

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

---

# **Worcester Sixth Form College**

**June 1997**

---

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

---

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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

---

# CONTENTS

	<b>Paragraph</b>
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	8
Governance and management	16
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	24
Teaching and the promotion of learning	32
Students' achievements	42
Quality assurance	56
Resources	67
Conclusions and issues	76
Figures	

---

---

## **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

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

*The descriptors for the grades are:*

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

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

### **College grade profiles 1993-96**

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

---

---

# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 86/97

**WORCESTER SIXTH FORM COLLEGE**  
**WEST MIDLANDS REGION**  
**Inspected November 1995-March 1997**

## Summary

Worcester Sixth Form College is located on a large and attractive campus on the eastern edge of the City of Worcester. Its governors work closely with the principal and staff. They have broad expertise which they willingly use to the benefit of the college. The college provides a wide range of advanced courses. There is a well-established industrial education policy. Students receive strong support and guidance from their teachers and personal tutors. Staff are well qualified and give freely of their time. Standards of teaching and learning throughout the college are high. Students are well motivated and enthusiastic. Examination results in many subjects are above the national average. Governors and staff are clearly committed to maintaining and improving the quality of provision. The college's classrooms are well equipped. There is a good range of specialist accommodation. Facilities for students wishing to participate in sport are of a high standard. The college should: further develop its provision of non-advanced courses; establish strategies for securing funding from external sources; develop support for adult students; improve retention rates in some subjects; and take urgent steps to improve the standard of private study and recreational areas for students.

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

<b>Aspects of cross-college provision</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Responsiveness and range of provision	2
Governance and management	2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	2
Resources: staffing	1
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	3

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science	1	Art and design	2
Mathematics	2	English	1
Business	1	Modern languages	2

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

1 Worcester Sixth Form College was inspected in four stages. The college's induction and enrolment procedures were inspected in September 1996. Inspections of curriculum areas took place in November 1995 and March 1996, followed by an inspection of aspects of cross-college provision in March 1997. Thirteen inspectors spent 58 days on the inspection. They visited 100 classes, involving 1,131 students, scrutinised students' work and examined documentation relating to the college and its courses. They held meetings with members of the governing body, the college's managers and staff, students, parents, local employers, and representatives from local educational establishments, the local education authority (LEA), a number of community groups and the Chamber of Commerce Training and Enterprise, Hereford and Worcester.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 Worcester Sixth Form College was founded in 1984. It is located in a residential area on the eastern edge of Worcester, on the site of the former girls' grammar school. The college shares 25 acres of playing fields with a neighbouring high school. In 1985, a sports centre for college and community use was built on the fields.

3 The City of Worcester has a population of 92,000. For the last five years the population has grown at a rate of around 1,000 inhabitants per year. Employment in Worcester has traditionally been in engineering, though this sector has declined significantly in recent years. Growth in the service industries has created new jobs, but an increasing proportion of Worcester's population works outside the city. Unemployment in Worcestershire as a whole stands at 4.8 per cent. The rate for the City of Worcester is somewhat higher, at 5.9 per cent. The rate of unemployment has gradually declined in recent years.

4 The college has six 11 to 16 partner schools. Five are in the city and one is in a rural area to the west. Two of the partner schools are denominational. About half of the college's students come from its partner schools. A further 25 per cent are recruited from county high schools with sixth forms, and 15 per cent from independent schools. Substantial numbers of students travel to the college from towns at some distance from Worcester. Within the city, the college competes for students with four 11 to 18 independent schools and a general further education college.

5 Most of the college's students are aged between 16 and 19 and study full time. Since 1993 the college has offered courses for adults, mainly in the evening. Students from minority ethnic groups make up 2 per cent of the college's population, the same proportion as for Worcester itself. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3.

6 The senior management team comprises the principal, two deputy principals, five senior tutors, and an administrative manager who has

---

responsibility for finance. One of the deputy principals is responsible for curriculum development and quality assurance, the other for student support and guidance, enrolments and marketing. Academic work is organised through 14 departments, with heads who report to the deputy principal for curriculum development. There are 85 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 22 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

7 In its mission statement the college states that it 'will build upon its present strengths and independent status to: provide high-quality general education designed to meet the individual needs of 16 to 19 year olds; widen access and extend opportunities to those returning to education; provide support and guidance for all students to encourage their personal and intellectual development; prepare students for further and higher education, training or work in the European and wider international community; sustain a friendly, safe and attractive learning environment; maximise the benefits available from the resources at its disposal'.

### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

8 The college has a growing portfolio of courses which it reviews regularly. It offers 35 subjects at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and eight GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects. There is a choice of 21 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects. Students wishing to follow programmes of study leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at advanced level may choose from business, leisure and tourism, and health and social care. The college also provides a course leading to the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing. Careful timetabling ensures that most students can study the subjects of their choice. Students have the opportunity to combine academic and vocational subjects.

9 Over 80 per cent of the college's full-time students are enrolled on GCE A level courses, and a further 10 per cent on advanced vocational courses. Provision for students who are not qualified to follow advanced courses is limited. There is a one-year full-time GCSE course. Full-time students who have not achieved a level 2 qualification in information technology are required to enrol for a computer literacy and information technology course. Students who have not achieved grade C or above in GCSE mathematics or English language are required to resit these examinations, and are offered no alternatives. There are no vocational courses at foundation or intermediate levels. The number of students in the college with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is small. There are no courses specifically for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

10 In line with its commitment to widen access and extend opportunities to those returning to education, the college introduced evening courses for

---

adults in 1993. Daytime provision for adults includes a one-year access to higher education course. The numbers of adults attending the college are small; they account for only 2 per cent of full-time equivalent enrolments.

11 The college has well-established links with the LEA and the local college of further education. It is an associate college of Worcester College of Higher Education. Links with schools and colleges abroad are well developed. For example, members of the science department have worked with a school in Nancy in France on curriculum development. The college's relationships with industry, and with Worcestershire's education/business partnership, are strong and well managed. Under the college's industrial education policy all students are encouraged to gain experience of business. Several industrialists are involved in the college's tutorial programme through a pairing scheme with tutors. An employer and community liaison group has recently been established. The college has not used its industrial links to develop full-cost courses for employers or courses delivered in the workplace.

