

**Warwickshire
College,
Royal
Leamington Spa
and
Moreton Morrell**

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
2000-01**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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

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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1999-2000, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	6	44	44	7	0
Cross-college provision	9	45	38	8	0

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Sample size: 112 college inspections

Note: percentages subject to rounding

Student Achievements

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

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1996, would appear in the results for 1997-98 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not included.

Summary

Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell

West Midlands Region

Inspected November 2000

Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell is a general further education college which brings together, through a merger, the former Warwickshire College of Agriculture, Horticulture and Equine Studies and Mid-Warwickshire College. In preparation for the inspection the college produced a comprehensive self-assessment report. Staff and governors participated in the self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the report. However, a number of weaknesses were understated or omitted and inspectors did not agree with two of the cross-college grades awarded by the college. Although there were external representatives on the college's self-assessment committee, the report was not subjected to a final external validation.

The college offers provision in all of the FEFC's programme areas. Provision in seven areas was inspected. Programmes of study are well organised and much of the teaching is good. Achievements are particularly strong in engineering. Students' achievements rose significantly in 1999-2000. Student retention rates are mostly good. The college provides an extensive range of helpful support services for students. Some high-quality new buildings and thorough refurbishment of existing ones has greatly improved the accommodation and facilities for students in recent years. Staff development is closely related to strategic aims and identified training needs. The college is well led. Communications are good and the strategic plan is well understood. Governors provide effective strategic direction. The college should: ensure that more students make use of additional support for literacy and numeracy; improve some resources in the learning centre; improve the effectiveness of course team reviews; increase the timeliness of corporation oversight of college finances; and develop and monitor operating plans more rigorously.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Agriculture	2	Support for students	2
Equine studies	2	General resources	2
Engineering	1	Quality assurance	2
Business studies	2	Governance	2
Health and social care	2	Management	2
Art and design	2		
English, history, psychology and sociology	3		
Basic skills	3		

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell is a general further education college serving the towns and villages of central Warwickshire. It was formed five years ago through a merger of the former Warwickshire College of Agriculture, Horticulture and Equine Studies and Mid-Warwickshire College. The college's main campuses are at Moreton Morrell and Royal Leamington Spa. There are also some centres in the community. The college operates in a competitive environment. There are seven other further education colleges in Coventry and Warwickshire. All local schools have sixth forms and private providers compete for training contracts. Local colleges collaborate in order to reduce wasteful competition.

2 Partnerships exist with Warwick District Council, Warwickshire County Council, regeneration community groups, employers, and the voluntary sector. Recently, a concordat has been signed between the college and Warwickshire County Council focusing initially on close collaboration with a local secondary school. The college works also with the county council to support an increasing number of 'disapplied' students. Its staff work at various levels within the Lifelong Learning Partnership initiative in Coventry and Warwickshire, and collaborate with agencies concerned with economic development and inward investment. The college plays a leading part in a major single regeneration budget community initiative in Leamington Old Town. It offers a significant amount of training for companies.

3 The college serves a wide catchment area. Some courses attract students from all areas of the country. A significant number of students from overseas attend the college. Most students, however, live within one-hour travelling distance from the college. Participation rates in Warwickshire for 16 year olds are high. Leamington Spa has areas of affluence and

some pockets of deprivation. With the exception of the deprived areas, unemployment rates are mostly low. In July 2000, the college had over 18,000 enrolments; 4,219 were full-time further education students, 13,404 were part time and 500 were on higher education provision. The majority of students are over the age of 19.

4 Significant provision exists in all Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) funded programme areas. Programmes are offered from pre-foundation to higher levels. General national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) are offered alongside national diplomas, and subjects at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). Higher education qualifications include foundation and honours degrees, and a wide range of higher national certificates and diplomas. Substantial changes have been made to GNVQ provision in order to meet the requirements of curriculum 2000.

5 The management structure consists of the principal, deputy principal, academic deans, functional directors, and a third tier of programme area managers. The latter are supported by curriculum leaders. The structure has been designed to aid communications and ensure the proximity of managers to students. The college employs over 1,000 full-time and part-time staff. The mission of the college emphasises family learning, partnership, care, flexibility, aspects of citizenship, and links with industry. A values statement is used to emphasise the ethos of the institution.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected during the week beginning 20 November 2000. Before the inspection, inspectors considered the self-assessment report and reviewed information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. This included data on students'

Context

achievements for 1998 and 1999, which were derived from the individualised student record (ISR). The college provided data on students' achievements and retention for 2000.

Inspectors checked the data against class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies and found them reliable.

7 The inspection was carried out by a team of 13 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 61 days. Inspectors observed 94 lessons, including some tutorials, and examined students' work and college documents. Inspectors held meetings with college governors, managers, staff and students. They consulted the local training and enterprise council (TEC) about its relationship with the college. Eight inspectors from the Training Standards Council

(TSC) worked with the inspection team during the college inspection. The TSC inspectors concentrated on work-based training. The areas they inspected were agriculture, animal care, engineering, hair and beauty, health and care, and business administration. They also inspected trainee support, equal opportunities, management of training, and quality assurance. Where it was appropriate, evidence gathered by TSC inspectors was taken into account.

8 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000. Of the lessons inspected, 65% were rated good or outstanding. This is a little above the average for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	2	9	5	1	0	17
GCSE	0	2	1	1	0	4
GNVQ	2	7	6	0	0	15
Other vocational	16	16	11	2	0	45
Other*	1	6	2	3	1	13
Total (No.)	21	40	25	7	1	94
Total (%)	22	43	27	7	1	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000 (%)	17	45	31	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Note: percentages subject to rounding

*includes basic skills and access to higher education

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9 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell	11.4	80
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000	10.3	76

Source for national average: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report

Curriculum Areas

Agriculture

Grade 2

10 Inspectors observed 10 lessons covering courses from entry to advanced level. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses but found additional strengths and weaknesses not identified in the report.

Key strengths

- high retention
- high achievement on full-time courses in 1999-2000
- good tutor support for students
- effective use of the college farm

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to the needs of all students
- weaknesses in individual action-planning
- some gaps in the provision of modern arable equipment

11 In most respects the agriculture provision meets the needs of students and local industry. It caters for students with a wide range of pre-course experience and ability. There are full-time courses at levels 2 and 3, and an entry-level course for students with additional learning support needs. There is a reasonable range of programmes for those employed in the industry. Enrolments are low on most courses and groups are combined for lessons in order to increase class size. Action is being taken to increase enrolments and this has had some success. There are productive links with industry. Local farmers provide good support by lending out equipment and making their farms available for practical work. Work experience is well managed. The college's self-assessment identifies that students are well supported

during their studies. There are good opportunities for students to meet their tutor; they have at least two recorded individual tutorials each term. The records of these are often insufficiently detailed, the review of progress is not always comprehensive, and actions are not clearly specified.

12 There is some good teaching. In most lessons, teachers develop subjects well and provide clear explanations of new terms. They draw effectively on their knowledge of the industry to provide well-chosen examples of general points. In the most successful lessons, teachers provide a balanced variety of appropriate activities to keep students interested. Students gain an understanding of theory by working on realistic exercises. In most practical lessons, teachers carefully demonstrate new techniques and then provide effective guidance to help students improve on their initial performance. As the college's self-assessment report identified, the combining of course groups in many lessons leads to insufficient account being taken of the range of students' needs. When teachers ask questions they do not ensure that all students are given an opportunity to respond but allow the more able and articulate students to dominate. Teachers do not always check that students fully understand the work. In some lessons, students lose interest and chatter to each other causing a distraction to the rest of the class. The end of some lessons is rushed, and teachers do not leave sufficient time for an effective summary. There are weaknesses in the management of some practical lessons and not all students are effectively involved. For most assignments students develop their knowledge by working on exercises drawn from real farm situations. In the best examples their understanding is effectively promoted. Most written feedback from teachers is clear.

