

Hendon College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education 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.

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Contents

Paragraph

Summary

Context

The college and its mission	1
The inspection	5

Curriculum areas

Computing and information technology	7
Business	13
Hotel and catering	18
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	25
Childcare and health	33
English and English as a foreign language	38
English for speakers of other languages	44

Cross-college provision

Support for students	50
General resources	57
Quality assurance	63
Governance	70
Management	77
Conclusions	85

College statistics

Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

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

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

Retention and Pass Rates

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

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

Summary

Hendon College

Greater London Region

Inspected March 1998

Hendon College is a general further education college in north London. The college's first self-assessment report was produced for this inspection as a process additional to the college's normal quality assurance arrangements. The inspection team agreed with many of the judgements in the report. The college's assessment of some curriculum areas overstated strengths in teaching and learning and made little reference to students' achievements in external examinations.

The college offers a wide range of courses in most of the FEFC's programme areas. Provision in seven curriculum areas was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. The curriculum is well designed to widen participation in the local community and provide progression from foundation to advanced level courses. Some courses are specifically for speakers of other languages and for students with learning difficulties. Courses and lessons are well planned and most teaching is good. Some teachers are skilled in catering for students' varied learning needs, levels of ability and language skills. Key skills are being taught

effectively on most courses but, on some programmes, there are few opportunities for students to develop IT and numeracy skills. Most assignments are clear and well presented and students' work is usually of an appropriate standard. Teachers do not always question students' poor punctuality. Achievements in some external examinations are good, especially in secretarial studies, hotel and catering, beauty therapy, ESOL and vocational EFL courses. There are also poor achievements. The college is working hard to improve students' retention. Some teachers on vocational courses lack relevant up-to-date industrial experience. Support for students is good, especially language and learning support. Governors make an effective contribution to the college. There is a comprehensive strategic planning process and a clearly understood management structure. Improvements in accommodation and learning resources have been accompanied by improvements in communications and some aspects of the curriculum. The college should: improve the quality of some teaching; extend the development of key skills to all courses; and introduce more rigour into the quality assurance procedures.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Computing and information technology	3	Support for students	2
Business	3	General resources	2
Hotel and catering	2	Quality assurance	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2	Governance	2
Childcare and health	3	Management	2
English and English as a foreign language	3		
English for speakers of other languages	2		

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Hendon College is a medium-sized general further education college in the north London borough of Barnet. It was established in 1973 and is based on two sites, the main campus at Grahame Park and a smaller site at Montagu Road in west Hendon. The college is one of three in the borough funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Other post-16 providers nearby include most of the schools in the borough and five colleges in the neighbouring boroughs of Brent and Harrow.

2 In 1996-97, the college enrolled 8,159 students, of whom 74 per cent were part time and 84 per cent were 19 or over. The college had courses in nine of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. It expects to enrol over 10,000 over the full year 1997-98. Over 50 per cent of the students are from minority ethnic groups. The college employs 298 full-time equivalent staff of whom 155 are in teaching posts. It is organised into eight college programme areas: basic education and learner support; professional studies, computing and care; academic studies; food, leisure and tourism; English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and English as a foreign language (EFL); science and the built environment; access and adult recreational education; and hairdressing and beauty therapy. The senior management team of six comprises the principal, the directors of finance and personnel, and three assistant principals responsible for client services, curriculum delivery and quality, and strategic and curriculum planning and information technology (IT), respectively.

3 The majority of students at the college live in the borough of Barnet, especially in the districts surrounding the college. The unemployment rate for Barnet is slightly lower than the figure for Greater London as a whole. The majority of employees working in Barnet are employed in companies with fewer than 25 employees. Most work in the service sector.

However, unemployment rates are not even across the borough. In the districts from which the college draws most of its students, unemployment rates are higher, the number of 16 year olds staying in education is lower and levels of social deprivation are higher than in the borough as a whole. About 20 per cent of the borough's population are from minority ethnic groups, the highest proportion living in the areas around the college.

4 The college's mission is to 'identify and satisfy the diverse educational, training and recreational needs of its communities and offer a high-quality service which is open to everyone'. Its key strategic objectives for 1997-98 are summarised as follows:

- achievement of the FEFC's targets
- consolidation of the curriculum, including successful expansion of IT and sports, development of key skills and improvements in the numeracy skills of students
- implementation of action in response to the Tomlinson and Kennedy reports
- recognition of the college as an Investor in People
- completion of the college's accommodation strategy
- obtaining 30 per cent of college income from sources other than the FEFC.

Context

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected during the week beginning 2 March 1998. The inspection team had access to the college's self-assessment report and to information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. The college was notified of the aspects to be inspected about two months before the inspection. The college submitted data on students' achievements for the three years 1995 to 1997. In some programme areas data were not available for 1995. The inspection was carried out by 11 inspectors working for a total of 46 days and two auditors, working for 10 days. The team observed 87 lessons, examined students' work and college documents, and held meetings with students, staff, managers and governors.

6 Of the lessons observed, 60 per cent were rated good or outstanding and 10 per cent were less than satisfactory. This compares with 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 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. The average level of attendance in the

lessons inspected was 74 per cent. The average in the sector as a whole was 77 per cent during 1996-97 according to the chief inspector's annual report. The following table shows the grades given to lessons observed.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level and GCSE	2	1	2	2	0	7
GNVQ	3	7	7	3	0	20
NVQ	2	10	5	1	0	18
Other	9	18	12	3	0	42
Total	16	36	26	9	0	87

Curriculum Areas

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 3

7 Fourteen computing lessons were observed on courses including the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) in IT, the BTEC national diploma in computing, the general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) computing and access to computing. The findings of the inspection were broadly the same as those presented in the college's self-assessment report. However, the report made no reference to students' achievements.

Key strengths

- well-planned lessons
- teachers' effective use of learning technology
- comprehensive range of full-time and part-time courses
- excellent computing equipment and accommodation
- students' skill in using IT

Weaknesses

- poor attendance and punctuality
- poor retention and pass rates on most full-time courses
- failure to meet the different needs of students in some groups
- lack of involvement by GNVQ students in the world of work
- little use of performance indicators and target-setting at programme level

8 The college offers a comprehensive range of vocational computing and IT courses at the main site. The full-time programme ranges from entry level to advanced level and a significant proportion of students progress

within the college or to higher education. There is an expanding range of part-time day and evening courses. As the self-assessment report notes, most courses are well planned and managed. Each course team keeps a comprehensive course file which includes students' records, schemes of work and external verifiers' reports. Targets set are restricted to enrolment and retention. Progress in meeting targets is not rigorously monitored.