12 The college's links with the Chamber of Commerce Training and Enterprise, Hereford and Worcester (known as the chamber) are concerned in the main with industrial education. The chamber provides support for teachers in the college wishing to undertake placements in industry. Representatives of the chamber also act as advisers to students taking part in the young enterprise scheme.

13 The college has an extensive curriculum enrichment programme, comprising tutorials, careers education, and a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Participation in extra-curricular activities is voluntary. Nonetheless, 90 per cent of students took up one or more such activities in 1995-96.

14 The college's marketing activity focuses on the production of the prospectus. The marketing budget is small, and represents less than half of 1 per cent of college expenditure. The college judges the effectiveness of marketing by the number of applications received. It has not used market research to inform the development of some aspects of its curriculum.

15 The college has a well-established equal opportunities policy that is regularly reviewed. An equal opportunities group, which includes a large number of students' representatives, meets frequently. Responses to a questionnaire issued to staff indicated that their awareness of equal opportunities issues was insufficiently developed. The college is taking steps to strengthen the implementation of the policy.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

16 The members of the governing body work closely with the principal and other members of staff. They give freely of their time and take an informed interest in the work of the college. There are 16 governors, including a nominee from the Chamber of Commerce Training and Enterprise, Hereford and Worcester, two staff governors, a student and

---

the principal. The 11 business or independent governors have varied expertise that they use to the college's benefit. They have backgrounds in the law, accountancy, personnel management, manufacturing and education. Turnover of governors has been high since incorporation. Vacancies have been used to good effect to maintain a broad and appropriate spread of expertise. New governors receive a thorough introduction to the workings of the college. The chairman of the governors ensures that they have a clear understanding of their role and duties. There is a detailed and useful governors' handbook.

17 The clerk, who is also a member of the senior management team, has separate job descriptions for each of his functions. He is helped by a minuting secretary. Minutes of meetings are detailed and provide an accurate record. Six subcommittees support the work of the governing body: audit; finance; planning and development; human resources; remuneration and governance. All governors belong to at least one of them. The finance, planning and development, audit, and human resources committees are well established. The human resources committee has oversight of health and safety in the college and receives regular reports on it. In October 1996, a governance committee was set up. It acts as a search committee, oversees training for governors, and leads the annual review of the governing body's performance. A remuneration committee meets when necessary. Attendance at the meetings of the governing body and its subcommittees is generally satisfactory. Some rules of procedure have not been observed. Recently, a governing body meeting and an audit committee meeting went ahead despite being inquorate. The college has had an equal opportunities policy since 1991. The members of the governing body do not at present monitor the implementation of the policy. They acknowledge that they need further training in this area.

18 The college's management structure is well established, and is understood by staff at all levels of responsibility. Roles and responsibilities are clearly assigned in up-to-date job descriptions. Leadership of departments is effective. The college's managers encourage openness and honesty. Strong and well-organised lines of communication between managers and their staff have been established. The principal and his deputies hold a weekly briefing meeting which is attended by all teachers. A daily staff bulletin is displayed in the staff room and a student bulletin is distributed to all tutor groups. Regular departmental and cross-college meetings ensure that all staff are able to contribute to curriculum development and to planning.

19 Staff at all levels are involved in strategic planning. Governors also play an active role. They have the opportunity to discuss the strategic plan with senior managers of the college at a well-attended annual conference, and at subsequent meetings of the planning and finance committees and the full board. Trends in students' recruitment and achievement are taken into account in planning provision, as are the views of parents, students

---

and members of the local community. The strategic plan does not communicate a long-term vision of how the college will develop.

20 The strategic plan and the accompanying annual operating statement specify enrolment and financial targets. Retention rates are monitored at college level and by each of the departments; measurable targets have only recently been introduced. Discussion takes place, mainly at departmental level, to identify reasons for the poor retention which on some courses is starting to cause concern. There are otherwise few precise targets. This makes it difficult to measure with accuracy the progress made towards the achievement of the college's mission and its objectives. Departmental plans and budgets are drawn up to a common format. They do not explicitly reflect a clear contribution to the achievement of the college-wide strategic objectives.

21 The principal and the administrative manager prepare the college's budget. Unit costing is at an early stage of development. Course costing is carried out by senior managers, but it is not used by department heads in their planning. An advisory group, consisting of a deputy principal and a representative selection of middle managers, sets departmental budgets on a largely historical basis. There is no formula for the allocation of funds. Staff perceive the system as fair. The college's average level of funding in 1995-96 was £17.40 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges was £19.73 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college derives almost all of its income from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). It has not developed a long-term strategy for generating income from other sources.

22 The college has recently reviewed its management information system. It has increased the number of administrative staff working in this area. As yet, departmental heads make little use of the wealth of information that the system generates. They have received insufficient training on the potential uses of a comprehensive management information system. The one training session offered was optional and poorly attended. This has resulted in staff being unaware of the ways in which reliable management information can support effective management.

23 The college meets the requirements laid down in sections 44 and 45 of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* for an act of Christian worship. A small group of staff holds daily prayers. There is a Christian union, which meets weekly for prayer and discussion.

#### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

24 The staff of the college work vigorously to recruit full-time students. There is an attractive prospectus which was recently redesigned in consultation with students. Senior tutors and school liaison staff maintain regular contacts with the college's partner schools and with other schools further afield. The college holds an open evening for students and their parents and also regular information evenings. A well-organised 'taster'

---

day introduces pupils in year 10 to the college through a programme of lessons and other activities. A survey of pupils who attended in the summer of 1996 showed that almost all found the day worthwhile. Their teachers saw the event as an important part of their work in guiding students.

25 Applications are handled efficiently. Interviews are arranged promptly. There are detailed guidelines for staff who conduct the interviews. Students are encouraged to take their records of achievement to interviews, where they are used as a basis for discussion. Successful applicants receive a letter with an offer of a place at the conclusion of each interview. Late applicants spoke appreciatively of the speed with which their applications were processed.

