

Grimsby College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98**

THE
FURTHER
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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 according to a four-year cycle. It also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

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

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

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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.

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

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

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

Retention and Pass Rates

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

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

Summary

Grimsby College

Yorkshire and Humberside Region

Inspected May 1998

Grimsby College is a general further education college situated in North East Lincolnshire. The college produced a sound self-assessment report. The self-assessment process involved staff at all levels in the college and was carefully considered by the corporation. Since the report was written, the college has made good progress in addressing some of the weaknesses it identified, especially with regard to cross-college areas. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. A few weaknesses were noted by inspectors that the college had not identified, and inspectors also found some strengths that had been underestimated. Where the overall judgements of inspectors differed from self-assessment judgements, they indicated higher standards.

The college offers courses in all of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. The inspection covered provision in five programme areas and aspects of cross-college provision. The college benefits from good governance and effective leadership from senior managers. Successful business

planning is closely linked to strategic planning. The college has productive partnerships with a wide range of organisations. Accommodation and some specialist facilities are excellent. The arrangements for quality assurance are comprehensive. Students receive good advice and guidance, and there is a good level of support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Standards of teaching are generally good or satisfactory. Retention and achievement rates on some courses are poor. The college should: strengthen the development of the curriculum; make more effective use of management information to inform course planning; improve the procedures for course and programme annual reviews; make the monitoring of service standards more rigorous; address inconsistencies in tutorial provision; strengthen some aspects of the provision of additional learning support; improve retention and achievement rates in some areas; and improve the quality of some teaching.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science and mathematics	3	Support for students	2
Computing and information technology	3	General resources	1
Construction	2	Quality assurance	2
Engineering	2	Governance	1
Hospitality and catering (including collaborative provision)	2	Management	2
Leisure and tourism	2		
Basic skills and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3		

The College and its Mission

1 Grimsby College, a general further education college, is the major provider of education and training in the unitary authority of North East Lincolnshire. Most college provision is located on an attractive campus close to the town centre, and there are two other main sites. The catchment area comprises the towns of Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Immingham in addition to a large area of rural Lincolnshire. The major industries in the immediate area are food production, fish sales and car imports and exports. Cleethorpes is a seaside town with a developing tourist industry and Immingham is a large commercial port. Chemical and petrochemical industries are located on the nearby Humber Bank. The Grimsby area has the highest unemployment in Yorkshire and Humberside. At the time of the inspection, the unemployment rate was over 13 per cent compared with the rate for Yorkshire and Humberside of 5.8 per cent.

2 Secondary education in Grimsby is based on a system of comprehensive schools for pupils aged 11 to 16 and a sixth form college which is located on a site adjacent to Grimsby College. Schools in nearby towns have retained their sixth forms. Sixty per cent of school-leavers enter further education. This is below the national rate, and the college has achieved a 15 per cent increase during the last three years in the numbers of school-leavers entering the college. The nearest general further education college is some 30 miles away. The area has several private training providers and the new deal programme is managed from within the private sector. Adult education is provided by the North East Lincolnshire Adult Education Service in a number of centres throughout the area.

3 The college offers provision in all 10 of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) programme areas. Since the last inspection, the college has developed new courses in music,

tourism, media studies and design. The range of national vocational qualification (NVQ) and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes has increased. A larger number of courses are now provided at foundation level. The college has 30 courses leading to GNVQs; four subjects are provided at all levels from foundation to advanced. A total of 126 NVQs are provided, of which more than half are at level 2. The college is the largest provider of TEC-funded training in the area. The college offers 21 subjects at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and 17 subjects leading to general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). The college provides a large number of higher education courses, some in association with universities, including 13 subjects leading to the higher national certificate and 11 subjects leading to the higher national diploma. In addition, there are four degree programmes provided in collaboration with the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside.

4 Student numbers have increased significantly during the last three years. This has included a growth in FEFC-funded student enrolments from 8,274 in 1993-94 to 17,314 in 1996-97, an increase of 39 per cent. In March 1998, the college had enrolled a total of 25,355 students, of whom 3,585 were on full-time courses. A large proportion of the students, 41 per cent, study foundation level courses; 32 per cent study intermediate level courses. Seventy-two per cent of the students are aged 19 and over. The college's annual target for funded units has increased from 567,000 in 1995-96 to 744,000 in 1997-98. These targets have been exceeded in each of the last three years. The college employs 524 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 235 full-time equivalents are teachers. At the time of the inspection a management reorganisation was under way. The executive team comprises the principal, two vice-principals and the director of finance. The academic structure of the college has four

Context

faculties and 14 schools. Provision in eight of the schools was inspected.

5 The college is developing a number of partnership arrangements. Productive links are in place with the local training and enterprise council (TEC), the careers service and many local schools. The college is undertaking a review of its links with the community and of how the college is perceived locally. College staff are collaborating with the local authority to develop learning programmes which are based in the local community. The college has recently amended its mission statement after consultation with staff and governors. The college aims to 'provide high-quality learning opportunities to meet the needs of individuals, employers and the community'. The college has derived six strategic objectives from its mission. 'The college will:

- identify the requirements of its customers
- enhance the development of individuals in terms of their future progression in education and employment
- provide opportunities for lifelong learning
- offer flexible access to study programmes for a range of customers
- assure excellence in customer care and satisfaction
- be a principal partner in the development of the local community.'

Curriculum Areas

The Inspection

6 The inspection took place during one week in May 1998. Inspectors had previously scrutinised the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other divisions of the FEFC. The college submitted data on students' achievements for the three years 1995 to 1997. These 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 12 inspectors for a total of 46 working days and an auditor for five days. They observed lessons, examined students' work and evaluated college documents. Meetings were held with governors, managers, other college staff, students, employers, local schools and the local TEC.

7 Of the 103 lessons inspected, 65 per cent were judged to be good or outstanding and 8 per cent were judged to be less than satisfactory or poor. This profile compares with the average of 61 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, for all lessons observed during 1996-97, according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England in 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected was 74 per cent compared with the average for general further education colleges of 73 per cent in 1996-97. An average

of 9.6 students attended each of the lessons inspected compared with a figure for all colleges in 1996-97 of 10.8 students in each lesson as reported in the chief inspector's annual report. The following table shows the grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GNVQ	1	10	6	2	0	19
NVQ	2	11	7	1	1	22
Other vocational	2	19	9	4	0	34
Other*	4	18	6	0	0	28
Total	9	58	28	7	1	103

*includes GCE A/AS level, GCSE, higher education and basic education

Curriculum Areas

Science and Mathematics

Grade 3

8 Inspectors observed 16 lessons in science and mathematics. Teachers were fully involved in the thorough self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that insufficient weight had been given to poor achievements by students.

