

Grantham College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1998-99**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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

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

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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

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

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

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

Student Achievements

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

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

Summary

Grantham College

East Midlands Region

Inspected September 1998

Grantham College is a general further education college in Lincolnshire. The college's self-assessment report is accurate with governors and almost all sections of the college involved in its production. A number of the weaknesses identified in the report had been addressed by the time of the inspection. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They agreed with three of the five curriculum grades and all the grades for aspects of cross-college provision. In two curriculum areas, the grades awarded by inspectors were one grade lower than those given by the college.

The college offers courses in all of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. The inspection covered provision in four programme areas, including two areas of off-site collaborative provision, and aspects of cross-college provision. The college has made many improvements since the last inspection. Most teaching is sound. The college benefits from purposeful governance and it is ably and effectively managed. Students receive effective personal and academic support to help them to succeed on their courses. The accommodation has been improved substantially since the last inspection and has been successfully adapted to meet changes in the curriculum. There is a strong commitment from staff and the corporation to quality assurance

and there is a well-established and effective course review process. The college should: improve students' achievements in science and mathematics; improve the monitoring of students' progress in off-site collaborative provision; analyse reasons for student withdrawals; improve the availability of computers on a 'drop-in' basis; extend its quality assurance processes to all college functions; and review the setting and achievement of targets.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Computing and information technology	2	Support for students	2
Science and mathematics	4	General resources	2
Management and professional studies	2	Quality assurance	2
Health and social care	2	Governance	2
Art and design	2	Management	2

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Grantham College is a general further education college in a small market town with a population of 32,000 in Lincolnshire. The college's catchment area also includes the surrounding rural communities. The college is located close to the town centre on a main site with two smaller annexes nearby. The college is a partner with a housing association in a 'foyers' project in the neighbouring market town of Sleaford. This provides for young people with a housing and training need. The college provides a range of courses to support the project and for the residents of Sleaford and surrounding areas. The economy has been affected by the significant decline of traditional engineering companies in Grantham. However, there has been considerable growth in other employment sectors, particularly in food manufacturing and distribution. Reports on the local labour market by the Lincolnshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) show shortages in technician skills, and that growth areas for training are management, personnel services, and health and social care. These are also the key areas of growth in the college's off-site collaborative provision which accounted for over a quarter of the funded units in 1997-98. Unemployment in the Grantham area, at 4.5% for men and 1.9% for women, is lower than the average for the East Midlands.

2 Grantham has eight secondary schools of which only two are local authority controlled. Two are selective and have sixth forms. Attempts to provide a common timetable for general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects in conjunction with some of the schools have not succeeded. The proportion of young people continuing in full-time post-16 education averaged 70% during the 1990s with the majority attending the college.

3 The college offers a range of courses in all Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. The college is committed to

sustaining as wide a range of courses as its local community requires. Art and design, health and social care, and information technology (IT) have grown substantially in recent years replacing courses in construction and motor vehicle engineering. Higher education is provided through franchised arrangements with the Nottingham Trent University and offers progression opportunities locally for a growing number of students at the college. The college mission is to 'provide a high-quality service in support of the lifelong learning needs of its community'.

4 Student numbers have increased significantly during the last three years. FEFC-funded enrolments have grown from 3,611 in 1994-95 to 6,297 in 1996-97, an increase of 74%. In 1997-98, the college enrolled a total of 8,660 students, of whom 7,896 were part-time students. The significant increases in short course enrolments on off-site collaborative provision have changed the student numbers profile. In 1997-98, 52% of students were on foundation level courses and 26% were on intermediate level courses. However, the college is still a significant provider of education for full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 41% of the 764 further education full-time students are in this age range. The college's annual total of funded units has increased from 181,378 in 1993-94 to 232,878 in 1996-97, a growth of 28%. Unit targets have been met or exceeded each year. The senior staff comprises the principal, vice-principal and assistant principal. The senior management team comprises the senior staff, four heads of faculty, the chief administrative officer, the director of business initiatives, the college accountant and the head of student services. Provision in each of the faculties and at off-site centres was inspected.

5 The college has a number of important partnership arrangements. It has productive links with the Lincolnshire TEC which has provided financial support for a number of refurbishment initiatives, and the college is

Context

partnered with South Kesteven and North Kesteven District Councils on single regeneration projects. The college works closely with other Lincolnshire colleges. Members of staff are governors of local schools and the college is represented on the local education-business partnership, and the regional advisory committee of the Lincolnshire TEC. The college aims to:

- be responsive to the differing needs of all young and adult learners
- provide courses and guidance services for students of all abilities
- be a cost-effective provider of services
- work with partners to ensure a comprehensive range of training and educational provision
- be viewed positively by its customers
- provide appropriate learning programmes for students with learning difficulties and disabilities
- promote learning through IT
- fulfil its role as a responsible employer.

The Inspection

6 The inspection took place during the last week of September 1998. Inspectors had

previously scrutinised the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other divisions of the FEFC. Inspectors used data on students' achievements derived from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1996 and 1997. The college submitted its own data on students' achievements for 1998. These data were checked by inspectors against primary sources of evidence, such as registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies, and were found to be generally reliable. The inspection was carried out by 11 inspectors for a total of 41 working days and an auditor for five days. The inspection team observed lessons, examined students' work and evaluated college documents. Meetings were held with governors, managers, other college staff, students, and employers.

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the 57 lessons observed, 58% were judged to be good or outstanding and 5% less than satisfactory. This compares with averages of 65% and 6%, respectively, for all lessons observed during 1997-98.

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level and GCSE	0	4	8	2	0	14
GNVQ	3	7	3	0	0	13
NVQ	0	4	3	1	0	8
Other vocational	3	6	5	0	0	14
Other	3	3	2	0	0	8
Total (No)	9	24	21	3	0	57
Total (%)	16	42	37	5	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

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

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Grantham College	13.1	85
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

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

Curriculum Areas

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 2

9 Inspectors observed 13 classes covering courses in computing and IT. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment of strengths and weaknesses. In some instances, however, the inspectors differed from the college in the degree of emphasis they gave to points in their judgements. In awarding a grade for this area of work, the inspectors had access to recent data on students' achievements which were not available at the time the self-assessment report was written.