26 For prospective students, there is a well-organised two-day induction programme in July, during which they attend sample lessons in a number of subjects. Some of the weaker lessons in this programme gave students little opportunity to participate in discussion or other activities. Careers officers, who also work in the college's feeder schools, are available both at induction and during enrolment. When students enrol, the process for determining their programme of study is well documented and efficient. Tutors are welcoming and supportive. At enrolment students receive a copy of the college's charter and are made aware of their rights and responsibilities. In a recent survey, almost all students expressed their satisfaction with the college's induction and enrolment arrangements. There are satisfactory arrangements to enable students to change their programme of study after enrolment.

27 The college seeks information on the support that individual students are likely to need. This is done both before they enter the college and also during induction and enrolment. Diagnostic assessment is used to identify the help that students with grade D or below in GCSE mathematics will require. A mathematics workshop provides individual tuition. The college does not use formal assessments to identify the students needing help to improve their literacy skills. Support is available for students with dyslexia. The local Service for Children with Sensory Impairment and the Royal National Institute for the Blind advise the college on provision for students with disabilities.

28 The college has a well-established tutorial system. All full-time students are allocated to one of 60 tutor groups. Five senior tutors monitor their welfare and progress, and maintain contacts with parents. Students meet their tutors each day for registration and once a week for a longer tutorial session. In the tutorial sessions seen by inspectors, the tasks undertaken encouraged discussion, but did not challenge abler students. Students who did not intend to proceed to higher education commented that the tutorial programme paid insufficient attention to the needs of those intending to enter employment. Adult students are allocated a tutor, but do not have organised tutorials. Support for learning is available to adults on an individual basis, but the systems for support are less well developed than those for younger students.

29 There is a well-documented system for assessing students' progress and achievement. Both students and tutors contribute to records of progress. The records are then used as a basis for discussions with parents. There are regular opportunities for parents to meet staff, either at organised meetings or by individual arrangement. There are no arrangements for providing records of achievement for all students, although some students maintain the ones they started at school. The college is in the early stages of developing a system for accrediting students' prior learning.

30 The head of student services co-ordinates a well-planned careers education and guidance programme. Worcester's careers service provides a team of staff who work with college staff. All students are entitled to an individual guidance interview. In addition, there is a compulsory programme of careers education which covers employment and higher education. Attendance at this programme was poor, at 76 per cent. There is a well-equipped careers library with up-to-date literature and software, and a noticeboard giving details of employment opportunities. Support is available to students in the days after GCE A level results are published. The college employs a qualified counsellor.

31 There is a flourishing college council, with some 60 student representatives. Members of the council sit on college committees. They hold regular discussions with senior managers on issues relating to students and their experience of the college. Through allocations from the college fund, and profits from social activities, the council has been able to give substantial support to sports teams and extra-curricular activities. Individual financial support for a small number of students is available through the college's hardship and access funds.

#### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

32 Inspectors observed 100 lessons. Of these, 88 per cent had strengths which outweighed the weaknesses. The profile of the college's grades is well above the average of 63 per cent for all lessons observed during the 1995-96 inspection programme according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. The following table summarises the grades given to the lessons inspected.

##### **Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE AS/A level	29	31	8	1	0	69
GCSE	4	14	2	0	0	20
GNVQ	2	2	0	0	0	4
Other	2	4	1	0	0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>

---

33 The average number of students in each teaching group was 12. The average attendance in classes inspected was 83 per cent. Attendance is regularly monitored and students are normally challenged to explain absence and lateness. During the inspection, some unexplained absences were not followed up. Since then the college has improved the system for monitoring absences.

34 Relations between staff and students were, without exception, good. Students clearly valued the knowledge and enthusiasm of their teachers. Most departments had detailed schemes of work with clear aims and objectives that were shared with students. However, few schemes of work or lesson plans made reference to key skills. Teachers generally planned their lessons carefully. The majority of lesson plans gave details of teaching methods, of the resources that would be used, and of the expected outcomes. Teaching in the sciences, business studies and English took account of the differing abilities of students. For example, students who were progressing more quickly than others in science lessons were provided with more demanding tasks.

35 In science lessons teachers incorporated practical work whenever possible. In one well-planned lesson, students explored the ways in which different metals react with each other. The teacher used the exercise to stress the importance of good practical techniques, and highlighted the need to take safety and the cost of materials into account when setting up experiments. Thorough discussion was encouraged. In another lesson, students of physics devised an experiment to test a hypothesis relating to the factors affecting the speed of a wooden boat dragged by a weight attached to a pulley. In the subsequent practical session, they combined use of this traditional equipment with modern electronic measuring devices. Teachers of science used question and answer sessions to good effect. Frequent tests encouraged students to commit material to memory. All students had a regular and well-structured programme of homework. Students' achievements were conscientiously recorded and students were regularly informed of their progress. Not all students used information technology in their work. Students of GCE A level biology used it most widely.

36 In mathematics, the best lessons were well structured and the work involved students in the development of their mathematical ideas. In one lesson, the use of a simple home-made cardboard model enabled students to visualise three-dimensional co-ordinates clearly. Students made little use of computers or graphical calculators in their work. Teachers regularly set homework. They marked it carefully and discussed it with students. They also regularly set tests. All members of the department discussed the results of the tests and used the information gained in the planning of subsequent lessons. In a few lessons, the teacher dominated the work to too great an extent so that students were not actively engaged in it and the pace of learning was slow. Some teachers made insufficient use of teaching aids such as overhead transparencies when explaining work to students.

---

37 In business studies, all of the lessons observed engaged the students' interest and extended their skills, knowledge and understanding. Generally, teachers introduced theory, checked students' understanding of it through questioning, and then asked them to apply it, using group exercises. Students were often asked to report on their work to the rest of the class. This helped to improve their communication skills. Teachers used current events to encourage students to link theory to practice. On the morning after the budget, students were asked to play various roles, for example, that of a pensioner or a young person. They used information from the morning's newspapers to determine whether they would be better or worse off because of new taxation. Teachers set homework of an appropriate level, marked it thoroughly and returned it to students within agreed deadlines. They kept records of students' achievements, and gave students regular information on their progress. Late arrivals disrupted the start of many classes seen during the inspection. Some lessons finished early to allow students time to move around the building. In some cases, the late start and early finish reduced class time by as much as 15 minutes.

