

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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**Mid-Kent College  
of Higher and  
Further  
Education**

**June 1997**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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**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.*

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## **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%

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 76/97

## MID-KENT COLLEGE OF HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected May 1996-March 1997

### Summary

Mid-Kent College of Higher and Further Education is a large college with sites in Maidstone and the Medway towns. It offers a broad range of courses for school-leavers and adults, from pre-foundation level to degrees. The college has particularly productive links with industry in Britain and abroad. Marketing and promotion are well conceived and vigorously conducted. There is a wide range of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Governors and senior managers have concentrated their efforts on improving college responsiveness, establishing robust financial systems and improving the college estate. They have paid too little attention to students' achievements and the quality of teaching in some subjects. Examination pass rates and retention rates on many vocational courses are low. For students aged 16 to 18, the pass rate on GCE A level courses was below the national average in 12 subjects. The arrangements for pastoral care, which are the responsibility of teaching divisions, vary widely and are sometimes poor. Counselling and other central services for students are good. Quality assurance arrangements are poor, including those which cover one of the two franchised operations. Procedures for staff appraisal and staff development lack co-ordination. The college charter is unfamiliar to some students and their parents. Specialist equipment, computing and library facilities are all good. The college's accommodation is well maintained.

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		1
Governance and management		3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		3
Quality assurance		4
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	1
	accommodation	1

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science, mathematics and information technology	3	Health and care	3
Construction	2	Hairdressing and beauty	3
Engineering	3	Art and design	2
Business	2	Humanities	2
Catering and leisure and tourism	3	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 Mid-Kent College of Higher and Further Education was inspected between May 1996 and March 1997. The college's arrangements for enrolment and induction were inspected in September 1996. During May 1996 and March 1997, 16 inspectors spent a total of 55 days assessing specialist subject areas. They observed 218 classes and examined students' written and practical work. In March 1997, six inspectors spent a total of 24 days assessing aspects of cross-college provision. They held meetings with governors, college staff, students, employers, parents, representatives of the local community and the Kent Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Although representatives from local schools were invited to meet inspectors, only one did so.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 Mid-Kent College of Higher and Further Education was formed in 1967 through the merger of Medway College of Technology and Maidstone Technical College. The college serves a large conurbation close to the estuaries of the rivers Medway and Thames, and the town of Maidstone. The college is on three sites: one in Chatham (Horsted), one in Rochester (City Way), and the other nine miles away from Horsted in Maidstone (Oakwood Park). The Horsted and the City Way sites are about two miles apart. Road and rail access to the college is good. Employment in the Medway area was traditionally in defence establishments and manufacturing industry. The closure of the naval dockyards at Chatham and more recent cuts in defence expenditure, have reduced employment opportunities significantly. The county town of Maidstone has a mixed economy based on services and agriculture. The Medway and Maidstone areas have a rising unemployment rate which stood at 6.7 per cent in January 1997. The comparable figures for Kent and for the country as a whole were 6.9 per cent and 6.5 per cent, respectively.

3 The college is the largest provider of further education in mid-Kent. The secondary school system in Kent is selective and almost all the schools in the area either have, or intend to open, sixth forms. There are three other general further education colleges nearby, with centres in Canterbury, Dartford, Gravesend, Sheerness, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells. Competition for all students is intense, but especially so for those aged 16 to 19. The college has courses in all of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) 10 programme areas. At the time of the inspection, there were 14,785 enrolments, of which 4,125 were full time and 10,660 part time. Student numbers by age, by level of study, and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. The college was restructured in 1996 following the departure of two of its most senior managers. The curriculum is organised in four teaching divisions: leisure, media and creative arts; computing and technology; business; and education and community programmes.

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The college, in its mission statement, sets out to support economic and personal development by providing education and training of the highest possible quality.

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

4 The college has an extensive range of academic and vocational courses from pre-foundation level to degrees. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) are available from levels 1 to 5. General national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) are offered in health and social care, science, business, leisure and tourism, hospitality and catering, retail distribution, information technology, media studies, art and design, the built environment, engineering and manufacturing. Most of these subjects can be studied at the intermediate and advanced levels; four are available at foundation level. There are also first and national diploma courses leading to qualifications awarded by the Edexcel Foundation in early childhood studies, motor vehicle studies, popular music, performing arts and sports science. The college extended its provision this year through two large contracts with private training companies to which publicly-funded courses are franchised. One partner company provides distance learning courses in book-keeping which may lead to accreditation for students through the International Association of Book-keepers. The other contract is with Plymouth Ocean Projects which provides courses approved by the Professional Association of Diving Instructors and The Health and Safety Executive.

5 General certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) courses are offered in 25 subjects through a two-year full-time programme. Thirteen subjects can be studied on a one-year programme. Six GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects are taught as part of the GCE A level programme. There are limited opportunities at the college for part-time study leading to the GCE A level and the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). GCSE courses have been cut back recently in response to students' poor achievements. Students have been advised to take courses which are seen as more appropriate. There are nearly 200 full-time students on 19 courses designed to meet the needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All these courses are appropriately accredited and they are carefully planned to enable students to progress to foundation level courses in caring, retailing and catering.

6 More than 450 full-time and 950 part-time students are enrolled on courses in higher education. Most degree programmes are validated by the University of Kent at Canterbury, but the college also has close links with the University of Greenwich and South Bank University. The college is developing new higher education courses in response to demand from students who do not wish to travel to Canterbury or London. There are eight access to higher education courses and pre-access courses, which can be studied full time or part time.

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7 International activities are a strong feature of the college. The college has links with more than 20 different countries. It is a founder member of the European Training Network Association and it is currently involved in more than 12 projects. These embrace both staff and student exchanges and joint programmes with organisations and colleges in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. The college has initiated and been host to two major international conferences on education and training in the twenty-first century, for which it received local, national and international sponsorship.

8 Links with employers are strong. Contacts with them are maintained through a variety of formal and informal arrangements, including advisory panels representing particular sectors of industry. A leading international bio-science company sponsors 10 young people each year on the GNVQ advanced course in manufacturing. Each student has a member of the company's staff as mentor, as well as receiving four weeks' paid work experience and a bursary of £300. Students who complete the course successfully progress to full-time employment with the company, initially on a two-year contract. The college holds an annual prize-giving ceremony, and the 160 awards which are presented are sponsored by a range of different firms. Kent TEC works closely with the college. It contributed towards the development of a higher national certificate course in paper technology for employees of the 16 paper mills in the region. The college acts as a managing agent for training credits, and more than 250 people are enrolled on the scheme. Sixty trainees are enrolled on the college's modern apprenticeship scheme. The college plays an active role in a TEC project aimed at improving the participation of adults in education by providing them with impartial guidance.