9 The quality of teaching and learning is generally sound. Some teachers displayed good practice in combining theory and practical work. Teachers have good working relationships with their students. They make effective use of new technology for demonstrations in teaching. The work experience arrangements for students on the BTEC national diploma course are good. There are no similar arrangements for students on other courses. Teachers lack recent industrial and commercial experience and there are few visits to or meetings with employers. This means that students on these courses have insufficient contact with their intended world of work. This is an issue addressed in the self-assessment report and an action plan is currently being considered to include work experience for GNVQ students. Development of key skills of numeracy and communication is built into all programmes. Students recognise the importance of key skills and get good support, especially in the development of language.

10 Pass rates on the access to higher education and BTEC national diploma programmes are good but those on the GNVQ and GCE A level programmes are below national averages. Most part-time courses are modular and have good retention and pass rates. Retention on full-time courses is a major problem addressed in the self-assessment report. Strategies are in place to attempt to improve retention. The self-assessment report also identifies the poor attendance and punctuality of students as a weakness. Many

Curriculum Areas

lessons observed were adversely affected by late arrivals disrupting the continuity and overall quality of the lesson. Computing and IT students demonstrate a good range of practical skills. They are confident in using the college's computer network and, through this, the internet and electronic mail facilities. They make frequent and effective use of these computing resources in researching and producing assignments as well as in communicating with staff and receiving lecture notes and materials which teachers place on the network.

11 Assignments are well planned by teachers who provide helpful, comprehensive explanatory notes. Students' responses are generally of an appropriate standard. The assessment of the work is fair, but the feedback given to students is not always sufficiently detailed and is particularly limited in the case of those students whose work is most in need of improvement. Teachers do not always direct students who have failed external tests or fallen behind in their work to appropriate materials and learning packages.

12 The practical aspects of computing are taught in excellent purpose-built accommodation containing a good range of computers and software. Demonstration facilities are outstanding. There is an open access area for computing students with over 50 workstations in addition to those within the college's central learning centre. Good use is made of the open access area which is often over-full whilst some of the teaching areas have computers which are not being fully used. Technician support is sufficient and readily available.

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

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level computing	Retention (%)	*	50	55
	Pass rate (%)	*	60	55
GNVQ advanced IT/BTEC national diploma IT	Retention (%)	*	41	66
	Pass rate (%)	*	89	45
Access to higher education	Retention (%)	*	70	71
	Pass rate (%)	*	86	82
BTEC national diploma in computing	Retention (%)	*	62	44
	Pass rate (%)	*	88	75
GNVQ foundation/intermediate	Retention (%)	*	65	57
	Pass rate (%)	*	30	33

Source: college data

*data not available

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 3

13 The inspection covered business studies, accounting and secretarial studies. Fourteen lessons were observed. The college's self-assessment report on the programme area was comprehensive and evaluative and inspectors agreed with the strengths identified. Some of the weaknesses noted in the report had already been, or were in the process of being, remedied. Some weaknesses had been understated.

Key strengths

- effective, supportive teaching
- appropriate assignments
- good achievements on the intensive secretarial course
- the high standard of presentation of most students' work
- good course management and planning
- good IT facilities

Weaknesses

- a few undemanding lessons
- poor attendance and punctuality of students
- few full-time teachers with up-to-date industrial experience
- low retention rate on many courses
- low pass rates on business studies courses

14 The college offers a range of GCE A level, GNVQ, national vocational qualification (NVQ) and secretarial courses. Curriculum management of business studies and secretarial programmes is generally good. Course planning is comprehensive. Course files containing information about the course, qualifications, syllabuses, schemes of work and operational plans have been produced. Team meetings are

held regularly and minutes are circulated. Comprehensive records are kept of students' progress. Internal verification procedures are in place on GNVQ and NVQ courses and these ensure consistent assessment procedures.

15 Most of the teaching observed was effective. Teachers use an appropriate variety of teaching methods. Teachers take care to check students' understanding and to consolidate their learning. On a GNVQ foundation business course, the teacher asked students questions about the previous week's visit to the post room. Students then completed different practical tasks according to their level of ability. The teacher and learning support tutor checked their work and gave assistance. A few teachers failed to plan and deliver lessons which sufficiently challenged the students. Lesson plans and schemes of work are used for all courses. In the better lessons, the planning is detailed and aims and objectives are communicated to students. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, schemes of work do not indicate what key skills are covered in assignments and how they are to be assessed and accredited. Assignments are set at an appropriate level and many are placed within a business context. They are marked to meet the standards required by examining boards. Working relationships between staff and students are good. In some lessons, students arrived late and were not always questioned as to the reasons.

16 The industrial experience of many teachers is small or out of date. Most have gained appropriate assessor and verifier qualifications. Students enjoy easy access to a well-equipped learning area which has industrial standard hardware and software. The college indicated in the self-assessment report that it is proud of the quality of this equipment and inspectors agreed with this judgement.

17 The achievements of students on the 10-week intensive secretarial course are good. In June last year, the pass rate for the RSA

Curriculum Areas

Examinations Board (RSA) wordprocessing stage I paper 2 was 89 per cent and for wordprocessing stage II paper 2 it was 78 per cent. Students on NVQ courses have opportunities to gain qualifications whilst on work placement. Students on all courses submit work which is well presented and makes good use of IT. Students on business studies courses develop analytical, problem-solving and research skills. On GNVQ and NVQ courses, students' portfolios are well organised and provide a thorough record of achievement. Retention on many courses is low, which was not mentioned as a specific weakness in the business studies self-assessment report. Pass rates are low on the GNVQ advanced business programme and GCE A level courses in business studies and accounting. However, pass rates on all courses improved in 1997.

