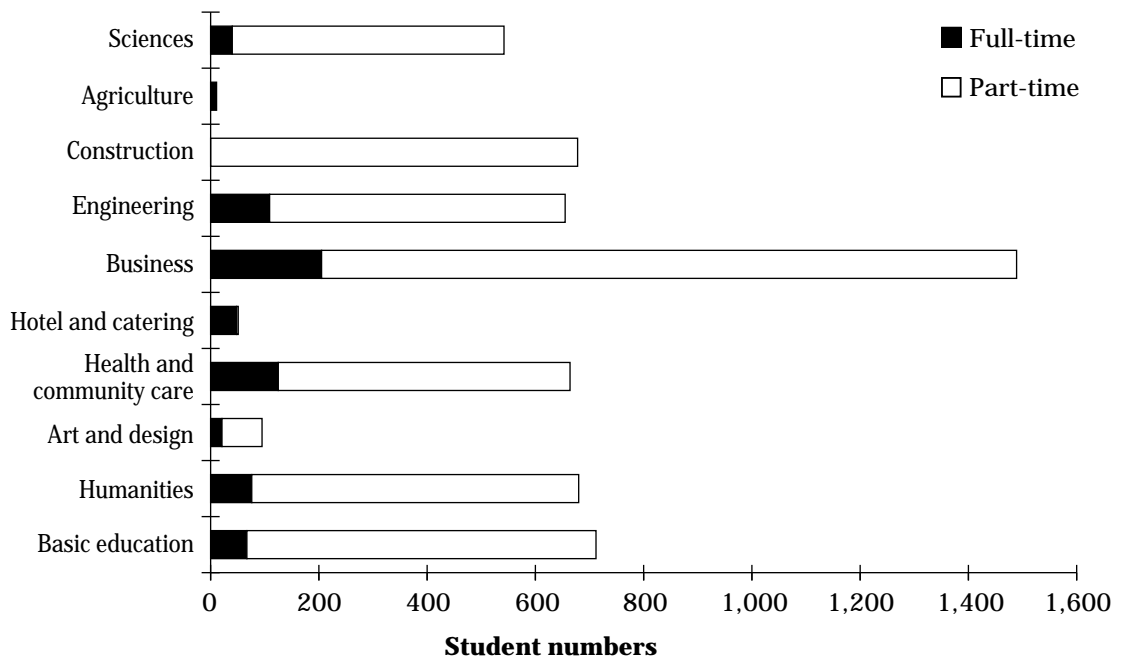
Evesham College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 5,577

Figure 3

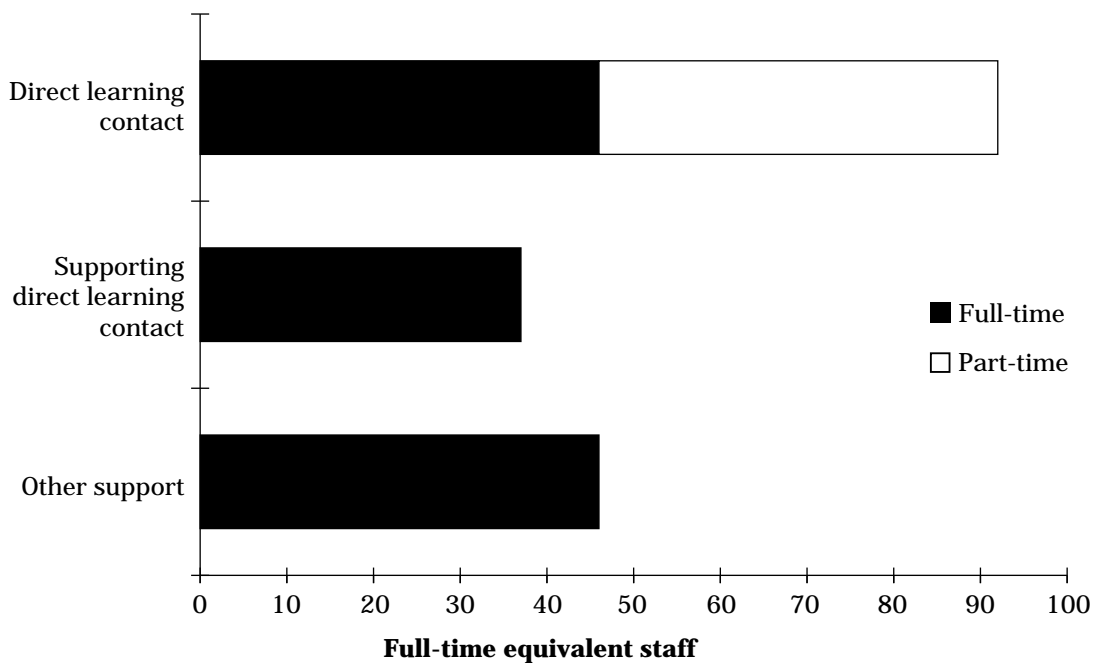
Evesham College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 5,577