9 The college has an annual turnover of more than £500,000 from its commercial activities. These include specialist courses in construction management which are taught on civil engineering sites throughout the United Kingdom. The enterprise unit earns £200,000 a year from short courses in computer-aided design, and the college has two contracts with major companies which sponsor research projects in seed production and neural computing. The college also encourages local companies to use its facilities for materials testing.

10 There is a comprehensive marketing strategy and a vigorous campaign of promotion. The college advertises through newspapers, radio, posters and exhibitions. The marketing unit consists of a marketing and corporate affairs manager and seven staff. In 1995-96, the college spent a substantial sum of money on marketing. Three open evenings are held every year on each of the college's three sites. An information shop in a Maidstone shopping centre was open for 10 weeks last summer. There were over 2,200 visitors and enquiries and the main areas of interest were analysed and used to refine the college's marketing plan. There is a college helpline open throughout the year, which logged nearly 18,000 enquiries in 1996. The marketing unit produces a wide range of attractive



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promotional materials including two prospectuses, newsletters describing students' achievements and advertisements. There is wide range of market research, including three surveys of students and one each of employers, parents and staff every year.

11 The marketing unit is active in maintaining links with secondary schools. Its staff visit 16 schools regularly to give talks, as well as participating in careers events organised by the schools themselves. Many schools see the college as a competitor and relationships have been difficult to maintain. There are link schemes with five special schools, which provide pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with an induction to the college and an introduction to vocational education. The college is a member of a consortium with five secondary schools in the Maidstone area which plan their timetables to enable pupils to attend the college to study some GCE A levels, GCSEs and NVQs.

12 The college has close working relationships with local community organisations. There are regular meetings with Kent Adult Education Service to identify any gaps in, or duplication of, provision. The college established, and now co-ordinates, the Kent County Engineering Society, which aims to stimulate interest in engineering among pupils in schools. The society sponsors young engineer clubs in 76 schools which are involved in competitions supported by the Kent Education Business Partnership. The college has maintained its enrolments on engineering courses against the national trend of decline.

13 There is an active equal opportunities committee which reports to the academic board. It is chaired by a senior manager and has both student and staff members. There are appropriate equal opportunity policies, and a procedure for dealing with harassment. The committee recently initiated a survey into students' representation on course committees. The college has promoted the development of courses for under-represented groups, including new courses in English as a second language. Students who are over 19 and studying on full-time courses are not charged tuition fees, so that barriers to their participation are minimised. The college has no facilities for childcare but there are alternatives locally.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

14 The board of governors has 16 members: 11 are independent members from business, one is the TEC nominee, one is from the local community, there are two co-opted members and the principal. There is a balance of long-serving and more recently-appointed governors to ensure continuity. Governors have a wide range of experience in finance, marketing, personnel, law, local government, company management and property. Three governors are women. The board has no representation from staff, students, or higher or secondary education. Nor is there a member of the local minority ethnic communities, although 8 per cent of college students are from minority ethnic groups. There are no formal mechanisms through which governors may consult students. The board

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takes care in selecting new governors and provides a suitable induction for them. The board does not evaluate its own performance as a body, but the chairman and vice-chairman review regularly the commitment and contribution of each individual member. There is a close working relationship between the principal and the chairman of governors, and they meet regularly. The distinction between governance and management is understood and observed. The chairman does not appraise the principal but the college's strategic objectives constitute the principal's targets and these are regularly monitored by the chairman.

15 Before incorporation, governors worked through an extensive committee structure. Subsequently, they decided to reduce the number of committees believing that they would better serve the college by considering all the matters for which they were responsible at full board meetings. The board nevertheless has committees for audit, remuneration, capital planning and estates, employment policy and public relations. A finance committee was established recently in response to the advice of the FEFC's auditors, but at the time of the inspection it had not met. The audit committee meets regularly. The other committees meet infrequently to deal with special issues; for example, the capital planning and estates advisory committee met last year to make recommendations on refurbishment of the college's buildings. There are three full board meetings each term compared with the minimum requirement of one each term. Most governors do not have to attend other committee meetings but the average attendance at board meetings is low at 67 per cent. Governors receive appropriate background papers to help them to deal with business. Records of meetings are kept meticulously by the clerk, who is a senior member of staff at the college. However, the governors are given too little information on the academic performance of the college to enable them to oversee it adequately.

16 The college has an academic board with 30 members, the majority of whom are senior managers of the college. There are four teaching and three support staff members and two students. The board meets once each term. It receives reports from committees dealing with academic standards, development, further and higher education. The committee structure is under review. The academic board does not receive sufficient information on students' achievements to allow it to form a view on the college's academic performance.

17 The college's aims and policies are determined by the governors. The college's senior management committee creates and updates the strategic plan. Governors give appropriate consideration to the financial implications of the plan. There are new arrangements which provide an opportunity for staff at all levels to contribute to the strategic plan. Each teaching division submits a business plan for the coming year. These plans include detailed consideration of teaching hours, staff-development needs, teaching support, and requirements for class

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material and capital expenditure. They are based on an appraisal of the previous year's performance against the targets. Plans are scrutinised carefully by the director of corporate operations. Teaching and support divisions are also expected to submit a longer-term development plan which is linked directly to the strategic plan.

18 The principal and the directors of corporate operations and finance form the principalship. Their roles are clearly defined and they work together well. There are three management committees. The college strategy group, chaired by the principal, is the senior committee. Its other members are the two directors, the four executive managers who head the teaching divisions, the head of marketing and the personnel manager. The director of corporate operations chairs the operational management team, which deals with the day-to-day running of the college. The director of finance chairs the finance committee and is responsible for budget management. These committees function well and because there is significant common membership, they communicate effectively with each other. They meet every two or three weeks and all their proceedings are minuted. The work of the college is regulated by policies on important matters, including equal opportunities and health and safety. There are detailed procedures for monitoring health and safety, which include clear allocation of responsibilities for each of the college's three sites. The health and safety committee meets every term and carries out audits of conditions in the college.

19 A new structure for the management of the curriculum was introduced in September 1996. Each of the four teaching divisions has an executive manager supported by a team of senior managers, and managers or co-ordinators of curriculum areas. Executive managers have considerable autonomy. They have been allowed to develop their divisions independently. Some are working more effectively than others and many of their practices differ. Some divisions are developing effective course teams, whilst others have weaknesses in communication, a lack of clarity about lines of management responsibility, a lack of planning and poor records of meetings. Communication across the college is not good, although administrative and support staff are generally more satisfied than are academic staff. Two newsletters, 'College News' and 'Quality Matters' are circulated every two months, and memoranda from senior managers are distributed widely around the college.