Examples of students' achievements in business, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A levels	Retention (%)	68	76	55
	Pass rate (%)	76	45	64
GNVQ advanced business	Retention (%)	68	55	61
	Pass rate (%)	41	43	52
GNVQ intermediate business	Retention (%)	89	64	59
	Pass rate (%)	48	26	69
GNVQ foundation business	Retention (%)	60	62	29
	Pass rate (%)	28	*	50
NVQ level 1 and 2 administration	Retention (%)	*	72	71
	Pass rate (%)	*	67	67

Source: college data

*data not available

Curriculum Areas

Hotel and Catering

Grade 2

18 Twelve lessons were observed covering all aspects of the provision in hospitality and catering. Inspectors generally agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report, but considered that the report understated the strength of students' achievements and also omitted some weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-planned teaching which effectively takes into account students' individual needs and abilities
- effective individual support for students
- effective monitoring and recording of students' progress and achievements
- good results on the GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering course and cake decoration programmes
- comprehensive course documentation
- excellent provision, progression and achievement for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- effective schools link programme

Weaknesses

- lack of analytical comments by teachers on students' written work
- teachers' lack of recent industrial experience
- poor retention rates on the NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking, and craft bakery programmes

19 The college offers an appropriate range of courses in hospitality and catering. Some courses offer flexible modes of attendance, including Saturdays. The hospitality and catering programme area has established an effective link programme for three schools in the

area. The quality of teaching and learning is generally sound. Lessons are well planned and in the majority teachers maintained and developed students' interest and understanding. In a few dull and unimaginative lessons, teachers failed to stimulate the students. Practical lessons were well organised and students paid appropriate attention to hygiene and safe working practices. As identified in the self-assessment report, students receive effective individual support within lessons. Teachers take into account students' different abilities and levels of English. In one foundation level course inspected, the main tasks were divided into elements which students could complete at their own pace; a learning support tutor helped two students with learning difficulties.

20 There is effective monitoring and recording of students' progress, attendance at lessons and achievements. Students are clear about methods of assessment and their progress. In general, the information on assignments given to students is clear and comprehensive.

21 Inspectors agreed with the college's view that the assessment of students' work is a strength. On the GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering programme the tasks set are appropriate for the level required. Students' written work is well organised and the standard of presentation is good. Very few assignments are wordprocessed. On the NVQ programmes, teachers have worked successfully to improve the standard of presentation of students' portfolios. However, teachers' comments on written work are often insufficiently detailed to help students to improve their work. Spelling errors are often not corrected. Little use is made of students' diverse cultural backgrounds in planning the curriculum.

22 The self-assessment report did not refer to students' achievements. The achievements of the first cohort of students who completed the GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering course in 1997 were good. Pass rates on the specialist sugar craft and cake decoration courses are

Curriculum Areas

generally good. The report did not highlight the outstanding results on the new NVQ level 1 food preparation and cooking course for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; a pass rate of 73 per cent was achieved in 1997. Retention is poor on the NVQ level 2 food preparation and cooking and craft bakery programmes. Retention of students on hospitality and catering courses is generally satisfactory, some courses having 90 per cent retention. A few NVQ programmes have retention rates as low as 34 per cent.

23 The management of hospitality and catering courses is effective and this is recognised in the self-assessment report. There is comprehensive documentation to support course and curriculum management. Course teams meet regularly. Sometimes, the standard of minutes produced, action-planning and maintenance of programme management files are good. However, this is not always the case. Although students' progress is monitored, students' achievements are not addressed in course reviews and course teams do not produce effective action plans on completion of the course review. Course teams systematically analyse retention and absenteeism. Internal verification systems are effective on all courses. Course handbooks and course guides are frequently reviewed and amended.

24 All teachers have a vocational qualification and an appropriate assessor and internal verification qualification. The majority have a teaching qualification. Although the programme area has strong links with employers, teachers lack recent industrial experience. Specialist accommodation for hospitality and catering comprises the training and production kitchens and a restaurant. These are equipped to an adequate level for the current provision.

Examples of students' achievements in hotel and catering, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced	Retention (%)	*	64	91
	Pass rate (%)	*	100	80
NVQ level 2 food preparation and catering	Retention (%)	*	47	34
	Pass rate (%)	*	56	94
NVQ level 1 food preparation and catering	Retention (%)	*	*	96
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	73

Source: college data

*data not available

Curriculum Areas

Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy

Grade 2

25 Twelve lessons were observed covering all aspects of the college's hairdressing and beauty therapy provision. Inspectors broadly agreed with the college's assessment of the strengths of this provision but some weaknesses were understated in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- broad range of courses
- comprehensive teaching and learning materials
- well-structured courses with coherent schemes of work
- mainly good teaching
- good students' achievements on beauty courses
- good retention rates
- effective course management

Weaknesses

- lack of opportunity to assess and accredit key skills
- students' poor punctuality at a number of lessons
- poor students' achievements on hairdressing courses

26 The programme area has developed a broad range of flexible provision which meets the needs of students and the local community. There are clear progression routes, from a pre-foundation course, specifically for students for whom English is not a first language, through to NVQ levels 1, 2, and 3. The college offers a specialised range of complementary therapy courses including reflexology, aromatherapy, Indian head massage and henna

skin decoration, sports therapy and health and fitness courses. Courses are offered on a modular basis so that students can attend at times which suit them.

27 Effective systems and documentation are in place to support the management of the curriculum area. Documentation includes operational and management course files, course handbooks, work placement handbooks, and 'catch-up-packs' for students who join courses late. Internal verification systems are thorough, and staff work together effectively.

28 Courses and lessons are carefully planned to cater for individual students. Teachers make effective use of a comprehensive range of workbooks which students use to work at their own pace. Teachers share the aims and objectives of lessons with students. Most teachers give clear expositions of key information. A few lessons are poorly managed and some teachers fail to ensure that all students join in the activities. Students arrived late to the majority of lessons inspected and this had a disruptive effect on learning. The college's self-assessment report recognised this as a weakness though not all teachers enforced measures to address poor punctuality.

29 The programme area is developing an appropriate strategy to assess and accredit students' experience in the workplace. Teachers record students' performance and keep students informed of their progress on courses. Teachers' comments on students' written work are generally constructive but they rarely refer to standards of presentation and organisation.

30 The college's self-assessment report highlights the lack of opportunity to assess and accredit students' achievements in key skills. Only one part-time hairdressing course provides the opportunity to develop skills in IT. Course teams do not consistently monitor, analyse and review students' retention, achievements in external examinations and destinations. Retention rates across the programme area are

Curriculum Areas

high and students' achievements on beauty courses are good. The college self-assessment report does not identify poor pass rates on hairdressing courses. The quality of students' practical work and oral responses in lessons inspected were good and the standard of written work was generally appropriate.