Key strengths

- good range of courses, modes of attendance and progression routes
- effectively planned and well-managed curriculum
- well-planned and varied teaching and learning activities
- innovative assignments in general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes
- the high standard of some assignment work
- good pass rates on some vocational courses

Weaknesses

- decreasing retention rate on the GNVQ advanced course
- little employer involvement in specialist computing provision
- insufficient staffing of some practical sessions to ensure adequate support for all students

10 The range of computing courses has expanded considerably over the last three years. The provision includes a GCE A level computing

course, GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses in IT, a course leading to a national vocational qualification (NVQ) in IT and a wide range of courses leading to modular qualifications in IT at three levels. In their work for the modular qualifications, students use software relating to the latest developments in IT and they acquire an understanding of global communications. The college is designated as a 'millennium centre' in the government scheme to help small and medium sized businesses to beat the 'millennium bug'. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the range of courses, offering students progression to employment or higher education, represents a strength of the college's provision. All GNVQ students are given the opportunity to complete at least one vocationally relevant work experience placement.

11 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the curriculum is managed effectively. Schemes of work are detailed and many describe the teaching methods to be adopted for particular topics. Course handbooks provide students with information on course content and on the operation of the course. In a number of instances, course content has been modified or redesigned to meet the needs of students who wish to progress to higher education or employment. For example, students on the GNVQ advanced course are introduced to the C++ programming language, and the recently introduced 'secretary 2000' programme includes familiarisation with a wide range of software and electronic communications and work experience placements on the continent. Assignments are reviewed regularly and all new assignments are approved internally.

12 As recognised in the self-assessment report, teachers use a suitable variety of activities to promote and strengthen learning. In many lessons, activity is divided appropriately between discussion, demonstration by the teacher and practical

Curriculum Areas

work. Teachers question students effectively and practical assignments require the use of modern software of industrial standard. In a number of theory lessons, good use is made of modern learning technologies such as presentation graphics software and currently there is a project to identify the effectiveness of a recently installed electronic whiteboard. In the few less effective lessons, some teachers spoke at length without questioning the students or involving them in discussion, and in some practical sessions there were not enough staff to ensure that students received help when they needed. Learning materials are of good quality and include notes provided by some teachers. Most learning guides for workshops on software applications are effective although some contain typographical errors which sometimes create difficulties for students.

13 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the college is well equipped for the computing and IT courses offered. The latest specialist software is available on computers networked across the college. An intranet holds assignments and other course information for GNVQ students. Students are provided with an appropriate range of information sources, including periodicals, textbooks, library reference material and access to the internet.

14 The standard of the best GNVQ assignments is high. A number of GNVQ assignments require the students to make good use of the college facilities. For example, one assignment provides students with the experience of having to support a range of IT users across the college, under the supervision of technicians and other teachers. Another assignment requires students to design and implement a website that provides information on a local air museum. Sufficient time is set aside to ensure that internal verification is carried out rigorously. Most of the written feedback on their performance in assignments is comprehensive and helpful. Staff make insufficient contact with employers in order to obtain materials for case studies or to involve them in the assessment of students' work. As the self-assessment report recognised, students' achievements on some vocational examinations are high. A number of courses have good retention and pass rates, including the newly introduced NVQ course in IT. The pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate course are below the national average for the sector. On the GNVQ advanced course, the retention rate is decreasing. For example, a significant number of students have left the first year of the current course.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in computing and information technology, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Other qualifications including computer literacy and information technology and C&G 726	1	Expected completions	1,321	1,233	781
		Retention (%)	94	89	89
		Achievement (%)	66	92	81
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	Expected completions	14	9	16
		Retention (%)	50	89	56
		Achievement (%)	50	56	38
NVQ IT	2	Expected completions	+	+	14
		Retention (%)	+	+	83
		Achievement (%)	+	+	83
GNVQ advanced IT	3	Expected completions	+	11	7
		Retention (%)	+	100	68
		Achievement (%)	+	91	50
GCE A/AS level IT	3	Expected completions	+	20	39
		Retention (%)	+	65	80
		Achievement (%)	+	77	57

*Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)
+course not offered*

Curriculum Areas

Science and Mathematics

Grade 4

15 Inspectors observed 10 lessons on courses in mathematics, chemistry, biology, physics, and sports science. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They considered, however, that the report failed to draw sufficient attention to weaknesses in students' achievements.

Key strengths

- clear lesson aims and objectives
- the regular setting of homework
- many students use IT to enhance their studies
- good range of specialist resources for sports science

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates
- poor retention rates
- many students' failure to complete or hand in homework
- insufficient help for under-performing students

16 The college offers general certificate of secondary education (GCSE), GCE A level and GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses in mathematics, biology, physics and chemistry. A two-year national diploma course in sports science was started in September 1997 but this year there were not enough applications for a new intake. There has been insufficient demand for vocational science courses. As acknowledged by the college in its self-assessment report, the range of courses offered to potential science students is narrow. There are plans to offer a national diploma course in food science in collaboration with a local food manufacturer. Science staff teach on other courses in the college that have a science component.

17 Inspectors did not agree with the conclusion in the self-assessment report that the quality of teaching and learning was good. Inspectors judged almost all the lessons to be no more than satisfactory. In almost all instances, teachers make the lesson aims and objectives clear to the students. Students make good use of IT to enhance their studies. For example, some GCE A level physics students are taught to use a computer database, donated by a local university, containing data on over 100 constructional materials such as steel and polymers. Homework is set on a regular basis with appropriate deadlines for its submission. Many students, however, do not complete or hand in homework. Work submitted is marked thoroughly. Teachers do not cope well with the wide ability range of students in some classes and some individual students do not receive the support they require. In two instances, lessons were inadequately planned and the teacher caused time to be wasted. Some overseas students initially lack the specialist scientific and mathematical language they need for GCE A level work. In practical lessons, little attention is paid to the teaching of safety principles. For example, in one GCE A level biology practical lesson on enzymes, the teacher made the wearing of laboratory coats and safety goggles optional rather than compulsory. Students' coats and bags are left on benches during practical lessons.