20 The college achieved substantial growth between 1989 and 1994, but in each of the last two years it has failed to achieve its growth targets by approximately 5 per cent. The college is in a strong financial position, largely due to sound financial planning and tight controls, and it has large reserves. Budgets are clearly related to the services that each area plans to provide. The budget system is clear to managers but less so to other staff. The college calculates its unit costs and compares them with income. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are

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shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £16.96 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit.

21 The college management information system has been improved recently. The new system is evolving, but much development work remains to be done. The college is able to meet the needs of external agencies such as the FEFC. However, it is unable to produce all the information which is required for monitoring the quality of its own work. For example, the destinations of full-time students are tracked through a postal survey which captures only a third of leavers. While these data are analysed thoroughly, other information on students' destinations which is held by course teams is not collated with the outcomes of the survey to provide a more complete picture. Training has been provided for users of the management information system and plans are well advanced to provide access for senior managers to a standard set of reports.

22 In August 1996, the college entered into contracts with two private training companies to run courses on its behalf, for which they are able to claim funding from the FEFC. The college's original estimate of the volume of this work has been exceeded at least four-fold. The courses are in two main activities, diving and book-keeping, in both of which the college has some experience. The college has recently been informed that it is unlikely that the FEFC will accept claims for funding a substantial proportion of the diving courses. Book-keeping is taught as a correspondence course, involving students throughout the United Kingdom. Students are offered an option to take an award validated by the International Association of Book-keepers, but in the past few have chosen to do so. The college's management arrangements for some of its franchised provision are not yet well developed, particularly in regard to giving students impartial advice when they enrol, monitoring their progress, and ensuring that courses are of an appropriate quality.

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

23 A clearly-stated policy sets out students' entitlements to pastoral care at each phase of their contact with the college. The central student support division is developing systems to ensure that every student receives at least a minimum standard of service. Recent work ensures that the college's response to initial enquiries about courses is quick and that the guidance offered is impartial. The quality of central student support services is generally good. The standards of guidance provided by teaching divisions vary widely from course to course, and there are a significant number of students who receive an unsatisfactory service.

24 Procedures for the recruitment and enrolment of full-time students are usually well managed. A telephone helpline is used to provide educational advice, and prior learning can be accredited. Both full-time and part-time applicants are generally placed on an appropriate course, whether at the college or elsewhere. A computerised system is shortly to

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be introduced to track potential applicants, to replace the present cumbersome paper-based system. Schools for pupils aged 11 to 16 ensure that an appropriate range of information about the college is available to their pupils. College staff attend school careers conventions, talk to year 11 pupils and, in some cases, they offer pupils a day at the college when they can sample lessons and college life. A series of open days and open evenings provides further opportunities for guidance. Links with special schools ensure that any need for specialist support is identified early and that appropriate arrangements are made.

25 There is a college induction process to familiarise full-time students with the college and the courses they take. The induction activities in curriculum areas vary considerably in both duration and effectiveness. Students on the access to higher education course value highly their introduction to the college. GNVQ students follow a four-week programme, which is a diagnostic and assessment period aimed at matching students' skills and abilities with the most appropriate level of study. On GCE A level programmes, the quality of induction varies between subjects and even between tutors. Induction for part-time students is not well organised.

26 The quality of tutorial support varies widely. Full-time students are allocated a personal tutor and they have a timetabled tutorial period each week. Teaching divisions have laid down guidelines for the use of this time, but practice differs. Where tutorials are working well, there is a programme of activities which is related to personal and social education, supplemented by individual appointments to review progress thoroughly and plan future work. At worst, there are only very brief individual meetings between tutor and student to check whether there are any problems. Part-time students receive a similarly varied experience. There is no central management of tutorial provision. The conscientiousness with which attendance is monitored and absences pursued varies from course to course. There is no college policy to determine how students' progress should be reported to parents, and some parents interviewed by inspectors said they would welcome better communication about their children's progress. The support provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.

27 All full-time students from foundation to degree level are assessed for basic literacy and numeracy, using a range of different tests devised by the college. About 30 per cent of students are identified as needing additional help, but only 15 per cent of these visit the college's key skills centres to take advantage of the help available. In addition, key skills staff teach some groups of students as part of their course. Part-time students may choose to be tested for basic skills. It is unfortunate that so few of the students who might benefit from extra learning support receive it. The college may wish to consider whether attendance should be compulsory, bearing in mind that a lack of key skills is likely to compromise students' achievements. Staff in the specialist support team have a wide range of expertise to assist students with learning difficulties and/or

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disabilities. This team works closely with the key skills centres but they are organisationally separate.

28 There is a range of central services to support students during their time at college. Careers guidance is run by Kent Careers Services, which offers a good service on two sites, but an unsatisfactory one at Oakwood Park. The number of students seeking counselling is increasing and the quality of the service is good. The majority of students who receive counselling stay at college to complete their courses. Students receive effective help with accommodation and finance. Both the physical location and organisation of the central support services at the Horsted site could be improved. At Oakwood Park, all the guidance services are located together; the future model for the whole college.

29 The student union receives helpful guidance from staff on each site and has apparently worked more effectively in the past. The degree to which students' views are sought and listened to varies from course to course. In the best examples their views are not only valued but there is a quick response to complaints even where they are about teaching. Each course is expected to appoint a student representative but not all do so.

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

30 Fifty-four per cent of the lessons observed had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. This figure is well below the average for the sector which, according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96* was 63 per cent. In 9 per cent of lessons the weaknesses clearly outweighed the strengths; slightly above the sector average of 8 per cent recorded in the same report. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected was 76 per cent. The lowest attendance was in hairdressing and beauty at 61 per cent, and the highest in business studies at 90 per cent. The average number of students in each session was 11, and ranged from nine in humanities to 14 in business studies and hairdressing and beauty.

The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

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**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	1	12	15	2	0	30
GCSE	0	1	4	1	0	6
GNVQ	7	20	22	6	0	55
NVQ	7	27	18	1	1	54
Other vocational	3	17	12	5	0	37
Other*	5	10	11	3	0	29
Franchised provision – diving	4	3	0	0	0	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>218</b>

*\*includes access to higher education, English for speakers of other languages, higher education, and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.*

31 The quality of teaching in science, mathematics and information technology is uneven. A narrow range of teaching methods is used. In science, the pace of lessons is often too slow and the teaching is uninspiring. The most common teaching method in science is for teachers to lecture to the class, punctuating their presentation with questions to students. These questions are often thrown out generally rather than addressed to individuals, so that many remain uninvolved. Teachers in computing give clear explanations. In mathematics, lessons often consist of students completing exercises with teachers providing help to those who need it. The practical lessons are better than those in theory. However, students are rarely set work which prompts them to develop their experimental, critical and evaluative skills. There is little use of audio-visual aids except the whiteboard. Teachers give encouraging comments on students' marked work.