13 In 1999-2000, retention rates increased for all the level 2 and level 3 full-time courses. A high proportion of part-time students

Curriculum Areas

complete their studies. Retention rates for most NVQ level 2 courses have been consistently high, but for NVQ level 1 and level 3 they have been low. Last year, all full-time level 2 and level 3 students who completed their studies were successful. For the national certificate and first diploma this was a marked improvement on the previous year when both courses were below the sector average. There have been some low achievement rates on the NVQ level 1 and level 2 programmes. Many full-time students gain work-related additional qualifications. Most national certificate and diploma students work on farms when they complete their qualifications.

14 The college in its self-assessment identified the use of the college farm to support teaching and learning as a strength and inspectors agreed. The farm is a good example of farming practice for students, and is used frequently and effectively for students' practical work and assignments. Performance data from the farm are readily available to students and staff and are used for coursework. The self-assessment report acknowledged the gaps in the provision of modern arable equipment. In general there is good provision of livestock facilities, including the new dairy on the college farm.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in agriculture, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
Vocational certificate level A and B (one-year and two-year courses)	Entry	Number of starters	37	40	38
		Retention (%)	100	93	89
		Achievement (%)	56	*	**
NVQ	1	Number of starters	13	10	11
		Retention (%)	100	70	73
		Achievement (%)	92	50	**
NVQ (one-year and two-year courses)	2	Number of starters	39	69	28
		Retention (%)	92	96	93
		Achievement (%)	*	*	**
First diploma in agriculture and national certificate in agriculture	2	Number of starters	26	19	13
		Retention (%)	92	79	92
		Achievement (%)	92	67	100
National diploma in agriculture	3	Number of starters	32	23	18
		Retention (%)	88	78	94
		Achievement (%)	*	94	100
NVQ and C&G phase 3	3	Number of starters	12†	9†	19
		Retention (%)	67	56	84
		Achievement (%)	75	40	**

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

* data unreliable

** data not available

† C&G phase 3 only

Curriculum Areas

Equine Studies

Grade 2

15 Inspectors observed 10 lessons. They agreed with many of the key strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but considered that some of the aspects identified as strengths were in no way exceptional practice.

Key strengths

- good teaching
- students' good practical skills
- good achievements on farriery diploma course
- excellent practical resources
- good vocational support and guidance

Weaknesses

- poor retention on some full-time courses
- insufficient use of work-based assessment
- weaknesses in tutorial action-planning
- lack of integration of key skills with the curriculum

16 The college offers a wide range of courses in horse studies from foundation to advanced level. In addition, there are courses in farriery and blacksmithing, including The Worshipful Company of Farriers diploma. There are good opportunities for progression to higher education courses. Management and organisation of the curriculum are good. Schemes of work are clear. Academic and support staff work together well. Staff have a wide range of vocational experience which they use effectively. The college's self-assessment report recognises the good links with industry. There are links with the equine and farriery advisory board and with work experience

placement providers. College and individual staff involvement in external activities in the equine industry offer students opportunities to take part in a wide range of activities, including assisting at shows and competitions.

17 Teaching is good and teachers use a range of appropriate methods and learning activities. There is a good mix of theory teaching and practical activity and this ensures a coherent learning programme for students. Lessons are well planned and teachers make the aims of the lessons clear to students. In the best lessons, teachers make sure that the work is always demanding. In practical lessons, teachers give good instruction and clear feedback to students. In some riding lessons, teachers do not question students enough to make sure that they understand the instruction and do not pay sufficient attention to meeting the needs of all the students.

18 Most worksheets and handouts are of good quality. Assignments are appropriate for the level of courses. Many assignments effectively link theory to practical applications. Some require students to use practical resources. Feedback to students on their work is usually clearly expressed but teachers often fail to give students enough advice on how their assignment work might be improved.

19 Students develop good practical skills. In a blacksmithing lesson on the national certificate course, students worked on a project to make a large strap hinge for a church. The project effectively enabled students to combine the range of skills they had acquired. Students received good individual assistance and guidance. Equine students develop high standards of stable management and horse riding. Students on horse studies courses are involved in realistic daily and weekend yard duties. Work experience is well organised. For the national diploma students it is a key feature, and includes a 20-week placement at the end of their first year. Students complete a thorough

Curriculum Areas

assignment based on their placement. There are opportunities for students to achieve additional vocational qualifications. The college's self-assessment report recognises that there is insufficient use of work-based assessment and that key skills are not well integrated with the curriculum. There has been little planning to ensure that the teaching of key skills is directly related to the curriculum and that it is seen as relevant by students.

20 Retention of students on two full-time courses in horse studies is poor. On the national diploma course, 27% of students who commenced in September 1999 had left the course by the end of November. The college has recognised this issue. The first diploma in pre-farriery has been reorganised in an effort to reduce the number of students leaving to take up employment before they complete their courses. There are good achievements on the farriery diploma course. Achievements on most horse care courses are in line with the national average.

21 Teachers provide especially good vocational support and guidance for students. Staff have a good rapport with students. Individual action-planning in tutorials is weak, as few tutors are effective in setting challenging targets for achievement. In those instances where targets are set, they are not reviewed effectively. These shortcomings were not recognised in the college's self-assessment report.

22 There are outstanding practical resources to back-up equine studies courses. These include an extensive range of stabling, three riding arenas, and a cross-country course. A wide variety of horses are kept, including breeding stock. There is a good range of specialist equipment including a high-speed treadmill and a weigh-bridge. To support farriery and blacksmithing there is a modern forge and a recently developed farriery centre that has facilities for eight horses to be shod at one time.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in equine studies, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
First diploma	2	Number of starters	41	59	40
		Retention (%)	85	80	70
		Achievement (%)	89	87	100
NVQ	2	Number of starters	24	82	39
		Retention (%)	92	77	73
		Achievement (%)	55	71	100
The Worshipful Company of Farriers diploma farriery apprenticeship	2	Number of starters	7	16	24
		Retention (%)	100	100	96
		Achievement (%)	100	100	91*
NVQ	3	Number of starters	80	74	66
		Retention (%)	80	86	70
		Achievement (%)	62	73	78
National diploma	3	Number of starters	42	40	33
		Retention (%)	74	68	85
		Achievement (%)	74	74	96

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

* all now passed

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 1

23 Inspectors observed 11 lessons. They agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- good teaching
- high retention rates
- high and increasing students' achievements
- external awards for outstanding achievement
- beneficial links with industry

Weaknesses

- some poor accommodation

24 The inspection focused on general engineering provision managed by the faculty of land-based industries and technology, namely GNVQ advanced and intermediate, City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) and national certificate programmes. Course team meetings are programmed throughout the year. The minutes of meetings identify actions, the person responsible and the timescale for implementation. Annual course reviews contain information on enrolment, retention and achievement, but discussion and action-planning on these items lack rigour. There are outstanding links with industry. Internationally renowned engineering-based companies use the college. An active engineering advisory committee meets once a term to discuss a range of curriculum issues and to review students' progress. Industrial representatives attend regularly. Training managers monitor progress by interviewing students at college on a regular basis. Students undergo literacy and numeracy testing. Students say they find the learning support they receive very helpful.