18 In general, the specialist science and mathematics resources and accommodation are satisfactory for the courses offered. As the self-assessment report states, however, the three science laboratories are of varying quality and are unsatisfactory in some respects. The biology laboratory is old fashioned and is in need of refurbishment. The laboratories have uncomfortable stools. There is at least one personal computer with modern database programmes in each of the laboratories. Sports science students use a well-equipped modern gymnasium and fitness area. Another spacious room has a rowing machine, an exercise bike

Curriculum Areas

and other specialist equipment used for measuring human performance and other aspects of physiology and biomechanics. The department and the library have several CD-ROMs that are useful to science students in their assignment work and background reading. The internet is readily accessible to science students. The library is reasonably well stocked with relevant texts and journals. The library quiet study area holds past examination papers in science and mathematics. Mathematics students are sometimes taught in rooms which are too small for the size of the class.

GCSE mathematics courses obtain an East Midlands Further Education accredited numeracy award.

19 As the self-assessment report recognised, pass rates and retention rates are poor in all courses and are declining. For example, in 1997, the pass rate in GCE A level biology was 30% compared with a national average of 77% for the sector. In 1998, the retention rate on the GCE A level chemistry course 1998 was 53% compared with a national average of 80%. On GCSE mathematics and science courses, over the last three years, only 31% of the students who sat the examination gained grade C or above, compared with the national average of 40% for the same period. Out of 146 students who started a GCSE mathematics course in 1997, only 82 sat the examination and only 20 gained grade C or above. However, some of the students who fail to obtain a grade C or above in

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSEs mathematics and science	2	Expected completions	243	199	206
		Retention (%)	81	67	65
		Achievement (%)	32	35	25
GCE A levels mathematics and science	3	Expected completions	125	105	92
		Retention (%)	71	49	48
		Achievement (%)	53	49	59

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

Curriculum Areas

Management and Professional Studies

Grade 2

20 Inspectors observed 10 lessons on courses in management and professional studies. They inspected the arrangements for the workplace assessment of students taking NVQs in management through collaborative provision. In general, inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report but they considered that whereas some strengths and weaknesses were overstated, others were not given enough weight. The college has addressed some weaknesses since the writing of the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-planned teaching
- appropriate support for students on a one-to-one basis
- contributions from students in lessons drawn from their own work experience
- variety of appropriate activities in lessons
- high standard of management and accounting portfolios
- many pass rates for individual subject qualifications above national averages
- constructive employer links for management courses through the workplace training unit
- good-quality course materials

Weaknesses

- the failure in some lessons to ensure the participation of all students in demanding activities
- the lack of evidence of workplace performance in the portfolios of students on Association of Accounting Technicians courses

- the failure of a significant number of students to achieve the full qualification within the target timescale
- poor monitoring of students' progress on collaborative provision

21 The faculty of business services offers a suitable range of professional and management courses at all levels. The workplace training unit supports employers offering management NVQs to their employees through collaborative provision. The faculty and the workplace training unit co-operate to make use of beneficial contacts with the world of work. There is good documentation for most courses. The inspectors did not agree with the statement in the self-assessment report that distance learning represents a strength of the faculty's provision. There was little provision of distance learning for students who have to study at home or at their place of work. Course files are well maintained but the summaries they contain of outcomes are insufficiently clear. Course teams are small. Some teachers have to teach all subjects on a course. The workplace training unit has good links with employers but it does not monitor the progress of students on collaborative provision closely enough. The self-assessment report recognised that the links with employers are weakest on accounting courses.

22 Teaching is well planned. The inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that students are provided with a learning environment in which they receive support and encouragement to succeed. In lessons, learning activities are appropriately varied. Teachers help students to develop interpersonal, presentational and information handling skills. The approach and style of teachers put students at their ease. In many lessons, students receive help and support on a one-to-one basis. Teachers make appropriate reference to the world of work. For example, in one lesson, the teacher held the interest of marketing students with a well-delivered

Curriculum Areas

introductory exposition on marketing concepts and the product life-cycle, drawing on plenty of real-life examples. Students find their assignments and exercises relevant and interesting. Teachers give the students constructive feedback on the quality of their portfolios and assignment work. In some lessons, however, teachers do not provide students with demanding tasks which require their full participation and they fail to ensure that their questioning involves everyone in the class. In its self-assessment report, the college acknowledges that there has been insufficient development of teaching and learning in key skills, although on some courses progress has been made in this respect. The self-assessment report also recognised that the portfolios of students on Association of Accounting Technicians courses lack evidence of students' performance and skills attainment in the workplace. The inspectors did not agree with the statement in the report that the college's procedures for the accreditation of students' prior learning represented a strength of provision. In practice, staff carry out little accreditation of prior learning.

23 The quality of course materials and teaching aids is generally high. In its self-assessment report, the college identified poor-quality teaching materials as a weakness. Since the report was written, the college has improved many of its teaching materials, although some of the printed notes given to students are of poor quality. Students have access to relevant CD-ROMs, the internet and suitable journals, periodicals and books. Some rooms do not provide good working environments and they have poor ventilation, poor lighting and are noisy.

24 Students on professional and management courses display good note-taking skills and are attentive and hard working. They make useful contributions in lessons, with examples drawn from their own work experience. Completed portfolios for management and accounting

students are of a high standard. Students in the workplace who are completing portfolios for an NVQ in management make good use of evidence from their work situations. The self-assessment did not identify this practice as a strength. In recent years, a significant number of students have failed to obtain their full qualifications within the target timescale. Lately, however, more students have gained full qualifications. The self-assessment report recognised that students on a number of management and professional courses successfully complete relevant individual units or examinations during their course and that pass rates for these individual elements are often above national averages.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in management and professional studies, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Supervisory management and professional	2	Expected completions	137	123	18
		Retention (%)	90	93	89
		Achievement (%)	81	83	69
Management and professional	3	Expected completions	117	123	115
		Retention (%)	85	80	73
		Achievement (%)	30	51	39
Supervisory management (off-site provision)	3	Expected completions	56	53	20
		Retention (%)	93	83	65
		Achievement (%)	2	42	54
Management and professional	4	Expected completions	44	151	37
		Retention (%)	89	83	86
		Achievement (%)	16	43	41