32 Teachers in construction use a wide variety of methods to keep students' interest alive. Courses and lessons are well planned, and they have clear objectives which are shared with students. At the end of lessons, teachers review what has been covered to reinforce learning. The level and pace of lessons is generally appropriate and care is taken to deal with the needs of individual students. For example, in a practical painting and decorating session, the teacher and a technician provided additional help when it was required. In some long lessons, students are not able to maintain their concentration. There is insufficient use of information technology. The quality of handouts varies and, in a few cases, they contain spelling mistakes. On craft courses, students receive too little feedback on their progress to enable them to learn as effectively as they might.

33 In engineering the quality of teaching varies. Although there are schemes of work and lesson plans, they are not detailed enough to be useful. Some teachers successfully use examples from their past

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experience at work to engage students' interest. However, the pace of some lessons is too slow and teachers often require students to copy notes from the whiteboard for long periods, an approach which does not make effective use of time. Students are more interested and enthusiastic in practical lessons than in theory lessons. In many lessons, questioning is not used effectively to check that students understand the key concepts. In a class of higher national certificate students, the teacher set a task to be completed individually and students' solutions were discussed. The pace of the lesson was appropriate and the work challenging. Students are set work regularly and marking is usually thorough, providing helpful advice on how to improve. The criteria for grading students' work are not always clear.

34 Teaching in business is generally good. In most lessons, objectives for learning are set, they are shared with the class and links are made with previous study. Good use is made of students' experience to exemplify aspects of the work. Teachers vary their methods appropriately and the pace of lessons is well judged. A small number of lessons are too long to sustain students' attention. There is some poor use of the overhead projector and some transparencies are of poor quality. Key skills are integrated with other aspects of the curriculum. A class of second-year advanced GNVQ students considered ways of improving competitiveness before a visit to a frozen food manufacturer. They worked in small groups, each group preparing a set of questions to ask during the visit to find out how the company dealt with this issue. The groups worked well, summarising their questions on a flipchart and presenting their list to the whole class. An agreed list of questions was used during the visit on the following day. Work experience for full-time students is well planned. Teachers' comments on students' written work are often insufficiently detailed to be of use to them as they seek to improve or to revise.

35 In catering and in leisure and tourism, there is some good teaching. Learning is enriched through participation in relevant external events and well-integrated work experience. Students on a GNVQ advanced course in hospitality and catering work regularly at a local hotel and take over running it for a short period. NVQ travel students learn about customer service by working at local and national tourist events and at major exhibitions. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and they use a wide range of teaching methods to sustain students' interest. However, their schemes of work are not sufficiently detailed to be useful in planning a coherent series of lessons. Teachers do not ensure that all students are brought into class discussions. Information technology is not used during practical catering lessons. Some teachers do not specify the tasks allotted to individual students sufficiently clearly.

36 Health and social care teachers use the interactions between students to help them learn. In a lesson where students talked about group behaviour, drawing on their personal experiences, the teacher provided sensitive help to enable them to express themselves clearly. Courses are



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well planned, often using handbooks to describe aims, structure and assessment strategies. However, teachers use a narrow range of teaching methods and there is little use of audio-visual aids. Students are prepared carefully for work experience. Teachers ensure that they understand how to behave appropriately in a health care or social service setting. Assignment work for students is interesting and varied. Teachers give helpful comments on marked work. There is insufficient use of information technology.

37 In hairdressing and beauty therapy, teachers ensure that students acquire relevant practical skills. Beauty therapy students undertake a variety of practical activities, for example doing the job of salon manager. However, there are not always sufficient clients available for first-year hairdressing students. Work experience for full-time students is well organised. Teachers of beauty therapy make sure that students understand what is expected of them. They use demonstration appropriately. In some cases, there is a lack of variety in the teaching methods. Teachers taking theory lessons rely too heavily on dictation and students become bored. Teachers do not always deal with the individual needs of students. Students' progress is monitored carefully and appropriate plans for further work are devised for them. However, the comments on marked work are often brief and students' errors, including spelling mistakes, are not always corrected. There is insufficient use of information technology.

38 Some teaching in art and design combines stimulating subject matter, disciplined work and sustained creative energy. Workshop sessions are well managed. Teachers introduce students to new practical skills carefully to allay their anxieties about embarking on unfamiliar exercises. In many lessons, students are questioned skilfully and sensitively to check that they understand. The content of most lessons is stimulating and challenging. In an outstanding lesson on media studies, students reviewed a controversial newspaper article. The teacher prompted them gently to reveal their own feelings about the article. Their interest was sustained throughout the lesson and their responses were handled effectively by the teacher. Introductions to lessons do not always indicate clearly the objectives which should be met. Some lessons end too abruptly and teachers do not provide an adequate summary of what has been accomplished. The quality of marking varies. Some teachers' comments are detailed and perceptive, while others provide no written judgement and guidance for students.

39 Most humanities teachers enable students to develop appropriate skills and knowledge. The objectives of lessons are generally made clear to students at the beginning and are subsequently reinforced. Although schemes of work and lesson plans are used, they sometimes amount to no more than a list of topics. In a few cases, lessons are not well planned and time is wasted. Teachers generally use a wide variety of teaching methods. Students' progress is monitored carefully by evaluating their participation in lessons as well as marking their written work. Students are encouraged

to speak as well as listen in lessons. In a few cases, teachers had low expectations of what students might achieve. In these lessons, teachers failed to use students' own experiences and understanding to develop their intellectual skills or to involve them in class discussions.

40 Teachers have good relationships with those students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Documentation for the courses which are designed specially for these students is comprehensive. The desired outcomes are identified clearly in lesson plans, but are not related to each student. There are action plans for individual students which are reviewed regularly but which are not referred to in lessons. In many lessons, students are not given enough opportunity to work by themselves. There is insufficient use of visual aids to support teaching. Worksheets are used frequently but they are not always pitched at an appropriate level. Work experience is well organised.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

41 Many students enjoy their studies and work well with their teachers. Students acquire relevant knowledge and skills and produce well-organised work of an appropriate standard. Practical work is carried out competently. Students' achievements in external examinations and retention rates present a mixed picture.