31 Full-time and part-time teachers of hairdressing and beauty have appropriate teaching and professional qualifications, though no member of staff has yet gained the appropriate award for advising on the accreditation of students' prior learning. This would enable the college to widen access to provision still further. Teachers undertake regular staff development activities to update their knowledge and skills. There are good levels of technical and administrative support.

32 The beauty suite and range of specialist equipment is impressive and comparable with commercial standards. The hairdressing salons, though satisfactorily equipped, are comparatively drab and valuable space is taken up by lockers. The theory rooms are too small

to accommodate the large groups which use them, and there are no displays of students' work to enhance the learning environment in either the hairdressing salons or the theory rooms.

Examples of students' achievements in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
NVQ level 3 beauty, epilation and aromatherapy	Retention (%)	*	96	94
	Pass rate (%)	*	77	90
NVQ level 2 beauty therapy	Retention (%)	80	78	76
	Pass rate (%)	45	94	95
NVQ levels 1 and 2 hairdressing	Retention (%)	79	70	79
	Pass rate (%)	26	21	16
Non NVQ complementary therapy	Retention (%)	*	66	86
	Pass rate (%)	*	88	89

Source: college data

*data not available

Curriculum Areas

Childcare and Health

Grade 3

33 The inspection covered provision in child, health and social care courses. Ten lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but considered that the college was overgenerous in its assessment of teaching and paid insufficient attention to students' achievements.

Key strengths

- much effective teaching
- high quality of most students' assignments
- good pass rates on a few part-time courses
- good links with employers

Weaknesses

- some poor teaching
- poor retention and pass rates on GNVQ intermediate and foundation programmes
- lack of development of key skills on some courses
- little use of IT in students' work
- lack of up-to-date professional experience of some teachers

34 Teaching on courses in health and social care is generally satisfactory. A few lessons observed were lively and stimulating. Some schemes of work lack sufficient detail, but all ensure that the requirements of awarding bodies are met. The aims and objectives of lessons are shared with students at the start of the lesson. In some lessons, teachers provided a wide range of imaginative activities. In other poorer lessons, teachers failed to enthuse students. Most of the handouts and materials used by teachers are well produced, though some

overhead transparencies are of poor quality. The key skills of communication, IT and application of number are taught separately but, wherever possible, assessment takes place through vocational assignments. Key skills are underdeveloped on some courses. Relationships between students and teachers are friendly and productive, and students speak highly of the tutorial support they receive from teachers. Equality of opportunity is integral to the delivery of care courses.

35 The self-assessment report identifies the need to develop strategies for improving retention. Pass rates for a few courses are higher than national averages. For example, the pass rate for students on the counselling courses was over 80 per cent in both 1996 and 1997. Pass rates for the health and social care courses leading to the GNVQ advanced are close to the national average, but for intermediate and foundation courses, pass rates are poor. Pass rates on childcare courses are slightly below national averages. Approximately 50 per cent of students who complete advanced level courses progress to higher education. Assignments are generally at an appropriate level, and are marked and promptly returned to students with helpful written comments from teachers. The standard of most students' work is good. There is little use of IT in the students' work. Teachers pay careful attention to the correction of errors of spelling and grammar.

36 All students undertake a well-managed work experience placement, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Students on most courses spend one or two days each week in their placement. Students on the GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses complete a two-week block placement. Students and employers receive clear guidelines on the activities which are expected to be undertaken. Teachers keep careful records of students' progress. Staff and students are involved in several overseas links.

Curriculum Areas

37 The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses in care, from entry level to higher education. Courses are generally well managed. There are regular course team meetings which address curriculum development and quality assurance issues. The college recognises in its self-assessment report that few teachers have had recent professional experience, and there are plans for some work shadowing to take place during the summer term. Teaching accommodation is good and there is appropriate accommodation for practical work. There is an adequate amount of equipment for the demonstration of practical care techniques. Classrooms are enhanced with displays of students' work. The library holds an extensive stock of childcare books, but there are insufficient texts on social care.

Examples of students' achievements in childcare and health, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Two-year vocational course	Retention (%)	*	65	46
	Pass rate (%)	*	66	58
GNVQ foundation and intermediate health and social care	Retention (%)	*	70	64
	Pass rate (%)	*	43	27
Access to nursing	Retention (%)	*	42	55
	Pass rate (%)	*	100	100
Part-time vocational courses	Retention (%)	*	67	79
	Pass rate (%)	*	48	51

Source: college data

*data not available

Curriculum Areas

English and English as a Foreign Language

Grade 3

38 The inspection covered general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and GCE A level English and EFL. Twelve lessons were observed. Inspectors generally agreed with the college's self-assessment on teaching and learning, but concluded that the report failed to include some weaknesses in students' achievements.

Key strengths

- good range of EFL and vocational English courses offered on a flexible basis
- good pass rates in GCSE English
- students' achievements in a range of vocational English qualifications
- good curriculum management, including effective integration of part-time EFL staff
- the well-stocked learning resource centre for EFL

Weaknesses

- some poor lesson management
- GCE A level pass rates below national figures
- generally low achievements in EFL examinations
- poor quality of presentation, content and technical accuracy in GCE A level written work
- low retention rates on GCE A level English course
- little monitoring of progress of EFL students

39 The teaching is generally well planned and lively. Teachers communicate clear learning

objectives to students. They use a good variety of learning resources which supplement course books in EFL. Students are effectively engaged in individual activities and in work in pairs or small groups. During such activities, teachers regularly check students' understanding. In lessons where whole-class discussion takes place, teachers often fail to encourage the less confident students to contribute. In some lessons, teachers talk for too long and do not allow EFL students the opportunity to practise speaking.

40 Not all courses pay adequate attention to the development of students' IT skills. Work produced by some GCSE students is wordprocessed. The use of IT by vocational English students is good. It is less good for EFL students. The self-assessment report identifies the assessment of students' work as a strength. Work is generally marked thoroughly. Most teachers provide comprehensive comments on students' written work and indicate the standard reached. The marking of some EFL work does not provide adequate feedback to students to help them improve their work. Work produced by GCSE English students is of a high standard. Work is well presented and students demonstrate a good understanding of the subject. The quality of GCE A level students' written work is generally poor. The presentation of work is often untidy. Many students' grasp of the subject is superficial and basic grammatical errors are common. The self-assessment report did not identify this weakness. Teachers regularly review students' progress and students are complimentary about the level of support they receive.