Key strengths

- well-planned lessons
- good management of classroom activities
- improving GCSE mathematics results
- good technical support and a well-managed environment

Weaknesses

- students insufficiently engaged in some lessons
- poor retention and examination results on some courses
- insufficient use of information technology (IT)
- decreasing range of science-based courses

9 Science provision is well organised and the course team has regular, minuted meetings. Technical support staff attend these meetings and feel valued. Schemes of work are written for all courses to ensure that syllabus content is covered. This is identified as a strength within the self-assessment report but is identified as a weakness in the action plan. Detailed course files are maintained, including useful annual reports for curriculum areas and quality assurance course audits. There is a broad range of mathematics provision with accredited courses that gives good progression to GCSE courses. However, some aspects of the

curriculum organisation in mathematics are too informal. For example, some staff are unaware of faculty policies and procedures across the GCSE and GCE A level provision. The provision in science is mainly GCSE and GCE A levels. The range of science-based courses has decreased during the last few years. Marketing has been unsuccessful, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Procedures to address problems of poor attendance and punctuality are not yet fully effective.

10 The quality of teaching in most lessons is high. Sixty-three per cent of lessons were judged to be good or outstanding. Teachers have good classroom management. Some lesson plans are rudimentary. Most of the lessons observed, however, were well planned. Inspectors agreed with the strength identified in the self-assessment report that teachers use an appropriate variety of activities. Teachers are clear in expressing and explaining difficult concepts. Their use of whiteboards and overhead projectors is outstanding. Teachers use questioning and group work effectively in science. They do not use IT in mathematics or science sufficiently to extend students' experiences. A restricted amount of practical work was observed because, in many lessons, students were revising for examinations. The practical work which was seen was safely carried out, well integrated with the theory work and enjoyed by students.

11 Students generally work hard in lessons but many find the work difficult. Apart from when there are group discussions, students in science lessons are often not effectively engaged in a variety of learning activities. Students' attendance is generally poor, and has been identified as an issue within the college's self-assessment report. In the mathematics lessons observed, there was an attendance figure of 60 per cent. Attendance at science lessons was better at 80 per cent. Inspectors found examples of poor retention rates which, overall, were understated in the college's report.

Curriculum Areas

Retention rates on science and mathematics courses were similar, at about 57 per cent. In 1997, one GCSE class lost 25 per cent of students before November and had only 50 per cent of the original enrolments at the time of inspection. Inspectors disagreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that pass rates are consistently above national figures. GCE A level pass rates vary greatly from year to year. The pass rates for those aged between 16 and 18 years of age are consistently below national averages. Pass rates in GCSE mathematics, however, are improving.

12 Teachers are well qualified. They have appropriate degrees, or their equivalent, and most have teaching qualifications. Science technical support staff are effective and highly valued. They maintain the laboratories to high standards and manage storage facilities effectively. The laboratories are generally good. Mathematics accommodation is new and of high quality. There is an attractive mathematics workshop and students have access to a computer suite. In addition, two computers on trolleys are available for use within the science area. There is a lack of dedicated IT equipment for use in laboratories.

Examples of students' achievements in science and mathematics, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level science	Retention (%)	93	71	74
	Pass rate (%)	43	40	35
GCSE science	Retention (%)	91	76	89
	Pass rate (%)	45	29	36
GCSE mathematics	Retention (%)	91	85	89
	Pass rate (%)	29	31	44

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 3

13 The inspection covered specialist courses in computing and IT. Eleven lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed in general with the college's assessment of provision, although the self-assessment report understated or omitted several weaknesses, particularly those related to students' achievements.

Key strengths

- the careful planning and effective teaching on most courses
- teaching of software techniques that reflects industrial practice
- good retention and pass rates on GNVQ IT courses
- the wide range of provision

Weaknesses

- failure to meet the planned learning objectives in some lessons
- poor attendance at some lessons
- poor pass rates on many courses
- low retention rates on some courses

14 The extensive range of computing and IT courses meets the needs of a wide range of students. The provision includes GCSE and GCE A levels, and a wide range of vocational courses both full-time and part-time, including introductory level IT to higher national certificate and higher national diploma level computing. Since the previous inspection, IT workshops with long opening hours have been established at the main college building and at a centre in Immingham. These recruit large numbers of students who can now study at times to suit them. GNVQ courses do not include work experience. Courses are managed

effectively. Teachers maintain good records. Course reviews are generally informative and include students' perceptions of their courses. Managers do not have consistent statistical data to inform course reviews. The self-assessment report identified these strengths and weaknesses.

15 Teachers plan courses and lessons effectively and provide their students with clear learning objectives. Practical work in IT is assisted by good learning materials that enable students to work at their own pace. Students receive effective support on an individual basis and have productive working relationships with their teachers. Students who study software development are taught design methods used in industry; this work is demanding. Teachers make some good use of visual aids. Full-time students often work in groups and give presentations. Assignments are well designed and assessments are usually thorough. Teachers provide students with detailed feedback on their work. The self-assessment report identified the strengths of teaching but did not clearly analyse the weaknesses. In some lessons teachers failed to meet their objectives. This happened, for example, when teachers had not prepared a large enough range of activities to sustain interest or when students had not prepared work sufficiently in advance. Of the lessons inspected in computing and IT, 55 per cent were judged to be good or outstanding. This is below the proportion found nationally.

16 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment of the strengths of students' achievements. The report, however, identified very few weaknesses. Inspectors found that the achievements of students were not consistently high. The GNVQ IT courses have retention and pass rates above the national rates for further education colleges, but several part-time vocational courses have retention and pass rates below those usually found. The table below gives examples of these variations. The GCSE information systems has had low pass rates for

Curriculum Areas

three years. Last year, only 14 per cent of students achieved grades A to C. The GCE A level computing course also had a low pass rate of 30 per cent last year. Some classes had high attendance but others had less than half the students present.

17 Teachers have appropriate vocational, academic and teaching qualifications. There are adequate supplies of booklets for software packages and most students find these helpful. Some good-quality learning materials have been installed on the college IT network for easy access. The IT courses are supported by good levels of modern computers. The college has a significant upgrading programme planned for this summer. Teachers' use of posters and display materials is unimaginative. Some specialist IT rooms, although having modern fittings, are uninspiring; a minority lack sufficient space for large groups of students.