38 Teachers in art and design were well organised and enthusiastic. They used studies of artists and the history of art to reinforce learning and to help students develop their own practical work. Visits to museums and galleries and the use of reference materials also stimulated and reinforced students' learning. Teachers kept thorough records of students' achievements and students were well informed of their progress. They regularly checked that students were achieving the objectives of their course and that they were meeting deadlines for the submission of work. The short duration of practical sessions and the multiple use of studios meant that teachers had to maintain a high degree of control over the work to ensure that resources were kept tidy and work completed in time. This made it difficult for students to experiment at length with materials and processes. Their work was consequently predictable and restricted in the scope of its visual research and enquiry.

39 English teachers successfully used a variety of teaching methods, including question and answer sessions, small group work, textual analysis and summary. In one revision lesson, groups of students produced well-constructed flow charts on an overhead transparency to identify issues drawn from a study of Shakespeare's *Othello*. This exercise was followed by presentations to other groups in the class. In another lesson, students of English language used a speech by the prime minister to analyse language structures. Summarised details of the analysis were then developed further by students.

40 Teaching of modern languages was planned to give good coverage of examination syllabuses. However, schemes of work and lessons plans lacked clear learning objectives; some consisted simply of a list of topics to be covered. Most teachers conducted a high proportion of their lesson in the language being taught, and provided a good model for students to copy. Teachers set appropriate work, marked it carefully and returned it

---

promptly. A weakness of many lessons was the lack of opportunity for students to be actively involved in communicating in the foreign language. The language laboratory was frequently used and, in some classes, teachers made imaginative use of overhead transparencies. Generally, however, teachers used only a narrow range of teaching aids.

41 All students on vocational courses, and those taking GCE A level design, graphic design and technology courses and GCSE travel and tourism, have a compulsory element of work placement. Voluntary work experience or work shadowing placements are available for all students attending the college and the participation rate is high. In 1995-96 over 800 students were placed.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

42 Students were well motivated and enthusiastic about their studies. The development of their key skills was variable. Students following business studies courses had well-developed communication skills. Students of English were able to make positive and articulate contributions to class discussions. In modern languages and art and design students' oral skills were less well developed. The quality of written work was generally good and, in some cases, of a very high standard. In GCE A level chemistry, students had developed specialist written skills, such as the ability to produce an abstract of a scientific article. Students of English made effective use of information technology in the production of longer pieces of coursework. Students following courses in science and modern languages made little use of wordprocessing skills. Students of science and art and design carried out practical work safely and competently.

43 The overall pass rate for GCE A level examinations is slightly above the national average for sixth form colleges. There has been a small but progressive decline since 1994 in the percentage of students aged 16 to 18 who passed with grades A to E, as shown in the following table.

#### **College pass rates between 1994-96 for students aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE A level examinations**

	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>
Number of entries for all students	1,032	1,145	1,146
Pass rate at grades A to E (%)	92.1	90.8	89.7

44 The 519 students, aged 16 to 18, entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1996 scored, on average, 5.1 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2), according to the tables published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). This places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. There has been a slight decrease in the average performance compared with that in 1995 and 1994, when the average scores were 5.3 points per entry and 5.4 points per entry, respectively.

---

45 Pass rates for individual subjects at GCE A level were variable when compared with the national averages for 16 to 18 year olds at sixth form colleges. In 16 subjects the college's pass rates were significantly above the national average, with 100 per cent pass rates in seven subjects, and pass rates of over 90 per cent in a further seven subjects. In five subjects, pass rates were close to the national average, and in 11 subjects they were below it.

46 The proportion of students achieving grade C or above at GCE A level varies considerably between subjects. Year-on-year comparisons show that the pass rates in six subjects declined to below the national averages for 16 to 18 year olds in sixth form colleges during the period 1995 to 1996. Comparisons show that:

- in English language, French, music, dance, geography, physics and technology pass rates at grade C or above are at least 10 per cent above the national average
- in just under half the subjects the pass rates at grade C or above are below the national average
- in law, general studies, and sociology pass rates at grade C or above are at least 10 per cent below the national average.

47 The college subscribes to an external service which enables it to compare the extent of students' achievements on GCE A level courses with those predicted on the basis of their GCSE grades. It shows that over the last three years:

- in English language, science subjects and theatre studies, achievements were above the predicted level
- in 27 subjects results were in line with predictions
- in law, physical education and general studies, results were below the predicted level.

48 In 1995-96, there were 131 entries for GCE AS examinations in eight subjects with an overall pass rate of 68.7 per cent. Less than a third of all passes were at grade C or above. These overall results are slightly below the national average for sixth form colleges, but the pass rates were good in geography and business studies.

49 In 1995-96, there were 673 entries for GCSE examinations in 21 subjects with an overall pass rate of 62 per cent at grade C or above. This compares favourably with the national average for 16 to 18 year olds in sixth form colleges of 51 per cent. Comparisons show that:

- there were 13 subjects where the proportion of grades C or above was significantly higher than the national averages
- there were good results in a few subjects including art and design and drama, where all students achieved grade C or above and business studies and sociology where the proportion of students achieving grade C or above was at least 20 per cent above the national average for each subject
- there were poor results in French and English literature.

50 The overall success rate of students following a one-year GCSE programme is low. Of the 72 students who completed the GCSE course in 1996 only seven obtained four GCSEs at grade C or above; 16 students failed to achieve a single grade of C or above.

51 Students following vocational courses achieve good results in some subjects. In 1996 they achieved pass rates of 100 per cent in the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing, the access course for adult students, the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) cookery and C&G photography courses. There were pass rates of at least 90 per cent in the National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare stage III certificate and the RSA Examinations Board (RSA) computer literacy and information technology certificate.