41 The college offers an unusually wide range of vocational English courses which lead to externally accredited qualifications. The courses are organised flexibly to enable students to follow programmes which meet their needs. The self-assessment report identifies this strength. Curriculum management is generally effective. Part-time EFL teachers have regular

Curriculum Areas

contact with full-time teachers. Teachers of English meet regularly to discuss curriculum issues and students' progress. Some schemes of work for the EFL and vocational courses are comprehensive. Others lack any detail on teaching methods, assessment and resources. There are no systems in place to check that EFL students take up appropriate learning support, or to monitor enrolment, retention and individual students' achievements. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

42 GCSE pass rates at grades C or above in 1997 were significantly above the national figure. The self-assessment report identified the good GCSE results but not the GCE A level pass rates, which were significantly below the national figure, or some poor EFL pass rates. Pass rates for students taking the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate examinations were lower in 1997 than in 1996; fewer than 50 per cent of those entered for the advanced level examination passed. The self-assessment report did not mention the poor retention rates on the GCE A level English course. Pass rates for students taking vocational qualifications have been high.

43 The classrooms used for English are adequately furnished. Those at Montagu Road are designated for EFL and vocational English teaching. They contain stimulating display material. The learning centre for EFL at

Montagu Road has a wide range of materials. The centre is well used by students. At Grahame Park there is an adequate collection of EFL print and audio materials. There is a sufficient range of English language materials but much of the literature stock is out of date.

Examples of students' achievements in English, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level English	Retention (%)	*	64	66
	Pass rate (%)	*	70	70
GCSE English language	Retention (%)	55	66	70
	Pass rate (%)	72	46	71

Source: college data

*data not available

Curriculum Areas

English for Speakers of Other Languages

Grade 2

44 The inspection of the college's provision of ESOL included the observation of 13 lessons at all levels on both college sites and at a venue in the local community. Inspectors agreed with the list of the strengths of this work identified in the self-assessment report. The weaknesses identified by inspectors covered cross-college issues rather than those relating specifically to the ESOL provision.

Key strengths

- good curriculum management
- effective teaching
- good pass rates for students taking external examinations
- good progression to more advanced ESOL and other courses
- the broad range of courses
- good opportunities to extend students' learning

Weaknesses

- poor information on retention rates and destinations of part-time students
- insufficient use of individual action plans

45 The ESOL section is well managed. A broad range of full-time and part-time day or evening courses has been developed to widen participation. Most of the provision is on the college's two main sites but some classes are held in community venues. There are classes at six levels from beginners to advanced. The college has developed a popular course in medical English for students with qualifications from other countries who wish to practise medicine in this country. Pre-enrolment guidance is available throughout the year. As

recognised in the self-assessment report, course documentation is thorough. Schemes of work for full-time courses are detailed and lessons have comprehensive plans indicating what is to be taught and how. There are regular meetings of staff. Communication with part-time staff who cannot always attend meetings is good. Recent restructuring has brought together the sections of the college responsible for ESOL and for EFL provision and this provides an opportunity for greater sharing of good practice and resources.

46 The majority of teaching is good. The self-assessment report described the skilful teaching that enables students from a wide range of backgrounds to learn together. In the best lessons, teachers make clear what the aims of the lesson are and use resources imaginatively. In a lesson for beginners, the teacher used body language and drama techniques effectively to develop students' confidence in listening and speaking. In another lesson, the teacher used a skilful combination of worksheets, overhead projector, whiteboard and telephones to teach the vocabulary and sentence structure for reporting accidents. Teachers provide graded materials which take account of the different abilities of the students. In some lessons, teachers did not make their explanations clear enough and failed to check sufficiently that students were understanding the work. Learning is enhanced through work placement, visiting speakers and visits to places of interest.

47 In most lessons, students work well together and are confident in answering questions and completing the work set. They successfully practise the skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking and many students complete homework to consolidate what they have covered in class. Teachers mark work regularly but they do not all adhere to the marking guidelines. Assessment takes place within class and through formal reviews of progress. However, teachers do not use individual action plans sufficiently to help

Curriculum Areas

students to plan their learning and monitor their own progress towards achieving their goals. The self-assessment report described the progress made since the last inspection in extending the opportunities for students to gain external accreditation. A substantial proportion of the students take examinations or work towards credits awarded by the London Open College Federation. Results are good.

48 Retention rates for the full-time programmes are satisfactory. There are no accurate data on retention for the part-time programmes. Progression from full-time courses is generally good. In 1996-97, of the 59 students who completed the full-time foundation course 78 per cent progressed to further or higher education courses. On the 1995-96 medical English course, 33 per cent of students are now practising doctors and a further 40 per cent are in related occupations or undergoing further medical training. There is less information about the progression of part-time students. A sample of approximately half the part-time students on this year's programme shows that 61 per cent have moved up a level from last year. There are a number of successful strategies which help students to progress and ESOL staff use their knowledge of other courses in the college to advise students.

49 Staff have developed a good range of resources. The learning centre at Montagu Road provides materials for students to work on their own outside timetabled lessons; full-time students have one timetabled session a week in the centre. Part-time students make less use of this facility.

Examples of students' achievements in ESOL, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Pitman's examinations (basic, elementary and intermediate)	Retention (%)	*	*	*
	Pass rate (%)	90	90	89
Cambridge Communicative Skills in English	Retention (%)	*	*	*
	Pass rate (%)	77	81	75
International English Language Testing Scheme	Retention (%)	*	*	*
	Pass rate (%)	*	96	97

Source: college data

*data not available

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

50 The college's assessment of the support it offers students was comprehensive, and benefited from the contributions of a range of staff. Some apparently well-designed systems were too recently in place for there to be evidence of their effectiveness in practice. The inspectors' findings are in broad agreement with the college's self-assessment.

Key strengths

- effective monitoring of the quality of the service
- effective pre-entry guidance, enrolment and induction
- language and learning support screening for all full-time students
- flexible, expert learning and language support
- accredited careers education programme for many full-time students

Weaknesses

- some less effective tutorial provision
- underdeveloped numeracy support

51 The college has comprehensive and effective systems for recruiting students and guiding them on to appropriate courses. There are four education guidance staff, one of whom is based in the local community, and two careers staff. Specialist guidance is available for applicants for whom English is not their first language and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Open events are held regularly for prospective students. Standard guidance notes help teachers to advise applicants and draw up a learning agreement. Induction into the college, the learning centre, student services and the courses follows standard guidelines. Induction assignments are relevant to particular courses and some are

used as evidence of the achievement of key skills for GNVQ students. The learning centre has produced attractive 'catch-up' packs for students who enrol after induction, which are tailored to suit the programme area the student is joining.