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

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care

Grade 2

25 Inspectors observed 11 lessons on health and social care courses in the college and on work-based programmes which form part of collaborative provision. Detailed and comprehensive self-assessments were completed separately for the college and work-based programmes. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgements, but they found some strengths and weaknesses which were not mentioned in the self-assessment report. Some weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- stimulating and challenging teaching involving a wide variety of appropriate methods
- effective use of work experience in classes and students' work
- high retention rates on most courses
- high pass rates on a majority of courses
- the students' success in achieving progression to higher or further education or to appropriate employment
- well-managed and properly documented courses

Weaknesses

- the failure to meet some students' learning needs
- the failure of some students to complete their work-based NVQs within the two-year registration period
- the failure to monitor and record students' achievements in workplace training

26 Although the number of college-based courses has been reduced recently, a suitable range of full-time and part-time courses in health and social care is offered. Provision

includes a national diploma course in caring services, a health care studies programme, counselling courses, and courses leading to NVQs in care. Some courses are also offered at the Sleaford annexe mainly for students in rural areas. The college has partnerships with 13 employing agencies to provide work-based training programmes and these are managed by the workplace training unit.

27 Courses are well planned and effectively managed. Students are fully prepared for their work placements. Teachers make good use of the students' work placement experiences in lessons and in assignments. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that course documentation is thorough and detailed. They also agreed with the college's judgement that teachers use a variety of suitable teaching methods and that students find most lessons stimulating and demanding. For example, a lesson on health studies took place in the college's learning centre. Students planned and reviewed their future career goals with the support of their tutors and library staff. They were enabled to identify relevant careers data successfully and to raise careers issues and as a result of the lesson, their motivation was increased. In partnership with the county social services department, the college has designed and written a specialised modular training programme for care staff which is preliminary to study for an NVQ in adult care. A large number of care staff undertake this programme using well-written workbooks prepared by college teachers for each of the five modules. In its self-assessment report, the college identified that there are some problems in ensuring that students obtain the wide experience they need in order to obtain certification on a number of courses. These problems have been or are being addressed. All classrooms are well equipped with teaching aids including video recorders. Suitable specialist health equipment is available on both sites.

Curriculum Areas

28 The self-assessment report recognised that student achievement rates on many courses are good. On counselling courses, including both college and work-based programmes, retention rates are high and pass rates in most years have been good. The small number of students completing the BTEC national diploma course in caring services were all successful. The retention rate on this course in two of the last three years has not, however, been good. On the work-based NVQ programmes, retention rates are high but students' pass rates within the two-year registration period have been poor. Before 1998, the college did not record the achievements of students who obtained their qualification after the expiry of the two-year period, and in the self-assessment report it acknowledges its failure to do so as a weakness.

The report also identified the college's failure to monitor and analyse data on students' work-based achievements as a matter of routine. The college is addressing these weaknesses. The college and its consortium partners have identified a problem over the accuracy of completion rates on modular courses and they are taking the necessary corrective action.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Short courses	1	Expected completions	1,216	2,268	2,373
		Retention (%)	72	99	97
		Achievement (%)	100	76	85
Skills for carers (EMFEC)	2	Expected completions	9	13	9
		Retention (%)	100	100	100
		Achievement (%)	100*	100	100
GNVQ intermediate	2	Expected completions	11	10	+
		Retention (%)	69	100	+
		Achievement (%)	43	100	+
Counselling	3	Expected completions	145	165	43
		Retention (%)	98	95	90
		Achievement (%)	78	67	80
Counselling (off-site provision)	3	Expected completions	**	**	+
		Retention (%)	90	97	+
		Achievement (%)	54	85	+

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

*certificate of attendance awarded

**data not reliable

+course not offered

Curriculum Areas

Art and Design

Grade 2

29 Inspectors observed 13 lessons on general art and design, interior design, pre-degree foundation, and craft skill courses. Inspectors agreed with the main strengths and weaknesses identified by the college. They found some weaknesses which were not mentioned in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- carefully planned courses and well-organised teaching
- outstanding students' work on craft embroidery courses
- good teaching of basic visual research and drawing skills
- regular assessment and thorough record-keeping
- high pass rates on the vocational course
- the good range of specialist facilities and accommodation

Weaknesses

- the failure of some teachers to give students rigorous learning tasks
- the absence of clear assessment criteria in practical assignment briefs
- small numbers on some courses
- underutilised accommodation and facilities

30 There is an appropriate range of art and design courses. These include courses leading to GNVQ intermediate and advanced art and design, a national diploma in interior design, a pre-degree foundation diploma, GCE A level and GCSE, and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) craft qualifications in photography and embroidery. Some of these courses have low student numbers. Both years of the national diploma course in interior design are taught

together because of low enrolments. In its self-assessment report, the college recognises that it is difficult to teach such a mix of students effectively and it believes that such an amalgamation is adversely affecting the students' GCE A level and GCSE results. Many full-time students on the vocational courses also take GCE A level and GCSE subjects as a means of gaining additional qualifications.

31 Teaching is well organised and courses and lessons are carefully planned. Students' work is assessed regularly. Assessment records are detailed and there are termly reviews of students' progress. Students are well informed about their progress through continuous advice and feedback from their teachers. The best teaching is sensitive to the requirements of individual students. It helps students to increase their confidence and it furthers their personal development. Some written briefs for assignments are too complex. Most are lists of tasks and they do not clearly identify the criteria for success. The self-assessment report failed to recognise that in the weaker lessons, students were given undemanding tasks. They were not encouraged to adopt a rigorous approach to their work and their drawings lacked vitality.

32 The art and design facilities are good. In particular, the facilities for textiles, photography, two-dimensional design and ceramics have strengths. The college recognises the need to upgrade the specialist graphic and image manipulation IT facilities to an industry standard, and to develop a three-dimensional studio. The studios are light, airy and provide excellent workspaces. The art and design facilities are inconveniently spread across three buildings. In some instances, large groups of students were taught in spaces which were too small and they had to work under cramped conditions. As a result of low student numbers, some specialist equipment and accommodation, such as the specialist textile studio and the graphic design computer suite, were underutilised. The library is reasonably well

Curriculum Areas

stocked with a good range of journals but the number and range of contemporary art and design books are small. Students' work is displayed throughout the studios and framed work is displayed in the public areas and corridors of the college.