52 Forty-three per cent of the 28 students aged 16 to 18 in their final year of study on the advanced vocational courses included in the DfEE's 1996 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the bottom 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

53 Many students achieve success in extra-curricular activities. Performing arts students take part in numerous drama and musical productions. Two students are members of the English String Youth Orchestra and one student's musical composition was performed as part of the Edinburgh Festival. There are examples of outstanding success in sport. In 1996, one student joined the England under-19 football team and a further nine students achieved national honours in a range of sports including rugby, hockey, netball, rowing and judo.

54 Retention is an issue at the level of individual subjects. In 23 GCE A level subjects retention rates were below 75 per cent. In 1996, the retention rates for 15 GCE A level subjects and eight GCSE subjects declined by at least 10 per cent compared with those for 1995. Only 42 per cent of students enrolled for GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism and 55 per cent of students enrolled for GNVQ advanced business in 1994 completed their course.

55 The college collects detailed information on the destinations of its students, as the following table shows.

**Data on students' destinations for 1993-96**

<b>Programme</b>	<b>1993-94</b>	<b>1994-95</b>	<b>1995-96</b>
Total numbers of students completing their courses	399	468	487
Progressing to higher education (%)	66	62	59
Progressing to other courses in further education (%)	8	10	6
To employment (%)	15	13	16
Other (%)	11	11	14
Unknown (%)	-	4	5

---

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

56 Governors and staff are clearly committed to maintaining and improving the quality of the college's provision and members of the senior management team have the primary responsibility for quality assurance. The college has an effective and straightforward system of quality assurance. It is part of a well-established cycle of annual planning and review. Quality assurance procedures are set out in a quality handbook for staff that focuses on teaching and learning, students' achievements and services to students. It contains useful guidance and a list of performance indicators. The standards and targets to which the college is working are summarised in separate documents. The quality assurance procedures do not apply to the college's support services.

57 Departments and cross-college areas evaluate their work in annual reports written to a common format. These record whether objectives have been met. Heads of department and cross-college areas have three meetings a year with a member of the senior management team to discuss their annual report and the progress made towards meeting the objectives in their development plan. Departmental and cross-college reports are summarised in an annual college self-assessment report. The annual reports are, on the whole, useful and informative. There is thorough monitoring of examination results, and students' retention and attendance rates. Some reports include careful comparison of students' examination results with those predicted on the basis of their previous GCSE achievements, using data supplied by an external service.

58 Integral to the process is a well-established and useful programme of lesson observation. Senior staff observe and prepare reports on individual lessons. They collate their comments in a report on teaching and learning for the department concerned. Wider college issues arising from this observation programme have been discussed with staff and incorporated into targets for improvement.

59 Teachers on all courses obtain students' views by issuing questionnaires and holding meetings of course consultative groups. The findings are incorporated into the departmental annual reports and sometimes lead to clear action plans for improvements. There is considerable variability in the quality and level of detailed analysis in departmental reports. Some contain performance indicators which are too broad to provide actual measures of performance and are not supported by evidence. There is not enough analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Many of the plans arising from review do not contain clear targets and timescales for action.

60 Where appropriate, departmental reports pay due attention to reports from external validation bodies and assessors, including FEFC inspections, and include action to address areas where improvement is needed. The college has established procedures for internal verification of GNVQ courses which set out clearly the role and remit of internal verifiers.

---

61 The college has recently sought to improve its analysis of its performance by establishing college-wide targets in several areas. These include students' achievements at GCE A level, retention rates, attendance rates and students' development of key skills. Senior managers require departments to identify the targets to which they are working and their strategies for meeting them. The quality of departmental responses is variable. Some are detailed, practical and include measurable targets for improvement. In general, however, there is a need to identify more clearly the standards which departments are setting for improvement and how they will monitor them. Most departments do not analyse trends in performance over time or compare their performance with national averages. None analyses the total performance of groups of students, from enrolment to final achievement. Annual reports do not include considerations of students' destinations after they have left the college.

62 A particular strength of the quality assurance system is the emphasis placed on the involvement of students, governors and other groups, including parents, partner schools and employers. The college actively seeks the views of parents both informally and, more recently, through a questionnaire. The views of partner schools and employers are obtained through meetings of various groups and contribute to the college's self-assessment report.

63 The college's charter addresses students in clear and friendly language. It also contains sections for parents, employers and the local community. There are some measurable standards of performance and information about what to do if things go wrong. The charter refers to a college complaints procedure but this is rarely invoked. Students were aware of the charter but did not view it as particularly significant. There is no formal mechanism for reviewing the commitments in the charter, although certain aspects, for example admissions procedures, are carefully monitored by the staff involved. There are no clear links between the charter commitments and the college's quality assurance procedures.

64 Staff development is well organised and strongly supported by management. The staff-development policy has clear aims, general principles and procedures. There are systems for identifying staff-development needs and most requests for staff development are granted. All staff take part in at least five days training each year within the college, two of which are organised by departments. Staff who attend courses outside the college pass on what they have learned to colleagues. A small number of teachers have received no training outside the college. Teachers new to the college receive an effective induction. There is no common formal induction programme for administrative staff. There has been no development of training leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) for administrative staff, although this has been discussed.

---

65 An appraisal scheme for teachers began in 1992. Most teachers had been appraised by the end of the two-year appraisal cycle which ended in summer 1996. Members of the corporation appraise the principal and the two deputy principals. In 1996, the appraisal scheme was revised and extended to administrative staff. The new scheme is based on an annual cycle of appraisal which leads to agreed targets and identifies individual staff-development needs. The college has recently made a commitment to obtaining recognition as an Investor in People by December 1998 and is now implementing its action plan.