25 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that teaching and learning is good. They considered that some teaching is outstanding. In one successful lesson, theoretical aspects of a subject were being taught in well-presented separate stages. The teacher carefully consolidated students' learning by asking them to attempt related practical exercises. Before moving on with the theory, the teacher checked and recorded students' learning. The whole process led to high student involvement, high motivation and good achievement. In another successful lesson, a theoretical description of a metal removal procedure was then effectively followed up by an informative practical examination of the process in a workshop. The use of an innovative demonstration model quickly helped students to grasp the scientific principles involved and served to increase their interest as well as extend their theoretical understanding. Tutors comments on students' work were informative. However, most lesson plans were too brief and lesson evaluation sections were not completed. The quality of some course notes was poor. Lateness and absence are closely monitored. Safe working practices are observed at all times in workshops. Students spoke positively of the engineering provision. Key skills are timetabled on GNVQ programmes and fully integrated with each subject. All students are allocated a tutor. Regular meetings are held to review students' progress.

26 Facilities within the engineering area include two information technology (IT) centres which offer good open access to computers with Internet connections. Students appreciate the accessibility to modern and extensive IT equipment. A large machine shop and advanced machining centre provide a range of metal removal machines, which assist students in developing basic skill competences and increasing their knowledge of modern computer-based industrial practices. Some classrooms are in need of refurbishment. There

Curriculum Areas

are sufficient and adequate books, videos and CD-ROMs in the college learning centre and the engineering area. Lecturers are well qualified. Most are teacher-trained and possess assessor and verifier qualifications. Recent staff development activities have focused on key skills and on the introduction of curriculum 2000, including its implications for GNVQ courses.

27 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that most retention rates are well above the national average. There are increasingly high levels of achievement. For example, achievement on the GNVQ advanced course has increased from 76% to 95% over the last three years. Achievement rates are well

above the national average for the programme area, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Achievement rates for courses range from eight to 33 percentage points above the appropriate national average. Over the whole of the provision, results are 19 percentage points above national averages. For the third successive year, the engineering programme area won the Engineering Employers Federation award, West Midlands, for Engineering Education and Training Best Practice. Company employees on college courses have won the award 'Best First Year Apprentice' for the Coventry and Warwickshire Region in 1998 and 1999, and also the 'Best Final Year Apprentice' in 1998.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in engineering, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GNVQ intermediate	2	Number of starters	41	43	44
		Retention (%)	88	84	77
		Achievement (%)	83	94	79
NVQ engineering manufacture – foundation	2	Number of starters	94	115	73
		Retention (%)	93	89	86
		Achievement (%)	70	95	88
C&G 4351 computer-aided design	2	Number of starters	37	48	38
		Retention (%)	61	81	92
		Achievement (%)	82	87	93
GNVQ advanced	3	Number of starters	42	38	35
		Retention (%)	95	92	80
		Achievement (%)	76	86	95
National certificate in engineering	3	Number of starters	57	69	54
		Retention (%)	93	87	91
		Achievement (%)	89	92	100

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Curriculum Areas

Business Studies

Grade 2

28 Inspectors observed 10 lessons on GNVQ programmes, GCE A level and GCE advanced subsidiary (AS) business studies. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified a number of additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-managed courses supported by thorough documentation
- outstanding pass rates on GNVQ intermediate business
- effective personal tutor system
- productive links with employers

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on GCSE business studies
- some ineffective teaching
- lack of attention paid to teaching students of differing abilities
- students' late arrival at lessons

29 The college offers a broad range of business and professional courses. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that courses are well managed. There is a published schedule for course team meetings, at which the monitoring of students' attendance and retention is a regular item on the agenda. Course files are well maintained and students receive comprehensive course handbooks. Course induction programmes are effective and comprehensive and valued by students. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the personal tutorial system works well. All students are assigned to a personal tutor and have timetabled tutorials which are

used to monitor and encourage individual students' progress. Teachers have established effective links with parents, and provide regular reports on students' progress and attendance.

30 The college's self-assessment report states that there is much good teaching. Inspectors identified some that was good but also some that was less successful. In many lessons, teachers ask students well-directed and demanding questions to sustain their interest and make sure they understand what they are learning. Students are motivated and engage in a range of appropriate activities. On GCE A/AS level business studies, students are keen to learn and have high aspirations. They respond well to the intensive revision sessions which teachers provide to develop examination techniques. Students on GNVQ and GCE A level courses have benefited from trips, visits, and attendance at conferences, all of which have had vocational relevance to their studies. There are productive links with employers and all GNVQ courses include a period of well-planned work experience, which is linked to learning activities in the college. Students are encouraged in lessons to draw on their own background knowledge and work experience. In some weaker lessons, the pace of work was slow, and teachers failed to take account of the different abilities of students. Lack of differentiated learning materials meant that some students were not given opportunities to tackle more difficult work in order to achieve their full potential. In a few lessons students sat passively throughout. Occasionally, students spent too much time unnecessarily copying information from projected slides. In some GNVQ and GCE AS lessons, students were not able to make notes accurately. These weaknesses were not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Assignments are well-designed and guidelines for students are clear. In five of the lessons observed students arrived late and this adversely affected teaching and learning.

Curriculum Areas

31 On both GNVQ and GCE A level courses students' written work is often of good quality. Students' portfolios on the GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses are well maintained and carefully organised, and show that students have acquired an appropriate range of skills. On both GNVQ and GCE A level courses, students' progress is regularly monitored. Assessed work is returned to students quickly. Teachers give students constructive feedback on the quality of their work. Spelling or grammatical errors are corrected. In 2000, the achievement rate on the GNVQ intermediate business studies course was above the national average. Pass rates are declining in GCE A level business studies. In GCSE business studies, the proportion of students achieving a pass at grade C or above has been consistently below the national average for the last three years. Between 1999 and 2000, retention rates on the majority of courses were at, or above, the national average.

32 Teachers are appropriately qualified. There is a planned programme of staff development that is relevant to their work and which includes secondment to local employers to update their commercial knowledge. The teaching accommodation for GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses is good. It is located in a modern building, which is well decorated and contains relevant display material. Classrooms are appropriately furnished. Students have access to good-quality IT facilities with modern business software. However, some teaching rooms do not have sufficient IT facilities for the size of classes. The teaching of GCE A/AS level business studies is located in two drab portacabins. The staff work areas are overcrowded. The library has an adequate stock of books, business journals and CD-ROMs. Students effectively use the Internet for research work on assignments and, in so doing, develop their investigative skills.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in business studies, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GNVQ intermediate	2	Number of starters	44	33	51
		Retention (%)	91	79	84
		Achievement (%)	88	100	96
GCSE business	2	Number of starters	25	20	12
		Retention (%)	67	85	75
		Achievement (%)	16	24	25
GNVQ advanced	3	Number of starters	58	45	58
		Retention (%)	83	78	77
		Achievement (%)	88	83	80
GCE A level business studies (one-year course)	3	Number of starters	33	21	26
		Retention (%)	91	95	77
		Achievement (%)	43	60	58
GCE A level business studies (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	†	19	36
		Retention (%)	†	79	83
		Achievement (%)	†	83	75

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

† course not running

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care

Grade 2

33 Inspectors observed 11 lessons. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good teaching
- effective tutorial support
- very high pass rates in health studies, counselling and welfare studies
- good work experience
- teachers' wide range of vocationally relevant qualifications

Weaknesses

- key skills not fully integrated with lessons
- low and declining retention in GNVQ advanced health and social care
- lack of employer involvement in course planning and design
- some gaps in provision for adult learners

34 Health and social care courses are offered from entry to higher levels, but the majority of students study at level 2 and level 3. There is good communication between managers and teachers, a strength not stated in the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed that there is a lack of employer involvement in course planning and design. Targets for enrolment, students' retention and pass rates are monitored as part of the review process at meetings held twice a term. Work experience makes a significant contribution to students' learning. All courses provide opportunities for students to undertake a work placement.