33 Students are developing a good range of skills. The best work on vocational courses relates to direct observation and research. For example, drawings and models derived from the observation of live chickens reflect the vitality of the birds and automata models skilfully mimic their movements. Proper attention is given to the teaching of basic drawing and students produce successful perspective drawings and life drawings. The quality of graphic and interior design work is good. The self-assessment report recognised the high quality of the craft work in embroidery. Insufficient use is made of computer-generated imagery and photography. The pass rates on vocational courses are above national averages and on the pre-degree foundation course and the C&G embroidery courses they are 100%. Only a small number of

these students who start a GCE A level or GCSE course gain a qualification. There are some poor retention rates on the GNVQ and the national diploma interior design courses. For example, only three students remain on the second year of the national diploma in interior design course. Most students who complete the pre-degree foundation course gain a place on a degree course.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
C&G embroidery and photography	2 and 3	Expected completions	29	18	22
		Retention (%)	87	74	96
		Achievement (%)	85	100	78
GCE A levels and GCSEs art and design, graphics, drawing and painting	2 and 3	Expected completions	72	64	36
		Retention (%)	85	70	66
		Achievement (%)	81	68	73
GNVQ art and design and interior design national diploma	3	Expected completions	45	53	35
		Retention (%)	62	77	74
		Achievement (%)	86	87	85
Pre-degree foundation art and design course	3	Expected completions	9	7	16
		Retention (%)	78	86	81
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100

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

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Support for Students

Grade 2

34 The section in the self-assessment report on support for students is detailed and comprehensive. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college.

Key strengths

- well-established and effective procedures for the guidance, enrolment and induction of students
- strong links with local feeder schools
- good tutorial system
- effective learning support for students with identified needs
- constructive and comprehensive personal support for students

Weaknesses

- narrow range of students screened for learning support
- some students' lack of awareness of the student services unit
- underdeveloped systems for analysing reasons for students' early withdrawal from courses and for tracking student destinations

35 Student support is well managed. The student services unit co-ordinates a wide range of appropriate activities effectively. It is sited away from the main college areas and some students are not fully aware of the services it offers. Processes and procedures for guidance, enrolment and induction are effective. There is a good range of publicity materials. Students receive impartial and appropriate initial guidance before enrolment. Induction is an effective combination of team-building exercises, introduction to the college as a whole and to course-specific material. A useful student handbook is issued to all students. Course

handbooks provide extensive information about the requirements and structure of courses. Students enrolled for off-site collaborative provision receive a candidate handbook. Such students are made aware of the college's student services but in practice they make little use of them. The self-assessment report recognises the college's strong links with local feeder schools. There is an extensive programme of visits by college staff to local schools for the purpose of marketing courses. College representatives attend open evenings and careers events. Staff from feeder schools visit their ex-pupils and discuss their college experience with them. The college is involved in projects with local schools and community organisations to help disaffected pupils to complete their schooling.

36 In its self-assessment report, the college recognises that most full-time students are well supported in their academic studies through an effective academic tutorial system. Full-time students are entitled to an hour's tutorial each week and to a formal one-to-one review of their progress twice yearly. Additionally, the progress of GCE A level students is carefully monitored to help them to attain the examination grades predicted for them. Parents of students aged 16 to 19 are kept informed of their child's progress. To provide a further dimension in their personal development, GCE A level students are able to work towards a nationally recognised further education award scheme which allows them to gain accreditation for relevant activities associated with community work, hobbies, sports and other activities.

37 Effective learning support is provided for those full-time students who have been identified as needing it. Only full-time students who have achieved less than a GCSE grade C in mathematics and/or English are screened to identify their support needs in those subjects. Other students are not routinely screened. Students who are identified as requiring support have further individual diagnostic reviews. A learning support plan is completed for them and

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this specifies dates when the plan will be reviewed. Of those who are identified as needing help, a high percentage attend learning support sessions regularly, but a few do not. Other students can be referred for support by tutors or they can refer themselves and many do. The self-assessment report acknowledges that some teachers have not been informed of their students' learning support plans or progress. The college is now implementing the provision of learning support more systematically. Students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities such as dyslexia, hearing impairment or partial sight are provided with effective support. Learning support is provided in the open learning centre where students can receive help on a one-to-one basis. It is also available through small group work. Within the curriculum areas, however, support is not provided. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, some staff are insufficiently aware of the benefits of learning support. Training events have taken place to increase the staff's understanding and knowledge of learning support.

38 Students benefit from constructive and comprehensive personal support. Personal tutors play a major role and are valued by students. A range of specialist counselling services is available to students. The college careers service works well with tutors and the Lincolnshire Careers and Guidance Services to provide careers advice to groups and to individual students. There is a well-established and effective system for supporting students applying to higher education. Students receive help with personal problems. The college chaplain is an active member of the student services team and is available to individual students at any time. In its self-assessment report, the college identified the effective professional counselling provided by the college counselling service, and the practical welfare guidance given by the welfare officer, as strengths in the college's provision of student support.

39 The college's employment of a qualified youth worker as a student officer helped to strengthen the role of the student association. The association organises sporting and social events and a range of activities to raise students' awareness about topics such as health and safety. It also provides an alternative source of personal support for students. Student association members are representative of student opinion on college committees. Students with children benefit from the availability of an on-site nursery with 30 places. The nursery is well used and is soon to be expanded to 50 places. Students were aware of the charter and its commitments. A revised version of the charter has been produced and this indicates how the charter commitments reflect college policies.

40 The self-assessment report acknowledges that the college has underdeveloped systems for analysing reasons why students withdraw from courses, and for tracking students' destinations, other than higher education.