42 Between 1994 and 1996 the number of entries for GCE A level qualifications declined by 7 per cent. There was a more substantial drop of 58 per cent in the number of entries by students aged 19 or over between 1995 and 1996. In 1996, the college's average pass rate at grades A to E for students of all ages was close to the national average for general further education colleges. The following table shows the number of students of all ages entered for GCE A level examinations each year between 1994 and 1996, together with pass rates at grades A to E, compared with national averages for general further education colleges.

#### **GCE A level entries and pass rates 1994-96**

	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>
Number of students entered	737	836	686
Number of subjects in which students were entered	24	28	30
Average pass rate A to E	68%	68%	70%
National average for general further education colleges	68%	69%	71%
Number of subjects with pass rates at or above the national average	14	10	18
Number of subjects with pass rates below the national average	10	18	12

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43 Results in individual GCE A level subjects varied. They were generally better in the humanities than in the sciences. In 1996, there were good results in accounting, business studies, English literature, film studies and psychology, and results have been consistently good in English language, environmental science and politics. In 1996, pass rates were poor in mathematics (41 per cent), in physics (9 per cent), and in sports studies (33 per cent). Results in geography were poor in 1994 and 1995, but they improved in 1996.

44 In 1996, the average pass rate for students aged 16 to 18 was 69 per cent; 5 points below the national average for such students. It was also below the national average in 1995. In 1996, pass rates were above the national average in 16 subjects out of 29. Students aged 16 to 18 entered for at least one GCE AS/A level in 1996 scored, on average, 3.7 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This performance measure places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector, according to tables published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). Students aged 19 and over performed better in GCE A level examinations. The average pass rate for this age group has been consistently above the national average and has steadily improved each year since 1994. In 1996, pass rates for students aged 19 and over were above the national average in 19 out of 26 subjects, although the number of students who entered exceeded 20 in only three of them.

45 The number of students of all ages entered for GCSE examinations has dropped by 42 per cent since 1994. The percentage of 16 to 18 year old students achieving grade C or above has varied around the national average and was just above it in 1996. The results for individual subjects present a mixed picture. In chemistry and sociology results were good. Results were below the national average in English and mathematics which had the largest number of entries. For students aged 19 and over, the percentage achieving grade C or above has risen. It was significantly below the national average in 1994 and 1995, but rose to 73 per cent in 1996, 11 per cent above the national average. This improvement in results coincided with a decline of 65 per cent in the number of entries, from 277 in 1995 to only 97 in 1996.

46 Analysis of retention rates for individual subjects within the GCE A level and GCSE programme is impossible because the college is unable to provide data on enrolments in the different subjects. Some registers are missing and the college's database of past student enrolments did not record them by subjects. The college has recognised this weakness and has developed a new approach. In the past, the college subscribed to an independent, external service which provided an analysis of the value added to students' achievements in schools and colleges in Kent by comparing their actual performance at GCE A level with their predicted performance based on GCSE achievements. The college did not subscribe to this service in 1996 but intends to rejoin later this year.

47 Seventy-eight per cent of the 550 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 performance measure places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector. On the performance measure for intermediate vocational courses, 55 per cent of the 310 students in their final year of study were successful in 1996, again placing the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector.

48 Students' achievements on advanced full-time vocational courses are declining. In 1993, there was a large increase in student enrolments and a fall in the level of achievement compared with the previous year. In 1994, student enrolments fell, and there was a further decline in students' achievements. As retention rates have fallen, a larger proportion of the students who remain achieve merits and distinctions. A larger proportion of the stronger students therefore appear to stay to the end. The weaker students who remain often fail to achieve a full pass. Data on students' achievements on advanced full-time vocational courses, including national diplomas and GNVQ courses, are shown in the following table.

**Students' achievements on advanced vocational courses 1994-96**

	<b>1992-94</b>	<b>1993-95</b>	<b>1994-96</b>
Number of students enrolled	607	1089	755
Number completing the course (retention as a percentage in brackets)	453 (75)	724 (67)	441 (58)
Number achieving a full pass (percentage of those enrolled achieving a full pass in brackets)	360 (59)	450 (41)	273 (36)
Number achieving distinction/merit (percentage of those passing achieving merit or distinction in brackets)	40 (11)	32 (7)	71 (26)

49 Outcomes for GNVQ advanced courses are very mixed. Only 20 per cent of students achieved a qualification on the GNVQ advanced course in science in 1996. Achievement levels on the computing and information technology courses were better. Most students who completed the advanced GNVQ in information technology passed, but retention was poor. Only 40 per cent of those who originally enrolled for the course passed. In 1996, about half the students who completed the GNVQ advanced course in construction passed, and 50 per cent of these achieved a merit or distinction. On the engineering and motor vehicle engineering advanced full-time courses, results have been poor for the last three years. Achievements on GNVQ advanced courses in business studies are generally good, although there are variations between the different college sites; results at City Way are better than those at Oakwood Park. Retention on

the GNVQ in leisure and tourism was poor in 1996, with less than half of those students who originally started the course achieving a qualification. Achievements on the advanced GNVQ in health and social care were very poor. Only 19 per cent of the students gained an award in 1996.

50 The achievements of students on intermediate full-time vocational courses declined slightly between 1994 and 1996, but they were poor throughout the period. In 1996, only 33 per cent of students who originally enrolled on an intermediate vocational course achieved a qualification. Although the percentage of students who achieved a distinction or merit is low, it improved between 1994 and 1996 and the retention rate stayed about the same. The data on students' achievements on intermediate full-time vocational courses, including the first diploma and intermediate GNVQ, are shown in the following table.

**Students' achievements on intermediate vocational courses 1994-96**

	<b>1992-94</b>	<b>1993-95</b>	<b>1994-96</b>
Number of students enrolled	446	540	542
Number completing the course (retention as percentage in brackets)	381 (85)	419 (78)	424 (78)
Number achieving a full pass (percentage of those enrolled achieving a full pass in brackets)	174 (39)	191 (35)	188 (33)
Number achieving distinction/merit (percentage of those passing achieving merit or distinction in brackets)	9 (5)	19 (10)	30 (16)

51 Results on full-time intermediate courses varied but some were very poor indeed. Not a single student passed the GNVQ intermediate course in science in 1995 and 1996. In 1996, 45 per cent of those who originally enrolled for the GNVQ intermediate course in information technology achieved a qualification, and just over half the students completing a GNVQ intermediate course in construction were successful. Over the last three years, results on engineering and motor vehicle engineering courses have been very poor. Less than half the students who completed these courses achieved a qualification and none of them achieved a merit or distinction. Although the results for intermediate courses in business studies have improved over the last three years, they are still below the national average. Less than a third of the students who completed the intermediate GNVQ in food and hospitality successfully achieved a qualification. Only five students out of the 80 who originally enrolled on the GNVQ intermediate course in leisure and tourism achieved a qualification in 1996.