A good range of placements is used, and there is a strong partnership with social services, the local National Health Service and private hospitals. College tutors and workplace supervisors liaise well. In the workplace, students effectively apply theory to practice. However, inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that placement providers are not always clear about the learning objectives of full-time, 16 to 19 year old students in placements. A work placement focus group has been set up to address this.

35 Most teaching is of a high standard. Most schemes of work are well planned, though some fail to identify learning outcomes. In lessons and written work, most students demonstrate appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding. In the most successful lessons, good use is made of the students' experiences to promote knowledge and understanding. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that key skills are identified as part of assignment briefs, but are not fully integrated with lessons. In some lessons, opportunities for developing key skills are missed. Assignment briefs set by teachers are clear. Assessment criteria are shared with students and feedback is supportive and encourages further learning. Marked work is graded fairly. The use of information learning technologies in lessons is underdeveloped.

36 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that some achievement rates are above the national average. In 1999-2000, pass rates of 100% were achieved for the national diploma in health studies, diploma and certificate in counselling, childhood emergencies, first-aid refresher courses and welfare studies. The introduction of the first diploma in care has improved retention and achievement at level 2. However, inspectors agreed with the college that retention is declining in GNVQ advanced health and social care, and in the diploma in welfare studies. Strategies have been implemented to address this, including increased tutorial

Curriculum Areas

support and the immediate contact of absent students by tutors.

37 There is effective support for students in their work in college and in their work placements. All students receive regular tutorial support linked to professional and pastoral issues. Students complete an action plan with their tutors which identifies future learning targets and any additional support needed. In a tutorial course on the diploma in welfare studies, the tutor circulated a 'Talkback' book in which students entered their concerns in preparation for a discussion in the group tutorial session. Workshop sessions enable care students to keep up with homework and receive support. Tutors carefully record and monitor students' progress, their career goals, and any

personal issues they raise. Students speak well of the additional support provided by staff in the learning centre. In one entry level lesson, a signer supported a student with impaired hearing.

38 Inspectors agreed with the college that teachers have a wide range of vocationally relevant qualifications. Four teachers have undertaken vocational placements in local hospitals. There is a need for teachers to acquire IT skills to enable them to integrate this key skill with their teaching. The majority of classrooms are satisfactory, although the layout of furniture in some rooms prevents teachers from circulating to help students. There are some imaginative, well-presented displays of students' work in base rooms.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in health and social care, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
Care	2	Number of starters	21	23	27
		Retention (%)	85	83	85
		Achievement (%)	27	10	69
Counselling	2	Number of starters	49	*	23
		Retention (%)	96	*	100
		Achievement (%)	98	*	100
Emergency first aid	2	Number of starters	777	16	280
		Retention (%)	100	100	96
		Achievement (%)	100	100	96
GNVQ health and social care	3	Number of starters	28	16	14
		Retention (%)	68	60	57
		Achievement (%)	53	100	83
National diploma in science health studies	3	Number of starters	10	13	15
		Retention (%)	80	75	87
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100
Diploma in welfare studies	4	Number of starters	10	9	21
		Retention (%)	90	89	52
		Achievement (%)	89	100	100

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

* course not running

Curriculum Areas

Art and Design

Grade 2

39 Inspectors observed 16 lessons covering a range of courses. Inspectors agreed with the majority of findings in the self-assessment report. Some strengths identified in the report relate to recent changes and improvements that have not yet been fully tested.

Key strengths

- a high standard of teaching
- outstanding achievement on GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses
- significantly improved levels of achievement for GCE A level
- good progression to higher education
- an extensive range of courses
- comprehensive resources

Weaknesses

- low student retention and achievement on some courses
- underdeveloped use of computers for research
- some poor accommodation

40 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there is good course provision. There is an extensive range of courses from foundation level to higher education. There are good opportunities for students to progress to higher level courses within the college, with the exception of the access to creative interior crafts. The college offers many part-time day and evening short courses. There are recreational as well as Saturday classes and summer schools. Students value the flexibility offered and the variety of choice within programmes. For example, students on the

access to higher education and 'Pathway' in art and design programmes, have core units in computer skills and printmaking, and a choice of additional units including photography and drawing.

41 There is effective course management and curriculum planning. Common procedures are followed to a consistent standard. Course leaders and senior curriculum leaders work well with their managers. Communication is good. Assignment sheets are clear and informative and offer students an opportunity to comment on the tasks they are given. Assignments are appropriately varied and some raise equal opportunities awareness. Internal verification procedures have been improved. Students have a sound knowledge of assessment procedures and commented that their tutors are fair, make constructive comments, and return assessed work promptly. Compliance with health and safety is good.

42 All teaching is good and some is outstanding. Schemes of work are comprehensive and most lesson plans are used effectively. Teachers make particularly good use of traditional critiques to draw out and develop students' ideas. In the studio, national diploma foundation students carefully reviewed their work led by their teacher. In an IT room, individual students effectively reviewed the progress of their work on computer displays. Presentations are undertaken in seminars for contextual studies. A lively lesson in GCSE textiles provided a good example of students enjoying learning by undertaking practical work. Students make little use of computers to extend their learning, or to undertake research either with college material or through reference to appropriate websites. Tutorial support is good.

43 Students' achievements on level 2 courses are high. Particularly good results have been achieved for C&G courses, and for GCSE design subjects taken as additional qualifications. Achievement on both GNVQ intermediate and

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advanced courses is consistently above the national average. Results in 1999-2000 show a significant improvement in achievement for GCE A level. There is continued improvement in pass rates for GNVQ precursors. Achievement for the level 3 access course and C&G courses is generally high. There has been a decline in retention for level 2 courses, with the exception of the GNVQ intermediate, which is still above the national average. Inspectors agreed with the college that retention for the GNVQ advanced course is low and has been below the national average for three consecutive years.

44 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that the college's extensive resources provide students with a valuable breadth of experience. Most resources are well maintained. The library provision meets present needs. Some of the accommodation and decoration at the York Road centre is poor. Most teachers have experience of professional practice and the majority are employed part time. Students value the wide range of subject specialist expertise available. Although most teachers are well qualified in their subject area, a significant number of full-time teachers do not have a teaching qualification. A mentor is assigned for all new teachers.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in art and design, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
C&G and GCSE	2	Number of starters	153	104	64
		Retention (%)	82	84	73
		Achievement (%)	80	94	95
GNVQ intermediate	2	Number of starters	30	22	19
		Retention (%)	80	86	89
		Achievement (%)	88	100	88
GNVQ advanced	3	Number of starters	17	19	26
		Retention (%)	65	53	69
		Achievement (%)	100	89	94
GNVQ precursors	3	Number of starters	76	71	52
		Retention (%)	79	85	80
		Achievement (%)	89	88	95
C&G and access to higher education	3	Number of starters	16*	48	72
		Retention (%)	56*	81	63
		Achievement (%)	100*	89	83
Diploma in foundation studies	3	Number of starters	104	92	97
		Retention (%)	85	86	84
		Achievement (%)	70	85	89
GCE A level	3	Number of starters	131	145	92
		Retention (%)	89	71	90
		Achievement (%)	66	71	90

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

* C&G only

Curriculum Areas

English, History, Psychology and Sociology

Grade 3

45 Inspectors observed 16 lessons. It was not possible to relate judgements closely to the self-assessment report. However, inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses identified.