52 There are effective systems for identifying students who may need additional language and learning support. All full-time students undertake a writing exercise at induction in order to identify quickly those who may need language support. Students are classified according to their level of need. For instance, they may be placed on a full-time ESOL course, have language support made a compulsory part of their course, or have it as an option. NVQ and GNVQ students also take the screening tests for literacy and numeracy produced by the Basic Skills Agency. Learning support staff have good links with special schools and often discuss the needs of students before they enrol. The self-assessment report recognises that links with most local mainstream schools are more difficult to maintain and the college is considering how to address this.

53 The college provides a good level of language and learning support. There are 15 language support staff and 12 staff for basic education and learning support of whom five are dyslexia specialists. The support offered is effective and highly regarded by staff and students across the college. Specialist support teachers are linked to designated curriculum areas. This enables them to contribute to team meetings and to provide some language and learning support within normal lessons. Half-termly review meetings are held to identify students who are at risk of underachieving or dropping out of their course. Practical guides have been produced to help teachers identify students' problems and make best use of the support available. Support for numeracy is not yet as well developed as that for language and learning support.

54 Students have good access to personal counselling and advice. Four qualified

Cross-college Provision

counsellors were consulted by over 1,600 students in 1996-97 on financial, welfare and personal matters. There is also a health clinic. The student services manager produces a useful annual report which contains evaluative data and case studies. There is a small amount of childcare provision; a nursery at Grahame Park has places for 24 children aged three to five. Additional places are available to students in community venues.

55 The college's policy on tutorial provision has recently been revised. There are some variations in tutorial practice, not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. All full-time students have a one-hour tutorial each a week, which may involve group activity or an individual meeting with the tutor. GCE A level students have a one-hour session to develop their study skills as a group, as well as another 30 minutes for individual meetings. In addition, GCE A level and GNVQ advanced students receive 18 hours of careers education throughout the year. This also deals with university applications and is accredited as an additional GNVQ unit. Students appreciate this innovative scheme. Some tutors use tutorial time for teaching or record-keeping. Six group tutorials were observed during the inspection. All were at least satisfactory. The self-assessment report recognises as a strength the guidance pack for tutors. Inspectors agreed that the pack is useful. It includes the tutorial policy, information on student services, standard procedures for attendance, punctuality and disciplinary matters and a description of what students should expect of their tutor. A recent staff development workshop on the role of the tutor was well attended. A lead tutor has just been appointed and teaching observation has been extended to cover tutorials.

56 Different aspects of the support for students are the responsibility of all three assistant principals. This breadth of involvement has advantages, and there is evident co-operation between the managers

concerned. The need for more formal co-ordination of the support for students has been recognised. A working group met for the first time in December 1997 to address curriculum issues and support for students across the college.

General Resources

Grade 2

57 The inspection findings were generally in accord with the college's own assessment of its general resources.

Key strengths

- good facilities provided by the new building
- mainly clean, well-maintained accommodation
- extensive range of well-used facilities in learning centres
- IT network
- effective deployment of staff

Weaknesses

- poor accommodation at Montagu Road
- small amount of study spaces
- some inadequate heating and ventilation

58 The overall standard of the working environment for both staff and students throughout the college is good. The quality of the accommodation at the college's two sites differs in character. There has been extensive recent building at the Grahame Park site. In contrast, the college uses former school buildings at Montagu Road dating from 1900. The new building has provided attractive and efficient accommodation for student services, a refectory, learning resources, reception and administration. A large new sports hall, cardiovascular gymnasium and refurbished 25 metre

Cross-college Provision

swimming pool have added to curriculum resources and also to the recreational opportunities for students and staff. They have also increased the college's potential to benefit the local community. The self-assessment report did not sufficiently emphasise the positive effect the new building at Grahame Park has had on co-operative working and the enhanced status it has given to student services.

59 The accommodation at both sites is clean and generally well maintained, although some repairs are needed at Montagu Road. Much of the teaching space is dedicated to particular curriculum areas and rooms benefit from attractive displays of students' work and other materials. Across both sites, classrooms are spacious and well furnished. Litter is successfully controlled in most areas through the provision of bins and notices encouraging their use. Access for students with disabilities is good throughout the Grahame Park site, but there is no access to the learning resource centre at Montagu Road for people using wheelchairs. There are some narrow and precipitous staircases at Montagu Road, and there is a lack of office space. The three lecture theatres at Grahame Park are too big and poorly arranged for the type of teaching that takes place. Some teaching areas, including the lecture theatres at Grahame Park and the learning resource centre at Montagu Road, are overheated and inadequately ventilated.

60 The self-assessment report recognises as a strength the new learning centre at Grahame Park, which inspectors agreed is impressive. Its computers are part of the college network and the range of CD-ROMs covers many curriculum areas. There are good facilities for students to work on their own or in groups or to confer with staff. The use of resource facilities is carefully monitored. As a result, some adaptations to the original specification have already been made, for instance, by reducing the number of spaces available for watching videos. All major purchases for the centre have

to be justified to ensure their relevance and value. The bookstock in the centre has been extensively updated in recent years, although this process is not yet complete in some curriculum areas. A good selection of educational videos is available for students to borrow. Posters and notices about the learning centre's facilities are attractive and informative. The number of spaces for students to study in the centre is inadequate at times. The learning centre at Montagu Road provides a good range of resources for the courses taught at that site. The centre is always well used and sometimes overcrowded.

61 The college has installed a new computer network which has improved communication by providing electronic mail facilities for students, teachers and support staff. There are 650 computers connected to the network, which amounts to a ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students of 1:9. The college carefully monitors the extent to which the system is used. There is carefully monitored access to the internet through eight designated computers.

62 The report did not identify strengths and weaknesses in relation to staffing resources. It simply stated the current position and necessary action. Staff are effectively deployed and managed. There are accurate staffing records which are updated annually and established procedures for recruiting and selecting staff. Most part-time staff are successfully integrated with teams and fully included in appraisal and staff development. They are, for instance, included in programmes of training for assessors and verifiers.

Cross-college Provision

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

63 The inspection team agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses given in the self-assessment report. However, some of the strengths noted in the report were not clearly supported by detailed evidence. Inspectors also identified a few weaknesses which were not included in the report. Some of the quality assurance procedures were still being developed at the time of inspection and are not yet fully effective.