52 Students' achievements on other vocational courses in 1996 were mixed. Students were generally successful on part-time courses in computing, as were those who were registered for NVQs in building crafts.

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Results on plumbing courses were poor. Achievements for students studying for an NVQ in business administration at the Oakwood Park site were good in 1995 and 1996. Over 80 per cent of the students who originally started the course were successful. Students taking the same qualification at City Way were less successful. Students studying for other part-time business studies awards were generally successful. Although there are some good results in catering, only 23 per cent of students achieved an NVQ at level 2. Retention and qualification rates on counselling and nursery nursing courses are good. Retention rates on some beauty therapy courses were good, for example, on the NVQ in aromatherapy (91 per cent) and the full-time NVQ level 2 course in beauty therapy (86 per cent). However, results on many hairdressing and beauty therapy courses were poor: 38 per cent of students passed the full-time NVQ level 2 course in hairdressing, and 34 per cent the NVQ level 3 course in beauty therapy.

53 There were some good achievements on access to higher education courses. Eighty-one per cent of students achieved an access qualification and 80 per cent of students who completed access courses proceeded to higher education. Over 90 per cent of students on the access courses in computing, humanities and science were successful. Enrolments on access courses have declined by 44 per cent between 1994 and 1996, mostly in science and technology.

54 The college collects data on the destinations of full-time students. Twenty-two per cent of full-time students completing further education courses progressed to higher education, 15 per cent to additional further education, 33 per cent to employment and 6 per cent were engaged in other activities. The destinations of 24 per cent of full-time students are unknown.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

55 The college has recently devised a policy for quality assurance and there are some arrangements to implement it. There is a system of course review and evaluation covering most of the college's curriculum. Whilst some reviews have been effective, many have been poorly conducted and some have not been done at all. Though college targets for some aspects of performance have been set, most staff are unaware of them. There is no evidence that the limited arrangements which are currently in place have resulted in any improvement to the achievements of students or the standard of teaching.

56 Monitoring of courses is not effective. There has been little analysis of students' achievements or retention. There are no quality standards or performance indicators set for course teams against which they can judge their performance. Some teams involve students in course review meetings, but students report that they have insufficient time to air their views. Nevertheless, there are some instances of action being taken in response to students' complaints. Occasionally, parents have also been

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involved. Students' views about the college have been collected regularly using questionnaires and the college intends to inform students about the outcomes. There has been some good practice in ensuring consistency in internal assessment for vocational courses, particularly where teachers working in the same curriculum area, but on different sites, share the marking of students' work. Action plans resulting from course reviews vary; some are appropriately detailed but many just list activities, most of which are concerned with course administration. Very few contain any references to teaching and learning. There is little monitoring of action plans and course teams receive too little feedback from senior managers. Reports from external verifiers have been collated regularly and there has been effective monitoring to ensure that the actions called for have been taken.

57 The four executive managers are responsible for monitoring the quality of provision in their divisions. There is some evidence of more rigorous monitoring of course reviews recently. The college has yet to establish a consistent means of reporting the outcomes of course reviews. As a result, monitoring performance at college level is difficult. Management decisions to improve matters are constrained by a lack of data on which they might be based. A subcommittee of the academic board has responsibility for monitoring the college's academic performance. So far the only data brought to the committee have been records of students' examination passes for 1996, aggregated to a level where any conclusions which might lead to carefully-aimed remedial action are impossible to draw.

58 A new quality manager was appointed in August 1996. There is a development strategy for quality assurance covering the whole college. Some areas of the college have developed their own arrangements which are not part of the college's quality assurance system. The learning support service has defined the level of service it will provide for its customers and it measures its performance against them. Some parts of student services have established measurable standards for gauging customer satisfaction. The college has a charter. Some students are aware of its existence but many do not understand its implications. Parents are not aware of it. The charter contains only two measurable commitments to service. There are no formal means for monitoring whether the commitments in the charter have been met.

59 Some college staff do not accept the need for rigorous analysis of performance and for the introduction of a culture of continuous improvement. The marketing unit has devised targets for improving students' attendance, retention and examination performance. The four executive managers have also devised targets for these same areas, and the quality manager is developing performance indicators. However, very few staff are aware either of the college targets for student retention or achievement, or of targets in their own teaching areas. A much greater degree of co-ordination is required to ensure that these various targets

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and performance indicators do not conflict with each other. There is much scope for improving the dissemination of statistical data to inform staff about quality issues.

60 The college operates franchised courses in association with two private training companies. This work constitutes one-third of the college's FEFC-funded provision. The Professional Association of Diving Instructors and commercial diving courses are rigorously monitored to ensure that both course documentation and the stringent requirements of the Health and Safety Executive are met during practical teaching. Quality assurance arrangements for the correspondence programme in book-keeping courses are underdeveloped. At the time of inspection, the college could not produce adequate evidence of students' progress on this programme. Arrangements for tutorial supervision were slight, bearing in mind the many students and their distribution throughout the country.

61 Induction procedures for new staff are generally effective. For newly-qualified teachers the process includes observation while teaching. There is no college policy on mentoring new staff but where it is available, staff find such support helpful. There is an annual appraisal system, but its operation lacks central co-ordination. The system which is used for support staff is highly regarded. Appraisal for teachers has been in operation for three years but some staff have still not been appraised. Classroom observation is included in appraisal in some curriculum areas. Different sets of documentation are used for the appraisal of support staff and teachers. Some managers find the documentation designed for support staff particularly useful and they use it when appraising teachers. The college is reviewing its appraisal systems for teachers and support staff.

62 The college does not have a staff-development officer; there is no college staff-development plan or list of priorities, and there is little co-ordination of staff development. Executive managers prepare staff-development plans for their own divisions. The list of courses and events in the plans is extensive but the plans do not adequately address improvements in teaching. Staff report that they usually have no difficulty in obtaining permission to undertake training. There are few obvious links between the various staff-development plans and the college strategic plan. Although staff evaluate specific staff-development events, the college does not monitor the effects of staff-development activities and expenditure as a whole. The college deferred the target date for achieving the Investors in People award because of its recent reorganisation. The new target date is December 1997; this target appears to be ambitious.