Key strengths

- good achievements in English
- good resources for teaching and learning
- effective subject support for students
- separate and structured GCE A level revision course

Weaknesses

- some weak teaching and learning
- disruptions to teaching through students' poor attendance and punctuality
- some poor levels of achievement
- inconsistencies in marking students' work
- underdeveloped use of information learning technology

46 All the subjects inspected are offered at GCSE and GCE A/AS level at the Leamington centre and GCSE English at the Moreton Morrell centre. There are good opportunities for progression from GCSE to GCE AS. Many students proceed to higher education. Most courses are full time but some are part time. The separate one-year GCE A level course for students who were seeking to raise their grades is a distinctive feature. On average students improve their performance by nearly two grades in each subject.

47 The subjects are managed effectively by a programme area manager and a senior

curriculum team leader. All courses have schemes of work. Course teams for English and humanities pay close attention to the improvement of the quality of students' experiences and achievements. Tutorials enable students to consult individually on their progress. Minimum target grades give students clearer goals at which to aim.

48 Inspectors partly agreed with the self-assessment that teaching and learning is of a good standard. Most lessons were well planned and included careful attention to key themes in the subjects being studied, for example, critical analysis in English literature and human behaviour in psychology. Well-written handouts assisted students' understanding. Some imaginative use was made of group work. In a lesson on David Hare's play *Murmuring Judges*, the teacher and the students worked with enthusiasm to understand key themes in the play's presentation of justice. A well-chosen excerpt from a video by the playwright helped to deepen students' understanding. Less effective lessons did not always cover all the intended material. The work sometimes lacked pace and was not demanding enough. Insufficiently prepared students were not able to contribute to the lessons. In other lessons students were sometimes late and in some lessons for which students were required to prepare in advance, poor attendance meant that some of the topics could not be covered.

49 Inspectors agreed that achievements in English at GCSE and GCE A level are good. In some other areas, notably GCSE psychology and sociology they are poor and in GCE A level history they are not satisfactory. In other courses, achievement rates are around the national average for general further education colleges. Achievements on two-year courses at GCE A level were not as good as on one-year courses. The development of value-added analysis is beginning to help with identifying the reasons for the varying performances of

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students. This has already identified some underachievement by students who enter with good GCSE points scores. Retention rates are mostly around the average for general further education colleges. The quality of students' work varied from outstanding to poor. Inspectors agreed with the marks awarded by tutors. Teachers often made comments designed to improve students' performance. However, inspectors noted the lack of consistent policies and practice in the correction of spelling and grammatical errors. Some teachers were scrupulous while others corrected relatively little.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in English, history, psychology and sociology, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE English language	2	Number of starters	137	146	145
		Retention (%)	76	66	71
		Achievement (%)	54	61	65
GCSE sociology	2	Number of starters	48	60	62
		Retention (%)	68	70	72
		Achievement (%)	42	71	23
GCSE psychology	2	Number of starters	36	23	21
		Retention (%)	69	52	52
		Achievement (%)	36	36	27
GCE A level English language and literature	3	Number of starters	93	78	69
		Retention (%)	84	82	80
		Achievement (%)	78	88	84
GCE A level English literature	3	Number of starters	34	30	24
		Retention (%)	88	83	67
		Achievement (%)	100	91	94
GCE A level history	3	Number of starters	33	39	36
		Retention (%)	82	87	77
		Achievement (%)	42	63	50
GCE A level psychology	3	Number of starters	85	67	87
		Retention (%)	85	85	64
		Achievement (%)	73	69	69
GCE A level sociology	3	Number of starters	62	54	43
		Retention (%)	82	70	70
		Achievement (%)	71	57	67

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

50 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the quality of resources is good. Staff are well qualified. The new teaching accommodation is attractive and classrooms are well equipped and furnished. There is attractive display in some subjects. The quality of learning resources is good. The library has sufficient books, adequate journals and good on-line access to many articles in these subjects. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that progress on the integration of IT with teaching and learning is not well developed. A beginning has been made in psychology through the development of a site on the college intranet.

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Basic Skills

Grade 3

51 Inspectors observed 10 lessons in literacy and numeracy. They agreed with the college's selection of issues identified in the self-assessment report, but considered that some strengths had been overstated and some weaknesses underestimated.

Key strengths

- strong management commitment to improve the quality of basic skills
- wide-ranging and expanding provision
- effective arrangements for initial assessment

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped use of individual learning plans
- inadequate reviewing of students' learning
- failure to relate teaching to individual learning needs
- lack of clear data about students' achievements and progression
- inadequate availability and use of specialist basic skills IT resources

52 The scope of the inspection covered literacy and numeracy courses below level 2. This included discrete basic skills courses; study support in basic skills provided in college study centres and as part of students' main courses; and special programmes of basic skills aimed at particular groups of students who do not attend main college sites. The college is extending its basic skills provision through partnerships with other agencies, for example, the National Schizophrenic Fellowship, a rehabilitation centre for mental health service users and a family learning project.

53 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that there is some creative and innovative teaching but the incidence of less than satisfactory and poor teaching is considerably above the national average for basic skills. In the most successful lessons, teachers provide and adapt resources imaginatively to meet individual learning needs and interests. One teacher brought in a video and newspaper articles about recent floods which would be of interest to a student and her family. Another teacher used haiku poems to encourage students who lacked confidence to attempt short pieces of creative writing, and to gain understanding of the structure of words. In a number of lessons, there was insufficient differentiation in learning activities or learning materials to meet the varying needs of the students in the class. Skills practice is unrelated to learners' abilities, interests or experiences. Opportunities to make connections with other lessons and activities are frequently missed. This weakness was identified but underestimated in the self-assessment.

54 Inspectors agreed that there are effective arrangements for initial assessment. The college has this year introduced a new assessment and diagnostic test. Individual learning plans have also been revised this year and a new form issued on which to record them. In many cases these forms are not well used. Teachers record actions rather than plan individualised programmes of learning with students. The form does not promote learning reviews related to each individual's development. Assessment and the reviewing of learning are generally inadequate. Teachers offer much encouragement and personal support, but feedback is not focused enough on the specific process of learning basic skills.

55 The college does not have a clear knowledge of student retention rates or the achievements of its basic skills learners. Little use has so far been made of external accreditation. National Open College Network (NOCN) units which are related to the new basic

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skills standards have now been written. Inspectors agreed that the management information system is unable to give clear reports on the achievements and progression of basic skills students. There are few course-specific performance indicators for basic skills. Coupled with the absence of detailed individual planning and reviewing, the achievement of basic skills learners at the college remains largely unknown. The lack of reliable data on externally accredited awards precludes the publication of table of achievement rates in basic skills.

56 Inspectors agreed that there is a strong management commitment to improving the quality of basic skills. Many useful strategies have been put into place and are beginning to have an effect. A cross-college basic skills task group was established last academic year, charged with implementing the basic skills strategy. Basic skills 'champions' have been appointed in all faculties, though some are still unclear about their roles and there has been minimal training for them. Basic skills awareness-raising sessions have been introduced.