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

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced IT	Retention (%)	*	91	100
	Pass rate (%)	*	40	60
GNVQ intermediate IT	Retention (%)	79	88	92
	Pass rate (%)	37	48	58
C&G IT certificate and diploma (part time)	Retention (%)	87	59	68
	Pass rate (%)	15	48	52
RSA computer literacy and information technology	Retention (%)	83	77	82
	Pass rate (%)	64	64	58

Source: college data

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Construction

Grade 2

18 The inspection covered all aspects of the construction provision. Twelve lessons were observed. The college's self-assessment report identified many strengths which were confirmed during the inspection. By the time of the inspection the college had successfully addressed a number of the weaknesses identified in the report.

Key strengths

- good teaching, especially in practical sessions
- effective monitoring and recording of students' progress
- realistic working environments
- the wide range of courses
- up-to-date specialist equipment
- effective action to improve courses

Weaknesses

- some poor teaching in theory lessons
- lack of work experience for full-time students
- pass rates below national figures on some courses
- inadequate development of key skills

19 The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time craft and technician courses in construction. The specialist provision of courses in refrigeration includes some courses at higher education level and meets the needs of industry both locally and nationally. Labour market information is used effectively to identify new courses. There is a comprehensive range of short courses for industry, particularly in plumbing and refrigeration. Income has increased by over 50 per cent in the last two years. In the last year, 1,100 school pupils of all ages visited the college to undertake

construction activities in support of their studies. Managers communicate effectively with staff. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that course teams have taken action to improve the quality of the students' experience. New internal verification procedures have been introduced and there is more detailed analysis of students' achievements data.

20 Much of the teaching is effective and 67 per cent of lessons inspected were judged to be good or outstanding. Most teachers use clear and well-structured schemes of work. Teachers share good practice and have developed effective arrangements for monitoring students' progress. This strength was identified in the college's self-assessment report. Students report that they find staff supportive. Teachers make regular checks on students' progress. Assessment strategies meet the requirements of awarding bodies. Teaching in practical sessions is well planned. Teachers enforce safe working practices in workshops. Assignments for technician students involve them in suggesting solutions to real-life problems. Lesson plans for some theory sessions are merely lists of topics. In some theory lessons, teachers do not teach effectively. Some teachers makes insufficient demands on the students. For example, in some lessons students spend too long taking notes. In others, teachers make insufficient use of visual aids to maintain students' interest and increase their understanding. The quality of some learning materials is poor, and some handouts are merely poor copies of standard texts. The self-assessment report recognises these weaknesses in the teaching of theory. Full-time students rarely have visits to outside locations to help their understanding of the construction process; few undertake work experience.

21 Most students are enthusiastic and attentive in workshop sessions. The standard of practical work is good and matches that required by industry. Many students produce

Curriculum Areas

comprehensive portfolios of written work and research; plumbing students include evidence of work completed in the workplace. Overall, pass rates have improved over the last three years, from 40 per cent to 68 per cent; but they remain poor on a few courses such as crafts at NVQ level 3 and technician studies at national level. Attendance rates on some courses are poor. Few students develop their key skills effectively. Students do not make sufficient use of IT.

classrooms are well decorated, but few use displays of technical information to enhance their appearance.

22 Teachers are appropriately qualified. Staff development enables staff to gain the further qualifications needed for the growing range of courses. There are sufficient technicians to support teachers and students. Tools and equipment are maintained effectively. There is a wide range of relevant books in the college's learning resource centre. In brickwork, students can use computers located alongside their workshop to access technical information and assess their knowledge of safety issues. In most areas, however, the use of learning materials for students to study on their own is at an early stage of development. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. The range of specialist equipment and consumable materials for workshops is good. Sponsorship by industry has provided up-to-date equipment for gas and refrigeration training. Most

Examples of students' achievements in construction, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
NVQ level 3	Retention (%)	100	92	100
	Pass rate (%)	50	59	54
NVQ level 2	Retention (%)	92	80	84
	Pass rate (%)	42	65	89
NVQ level 1	Retention (%)	*	*	100
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	75
Technician studies	Retention (%)	98	90	83
	Pass rate (%)	35	45	41

Source: college data

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 2

23 The inspection covered provision in electronics, mechanical engineering, fabrication and welding, and motor vehicle studies. Twenty-two lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report on engineering. However, the inspection revealed some additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good teaching, including regular monitoring of students' learning
- successful encouragement of students' self-motivation
- generally high retention rates
- good learning resources and equipment
- high standard of specialist accommodation
- good progression routes
- strong links with industry

Weaknesses

- some poor pass rates
- internal verification and planning of some assessment programmes
- deficiencies in some aspects of course management
- lack of work experience for full-time students

24 The engineering provision offers courses from NVQ level 1 and its equivalent to NVQ level 4 and equivalent. This enables progression on both technician and craft routes. It has some limitations, for example in technician and professional level courses in motor vehicle studies. A strong feature is the provision of courses and services at an economic rate for industry. Faculty staff meet regularly with

industrialists in an active liaison group. However, as the self-assessment report recognises, full-time students do not have work experience as an integral part of their courses. Course teams hold regular minuted meetings, but fail to record adequately actions taken. The views of students are collected through questionnaires but there is little evidence that the college responds effectively to issues raised. Course files often omitted important information.

25 Teaching is good in both theory and practical lessons and 68 per cent of lessons inspected were judged to be good or outstanding. It is based on sound, though basic, schemes of work and generally thorough lesson plans. Teachers regularly check students' understanding and progress. They use humour and draw on the work experience of the students to improve their learning. Teachers are successful in encouraging students' self-confidence and motivation. Few teachers are qualified and available as internal verifiers to the GNVQ courses. This is recognised in the self-assessment report and more staff are training to become internal verifiers. On the GNVQ advanced course, the programme of assignments is not well planned and students have too many assignments of a similar kind. Teachers have analysed the overall assignment timetable and changes are to be implemented. In several courses, marking of students' work is late, or perfunctory. In fabrication and welding, tutors are not always aware if their work satisfies NVQ criteria.

26 Overall, retention rates are above the average and particularly good for most courses at level 2 and level 4. Some courses in 1996-97, for example the GNVQ advanced, had poor retention rates. However, more than half the early leavers found employment or apprenticeships in industry. Most pass rates are at, or above, those reported in the FEFC's national survey report on engineering provision, published in 1997. The engineering assembly,

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certificate in welding practice, and foundation engineering courses all have pass rates in excess of 80 per cent. On a minority of courses, pass rates are poor. Many courses in fabrication and welding, motor vehicle servicing, and engineering systems maintenance have pass rates of 50 per cent or below. The self-assessment report recognises these weak achievements. Over a number of years, the college has enrolled a substantial number of students on to open learning programmes leading to BTEC qualifications. Few of these students, studying at their workplaces, have completed the programme or achieved a full qualification.