63 The college produced its first self-assessment report specially for the inspection, following the headings of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Self-assessment is not yet part of the college's quality assurance routine and only the chairman and one other governor saw the report. Staff have not seen the report, though some contributed to part of



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it. The college has overrated some of its activities and has not taken a sufficiently critical view of the issues that confront it; notably poor achievements on the part of students and underdeveloped quality assurance arrangements. There is only partial congruence between the judgements in the college's report and those of inspectors. There is no action plan in the report and it does not contain corroborative evidence for its findings.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

64 There are 233 full-time and fractional permanent teachers, and 213 part-time teachers. Fifty-two per cent of all teachers are women. Seventy-one per cent of the 300 full-time support staff are women. Two of the nine members of the college strategy group are women, and 45 per cent of other college managers are women. Between August 1995 and February 1997, 146 staff left the college: 61 teachers and 85 support staff. Despite this turnover, 30 per cent of full-time teachers and 27 per cent of support staff are aged 51 or over. Just over one-third of full-time teachers have 10 or more years service with the college. Ninety-six per cent of staff are employed under newly-negotiated contracts, and all staff have current job descriptions. Teachers are effectively deployed and their teaching hours are monitored regularly. Course tutors on the franchised courses in book-keeping have heavy caseloads of around 1,700 students each. The college has planned to reduce the proportion of part-time teachers and their number has fallen from about 400 in 1992-93 to the present number of 213. Despite some reduction in numbers there is still a heavy reliance on part-time teachers in health and care and building crafts.

65 Teachers are appropriately qualified for the courses they teach. Eighty-one per cent of full-time teachers have a first degree or an equivalent qualification. Twenty-five per cent have a higher degree. A teaching qualification is not required by the college and only 67 per cent of full-time teachers have one. Forty-eight per cent of full-time teachers have training and development lead body qualifications. In addition, another 50 staff are working towards these qualifications. Of the 75 per cent of part-time teachers for whom data are available, 24 per cent have a first degree, 11 per cent a professional qualification, 24 per cent a teaching qualification and 13 per cent hold assessor or verifier awards. The majority of teachers have industrial experience. For example, in catering and leisure many teachers have recent commercial experience and four are undergoing work experience in travel agencies. In health and care, there are too few staff with backgrounds in social work and social care. Support staff are generally appropriately qualified and experienced, and they make a valuable contribution to the work of the college.

66 There is an effective personnel department. The personnel office is on the Horsted site which makes access to personnel staff difficult for

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employees on the other sites. There are appropriate personnel policies and procedures, including those for selection and recruitment, equal opportunities, grievance, discipline and harassment. It is intended that all full-time staff should receive a copy of the handbook containing an outline of relevant procedures. It is updated twice a year and some new staff have yet to receive a copy. The handbook is issued to part-time staff who work a substantial number of hours. Equality of opportunity is monitored in relation to recruitment and selection procedures. For example, the college has enquired why candidates with disabilities have withdrawn from the selection process. The college guarantees an interview to all applicants with disabilities who have the minimum requirements for a post. All full-time staff leaving college employment are given an exit interview by senior personnel staff. The results are passed to the relevant manager.

### **Equipment/learning resources**

67 The college has an appropriate range of classroom equipment and learning resources. The educational technology unit works to service targets to meet the needs of curriculum areas and it provides good support for teachers. In particular, there are extensive video and audio recording facilities and video studios at Horsted. Most classrooms have overhead projectors and whiteboards. The college guarantees the availability of a video player and a television for every four classrooms. Many curriculum areas are well equipped including dance, hairdressing and beauty, engineering and construction. There is new equipment for motor vehicle engineering and the latest digital equipment in the technology area. Equipment used on the franchised course in diving is good. There are some weaknesses in the provision of small specialist equipment in art and design. Hairdressing and catering students have no computers for use in reception areas and catering lacks blast-freezing facilities. There is an up-to-date assets register which makes adequate provision for depreciation. Replacement of equipment is well managed.

68 The provision for information technology equipment is generally good. There are 725 computers for student use, 63 per cent of which are modern. Overall, the ratio of machines to full-time equivalent students is about 1:7. The availability of computers varies between the three sites. It is much better at City Way and Horsted than at Oakwood Park. The college has invested significantly in computers and software in recent years. It has spent £400,000 this year and intends to spend another £500,000 in 1997-98. However, some machines are unreliable. Computer availability in science and mathematics is limited. Open access facilities for computing are well developed but they are heavily used and on some occasions full-time students are unable to get access to a computer.

69 The college's learning support service runs the libraries, the resource based learning and open learning facilities, and the education technology unit. It provides a good service to staff and students alike. There are spacious libraries on each site. There is a total of 252 general study places,

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with 63 for silent study. This is insufficient at peak times. The college's collection of books and pamphlets includes around 80,000 recent items, and there are 4,000 video tapes, 50 titles on the compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database and subscriptions to over 500 journals and newspapers. There is a good range of relevant, up-to-date material to support all the curriculum areas at all the sites. Opening hours for the libraries include evenings. The library budget for 1996-97 is £140,000, a similar sum to last year. Just over 40 per cent of this is used for book purchases, with some 30 per cent allocated to the curriculum areas. The library spends approximately £11 for each full-time equivalent student. All the libraries have student and staff computers, photocopiers for students' use and video playback facilities. A well-developed information system enables staff to analyse the use of the library and its stock.

### **Accommodation**

70 The Horsted site is the largest of the college's three centres, at 6.3 hectares. It is located among housing, light industrial buildings and a retail park. There is a variety of buildings. The original buildings are 50 years old. More recent construction in the 1960s and 1980s added some imaginatively-designed buildings for the library, the computer centre and for technology and science teaching. At City Way, the pleasantly landscaped site of 2.3 hectares is dominated by a 1960s tower block. The Oakwood Park site, which is 5.5 hectares, is part of an extensive campus which includes schools, further education and higher education set amid mature parkland on the outskirts of Maidstone. The original buildings are from the 1970s. New building in the 1990s has added teaching accommodation for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for engineering. There are some 15 huts for classroom teaching which are in good condition. The college has a detailed accommodation strategy, which is updated annually and managed well by the director of corporate operations. There have been extensive improvements to the buildings since incorporation. Most recently, at Horsted expenditure of £1.2 million on the former workshop blocks has created excellent new classrooms and practical areas for construction. Further improvements have been made by removing huts and landscaping the grounds. There are continuing improvements at City Way, which have already created professional facilities for leisure and for hairdressing and beauty therapy. Plans are advanced for better practical areas for the performing arts and art and design.

71 Most classrooms are appropriately furnished. There is widespread use of display materials in most rooms and communal areas. Most practical areas are clean and bright, and there is particularly good accommodation in engineering, construction, hairdressing and beauty therapy, leisure and catering. For the most part, rooms allocated to curriculum areas are grouped together. Changes to improve the accommodation for art and design at Oakwood Park were underway at the time of the inspection.