57 All full-time and most part-time basic skills teachers have a basic skills teaching qualification. All volunteers receive training, but usually this does not lead to a qualification. Most specialist classrooms have adequate resources and up-to-date computers. The vocational certificate base room at the Moreton Morrell centre is unattractive and poorly equipped. Learning support accommodation at the Moreton Morrell centre is welcoming, though there is some drab and cluttered accommodation at the Leamington centre. The provision of specialist basic skills software is inadequate, both in range and quantity, a weakness recognised in the self-assessment. The small selection of basic skills fiction texts in the learning centres is old and worn. A few teachers encourage students to visit the learning centres, but many students are unaware of how they might use them.

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Support for Students

Grade 2

58 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified a few weaknesses and a strength that had not been recognised by the college.

Key strengths

- the range of services provided by a helpful responsive student services team
- good impartial pre-course guidance
- well-organised induction
- the comprehensive programme of enrichment

Weaknesses

- low uptake of additional support for literacy and numeracy at one site
- unsatisfactory quality of written plans to improve students' performance

59 Staff in student services are friendly, helpful and supportive. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college offers a useful range of support services. These include guidance and assistance on student finance and welfare issues, health promotion, a college nurse, transport, residential accommodation and a warden service. Qualified counsellors provide personal counselling. The college offers childcare facilities for children aged up to eight years including very young babies, and support through its access fund for students to use childminders. It also provides childcare facilities for students in its community provision.

60 As the self-assessment report states, prospective students receive good impartial pre-course information and guidance. The college uses a variety of well-established

recruitment methods. Publicity material is attractive and informative and takes account of the changes for curriculum 2000. Students are informed of the range and content of courses at information and 'taster' events, through publicity materials and at interview. The college has clear entry criteria for each course and provides further guidance to potential students if their prior qualifications are not at the appropriate level. All potential students for full-time and substantive part-time courses receive an interview. Those unsure about which courses to study are referred for a guidance interview and, if it seems more appropriate, provision elsewhere is suggested.

61 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the enrolment and induction process is effective. This was a strength at the previous inspection. All full-time, and where appropriate, part-time students, have an induction programme. Staff are provided with clear written guidance, checklists and briefings for enrolment and induction. There is helpful documentation on college facilities and services, including a welcome pack, the student handbook and the college charter. Most students find that enrolment is efficient and induction informative. Both support them well at the start of their studies.

62 The quality of tutor support was strong in most curriculum areas inspected. Students appreciate the help and support of tutors. Each student has a personal tutor. Those on short courses have the opportunity of tutorial support through appointments with student services, if requested. Tutorials include both weekly group sessions and a review of individual students' progress at least once a term. Tutors provide substantial support for students but tutorials often lack a clear purpose. Tutors are provided with regular training, briefings, detailed guides and supporting materials for tutoring. Some written records provide a clear review on how students are progressing. Others do not. Plans to improve student performance are often

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underdeveloped. Action points are insufficiently specific and many plans do not include timescales within which targets must be met.

63 The college provides an appropriate range of careers services and facilities for students. There is a close partnership with Warwickshire Careers Service. At each main campus, careers areas are adequately resourced and include software packages, books, university prospectuses and some details on job vacancies. A programme of careers events, including external visits and visiting speakers, is publicised regularly in the college weekly newsletter and on the intranet. Guidance for students who wish to progress to higher education is incorporated into the tutorial programme.

64 As the self-assessment indicates, there is an appropriate set of activities to support students with additional learning requirements. These include help with communications, study support, numeracy, and dyslexia. Materials are adapted and specialist equipment and support services are provided to meet students' individual learning requirements. Students can obtain support as part of their programme of study, through individual appointments or by calling at the learning support centres. All full-time and most part-time students receive a diagnostic assessment for literacy and numeracy. Tutors can refer, and students can refer themselves, for support. The take-up of additional support for literacy and numeracy at the Leamington centre is low. Written records of the progress for students receiving help from additional learning support tutors are adequate but the use of individual learning plans is underdeveloped.

65 This year the college has extended its established programme of enrichment to offer a wider variety of activities, a strength not mentioned in the self-assessment report. It includes non-accredited and accredited activities, which can support a student's main programme of study or help them extend their

interests in a particular topic. The range includes art and design, performing arts, hair and beauty care, languages, equine studies, maintenance of farm machinery, IT, and first aid. The comprehensive sports programme includes eventing, clay shooting and circuit training. The college places a strong emphasis on team games, including mixed hockey, rugby union and soccer for both men and women students. It is also the venue for an annual women's seven-a-side rugby tournament.

General Resources

Grade 2

66 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but considered that some strengths had been overstated. They also identified additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- much excellent new building and refurbishment
- well-maintained buildings
- the good standard of IT resources
- the good recreational and sports facilities

Weaknesses

- insufficient resources in the learning centre
- poor staff work rooms
- some poor accommodation

67 Warwickshire College, Royal Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell operates from two main campuses one near to the centre of Leamington Spa, the other 9 miles away in an attractive rural setting at Moreton Morrell. Additional accommodation is held on smaller sites in Leamington Spa and in recently developed IT centres in local towns. The college

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has made considerable investment in new buildings and in the renovation of accommodation. It has spent £3.25 million on new buildings and an additional £2.5 million on refurbishment since the last inspection. Inspectors agreed that the Leamington centre is being developed to a high standard. The new Centralia building provides good-quality teaching rooms and a lecture theatre replacing mobile classrooms. Car parking space has been considerably expanded. The Moreton Morrell centre has also seen significant development. The new learning centre, a conversion of the former polo school and a grade II listed building, is outstanding. A new teaching block has been provided. While good progress has been made, some accommodation is unsatisfactory at both main centres, particularly the remaining mobile classrooms. The York Road centre has been subject to minor refurbishment but is in need of major improvements. The college has recognised these issues and has plans in place to ensure continued improvement.

68 The accommodation is well cared for and well maintained. A comprehensive maintenance plan is in place and is regularly reviewed and updated. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that, while staff workrooms are being systematically upgraded, many still provide an unsatisfactory working environment with inadequate storage facilities. Improvements have been made to refectories at both main campuses and at the York Road centre. The refectory at the Leamington centre has been extensively refurbished and is popular with students. At peak times, however, there is insufficient seating to meet the high demand. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that recreational and sports facilities are good. Student common rooms are well used. Good sports facilities including fitness centres and sports halls are available at both main centres. The Moreton Morrell centre has extensive playing fields.

69 Access for students with restricted mobility has been improved since the last inspection. At the Leamington centre access is now available to the upper refectory and a lift has been refurbished. The Victorian houses which were used previously have been disposed of. Some mobile classrooms are not accessible and at York Road and Thornbank centres there is access only to the ground floor.

70 The college has taken action to address the weaknesses in its library provision identified at the last inspection. A learning centre has been developed at the Moreton Morrell centre to provide a distinctive and well-used facility. It houses study spaces, including 27 open access, networked computers and a study support service. The former library at the Leamington centre has been refurbished to create a learning centre. It has 60 open access, networked computers. Refurbishment has increased usage by students. However, the study spaces available are insufficient to meet demand. Opening hours of the centres are good and include weekends. Bookstock is generally good, though further investment is required, particularly in basic skills resources. Access to a wide range of journals is available, of which 1,600 are in electronic format.