General Resources

Grade 2

41 The college has substantially improved its accommodation and learning resources since the last inspection. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in resources which the college had identified in its self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-maintained accommodation in landscaped grounds
- the good accommodation strategy reflecting curriculum requirements
- the study centre and the well-resourced library
- realistic plans for the maintenance and refurbishment of accommodation
- the cleanliness of college buildings

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Weaknesses

- low usage of some accommodation
- limited availability of computers for unprogrammed access

42 The college is located in pleasant, well-maintained landscaped grounds. The reception area is bright, spacious and welcoming to visitors. The main teaching block is a 1950s four-storey building which was extended in 1995. Accommodation also includes two nineteenth-century houses and various teaching blocks built in the 1960s and 1980s. Most buildings are linked by imaginatively designed covered walkways. There is good access for wheelchair users. Construction courses are based in an annexe adjacent to the main site. A further centre, in Sleaford, provides an attractive learning environment for mainly adult students. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the college has a realistic accommodation strategy for the future development of its property.

43 Since the last inspection, the accommodation has been improved and adapted to match curriculum changes. For example, a study centre has been created from excess corridor space and underused engineering workshops have been converted to art and design studios. Teaching faculties have responsibility for managing their designated rooms. They use a computerised timetabling system, the effectiveness of which is monitored centrally. The college recognises that there is a need to improve the use of space and regular surveys of room use are carried out. The accommodation strategy outlines realistic options to improve the utilisation of the teaching and learning resources. There are five-year programmes for major repairs and planned maintenance. There is also an annual schedule for minor improvements to the accommodation. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that all buildings are well maintained, clean, tidy and generally free of

litter. Regular inspections of buildings, grounds and teaching accommodation take place.

44 The majority of rooms are well equipped with whiteboards, overhead projectors, television and video recorders. There is an excellent 120 seat lecture theatre with appropriate audiovisual equipment. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that although some furnishings are of high quality, others are unsatisfactory and that some classrooms lack visual display material. The college has launched a realistic rolling programme to upgrade classroom furnishings. Most staff workrooms are adequate and all are well equipped with computers. A useful teachers' resources area is located next to the library.

45 The college recognises that students have access to a comprehensive range of learning resources. The library is continually improving. It subscribes to 190 journals and has a stock of approximately 25,000 books, about 42 CD-ROMs, and a good range of videos, although viewing facilities for these are inadequate. Outdated books and learning materials are removed from the library regularly. Library staff maintain good liaison with curriculum areas and the bookstock is updated to meet curriculum changes. There is a well-resourced careers section and a careers interview room but there is no silent study area. The separate study centre has a mathematics and communication workshop and a 'drop-in' IT centre with 25 computers. The self-assessment report notes that the bookstock at Sleaford is inadequate but that action is being taken to improve it.

46 In total, there are 230 up-to-date computers for use by students but only a limited number are available for unprogrammed access. This weakness is not identified in the self-assessment report. Students have access to the internet on about 70 workstations and their use of it is carefully monitored. Students at Sleaford have good access to computers and relevant

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software. The self-assessment report recognises that IT is not sufficiently integral to the main curriculum areas. The college has set up an information learning technology group to review the role of IT in teaching.

47 Students are offered a good choice of eating facilities and vending machines are sited throughout the college. The main refectory is also used as a communal social area and is the only designated smoking area in the college. Students have access to a well-equipped sports hall, squash courts and fitness centre. There is excellent residential accommodation for 80 students. A closed-circuit television surveillance system operates in key areas of the college. The college has 212 car parking spaces but as the accommodation strategy notes, more are required. There are plans to increase the number of spaces and to make it easier for vehicles to be driven around the main site.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

48 Inspectors agreed with the majority of the strengths and weaknesses relating to quality assurance in the self-assessment report, but they considered that some of the strengths had been underestimated.

Key strengths

- strong commitment by the college and its corporation to quality assurance
- well-established and effective course review processes
- effective canvassing of students' views through questionnaires
- observation by staff of one another's lessons
- the implementation of significant improvements in courses following the quality assurance process
- the effective quality audit process

- the structured and helpful staff appraisal process
- effective planning of staff development

Weaknesses

- variability in the rigour of course reviews
- use of inappropriate targets by some course teams

49 There is a strong commitment from staff and the corporation to quality assurance. Quality assurance is the responsibility of the corporation's quality committee which is chaired by the principal and includes a governor in its membership. A recently formed raising achievement committee has four corporation members and reports to the quality committee. Quality assurance arrangements for college courses have been developed steadily over several years and they are effective. They have led to improvements in provision. The quality assurance process is suitably phased in order that its outcomes may inform college planning and help to identify the training needs of staff. The quality assurance system does not fully cover non-teaching functions and it does not measure the extent to which the college fulfils its policy commitments. The college's performance against standards specified in the college charter is monitored, however, and it is the subject of a separate report to the quality committee.

50 The quality assurance process requires course teams to comment upon enrolment numbers, and on students' attendance, retention and pass rates. The majority of course teams assess their performance against overall college targets. In some instances, however, these targets are inappropriate. The self-assessment report failed to note that some teams are insufficiently rigorous in their analysis of performance data. For example, they fail to make year-on-year comparisons of data. The report states, however, that the culture of

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continuous improvement is not yet fully established within the college. Course teams draw up action plans which are thoroughly reviewed during the next annual cycle of quality assurance. Course reviews are collated by faculties. Faculty action plans are drawn up and reviewed, and faculty operating statements are produced which relate to the action plans. The quality assurance process has led to modifications to courses, the introduction of new courses and an increase in students' satisfaction with provision. In the three years, from 1995 to 1997, the retention rate for full-time, FEFC-funded students has increased from 83% to 89% and there has been a similar increase in the percentage of students achieving the qualification for which they were aiming. Similar quality assurance procedures are applied rigorously to the college's collaborative provision. However, as the separate self-assessment report on collaborative provision states, centrally held information about students' retention and pass rates is poor. Targets for students' pass rates are set by the collaborative providers but these are not always realistic in the light of the students' previous performance.