27 Specialist resources are at least adequate and often good. Engineering classrooms are satisfactorily furnished and well decorated although, owing to the growth in the courses in engineering, students are occasionally taught in unsuitable rooms. Equipment is maintained well and workshop areas are kept clean and tidy. Resources and accommodation available for both computer-aided design and motor vehicle courses are impressive. Staff have appropriate technical qualifications. These strengths are recognised in the self-assessment report.

Examples of students' achievements in engineering, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995*	1996*	1997
Higher national certificate	Retention (%)	100	77	90
	Pass rate (%)	67	72	67
National certificate	Retention (%)	93	87	72
	Pass rate (%)	45	64	59
Intermediate vocational	Retention (%)	100	90	85
	Pass rate (%)	53	61	68

Source: college data

*1995 and 1996 figures were calculated on a different basis to those in 1997. It is therefore not possible to comment on trends.

Curriculum Areas

Hospitality and Catering (Including Collaborative Provision)

Grade 2

28 The inspection covered all aspects of hospitality and catering. Twelve lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. All judgements in the report were well supported by evidence.

Key strengths

- well-designed courses
- well-prepared and effective teaching
- good work-based learning environment
- good support for students with learning difficulties
- strong links with industry
- well-managed and good-quality collaborative provision
- good specialist facilities

Weaknesses

- some unsatisfactory assessment procedures
- insufficiently demanding work for students in some key skills workshops
- poor retention rates on some courses

29 The college provides a wide range of courses including full-time and part-time NVQ programmes in food preparation and cooking, food service, reception and baking. Most provision is at level 2. All full-time students on GNVQ programmes have opportunities to gain additional relevant qualifications, such as the basic food hygiene certificate. The qualifications framework has not been developed to facilitate progression to level 3 for NVQ students. The range of provision meets the needs of adult learners. Participation has been widened by the

collaborative provision on employers' premises. Collaborative provision is well managed. There are strong links with employers, and collaborative programmes are of good quality. Flexible timetabling arrangements enable part-time students to achieve NVQ units in hospitality and catering. Staff have clearly designated roles and responsibilities and meet regularly to review and develop their courses. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that links with industry are strong. These have provided good opportunities for enhancing the curriculum. Effective use is made of students' work experience.

30 Most of the teaching is effective; 75 per cent of the lessons inspected were judged to be good or outstanding. Teachers provide effective support for students with learning difficulties. They prepare conscientiously for lessons. Students form productive working relationships with their teachers and this enhances their learning. They work well in practical sessions and are confident when responding to customers in the restaurant and reception areas. Teachers plan courses effectively to maximise the employment opportunities of the students. This strength was identified in the college's self-assessment report. Teaching schemes take account of course requirements and students are supported by regular tutorials and key skills workshops. However, teachers make insufficient demands of students in some key skills workshops. Tutorial time is not used effectively on some courses. Teachers do not make good use of IT to improve students' learning.

31 Students develop appropriate levels of skills during their courses. Good use is made of a number of realistic working environments around the college. Students' skills are particularly well developed in bakery. Students' progress is regularly reviewed and recorded, but there are some unsatisfactory procedures for assessing students on NVQ and GNVQ courses. Pass rates for the GNVQ programme, at 50 per cent, fall below the national average for the

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sector, but other courses are either at, or above, the national average. The overall pass rate for full-time students was 60 per cent in 1996-97, and 74 per cent for part-time students in the same year. There are poor retention rates on some courses and this is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The low retention rate on the NVQ meat processing programme is a particular cause for concern. Attendance levels are generally good and, in the lessons observed, averaged 82 per cent.

32 Staff have appropriate qualifications and experience. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the specialist facilities are a particular strength of the provision. For example, the two restaurant areas provide opportunities for specialised catering functions to be organised on a regular basis. The specialist facilities in bakery provide a good but more restricted space for production and display. Students on the NVQ reception programme benefit from gaining practical experience of using 'Innsite', a reservation system of industrial standard, which has been installed in the restaurant reception area.

Facilities are well equipped and maintained. Some poor practices were observed with regard to the implementation of hygiene standards and working practices in the kitchen areas.

Examples of students' achievements in hospitality and catering (including collaborative provision), 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering	Retention (%)	100	100	80
	Pass rate (%)	100	33	50
GNVQ intermediate hospitality and catering	Retention (%)	100	80	50
	Pass rate (%)	50	75	75
NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking	Retention (%)	75	83	83
	Pass rate (%)	75	53	62
NVQ level 2 reception	Retention (%)	*	80	92
	Pass rate (%)	*	25	100
NVQ level 2 bakery	Retention (%)	100	100	83
	Pass rate (%)	40	33	80

Source: college data

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Leisure and Tourism

Grade 2

33 The inspection covered provision in leisure and tourism. Inspectors observed 12 lessons. Inspectors agreed with many of the findings in the college's self-assessment report. Some strengths identified in the report were considered by inspectors to represent normal standards of provision in many colleges.

Key strengths

- good retention and pass rates on GNVQ intermediate course
- well-managed realistic work environment
- high standard of teaching
- specialist learning resource centre
- strong links with industry

Weaknesses

- poor retention and pass rates on GNVQ advanced course
- some poorly presented teaching materials
- restricted opportunities for students to study leisure subjects

34 The college provides an increasing range of courses from foundation to degree level, including full-time GNVQ courses at three levels and a NVQ level 2 course in travel services. One GNVQ intermediate course in which students spend two days a week in college is franchised to a local school; another has been introduced for adults who complete their qualification within six months. Other courses include the Association of British Travel Agents Consortium certificate for part-time students. The GNVQ curriculum includes language and travel and tourism options, but the range of vocational leisure options is restricted. Inspectors agreed

with the college's self-assessment that courses are well managed, course documentation is good and teachers meet regularly. The school business plan clearly states objectives and targets. There is, however, some confusion amongst staff over targets for retention and achievement. Statistical data are used at school level for monitoring budgets. The curriculum area has strong links with industry.

35 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that teaching is of a good standard; 75 per cent of the lessons inspected were judged to be good or outstanding. A good range of teaching methods is used and classroom management is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers' explanations are clear. Students' understanding is checked regularly. In most lessons teachers sustain students' interest and, in practical work, they give students effective support. In some lessons, however, students do not participate effectively. The presentation of teaching materials and the use of overhead transparencies and blackboards is weak in some lessons. Key skills are taught in lessons separately from vocational studies. Assignment work is set within a strong vocational context. However, some teachers' marking of students' completed work is insufficiently detailed to help them improve their performance. Course tutors are effective in monitoring students' attendance and progress during review meetings.