71 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that IT facilities and software available through the college network are good. An IT strategy is in place which clearly identifies priorities for future development. The number of computers has increased significantly since the last inspection and many teaching rooms are equipped with at least two networked computers. Community centres have good-quality facilities including up-to-date equipment. Computers are of a good specification. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is 1:5.5. However, there are insufficient open-access computers particularly at the Leamington centre. A good range of industrial standard software is available but there is a lack of specialist software in some

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curriculum areas. Students have access to the Internet and electronic mail. A well-developed student intranet is in place containing a good range of material, including useful resources provided by curriculum areas and links to related websites. The staff intranet is excellent. In addition to links to central management information and corporate policies and procedures it includes a section for sharing and testing learning materials. The ratio of computers to staff is 1:1.3. All staff rooms have at least one computer and staff have access to electronic mail. Technicians provide an effective service to maintain the equipment.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

72 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths in the self-assessment report. They thought that one weakness had been overstated and some had not been identified.

Key strengths

- improvements in students' achievements
- effective staff development and appraisal
- well-developed procedures for monitoring external and internal verification
- strong emphasis on customer care and the use of service standards
- well-managed and useful surveys

Weaknesses

- shortcomings in team reviews
- aspects of self-assessment

73 The college has good arrangements for quality assurance. Its strong commitment to quality improvement is reflected in the lead that is given by staff with specific responsibilities for quality. The principal chairs the college's

'quality' committee, a subcommittee of the academic board. It monitors actions arising out of the self-assessment process. It also intervenes to investigate issues identified through the careful monitoring of surveys, complaints, data on retention and achievement and external verifier reports. Staff agree with the emphasis on quality assurance. They have good access to all of the relevant documents which are available on the college intranet.

74 Effective quality assurance has led to improvements in students' achievements at levels 1, 2 and 3 over the three-year period to 1999. Achievements on short courses for students aged over 19 fell in 1999. Action was taken to address this and college data for 2000 indicate that achievements have now risen above the national average. Although there has been a slight decline in some retention rates, in most instances they are above the national average. Internal verification procedures are effective and well understood by staff. This proved helpful during the expansion of key skills as part of the curriculum 2000 changes.

A rigorous quality control system ensures that key staff see all external verifier reports and the quality committee carefully tracks the progress of actions until completion. For example, issues relating to a media course led to intervention by the committee which was concerned by the slow progress made in remedying the situation.

75 In the self-assessment report the college did not recognise shortcomings in the team review process. Team reviews concentrate on current performance against targets relating to enrolment, retention and achievement. Good use is made of national benchmarking data and teams are expected to address equal opportunities issues within the review.

However, the documentation does not require teams to monitor progress in completing the actions from the previous review. It is not possible to discern trends over time. Some plans are costed, others are not, and some reviews contain little reference to evidence from

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sources such as the lesson observation programme. Inspectors agreed that course management files are of uneven quality. The frequency of team meetings and the quality of the minutes of meetings vary significantly.

76 Two internal inspectors lead the well-established system for the observation of lessons. Each full-time member of staff and a significant number of part-time staff are observed. Over 200 observations are conducted annually. If an unsatisfactory lesson is observed it is followed up with another observation after an action plan has been agreed with the teacher. Summary reports on strengths and weaknesses are provided in order to inform staff development plans. The grade profile of lessons observed by college staff is more generous than that recorded by inspectors during the week of inspection.

77 Inspectors agreed that staff development is a strength. The priorities for staff development are closely related to the college's strategic aims and 'key success factors'. In addition, each programme area analyses its training needs on the basis of evidence from appraisals and lesson observations and these contribute to a costed college staff development plan. Teachers and support staff speak positively about the widely publicised opportunities for professional development. Staff appraisal is well established and, for teachers, is linked to lesson observation. Investor in People status, first gained in 1995, has been retained twice.

78 The college charter clearly indicates to students, employers, parents and the community the standards and services they may expect. Versions are available in large print and on audiotape. Inspectors found that students understand their rights and responsibilities. The college's customer care service standards are well defined and widely promoted throughout the college. Each area displays its performance against its standards. Support staff are aware of the importance of measuring

performance against standards and particular areas such as the learning centre have devised their own set of service standards. The Charter Mark award was gained earlier this year.

79 There are well-managed systems for obtaining the views of students, teachers, parents and employers. All full-time and a sample of part-time students are surveyed three times a year. This provides the college with useful feedback on entry arrangements, college services and teaching and learning. The college has responded to issues identified such as the need to improve car parking and refectory arrangements. The quality committee has made use of the results of the teaching and learning survey by devising a benchmarking technique to measure the performance of courses.

80 Inspectors found weaknesses in the self-assessment process. Not all reports are completed thoroughly. For example, in some, the action plans are incomplete. Inspectors found weaknesses that the college had not identified in most of the self-assessment reports.

Governance

Grade 2

81 Inspectors and auditors agreed with many of the strengths. However, inspectors considered that some strengths and weaknesses were overstated and they identified additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- effective oversight of strategic direction by governors
- good working relationships between governors and management
- the effective links of governors with curriculum areas
- detailed monitoring of students' performance

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Weaknesses

- delays in monitoring college finances
- some aspects of corporation business

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

83 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the self-assessment report that governors are keenly involved in the determination of the college's strategic direction. The mission statement and corporate objectives are considered annually. Governors take part in a number of 'away-days' when strategic planning is a key feature. The corporation has identified 17 key success factors, based on the strategic plan. The operating plan is monitored regularly through committees and the corporation. Governors and managers work effectively together as identified in the self-assessment report. They are linked with programme areas and some support functions. Governors have a good understanding of the issues within these areas. Staff are positive about the involvement of governors in their work. Managers regularly make presentations to the corporation on aspects of college provision. Conferences which bring governors and managers together are held twice a year.

84 Governors' broad range of skills are used to good effect. The search committee has undertaken skills audits to assess the skills base of the corporation. However, it has not determined a preferred skills profile. Governors display a strong commitment to the college. They attend events such as farm walks, prize-giving and meetings with local community representatives. The corporation has taken action to address some instances of low attendance by governors.

85 Four governors are serving a third or fourth term of appointment. The minutes of the search committee do not demonstrate that there was detailed consideration of the skills and contribution of these governors when they were considered for reappointment. The corporation has used advertising to attract potential governors. A role description or person specification for governors has yet to be developed. Governors evaluate their own performance through questionnaires, the self-assessment process and measurement of corporation performance against standards they have set. They have recently been asked to assess their training needs and are considering how best to use governor training modules.

86 Inspectors and auditors found that some aspects of corporation business did not comply with best practice. This was not identified in their self-assessment report. The number of tabled papers to corporation and committee meetings is often too high to allow governors sufficient time to consider issues effectively. Special meetings of the corporation did not receive and approve the minutes of the previous corporation meeting as required by the instrument of government. The terms of reference of the audit committee are not fully consistent with the requirement in Council Circular 98/15, *Audit Code of Practice* to focus solely on issues of control. The college does not employ the clerk to the corporation in any other role that might conflict with his clerking duties. Governors have formally appraised the clerk and the senior postholders.

87 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the self-assessment report that governors undertake rigorous monitoring of students' retention and achievements. The academic standards and quality assurance committee reviews student performance against national benchmarks. Governors have considered and approved targets for students' achievements and retention. They are aware of curriculum areas that have not performed as well as expected.