Key strengths

- quality assurance informed by accurate management information
- well-defined service standards in most cross-college support areas
- systems in place for observing teaching
- sound staff development procedures

Weaknesses

- lack of rigour in some course reviews
- insufficient use of students' perceptions and of observation of teaching in course review
- no formal mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of quality assurance procedures

64 The college's self-assessment report stated that the quality assurance arrangements lead to measurable gains in performance. Curriculum grades have improved since the last inspection. The lesson grades awarded by inspectors approximate to the national average for the sector. The grades show an improvement of 7 per cent when compared with the lesson observation grades in the previous inspection. Most cross-college support areas have developed and implemented sound quality standards and systems for monitoring them. For example, the learning centre obtains staff's

and students' perceptions of the service in a variety of ways and these are used to improve the service. The system for assuring the quality of the curriculum includes college-wide surveys of students' views, teaching observation, course review and staff appraisal.

65 The self-assessment report recognises and inspectors agreed that there are effective ways of gaining students' perceptions of the college. Students' views are gathered on two occasions during the academic year. The surveys enable the college to assess the effectiveness of enrolment, induction, teaching and support services. These surveys are linked to the standards specified in the college's student charter. The formal complaints procedure is easily available for students and other clients of the college. The responses of college staff to written complaints are monitored.

66 There are systematic procedures for carrying out annual course reviews, but no formal arrangements for monitoring that the procedures are carried out fully or efficiently. Programme management files are held for each course. The file should include three-year statistical data, course handbooks, schemes of work, verifiers' reports, minutes of course team meetings and the annual course review report. However, not all course teams across the programme areas maintain their files fully, a point that is not identified in the self-assessment report. Accurate management information is generally available for course teams. Data on performance are not yet fully analysed and used as part of the course reviews. Targets and figures for retention are included in the course reviews, but little reference is made to examination pass rates. Information on the destinations of students who have completed courses is not included. Many of the action plans developed as a result of the annual course review lack the detail and clarity required to assist in improving the overall quality of courses. Those responsible for addressing weaknesses and completion dates are not

Cross-college Provision

always identified. Course teams do not make sufficient use of the information provided by students' surveys to inform judgements on the quality of teaching. Internal verification of course assessment and students' work is good and is endorsed by the comments given in the reports from external verifiers.

67 Teaching observation is designed to improve the quality of teaching and to inform the professional development of teachers. A small team of senior staff observe teaching and learning using well-documented procedures. Approximately 80 per cent of the teachers have been observed teaching. Where specialist expertise has been considered necessary, for example, in computing, external consultants have contributed to the observation process. The observation team presents reports to groups of staff and teachers generally welcome the scheme.

68 A committee was established to manage the comprehensive process of assessing all aspects of the college provision and produce the self-assessment report required for inspection. Membership included senior managers and staff, representatives from the local training and enterprise council (TEC) and a partner college. A team of senior managers and external members validated the report. Staff from all sections of the college were consulted on the report which was updated before the inspection. This exercise was not part of the normal quality assurance process.

69 A commitment to staff training and development is demonstrated at all levels. The college has recently achieved the Investor in People award. Staff training needs are identified through staff appraisal and course review and are matched to strategic and operational objectives. Fair procedures are in place for approving applications to attend training events. Staff must evaluate the effectiveness of training after the event has taken place. Opportunities for training and

development are publicised in a variety of ways, including a weekly staff newsletter. The purpose, procedures and standards relating to appraisal are thoroughly documented and all outcomes are recorded and analysed. Each member of staff and the relevant line manager discuss the achievement of objectives set for the previous year and agree new objectives. Training and development needs are discussed and recorded. The self-assessment report recognises that priorities are linked to improving quality.

Governance

Grade 2

70 The self-assessment report provides a good analysis of the quality of governance. The inspection team agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses outlined in the report.

Key strengths

- effective clerking arrangements
- an effective associate governor scheme
- good induction and training for governors
- governors' knowledge of and commitment to the college
- governors' involvement in informing the strategic direction of the college

Weaknesses

- the register of interests and standing orders not sufficiently comprehensive
- some procedures too new to be fully effective yet

71 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

Cross-college Provision

responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

72 The college has sound procedures for governance and effective clerking arrangements. Corporation and committee arrangements are well planned, and supported by the timely distribution of agendas and relevant documentation. Discussions at meetings are focused and decisions are well minuted. Corporation minutes, excepting confidential items, are available for public inspection. All governors have signed a register of those interests which they consider may give rise to a potential conflict of interests with the college. This was established in response to recognised best practice and is available for public inspection. However, the register does not require a full list of all governors' interests and thus cannot be used to provide positive assurance that there are no actual conflicts of interests between governors and the college. The useful corporation handbook covers many areas of college governance, but does not include a comprehensive set of standing orders covering the conduct of meetings. The corporation has adopted both a code of conduct and a code of ethics to which all governors have formally agreed. Information on the meetings and decisions of the corporation and its committees are distributed within the college.

73 There are effective ways of identifying and supporting new governors. Potential new governors are sought through advertising and approaches to organisations. There is no formal skills audit but the corporation recognises the need to ensure that the membership has a broad range of expertise. The corporation recognised in its self-assessment that the current membership does not reflect the ethnic diversity of the college's student body and catchment area. This is being addressed by advertising in the local and national press.

74 An unusual and effective scheme is the associate member status. Associate governors

may become governors in the future. Such associate governors gain an excellent induction to corporation activities and the corporation is able to evaluate their suitability for appointment as full governors. Associate members may also be past governors who have resigned from the corporation but who still wish to assist the college. Associate governors do not have voting rights but may participate in discussions and have to declare interests in the same manner as full governors. New, full governors are provided with appropriate training on appointment, which includes discussions with senior managers. They have a mentor who helps them to become familiar with the operations of the corporation and with their roles and responsibilities. An annual residential training event, workshops, and external courses provide training. A new scheme links governors with appropriate sections of college, including curriculum areas, marketing and student support. This is not yet fully operational. The college is aware of the need to give stronger support to the student governor.

75 The corporation notes as a strength the strong commitment of governors to the college, and this is reflected in attendance at corporation and committee meetings which averages over 80 per cent. Governors have a good knowledge of the activities and ethos of the college. The corporation reviews its performance in a number of ways, including a review of performance as a part of the self-assessment process and the monitoring of governors' attendance at meetings. It has recognised that it is still in the process of refining formal procedures to ensure its own effectiveness. There is an effective partnership between governors and managers, and the distinction in roles is clearly understood. There is frequent contact, both formal and informal, between the chair and the principal.