36 The provision of realistic working environments contributes to students' achievements. Full-time NVQ students undertake placements in the college travel bureau in addition to external placements. GNVQ students undertake assignment work based on the bureau's resources and those of local organisations. They also visit tourist attractions and undertake a work placement. The self-assessment report identified that pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate course are above the national average and that retention rates on this course are good. Inspectors agreed

Curriculum Areas

with this judgement. The report, however, did not recognise the weakness that pass rates on the GNVQ advanced course are below the national average. The retention rate on this course is poor, at 55 per cent. A recently introduced GNVQ foundation course has a low retention rate. Students who complete their courses progress successfully. Most follow a related course in further or higher education, or move into relevant employment.

37 Teachers have relevant qualifications and recent industrial experience. Three teachers have undertaken recent work placements with relevant organisations. In collaboration with a commercial operator, a travel bureau is operated in the college. The bureau offers a full range of services and operates on a commercial basis, in addition to fulfilling a training and assessment function. The college's self-assessment report identifies the specialist learning resource centre as a strength; inspectors agreed with this judgement. The centre includes computer terminals with access to the internet, CD-ROMs, and other resources. There is a fitness centre with modern equipment, but leisure and tourism students are not timetabled into this facility. Some lessons

are inappropriately located. For example, a leisure theory class was held in an engineering laboratory. Students have access to modern computers and the library contains an appropriate range of relevant texts and journals.

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

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced	Retention (%)	*	51	55
	Pass rate (%)	54	67	66
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	90	86	94
	Pass rate (%)	75	84	86
NVQ travel services level 2	Retention (%)	+	+	72
	Pass rate (%)	+	+	80
Association of British Travel Agents Consortium travel agents certificate	Retention (%)	+	89	79
	Pass rate (%)	+	67	78

Source: college data

*data not available

+courses not running

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills and Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Grade 3

38 The inspection covered provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, provision of basic skills for students across the college and a small amount of adult basic education provision. Inspectors observed 18 lessons. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. Some strengths, however, were overstated and a few weaknesses were not identified.

Key strengths

- regular and effective assessment of students' progress
- effective provision of support for students
- some good students' achievements
- wide range of accreditation

Weaknesses

- inadequate specification of individual learning objectives
- some teaching which lacks variety and appropriateness
- insufficient demands made of some students
- poor attendance at, and participation in, basic skills support classes
- underdeveloped monitoring of performance

39 The college offers a small basic skills programme for adults. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has recently been extended. A few students continue to follow separate programmes, but most now study in vocational areas. In addition

to vocational subjects such as catering, these courses include basic skills, personal development and enrichment elements. The college provides opportunities for study at pre-entry and foundation levels, and progression routes are clearly identified.

Learning support tutors and other support workers are deployed sensitively to help students. Regular team meetings are held and a working group is addressing the issues arising from the reorganisation of this provision. Teachers have not yet agreed standards for some areas of activity, and monitoring of performance is underdeveloped. The curriculum area benefits from supportive senior management.

40 Students follow individual programmes and learning goals are linked to the accreditation framework. Lesson plans indicate that teachers do not successfully take account of the individual learning needs of students. On commencing their courses teachers and students identify preferred learning styles and individual learning goals, but this rarely results in different tasks or activities for students. This weakness was not identified in the college's self-assessment report. Teachers assess students work well, and reviews of progress with students are effective. Teachers are less successful in recording progress and identifying measurable future goals for students. The use of some inappropriate schemes of accreditation has an adverse effect on the provision of basic skills support. Teachers prepare thoroughly for lessons. Some manage learning effectively to enable students to maximise their achievement. There are relatively few examples where students are encouraged to manage their own learning. Teachers do not always provide learning activities which take account of the different abilities of students. For example, in one lesson, the same task was given to the whole group, making insufficient demands on some students; in another, students were asked to follow instructions and perform tasks with

Curriculum Areas

little understanding of their purpose. Only 56 per cent of the lessons inspected were judged to be good or outstanding.

41 In many lessons, students demonstrate understanding and are able to apply skills confidently. They are well motivated and generally interested in their studies. Students' attendance at lessons is variable. On most courses, attendance averages over 80 per cent; on some courses, for example the basic skills support courses, the average is low, at 56 per cent. This weakness is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Retention rates are high on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Achievement of students' learning goals has improved during the last two years.

42 Teachers and support staff are suitably qualified and have a good range of expertise. Further training is required for some staff who have new roles, an issue recognised in the college's self-assessment. Most teaching accommodation is well equipped and students generally have access to a good range of learning resources. Some staff have designed and modified resources, particularly within the vocational areas, to facilitate their use by students with learning difficulties.

Examples of students' achievements in basic skills and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Basic skills (C&G communication skills and numeracy at foundation level and stage 1)	Retention (%)	90	97	86
	Pass rate (%)	*	10	65
Preparation for work (Open College accredited schemes)	Retention (%)	91	92	94
	Pass rate (%)	*	62**	62**

Source: college data

*data not available

**includes achievement of single units

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Support for Students

Grade 2

43 Inspectors agreed with many judgements about support for students in the self-assessment report, but identified some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- high quality of information and guidance to potential applicants
- strong links with schools
- the work of the student services unit
- effective college health services
- the good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Weaknesses

- ineffective implementation of the policy for tutorials
- aspects of the provision of additional learning support

44 Pre-enrolment guidance for school-leavers is provided by two full-time schools liaison teachers who organise a programme of activities and co-ordinate links between the college and 12 local schools. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that links are strong and extensive. For example, 50 'taster' sessions for potential students have been held in college so far this year. The schools liaison teachers interview all applicants to the college before referring them to specialist staff for a second interview. An induction day in July allows applicants to spend a day in their chosen vocational area. Pupils from special schools attend a link programme at the college to familiarise themselves with the college and enable staff to identify their learning needs. As the self-assessment report indicates, the college's information centre provides good-quality information and impartial guidance.

The prospectus and course information leaflets are well presented, in a common format, and the admissions process is well organised.

45 Students receive effective induction to the college and their courses. A common approach, using a standard checklist, ensures that all relevant aspects are covered. Students receive course handbooks, most of which are comprehensive and detailed, and an informative handbook and diary. The college's learning support policy requires that on induction all full-time further education students are assessed for their needs for additional support in literacy and numeracy.