Figure 4

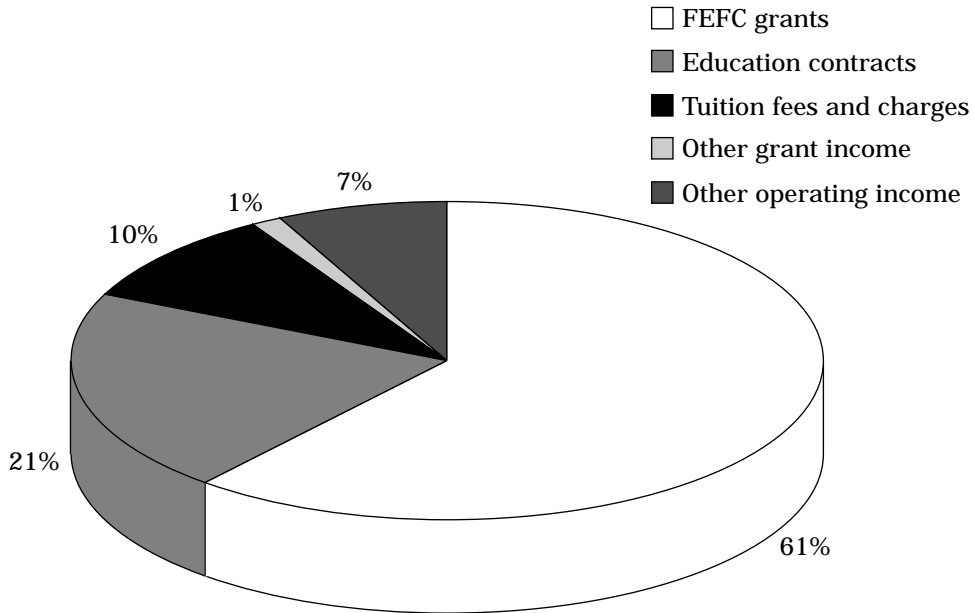
Evesham College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 175

Figure 5

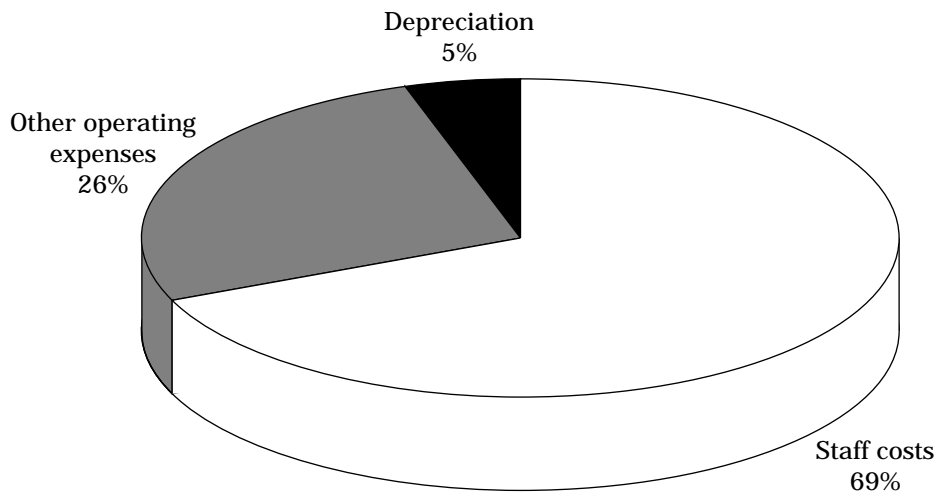
Evesham College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £4,373,000

Figure 6

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



Expenditure: £4,612,000

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