66 The college's self-assessment report was written under the seven major headings of the framework in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The format adopted was that of a FEFC inspection report. There was careful cross-referencing to college documents as sources of evidence. Grades were awarded to aspects of cross-college provision. The report did not clearly identify strengths and weaknesses and some important aspects of the college's provision were omitted. However, several sections of the report provided a useful starting point for the inspection. The findings of the inspectors coincided in a number of important respects with those in the self-assessment report but the college was not sufficiently critical about some of its weaknesses. The planning and development committee of the corporation discusses and approves the self-assessment report. Governors have reviewed their own work as part of the self-assessment process.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

67 Teachers are well qualified in the subjects they teach. Ninety-five per cent have a first degree, and 27 per cent (25) have a higher degree. Nearly 40 per cent of them keep abreast of developments in their subject through acting as assistant examiners for examining boards. A substantial number have a teaching qualification. Fifty-five per cent of the full-time vocational teachers have achieved the awards of the training and development lead body. Eleven teachers hold the vocational assessors' award and nine the internal verifiers' award. A further nine staff are working towards training and development lead body awards. Some teachers of vocational subjects, for example, in business subjects, have valuable and recent experience of employment in industry. Teacher placements in industry are well supported.

68 There is a mix of experienced and newly recruited teachers. There are more female than male teachers. There are few women in managerial posts. Only five of the 14 heads of department and two of eight senior managers are women. The number of staff from minority ethnic groups is in proportion to the number of students from minority ethnic groups. The college has sufficient teachers to meet its needs and they are efficiently

---

deployed. The payroll, expressed as a percentage of income, is 69 per cent. This is the norm for the sector as stated in Council Circular 96/29, *College Accounts*. Part-time teachers on permanent contracts undertake 13 per cent of teaching. They are encouraged to play an active role in curriculum development.

69 Most administrative and technician staff are well qualified and are experienced. They work well with teachers and their contribution is appreciated. There is insufficient technician support for art and design and modern languages. The college has acknowledged the need for a management information systems manager and for more staff in the finance office.

### **Equipment/learning resources**

70 There is an adequate supply of general teaching and learning aids. The majority of classrooms have overhead projectors and whiteboards. Staff have easy access to audio-visual equipment. Most departments have the specialist equipment they need. There is no written college-wide policy for the purchase of general equipment. Individual departments identify what is needed and budget accordingly. The arrangements work well.

71 The college has a comprehensive information technology policy supported by a centralised purchasing policy and procedures. Computers are in adequate supply; the ratio of students to computers is 8:1. Teaching staff may borrow laptop computers for use at home. Some computers are located in teaching departments. For example, the mathematics department has its own computer network. In the resource centre students have exclusive use of a network of 45 computers, and of four individual machines with a range of commercial software. There is a large number of compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database titles. Students from all disciplines use them when working on assignments. There is controlled access to the Internet. Demand for some specialist equipment and software, such as that used in graphics and computer studies, exceeds availability. Three computer technicians provide a good level of support. They install and maintain the equipment, and provide individual help to students and staff.

72 There is a large, modern library. Students and teachers value the service that the staff provide. The accommodation was substantially extended in 1994 to include a resources centre, an area for quiet study, and a separate careers library. Since then, students' use of the library has increased by 45 per cent. The library is open throughout the year, but in the daytime only. No provision is made for evening students. There is sufficient space for students to work individually. The accommodation is not suitable for students who need to work in small groups on assignments or projects. The library becomes overcrowded at times because students use it as a recreational area when they have nowhere else to go. The stock of books in the library is small and some books are outdated. However,

---

books and other materials are held in departments. There is an adequate supply of periodicals and journals. Other library resources include a television with video recorder, audio equipment, a scanner, and a photocopying machine for students' use.

### **Accommodation**

73 The college is situated in large and well-maintained grounds, parts of which are planted with trees and flowers. The appearance of the four-storey main building is marred by the poor condition of some of the windows and cladding. Four temporary classrooms are kept in good repair. Most teaching rooms are appropriately furnished and pleasantly decorated. There are many attractive displays of students' work. Public areas, such as the large main hall, the student cafeteria and kitchens, the reception area and some lavatories, are in urgent need of refurbishment. Students with restricted mobility can reach all parts of the college. Signposting from the public road and inside the college is poor.

74 There is a good range of specialist accommodation, including laboratories, a drama studio and a gymnasium. Most rooms are large enough to accommodate the groups using them. Teaching space is not evenly used throughout the day. At certain peak times, there is congestion. Breaks are not staggered and all rooms stand empty during these times. A slightly longer college day was introduced in 1994 to help to spread the use of rooms, but it has not been completely successful in doing so. Space in the large hall has not been used to its fullest extent. There is little indoor recreational space for students. During breaks and at lunchtime it is severely overcrowded. At all times of day, students were seen sitting around the building on floors, in corridors and in changing rooms. Accommodation for teaching staff is plentiful and well maintained. Most departments have small offices which provide a focus for departmental communication and administration. There is insufficient accommodation for administrative staff. The room used for counselling is unsuitable for confidential interviews. The college maintains a comprehensive and regularly updated register of assets, and has a 10-year buildings maintenance plan.

75 The college caters exceptionally well for students wishing to take part in sport. In the sports centre it shares with the local community, there are a sports hall, two squash courts, a fitness room, and modern changing facilities. There are also tennis courts, an all-weather pitch, and an eight-lane athletics track with a floodlit football pitch at its centre.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

76 The main strengths of the college are:

- a wide range of advanced courses
- governors who willingly use their broad expertise to the benefit of the college

- 
- strong support and guidance for full-time students
  - well-qualified staff who are generous with their time
  - high standards of teaching and learning throughout the college
  - above average examination results in many subjects
  - governors and staff who are committed to maintaining and improving the quality of provision
  - well-equipped general classrooms
  - a good range of specialist accommodation
  - exceptionally good facilities for students wishing to take part in sport.

77 To continue to make progress the college should:

- further develop its provision of non-advanced courses
- establish strategies for securing funding from external sources
- develop support for adult students
- improve retention rates in some subject areas
- take urgent steps to improve the standard of private study and recreational areas for students.