46 The student services unit offers personal counselling, chaplaincy, financial advice, the provision of accommodation and childcare, and a college health centre. It is centrally located off the main college foyer and is valued by students. In 1996-97, the college helped 375 students, mostly on higher education courses, to find accommodation locally. The college's nursery has 34 places for children aged from two to five, and the Kids' Club has 20 places available after school and during the holidays. The health centre is staffed by three qualified nurses, and is well used by students and staff. It has good links with other local medical services and promotes health awareness in the college. A recent student health fair, attended by some 800 students, included a presentation by a local drama group which highlighted the risks from drugs. Student services staff respond positively to invitations to contribute to induction and tutorials.

47 A tutors' handbook contains a useful policy and framework to guide personal tutors in their work. It specifies that a tutorial hour should be timetabled for each full-time course, following a structured, documented programme. Recommended activities include the reviewing of students' progress, careers education, equal opportunities, health education and the development of interpersonal skills. In practice, many courses fail to follow these

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recommendations, and the effectiveness of the tutorial hour varies considerably. Tutors monitor students' progress regularly and send written reports to the parents of students under 19 years of age. Most curriculum areas hold parents' consultation evenings. The tutors' handbook does not offer any guidance about tutorial arrangements for part-time students. Most students on substantial part-time courses do not receive any structured tutorial support. Most support services are not available in the evenings.

48 There are good opportunities for students to receive additional learning support. The uptake of support has doubled since the last inspection, though it varies widely between faculties. The self-assessment report refers to problems of poor attendance at the workshops; this was confirmed by inspectors. Areas of weakness not identified in the report include insufficient communication and poor co-operation between subject teachers and support tutors. The college has plans to improve these aspects. Gains in students' achievements from the increased amount of learning support have not been formally evaluated by the college. Support for students with dyslexia, hearing or visual impairment is particularly strong, using a good range of specialist equipment. As part of the college's strategy to develop inclusive learning, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are increasingly following vocational foundation courses. This has greatly increased their motivation and self-esteem. As the self-assessment report recognises, vocational tutors were insufficiently involved in the pre-enrolment guidance and assessment of these students. The college also acknowledges that further training is required to enable teachers in vocational areas to respond more effectively to students' needs, and a programme of staff development is planned.

49 Advisers from Humberside Careers and Guidance Services attend college for four and a half days a week to provide interviews and

group sessions. They contribute to induction and tutorials, and to other college events such as open days. However, the uptake of individual interviews is low. Students have good access to extensive resources which provide information on careers and higher education.

General Resources

Grade 1

50 Since the last inspection, the college has made significant improvements to its accommodation. Inspectors concluded that the self-assessment report accurately identifies the strengths of its provision and that the college had successfully addressed most weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-furnished accommodation of a high standard
- effective maintenance programme
- well-considered capital replacement strategy
- the quality and range of sports/recreational facilities
- high-specification computers and software for students and staff
- library provision at Nuns Corner

Weaknesses

- low utilisation of some accommodation
- insufficient use of the IT centre

51 The college provides a pleasant environment in which to study. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that accommodation is of high quality. The college's main site is located near to the town centre. A second site for art and design was adapted from a secondary school in 1994 and provides professional standard recording studios, an exhibition gallery and performing arts centre.

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In the last three years, the college has created a new library and built a high-quality self-contained centre for management training at the main site. A new maritime training centre has been built in the port area of Grimsby. The college also rents other accommodation, for example in Immingham. A 10-year maintenance programme is reviewed annually and buildings are well maintained. Buildings have clear internal and external signs. Common areas are carpeted and many have good visual displays. The college has recently introduced a quality standard for teaching areas, but some rooms do not yet meet the standard.

Computerised timetabling was introduced in 1997 to improve room utilisation. This led to the allocation of inappropriate rooms for some classes. Some accommodation continues to be underused. The college provides realistic working environments for many curriculum areas, including hair and beauty salons, a business centre and a media centre. There are inadequate work spaces for part-time teachers in some areas. Tutors do not always have a room available for confidential meetings with students.

52 The college has separate libraries, for further and higher education, at the main site. Students are able to use both libraries. There is a specialist art library at the other college site, but study places are limited. The libraries have a wide range of books and journals, with over 41,000 stock items. Audio and video collections are extensive. The libraries spend £22 per full-time equivalent student on new resources each year. Opening hours meet the needs of students. Each library contains computers connected to the main college network. Helpful information leaflets for students identify resources relevant to their studies. Teachers do not always liaise with library staff to ensure that the learning resources available are appropriate. There is a programme to establish curriculum resource areas in all the main curriculum areas to enable students to study on their own at times to suit themselves. Resources held in curriculum

areas, however, are not included in the central catalogue held in the libraries.

53 There are a large number of modern, high-specification, computers for teaching, and an open access IT area in which technical support is available. The facility is generally underused by students. The college acknowledges this weakness in its self-assessment and is implementing a strategy to improve usage. The overall ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is 1:8; the ratio to full-time staff is 1:3. Computer purchases are well planned and effectively co-ordinated. The college-wide network enables students and staff to access a wide range of software, CD-ROM databases and the internet. The college intranet includes course-based materials. The college has invested in high-quality digital reprographic equipment. Photocopying facilities for staff and students are readily accessible in all buildings.

54 The college has improved access for people with restricted mobility. Inspectors agreed that this is a strength. For example, lifts have low-level controls for wheelchair users and voice floor-indicators. Toilet facilities for wheelchair users are provided throughout the institution. Tactile signs assist those with visual impairment. Computers with large screens capable of voice recognition are available in the visually impaired unit. Guide dogs have their own compound. The maritime training centre has provision for students to undertake a wide range of water sports and maritime safety courses. On-site sports and leisure facilities include two football pitches, a sports hall and fitness centre. As confirmed by surveys of students' views, social facilities for students are insufficient, but a new facility is being built. Refectory facilities provide both counter service and vending machines throughout the day and evening; students express satisfaction with the service provided.

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Quality Assurance

Grade 2

55 Inspection confirmed many of the college's judgements about the strengths and weaknesses of quality assurance. The college overstated some weaknesses. Inspectors found that other weaknesses had been successfully addressed.

Key strengths

- a comprehensive framework for quality assurance
- the use of quality assurance arrangements to develop the self-assessment report
- extensive arrangements to verify compliance of practice with policy
- detailed monitoring of the implementation of planned improvements
- well-structured course review and evaluation
- effective procedures on most courses to respond to the views of students and external verifiers
- arrangements to induct and appraise staff

Weaknesses

- failure to support some self-assessment grades with appropriate judgements and evidence
- insufficiently evaluative school and programme area reports
- insufficiently rigorous monitoring of service standards

56 The development of the self-assessment report involved most staff. Strengths and weaknesses are clearly identified in the report, and grades were awarded to each section. Some of the grades were not supported by

judgements. In some cases, the sources of evidence to support the judgements were listed, but not the analysis of this evidence. An extensive body of well-catalogued evidence was assembled to support the inspection. Managers produced action plans to address weaknesses in each area. An update to the report was provided shortly before the inspection, together with a progress report for each of the actions. The self-assessment report proved useful to the inspectors.