51 As part of the quality assurance process, students' views are sought through questionnaires and are analysed thoroughly. Student representatives join course teams to consider the responses to these questionnaires. As the self-assessment report states, course teams are required to take action to redress students' dissatisfaction when this is plainly widespread. Appropriate corrective action is often taken to address students' complaints but in some instances course teams are insufficiently concerned at the significant levels of dissatisfaction expressed in some students' responses to questionnaires. Some course teams also take into account the views of parents and employers about the college and its services, although the quality assurance process does not require them to do so. In 1996-97, college managers carried out a pilot programme

of lesson observation. This led, in 1997-98, to the introduction of a scheme whereby all teachers observe one another's performance in the classroom. The scheme is well understood and it is implemented thoroughly and constructively. Detailed reports on each lesson observation are kept in the course files and they are taken into account when courses are reviewed. At the time of the inspection, 90% of full-time and 33% of substantive part-time teachers had been observed in at least one lesson.

52 The quality committee's audit team validates quality assurance processes and monitors aspects of college operations which relate to them. The team reviews 10% of course files each term. It provides thorough reports on good practice in maintaining the files and on the omissions in some of them. The course files are comprehensive and they contribute to the overall good management of courses, and to the effectiveness of the quality assurance process. The audit team has also reported on aspects of the library service and the examinations procedures. The self-assessment report did not identify the effectiveness of the audit team as a strength of the college's quality assurance arrangements.

53 Governors and almost all the sections of the college were involved in producing the self-assessment report submitted for the inspection. It is the second self-assessment report produced by the college. Reports from individual teams were collated and reviewed at various levels of college management. The college plans to streamline the self-assessment process in the future and to combine it with the quality assurance process. The self-assessment report is clear and easy to use, and judgements in it are firmly backed by evidence. The report contains action plans for improving the provision of each section of the college. Many of the planned actions had been carried out by the time of the inspection.

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54 The college places due importance on developing the skills of its staff. The budget for staff development activities is 1.9% of payroll, excluding the cost of the time of the staff development manager and of the considerable amount of IT training which is carried out for staff internally. Staff asking for training are required to justify their request in the light of the college's or faculty's operating plans, or to a need identified through the appraisal process. All staff are appraised annually. The appraisal process includes the setting and reviewing of job objectives and the progress of staff towards fulfilling these is reviewed each term. Appraisers and appraisees value the process highly. The considerable strengths of the staff development and appraisal procedures are identified in the self-assessment report. This year, the college successfully applied for renewal of its Investor in People status.

Governance

Grade 2

55 **Inspectors agreed broadly with the college's own assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of governance.**

Key strengths

- governors' skills, valuable experience and commitment to the college
- effective clerking arrangements
- the preparation of corporation papers to a high standard
- close monitoring of the college's financial performance by governors
- the governors' self-critical monitoring of their own performance
- the comprehensive register of governors' interests

Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring by governors of off-site collaborative provision

- lack of progress in the consideration of students' achievements

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

57 The self-assessment report recognises that governors maintain a high level of attendance at both corporation and committee meetings. The search committee has been effective in ensuring that the corporation has a good range of skills and knowledge. A formal audit of governors' skills has not been completed although the corporation recognises that it requires governors with marketing skills. The corporation has a membership of 18 which includes five women. Five governors are employed by the college. There is no student governor but two governors meet regularly with representatives of the student association. Governors are committed to the work of the college and each independent governor is paired with a specific curriculum and cross-college area. Governors helped to moderate the judgements in the curriculum self-assessment reports and reported back to the full corporation on significant issues. There are seven curriculum advisory committees, chaired by governors, each of which discusses the education and training needs of a particular industry.

58 The corporation is effectively clerked, as noted in the self-assessment report. The clerk has the necessary skills, knowledge and independence to carry out the role effectively. The clerk does not service the remuneration committee. Corporation and committee agendas and papers are prepared to a high standard. The college's self-assessment report did not identify the corporation's well-maintained register of interests as a strength. Disclosures in

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the register of interests are comprehensive and the register is updated annually. The corporation has not established criteria for deciding which items of its business should be classified as confidential, although in practice, the use of confidential items is appropriate. There is an appropriate procedure for governors to assess the performance of the principal.

59 The corporation has established a wide range of committees whose work is overseen but not duplicated by the full corporation. The terms of reference of the finance and policy, audit and remuneration committees are appropriate. The audit committee has, however, occasionally acted outside its terms of reference. The internal auditors' recent coverage of key financial systems has been significantly reduced. The finance and policy committee receives the college's monthly management accounts and the accounts are considered by the full corporation at its termly meetings. Governors hold frequent discussions about the implications for the college of its substantial off-site collaborative provision. They do not, however, receive regular reports on how the provision helps the college to meet its funding target. Governors have paid close attention to ensuring that the college and its clients receive value for money through benchmarking exercises and similar initiatives.

60 The corporation is involved in the strategic planning process and is responsible for agreeing the college's mission and aims. Governors understand the clear distinction between their roles and those of managers. Governors have direct responsibility for the quality committee which previously reported to the academic board. As a result, the committee's profile has been raised in the college. The committee is, however, steered primarily by managers. The precise boundaries between the corporation and management committees and the distinction between managerial and governor roles are not fully clear. Little progress has been made in ensuring that the governors receive and consider reports from college managers on

students' recruitment, retention rates and achievements. A newly established working group of the quality committee is addressing this issue.

61 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the corporation has made good progress in evaluating its own performance. Members used a questionnaire based on Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment* to assess their influence on determining the educational character of the college and the effectiveness of their roles. The regularity of governors' attendance and the overall levels of governors' participation in meetings are also measured. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, training for most business governors is largely restricted to activities promoted by the college. A programme of seminars for governors has been well attended and the chair and vice-chair have participated in regional and national training initiatives. The corporation intends to audit members' training needs as part of its action plan. Newly appointed governors receive informative briefings from the principal and the chair of the corporation. A detailed induction pack for new governors has been developed.

Management

Grade 2

62 Inspectors agreed broadly with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report although they considered that some strengths were overstated.