---

## FIGURES

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

---

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

---

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

---

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

---

  - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

---

  - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

---

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

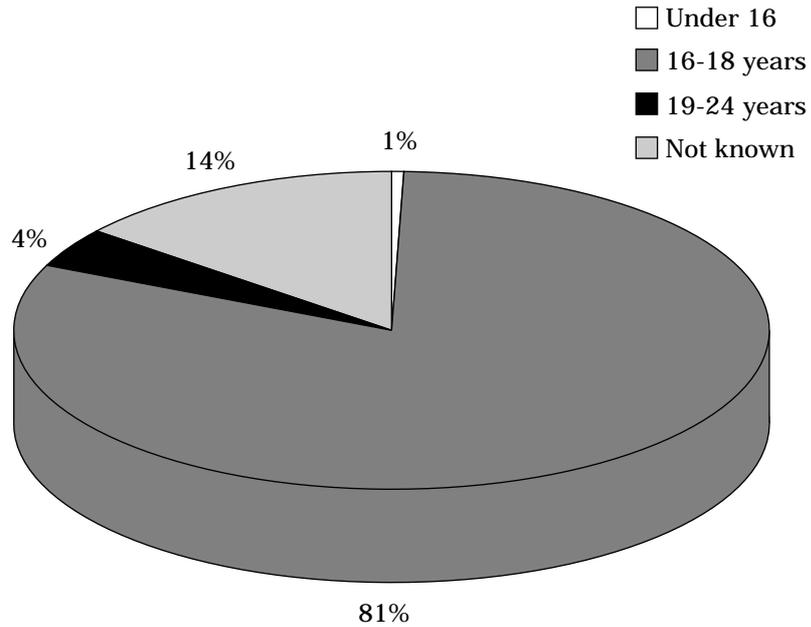
---

---

**Figure 1**

---

**Worcester Sixth Form College: percentage student numbers by age  
(as at November 1996)**



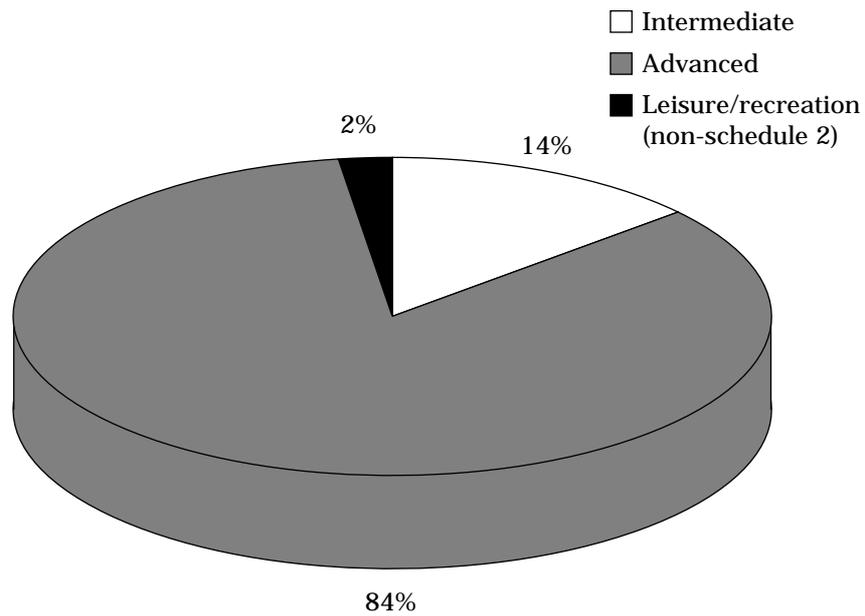
Student numbers: 1,536

---

**Figure 2**

---

**Worcester Sixth Form College: percentage student numbers by level of study  
(as at November 1996)**