57 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the quality assurance framework is comprehensive. It benefits from a clear commitment to quality from senior managers. For example, there are extensive references to quality and its assurance in the college's operating plans. The appropriate committee structure to support quality assurance includes the corporation's recently established 'quality' committee. Elements of the framework include the use of targets to monitor course operation, annual course reports, and audit activity. The annual cycle of course reporting is well established. The self-assessment report identified the link between these reports, self-assessment and college strategic planning. The reports giving an overview of performance at school level are inadequate; they do not provide sufficient detail on the quality of the provision. This weakness was not identified by the college.

58 To reflect the needs of self-assessment, course teams are required to reach judgements about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and grade aspects of course operation. Strengths of this process include the consideration of evidence such as data on achievements, the views of students and external verifiers, and targets for retention and achievement. Performance against these targets is graded. Proposed improvements are listed and selected actions are incorporated into the college's business planning cycle. Service standards have been established for a range of college support operations. Many of these

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standards are written in general terms which makes performance difficult to measure. The self-assessment report identified these issues. The commitments made in the college charter are monitored through the college's quality assurance framework.

59 Extensive audit activity of courses assesses the extent to which practice complies with policy. The college audit and inspection identified that some of the annual course reports fail to recognise weaknesses in the operation of courses. A sample of courses is selected for close examination by the principal and this helps to reinforce the rigour of the course review process. Action plans arising out of course reviews are collated at school level and regularly considered. The actions to address weaknesses arising from the self-assessment report are reviewed on a monthly basis. Actions to address weaknesses identified by external verifiers or by audit activity are pursued by the audit team.

60 A system for the direct observation of teaching is now fully implemented; over 250 classes have been observed this year. The profile of grades awarded by the college was higher than that awarded by inspectors. Different elements of the quality framework are not exploited fully. For example, the views of staff do not inform the reviews of some areas such as the college information service and staff development. Observation of teaching does not fully inform the self-assessment process. The college surveys employers' views of provision. The questionnaires sent to employers do not include questions about how well they are informed of their employees' progress.

61 The college is an Investor in People. As noted in the self-assessment report there are good arrangements to induct and appraise staff. Staff speak favourably of them and of the way in which staff development supports their work. Appraisal and quality assurance procedures inform the well-funded staff development programme. An internal programme of staff

development covers a wide range of activities. There is no formal planning process to link the volume and variety of activity to the college's strategic needs.

Governance

Grade 1

62 Inspectors confirmed most of the college's judgements on the strengths of governance, and considered that a few had been underestimated. Since the self-assessment report was drawn up, the college has addressed the few minor weaknesses identified in the report.

Key strengths

- supportive and open governance
- exceptionally well-informed governors with a wide range of experience and skills
- a well-developed structure of committees
- detailed and effective monitoring of the college's financial and academic performance
- close involvement in developing and updating the strategic plan
- strong and efficient clerking
- involvement in the self-assessment process
- an exemplary corporation handbook

Weaknesses

- poor attendance at full corporation meetings by a few members

63 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

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responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

64 The college corporation has 20 members; the intention is to reduce membership to 18. There are 12 independent governors, a TEC nominee, three co-opted governors, one of whom is the president of the students' union, two college staff, a representative from the community, and the principal. Six of the governors are women. At the time of the inspection, there were vacancies for one independent and one co-opted member. The governors use their broad range of skills and experience for the benefit of the college. Collectively, they have skills in industrial management and consultancy, public and community service, law, marketing, finance, education, and the church. Several hold, or have recently retired from, senior posts in major companies. The membership and governor training committee has well-defined and open procedures for recruiting new governors. There has been a regular turnover of governors since incorporation. Governors have welcomed this as an opportunity to lower the average age of the board and to bring in fresh skills. The members of the corporation give generously of their time. They work closely and co-operatively with senior managers who appreciate their depth of knowledge and their ability to ask searching questions.

65 Governors play a full role in strategic planning and review, working to a published annual calendar which takes account of funding applications and other information requirements. They regularly monitor the college's progress towards the achievement of its strategic objectives and related targets. They recently adapted the committee structure to allow themselves more time for detailed consideration of what they see as increasingly complex strategic and quality issues. The corporation now has eight committees. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, all committees operate effectively and in

accordance with their terms of reference.

Committees meet with sufficient regularity to ensure that the business of governance is properly transacted. For example, the finance and personnel committee meets monthly to review the college's management accounts. The committee is also fully involved in the budget-setting process. Reporting arrangements to the full corporation are good.

66 Governors are exceptionally well informed on the structure and business of the college and on matters of interest to the further education sector as a whole. Inspectors did not agree with the view expressed in the self-assessment report that training for governors was a weakness. All governors receive a corporation handbook as a part of their induction. This exemplary document is comprehensive and avoids the use of educational jargon. Each corporation meeting is preceded by a briefing from college staff on key developments in the further education sector. The most recent presentation was on inclusive learning. Governors receive all key publications. Internal and external training events are widely publicised and well attended. A mentoring scheme for new governors has recently been introduced. All governors spoke approvingly of a 'vision weekend' which allowed them to consider long-term strategic issues in the company of college managers and representatives of the local community.

67 Governors recognise the importance of monitoring and reviewing their own work. They are clearly determined to carry out their duties in accordance with established best practice. Their contribution to the self-assessment report was based on a detailed questionnaire and on subsequent lengthy discussions at a full corporation meeting. They drew up a plan to address the weaknesses they had identified, all of which were minor and which have now been rectified. Governors received, considered and commented on the college's self-assessment report.

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68 The corporation meets at least once a term and often more frequently. It receives excellent support from a well-qualified independent clerk. Agendas and corporation papers are sent out in good time. The agendas are particularly well constructed. Corporation papers are clearly written and concise. Attendance at corporation meetings over the last 12 months has averaged 68 per cent. The corporation has taken steps to improve poor attendance by a few individuals. Corporation minutes accurately summarise the business conducted and resolutions are clearly minuted. The business of governance is conducted openly. For example, corporation agendas, minutes and papers are available on demand to members of the public, together with the register of interests. There is a recently developed whistle-blowing policy and a formal complaints procedure.