76 As noted in the self-assessment report, governors have been fully involved in developing and reviewing the college's mission statement,

Cross-college Provision

the strategic plan and strategic objectives. Written reports detailing progress in the achievement of short-term objectives are presented to the corporation twice yearly. Throughout the year, all corporation members receive monthly management accounts which include relevant non-financial information, and detailed progress reports on the college's major building project. Governors are also kept well informed of initiatives in the further education sector. Because of an overlap of responsibilities between the finance, personnel and general purposes committees the corporation has revised its committee structure. The new structure will avoid the current overlap and will include a governance committee with a specific remit to cover governance issues, including approval of the corporation's self-assessment arrangements. Effective procedures are in place for the annual appraisal of the principal by the chair of the corporation.

Management

Grade 2

77 The inspection team agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and, in particular, recognised the improvements resulting from the revised management structure.

Key strengths

- well-structured strategic planning process
- realistic college-wide targets
- good internal communications
- revised management structure with clear reporting lines
- reliable management information
- effective financial management

Weaknesses

- failure to monitor achievement of programme areas' targets

- academic board ineffective in fulfilling its advisory role
- lack of financial targets in college's operating statement

78 The strategic planning process includes extensive consultations with staff and external agencies and meets the criteria established by the FEFC. Comprehensive market research is based upon information from the TEC, local authorities and the careers service. The strategic plan is a well-produced document which contains a realistic review of college achievements and quantifiable targets. Copies of the strategic plan are circulated extensively inside and outside the college and the key strategic objectives are understood by staff. The strategic plan is complemented by an annual operating statement which contains realistic targets. Although the strategic plan is supported by a three-year financial forecast, neither the strategic plan nor the operating statements contain specific financial targets to ensure close monitoring.

79 The college monitors the progress made towards achieving enrolment and retention targets regularly and systematically through meetings of the senior management team, the joint management group which consists of senior and middle managers, programme area teams and cross-college groups. Action is usually taken if targets are unlikely to be met. The college has met its unit targets in two of the last three years. However, some programme area teams do not monitor targets as rigorously as others, a point recognised in the self-assessment report.

80 The organisation of the college was revised in 1996 resulting in a less hierarchical management structure with clearer lines of responsibility and communication. The structure is understood by staff whose handbook contains an organisation chart and outlines the main responsibilities of senior managers. The college has a comprehensive system of executive

Cross-college Provision

and consultative committees with clear terms of reference.

81 The self-assessment report recognises that the new management structure and the reduction in the number of college sites have led to effective internal communications. Staff regard themselves as well informed and able to contribute to college initiatives. Internal communications are conducted primarily through the line management structure. The joint management group meets regularly to discuss issues and developments and to disseminate information. In turn, members of the group pass information to their staff through team meetings and cross-college groups. The weekly newsletter, which is circulated to all staff, is an effective channel of communication. Members of the senior management team make regular presentations to staff on current initiatives.

82 The self-assessment report understated the strength of the college's management information. It is reliable and produced in a form useful to managers. Reports are produced to meet the requirements identified in a recent needs analysis. Additional reports can be requested by managers and can usually be produced within three days. All senior and middle managers have direct access to management information and other staff can access it through administrative staff. All managers are trained in the use of the management information system.

83 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. There is a well-qualified and experienced finance team who have ensured, in conjunction with senior managers and governors, that tight financial controls have been maintained. Prudent management has enabled the college to undertake a major building project, although the financial status of the college remains weak and the college may become reliant on the goodwill of external parties. The budgetary process is

documented, appropriate to the needs of the college and clearly linked to the college's strategic plan. Detailed management accounts are prepared monthly and distributed to the senior management team and all governors. Reviews have been undertaken to ensure that value for money is obtained within the college's operations, and further reviews are planned. Financial regulations are widely distributed within the college, although they need updating. The college's average level of funding for 1997-98 is £15.87 per unit, compared with the median for general further education colleges of £16.72 per unit.

84 The academic board usually meets termly. Its membership includes a student and a representative from each of the eight programme areas. These representatives are sometimes the programme area managers who already have other forums in which to express their views. The academic board receives reports on current curriculum initiatives and considers students' achievements. The board rarely advises the principal on quality, planning, curriculum development and is generally regarded as ineffective within the college, a point not noted in the self-assessment report.

Conclusions

85 The self-assessment report was comprehensive in its coverage of the quality statements in Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. Judgements were backed up by supporting evidence. The inspection team agreed with the majority of the report's findings. Some of the strengths identified related to developments too recent to have shown their full impact. The assessment of some curriculum areas paid insufficient attention to students' achievements and judgements about the quality of teaching and learning were overgenerous. In some instances, the rigid format of the self-assessment report resulted in cross-college weaknesses being identified rather than those

Cross-college Provision

specific to the curriculum areas. In some sections, there was too much detailed description of the current position and too few clear judgements.

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

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 1997)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	1
16-18 years	15
19-24 years	18
25+ years	66
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1997)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	53
Intermediate	18
Advanced	12
Higher education	1
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	16
Total	100

Source: college data

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	342	1,336	21
Construction	60	42	1
Engineering	60	33	1
Business	390	758	14
Hotel and catering	216	265	6
Health and community care	295	1,424	21
Art and design	48	22	1
Humanities	289	938	15
Basic education	462	1,179	20
Total	2,162	5,997	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (February 1998)

	<i>Perman-ent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	112	35	8	155
Supporting direct learning contact	52	1	0	53
Other support	90	0	0	90
Total	254	36	8	298

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£8,914,000	£11,693,000	£9,995,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£15.83	£15.92	£16.41
Payroll as a proportion of income	76%	65%	*
Achievement of funding target	101%	101%	*
Diversity of income	27%	35%	*
Operating surplus	-£737,000	£946,000	*

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)

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

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

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

*data not available

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	74	50	52
	Average point score per entry	2.8	2.1	2.5
	Position in tables	bottom third	bottom 10%	bottom third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	80	23	66
	Percentage achieving qualification	71%	48%	55%
	Position in tables	bottom third	bottom 10%	bottom third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	159	81
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	8%	58%
	Position in tables	*	bottom 10%	middle 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

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