Student numbers: 1,536

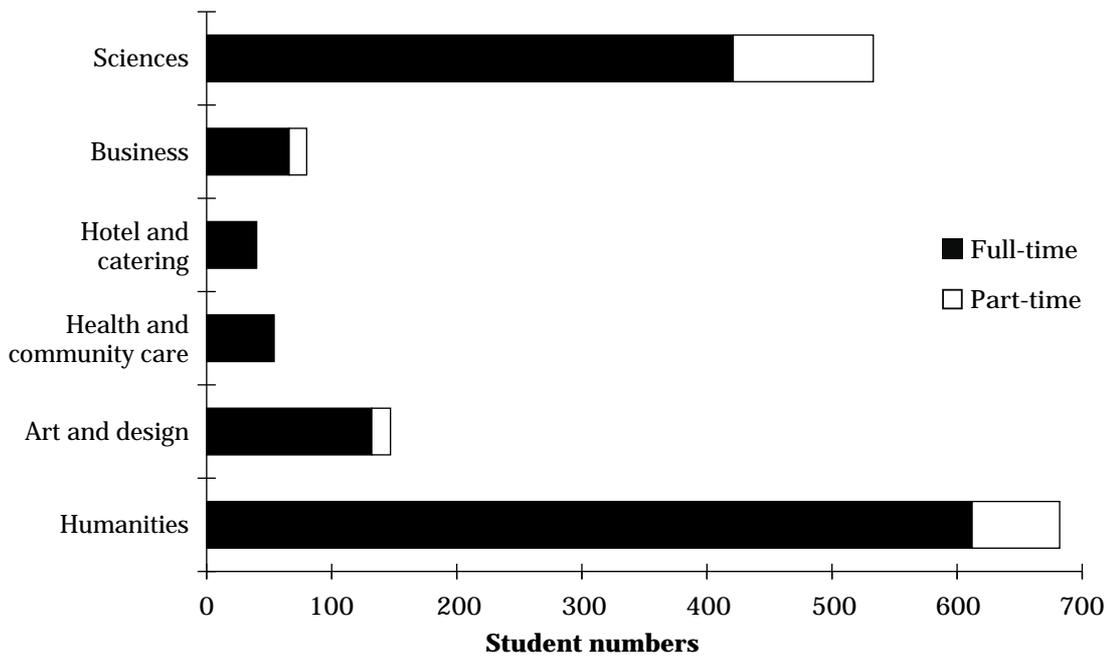
---

---

**Figure 3**

---

**Worcester Sixth Form College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)**



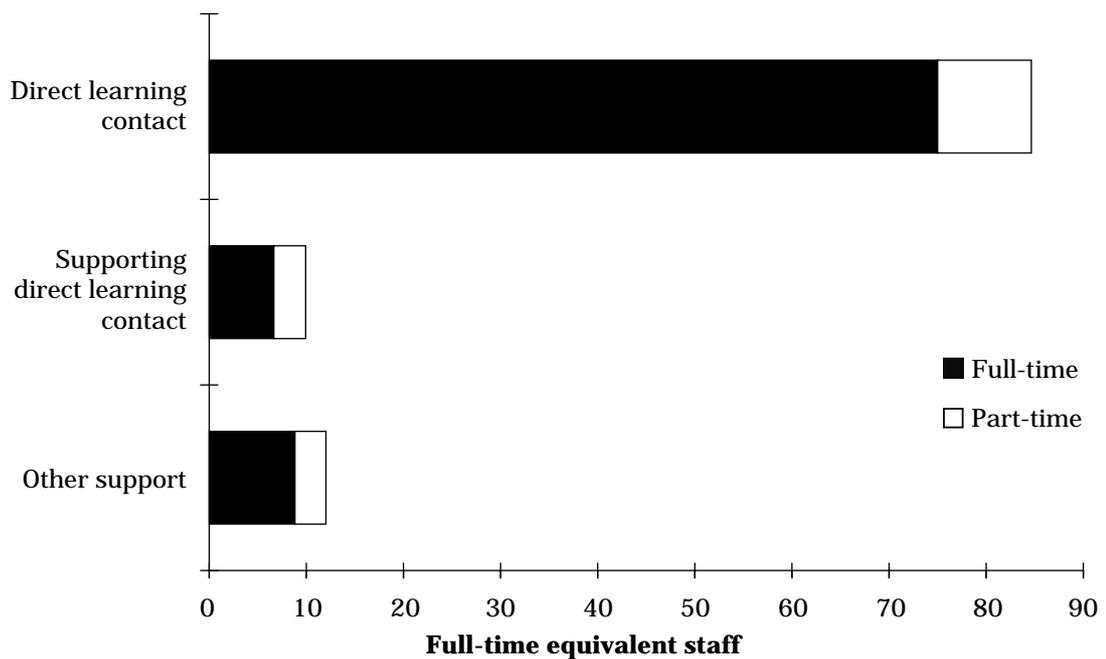
Student numbers: 1,536

---

**Figure 4**

---

**Worcester Sixth Form College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996)**



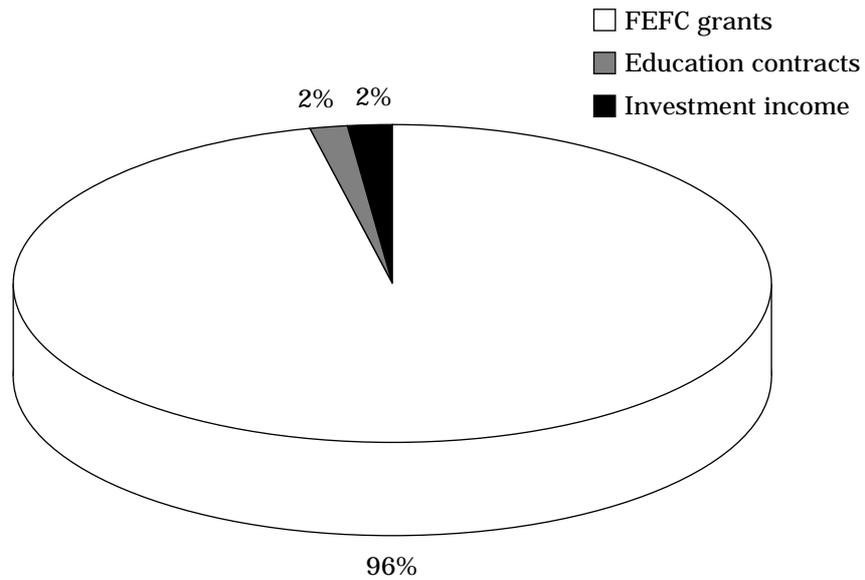
Full-time equivalent staff: 107

---

**Figure 5**

---

**Worcester Sixth Form College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)**

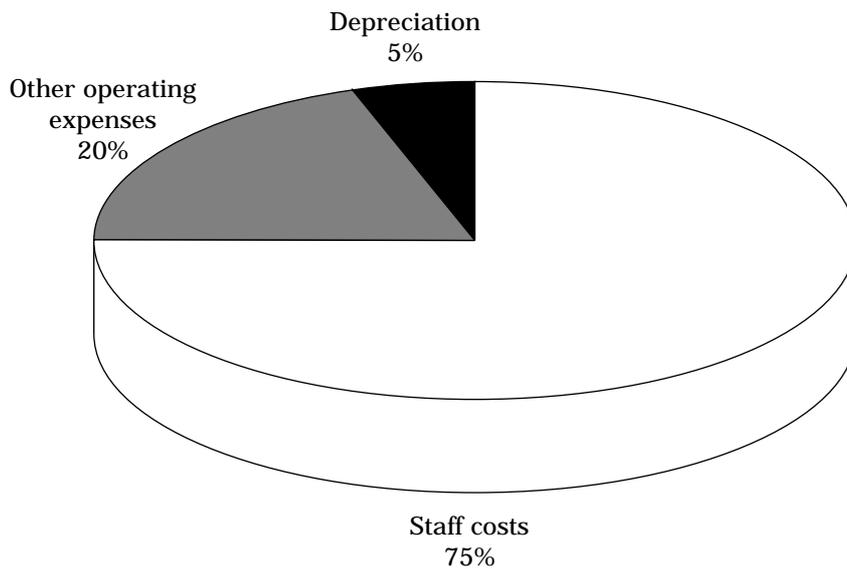


Income: £3,407,000

**Figure 6**

---

**Worcester Sixth Form College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)**



Expenditure: £3,169,000

---

Published by the  
Further Education Funding Council  
June 1997