Management

Grade 2

69 The self-assessment of management was thorough and self-critical. It was accompanied by an action plan which aimed to increase the strengths as well as rectify weaknesses. Inspectors generally agreed with the strengths and weaknesses of management identified in the college's self-assessment report. However, they identified a number of strengths and weaknesses in addition to those stated.

Key strengths

- a clear and widely understood mission
- increasingly open management and strong, effective lines of communication
- increasing involvement of staff in strategic planning
- prudent management of the college's finances and successful business planning

- carefully monitored and productive collaboration with a wide range of partners
- effective market research to inform strategic planning
- responsiveness to national initiatives

Weaknesses

- ineffective use of management for course planning
- underdeveloped management of curriculum development
- insufficient involvement of budget holders in setting budgets

70 Managers work closely and confidently together. The executive team meets weekly, with deans of faculties attending in rotation. The meetings serve, in part, as a forum for monitoring of key performance indicators. The corporate management team, which is chaired by a vice-principal and involves deans and cross-college managers, meets fortnightly. It contributes to strategic planning and oversees operational matters. Staff meet also as faculties, in school and course teams, and in cross-college groups. Some course team meetings are poorly minuted; action points are not always recorded or followed up. The college mission is understood by staff. Teachers and support staff have a clear understanding of their own roles and those of their managers. Out-of-date job descriptions, mentioned as a weakness in the self-assessment report, have now largely been updated. Staff at all levels report that there is an open style of management; they speak appreciatively of managers' approachability. Lines of communication are strong. A weekly bulletin goes to all employees and the principal leads a meeting of all staff each term. She also chairs regular focus groups which give staff the opportunity to raise issues and to receive information. The college's computer network, which links all sites, is increasingly effective as a means of communication.

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71 There is a well-established framework for business and strategic planning, that is understood and supported by staff. The college's strategic plan contains detailed analyses of needs and risks, based on thorough research of labour markets and different client groups. This analysis is valued by outside bodies, including the local authority and the TEC, who draw on it for their own use. Business planning is successful. The detailed business plans drawn up by schools, faculties and cross-college areas link well to the strategic plan and vice-versa. Plans at all levels, however, lack sufficient emphasis on strategies for managing the development of the curriculum and of classroom practice, and for ensuring full use of the college's outstanding resources. The college has developed a robust management information system, well adapted to its needs, which produces regular information that is well used in planning and monitoring by senior managers. Data are generally less readily accessible, and less well used, at course team level.

72 There is an active equal opportunities committee. The committee develops and oversees projects as well as monitoring the implementation of policy. The college acknowledges the need for further awareness raising and for the development of strategies to counter, for example, gender imbalances on some courses. The health, safety and welfare committee is equally vigorous, and includes a governor. Its work goes well beyond the inspection of premises and equipment and the logging of accidents. For example, it has introduced arrangements for ensuring that staff who have undergone operations or have suffered prolonged illness have a suitable induction back into working life.

73 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good, although this is not specifically identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. The reports of the

internal and external auditors do not indicate any significant internal control weaknesses. The financial regulations, which are clear and concise, have recently been updated. Detailed management accounts are produced monthly. A comprehensive budgeting and forecasting manual guides the setting of budgets. Budgets for supplies and services, part-time teaching hours, staff development, and capital items are delegated to deans of faculties, who further delegate to heads of school. The devolution of budgets is not yet fully developed. Reports on actual and committed expenditure are provided for budget holders each month. The college manages its finances with care. Its average level of funding is low, but it has recorded an operating surplus each year since incorporation.

74 The college has a wide range of external partners, and has established successful links with both large and small businesses. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that these links are strong. Over the past year its vision has focused on strengthening its position as a community resource. It enjoys good relationships with the local TEC, the local authority and the regional government office, and the college has a presence on many project boards. It works successfully to secure funding from a variety of government and European Community sources. Contacts with external organisations are carefully monitored at senior level to ensure that work is not duplicated. The college is responsive to national initiatives in the further education sector, and is, for example, taking part in a regional project to develop inclusive learning.

Conclusions

75 The college's self-assessment arrangements are good. The inspection team found that the self-assessment report provided a useful basis for planning and undertaking the inspection. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. A few

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weaknesses were noted by inspectors that the college had not identified, and inspectors also found some strengths that had been underestimated. In the curriculum areas, the grade profile of lesson observations derived from self-assessment was significantly higher than that identified during the inspection. The college has been successful in addressing some of the weaknesses identified in the previous report, especially in cross-college areas. Where the overall judgements of inspectors differed from self-assessment judgements, they indicated higher standards. The grades awarded in the curriculum areas by the college were mostly confirmed during the inspection; one grade awarded by the inspection team was better than the college's self-assessment. In the cross-college areas, three of the five grades awarded by inspectors were better than those in the self-assessment report.

76 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 (March 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	3
16-18 years	25
19-24 years	21
25+ years	51
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (March 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	41
Intermediate	32
Advanced	14
Higher education	7
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	6
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	415	4,523	19
Agriculture	129	144	1
Construction	190	840	4
Engineering	413	4,611	20
Business	328	3,696	16
Hotel and catering	468	1,386	7
Health and community care	664	1,905	10
Art and design	507	527	4
Humanities	408	3,285	15
Basic education	63	853	4
Total	3,585	21,770	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (March 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	172	61	2	235
Supporting direct learning contact	95	11	6	112
Other support	161	15	1	177
Total	428	87	9	524

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£14,857,000	£16,404,000	£17,061,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£15.32	£14.69	£16.12
Payroll as a proportion of income	62%	60%	62%
Achievement of funding target	102%	112%	115%
Diversity of income	44%	40%	40%
Operating surplus	£55,000	£96,000	£36,000

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

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

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

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), college (1996-97)

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

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

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	116	93	108
	Average point score per entry	4.2	3.9	3.6
	Position in tables	middle third	middle third	middle third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	79	236	160
	Percentage achieving qualification	71%	74%	76%
	Position in tables	bottom third	middle third	middle third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	297	161
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	69%	71%
	Position in tables	*	top third	top third

Source: DfEE

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

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

**1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available*

College Statistics

Three-year Trends *continued*

Students' achievements

		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Advanced academic	Pass (%)	55	52	77
	Retention (%)	88	84	76
Intermediate academic	Pass (%)	38	43	64
	Retention (%)	90	78	80
Advanced vocational	Pass (%)	41	53	62
	Retention (%)	92	88	89
Intermediate vocational	Pass (%)	36	55	77
	Retention (%)	90	87	82
Foundation vocational	Pass (%)	30	54	67
	Retention (%)	93	84	85
All levels	Pass (%)	42	55	69
	Retention (%)	92	88	88

Source: college data

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