Key strengths

- the efficacy of the management structure in ensuring clear lines of authority and responsibility
- the involvement of all staff and governors in the comprehensive strategic planning process

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- the frequent monitoring of college finances
- effective links with external bodies
- budget-setting process

Weaknesses

- insufficient management information on students
- the lack of monitoring of the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy
- insufficient rigour in some areas of the college in monitoring progress towards reaching quantifiable targets

63 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the management structure of the college provides clear lines of authority and responsibility. In 1996, the current structure of four faculties replaced a matrix structure. Staff are aware of their own responsibilities and those of their line managers, and understand the role of the senior management team and the functions of cross-college co-ordinators. In general, the management of the curriculum is good. Most courses are well planned and efficiently organised. Cross-college curriculum initiatives are successfully co-ordinated. Communication within the college is effective. Staff receive a monthly staff newsletter. There are regular staff meetings. The college has a widely used electronic mail system. The college's committee structure and the role of the academic board are not clear to all staff.

64 The strategic plan is a comprehensive and influential document which is widely circulated within the college. As identified in the self-assessment report, the strategic plan was developed following debate and consultation with staff, the corporation and external organisations. College staff feel that their views are represented in the plan and there is widespread support for its conclusions. The importance of the strategic planning process is

understood by the majority of staff who appreciate the clear lead given by college managers on a wide range of issues. The strategic plan is informed by market research including data provided by the TEC and other external bodies. The self-assessment report recognises that more comprehensive market research is required in some areas. Faculties, the workplace training unit and the student services and marketing sections all derive their operating statements from the strategic plan. Some operating statements specify more quantifiable targets than others and some areas of the college do not monitor their achievement in meeting targets with sufficient rigour. Some non-teaching sections do not produce operating statements.

65 The self-assessment report recognises that systematic and reliable production of management information about students does not occur throughout the college. The college's internal auditors have reported that arrangements for the production of management information on students are extremely limited. The current management information system was introduced in 1992 and has been used primarily to fulfil the requirements of the FEFC. The college recognises that the system does not meet the needs of all college managers. The provision of management information has been reviewed and an information systems manager has been appointed. The management information system is being revised to give it more flexibility and to make it more accessible. The college is exploring the feasibility of sharing a management information system with neighbouring colleges. The student achievement data used by inspectors were derived from the ISR and, in most cases, were considered accurate. Data on the achievements of students on collaborative provision in health and social care were unreliable.

66 As the self-assessment report recognises, the college has effective links with a wide range of external organisations. The principal and

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other senior staff represent the college on local and regional bodies and the college has particularly productive links with the local TEC and the local careers and guidance service. The college liaises closely with other colleges in Lincolnshire and makes joint bids with them to funding bodies on a regular basis. Successful bids for European funded initiatives have enabled the college to form constructive international partnerships.

67 The equal opportunities policy and a code of practice are circulated to all staff. An equal opportunities committee of the academic board was disbanded in 1996 and its responsibilities were transferred to the senior management team. As recognised in the self-assessment report, neither the senior management team nor the corporation gives appropriate consideration to the overall implementation of the equal opportunities policy.

68 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The college accountant is a member of the senior management team. The college's finance team is appropriately resourced, skilled and experienced. The college has stable financial systems, although some reports require further manipulations of the spreadsheet data. Timely management accounts are produced every month and appropriately distributed to and considered by managers, as noted in the self-assessment report. Reports to budget holders meet user needs. The management accounts include income, expenditure and balance sheet information, and written commentaries, but do not contain cashflow forecasting beyond the year end. The college's financial regulations do not cover all areas of the college's work and require updating. College budgets are produced from basic assumptions after thorough consultation with staff and valuable discussion with governors.

Conclusions

69 The self-assessment report provided a sound basis for the planning and implementation of the inspection. The inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college for its curriculum areas and aspects of cross-college provision. There were differences in emphasis between the judgements in the self-assessment report and those of the inspection team and in some instances, inspectors had access to information which was not available at the time of the self-assessment. Inspectors agreed with all the grades suggested by the college for aspects of cross-college provision, and with three of the five grades for curriculum areas. The grades awarded by inspectors for two curriculum areas were one grade lower than those given by the college. In the case of one of the curriculum areas, inspectors had access to recent information on students' achievements which was not available at the time of the self-assessment. In the case of the other curriculum area, the inspectors considered some poor achievements by students to be more significant than the college did.

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

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 1998)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	0
16-18 years	7
19-24 years	13
25+ years	71
Not known	9
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1998)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	52
Intermediate	26
Advanced	9
Higher education	1
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	12
Total	100

Source: college data

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	107	2,263	27
Agriculture	0	71	1
Construction	0	161	2
Engineering	46	237	3
Business	93	1,325	17
Hotel and catering	109	471	7
Health and community care	184	2,798	34
Art and design	73	107	2
Humanities	129	326	5
Basic education	23	137	2
Total	764	7,896	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 19% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (September 1998)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	61	3	22	86
Supporting direct learning contact	24	1	0	25
Other support	43	3	0	46
Total	128	7	22	157

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£5,279,000	£5,443,000	£5,394,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£17.17	£16.79	£16.36
Payroll as a proportion of income	72%	68%	66%
Achievement of funding target	113%	114%	100%
Diversity of income	29%	28%	27%
Operating surplus	-£511,000	-£14,000	-£53,000

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

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

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

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

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

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

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1995	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
1	Expected completions	137	383	462	569	847	843
	Retention (%)	91	84*	84*	97	87*	85*
	Achievement (%)	51	78	63	43	84	91
2	Expected completions	608	659	613	741	748	893
	Retention (%)	76	78*	76*	93	83*	84*
	Achievement (%)	61	57	63	43	82	79
3	Expected completions	–	612	565	–	619	939
	Retention (%)	–	76*	75*	–	82*	84*
	Achievement (%)	58	73	79	35	81	81
4 or 5	Expected completions	–	4	0	–	111	143
	Retention (%)	–	100*	n/a	–	86*	82*
	Achievement (%)	100	0	n/a	33	70	85
Short courses	Expected completions	37	341	512	1,042	3,537	3,962
	Retention (%)	100	99	97	97	98	98
	Achievement (%)	27	82	93	30	84	94
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	41	178	252	91	170	239
	Retention (%)	83	87*	89*	100	85*	79*
	Achievement (%)	26	48	89	0	74	91

Source: ISR

–ISR data not collected

*ISR data may not be reliable

n/a not applicable

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