Cross-college Provision

88 Inspectors and auditors did not agree with the self-assessment report that monitoring of the financial position of the college was a strength. The first formal corporation meeting at which the 1999-2000 management accounts were considered was in March 2000. The accounts presented at this meeting indicated an operating deficit of £311,000, whereas the budget had indicated that there would be a surplus of £279,000 at that time. Management accounts for September 2000 were not to be considered by the corporation until December 2000, although the finance committee received them earlier. This is not soon enough in view of the complexity of the college finances and the ambitious unit target for the year. The management accounts received by governors independent of the committee cycle do not include a detailed narrative. Financial performance targets are included in the strategic and operating plans but are not clearly reported to governors in the financial accounts.

89 The corporation holds an annual general meeting. An annual report is produced and minutes of the full corporation and committee meetings are publicly available in the learning centre and on the intranet. There is a 'whistleblowing' policy and a register of interests is updated annually by governors and staff. However, not all staff with a significant financial responsibility make a declaration. A code of conduct has been adopted but it does not fulfil all the requirements of best practice. A significant proportion of corporation items of business is classed as confidential without any indication of how long they should remain so. There were commercial sensitivities involved for a number of the confidential items.

Management

Grade 2

90 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the college's overall self-assessment of management. They found an additional strength and weakness.

Key strengths

- strong leadership based upon extensive teamwork
- good communications and an open management style
- well-understood management structure with effective lines of accountability
- comprehensive strategic planning involving all staff
- extensive and effective links with external partners

Weaknesses

- insufficient rigour in the development and monitoring of some operating plans
- inadequate monitoring of college finances

91 There is a clear and effective management structure, which has been in place for two years. Managers receive considerable training to enable them to carry out their duties. There is a clear definition of roles and responsibilities and lines of accountability. As identified in the self-assessment report, the college has excellent lines of communication. There is an open management style. Informative newsletters are distributed to staff and students regularly. Extensive use is made of the recently introduced intranet system and electronic mail facilities. A well-structured schedule of meetings ensures that staff are kept well informed. The principal makes regular presentations on college developments. He also holds a Wednesday

Cross-college Provision

surgery for staff to meet him by appointment and staff appreciate this.

92 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. For the past two years the college has had operating deficits and has some weak solvency indicators. The college has set an ambitious break-even budget for 2000-01. Underperformance on unit target in the last two years means that the significant cash reserves are subject to a substantial clawback by the FEFC. The budget setting and budgetary control processes are well documented and have been recently updated. The college management team does not consider full management accounts on a monthly basis. This does not comply with good practice. Financial information is provided to budget holders regularly and meets their needs. The head of finance is a qualified accountant and a member of the college management team. Neither internal nor external audit has raised significant issues of control.

93 The college is well led. Teams at all levels within the institution work effectively together. Agendas and minutes are in a standard format that allows senior managers to review the work of these teams. Staff feel valued within a supportive atmosphere. There is a thorough induction and mentorship scheme for new employees. Part-time teachers attend team meetings regularly and are appraised in the same way as full-time staff. The curriculum is generally well managed. Comprehensive procedures for the development of the strategic plan are in place. This was not recognised in the self-assessment report. The mission was reviewed in January 2000, and amendments agreed by the corporation following consultation with staff. Nine strategic aims have been established which underpin all college activity. These are well understood and extensively publicised throughout the college. There is an extensive range of appropriate targets. Annual business plans have been prepared for

programme areas and faculties and for many support services. Some of these plans lack sufficient detail against which to monitor progress. In some programme areas target-setting is inappropriate or poorly carried out.

94 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the computerised management information system is improving. A review of the information needs at various management levels has taken place. A users group ensures that changes in these needs are addressed. Management information is accessible to senior and middle managers but its availability does not extend to all curriculum leaders and teachers. The timeliness and accuracy of reports is improving. However, some managers are not able to use these effectively. Student attendance is entered onto the central system daily, ensuring that reports are up to date. Recently, five registry liaison officers have been appointed. They ensure that students who are absent are monitored and that contact is made with parents, employers or the individual, as appropriate. There are some databases maintained by teams which leads to duplication of work.

95 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college has developed productive links with an extensive range of external bodies. There is constructive liaison with the local TEC. Staff contribute to a range of external groups including Local Learning Skills Council planning forums. A three-way concordat has recently been agreed with the local authority and a local school to encourage further close working relationships. There are excellent links with employers in many areas. Minority ethnic liaison officers have been appointed to promote the progress of people from minority ethnic groups to college programmes. The college works productively with a number of institutions of further and higher education in both this country and overseas.

Cross-college Provision

96 The college identifies in its self-assessment report that policies and procedures are not readily accessible to staff. Inspectors found that this weakness had been addressed. Policies are available in a booklet and through the intranet. Monitoring the implementation of these policies is the responsibility of specific committees. For example, the personnel committee of the corporation monitors the implementation of the equal opportunities, health and safety and human resource development policies. Equal opportunities issues are dealt with promptly.

Conclusions

97 The college produced a comprehensive self-assessment report. It contained useful background information that assisted with planning the inspection. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college. However, a number of weaknesses were understated or omitted, particularly in aspects of cross-college provision. Inspectors agreed with most of the curriculum area grades awarded by the college but disagreed with two out of the five cross-college grades.

98 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 2000)

Age	%
Under 16	3
16-18 years	11
19-24 years	18
25+ years	63
Not known	5
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 2000)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation) and entry level	13
Level 2 (intermediate)	21
Level 3 (advanced)	20
Level 4/5 (higher)	7
Level not specified	39
Non-schedule 2	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 2000)

Programme area	Full-time	Part-time	Total provision (%)
Science	291	1,351	9
Agriculture	1,006	983	11
Construction	163	325	3
Engineering	551	817	8
Business	418	2,597	17
Hotel and catering	207	899	6
Health and community care	378	2,254	15
Art and design	683	1,345	12
Humanities	498	2,267	16
Basic education	24	566	3
Total	4,219	13,404	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1998-99 ISR data, the college recruited 12% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 2000)

	Perman-ent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	205	77	0	282
Supporting direct learning contact	45	2	1	48
Other support	181	28	27	236
Total	431	107	28	566

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1998	1999	2000
Income	£17,892,000	£18,821,000	£19,568,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£16.30	£16.27	£16.89
Payroll as a proportion of income	61%	61%	63%
Achievement of funding target	100%	94%	94%
Diversity of income	35%	38%	42%
Operating surplus	-£463,000	-£405,000	£23,000

Sources: Income – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

ALF – Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999), college (2000)

Payroll – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1997-98 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Diversity of income – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Operating surplus – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1998	1999	2000	1998	1999	2000
1	Number of starters	1,296	1,323	944	1,133	1,336	1,121
	Retention (%)	86	80	85	85	83	82
	Achievement (%)	43	58	87	55	75	88
2	Number of starters	1,986	2,042	2,161	1,532	1,548	2,037
	Retention (%)	80	81	79	84	84	86
	Achievement (%)	62	78	83	69	76	84
3	Number of starters	1,488	1,486	1,481	1,264	1,764	1,577
	Retention (%)	84	81	80	88	86	84
	Achievement (%)	77	79	82	62	79	85
4 or 5	Number of starters	26	47	88	275	550	500
	Retention (%)	81	83	93	88	88	85
	Achievement (%)	94	78	41	72	54	69
Short courses	Number of starters	2,362	1,296	976	7,806	5,677	5,325
	Retention (%)	95	85	92	98	92	94
	Achievement (%)	65	75	77	83	77	83
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	1,020	777	975	2,193	937	1,044
	Retention (%)	89	88	87	88	88	91
	Achievement (%)	72	76	72	76	82	89

Source: college

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