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The college has made great strides in making the sites accessible for students with physical disabilities including installation of lifts, special toilets and ramps. Reception areas at all sites are bright and welcoming. Buildings on all the sites are well maintained. The college does not routinely monitor room usage. A detailed space utilisation survey was carried out in 1994, which showed that the college was operating at about 75 per cent of its theoretical capacity.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

72 The particular strengths of the college are:

- an extensive range of academic and vocational courses
- the wide range of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- productive relationships with local industry
- governors and managers who control planning and finances carefully
- effective central services for student support
- good libraries and learning support services
- appropriately-equipped workshops and laboratories
- good estates management and well-maintained accommodation.

73 If it is to continue to improve the quality of its provision the college should address the following matters:

- the standard of some teaching
- poor examination results and low levels of retention on many courses
- the lack of effective oversight of students' achievements and other academic matters by senior managers, the academic board and the governors
- the variations in practice and inconsistent quality of service among the teaching divisions
- the underdeveloped quality assurance system
- the low proportion of teachers who hold a teaching qualification
- the poor awareness of the students' charter amongst students and parents.

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## FIGURES

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

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

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

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

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  - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

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  - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

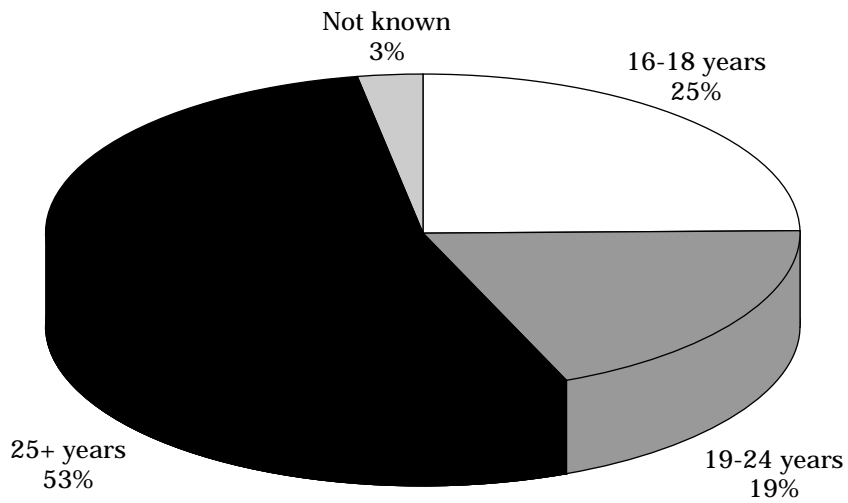
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**Figure 1**

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**Mid-Kent College of Higher and Further Education: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)**

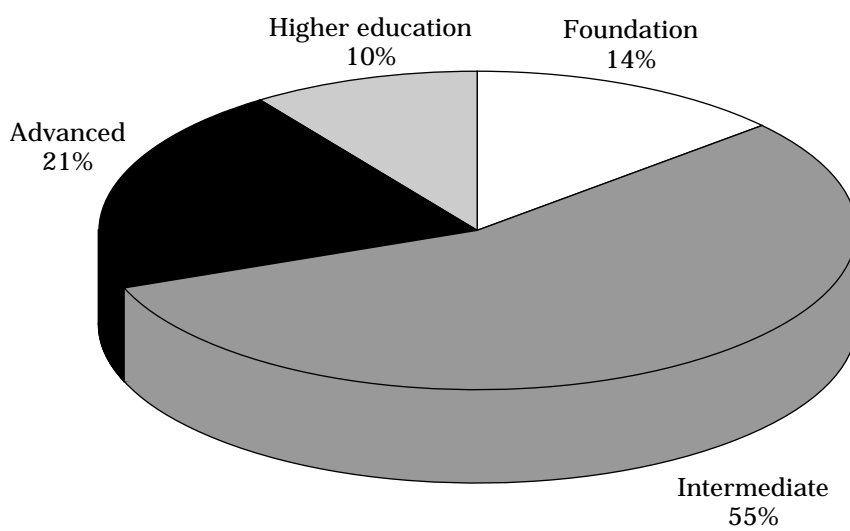


Student numbers: 14,785

**Figure 2**

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**Mid-Kent College of Higher and Further Education: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)**

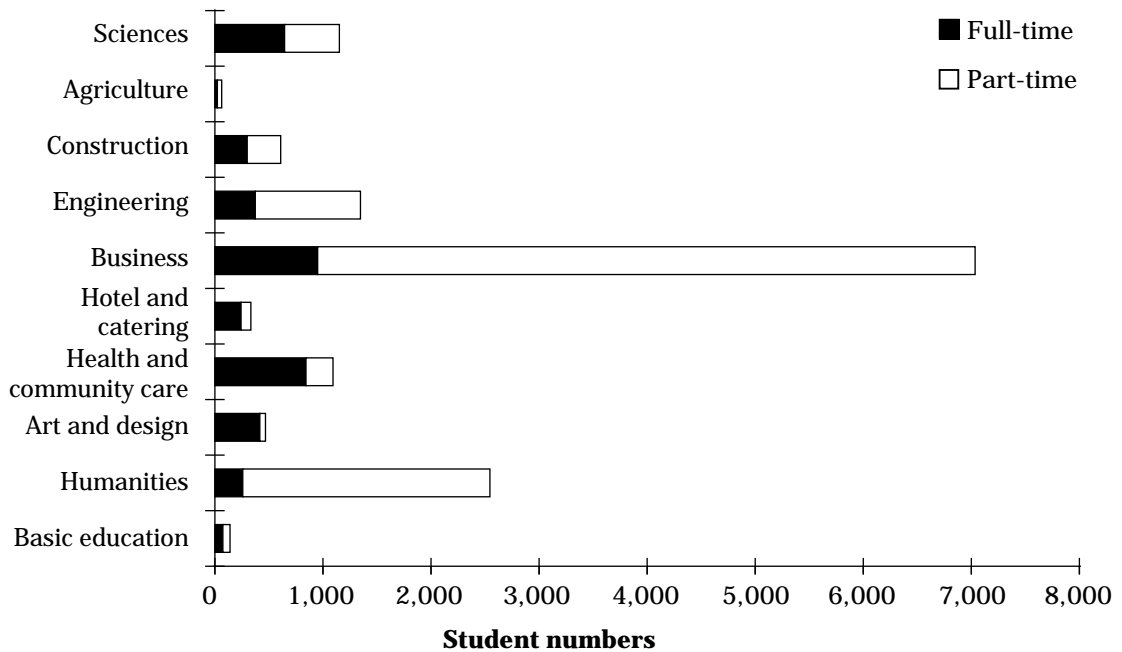


Student numbers: 14,785

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**Figure 3**

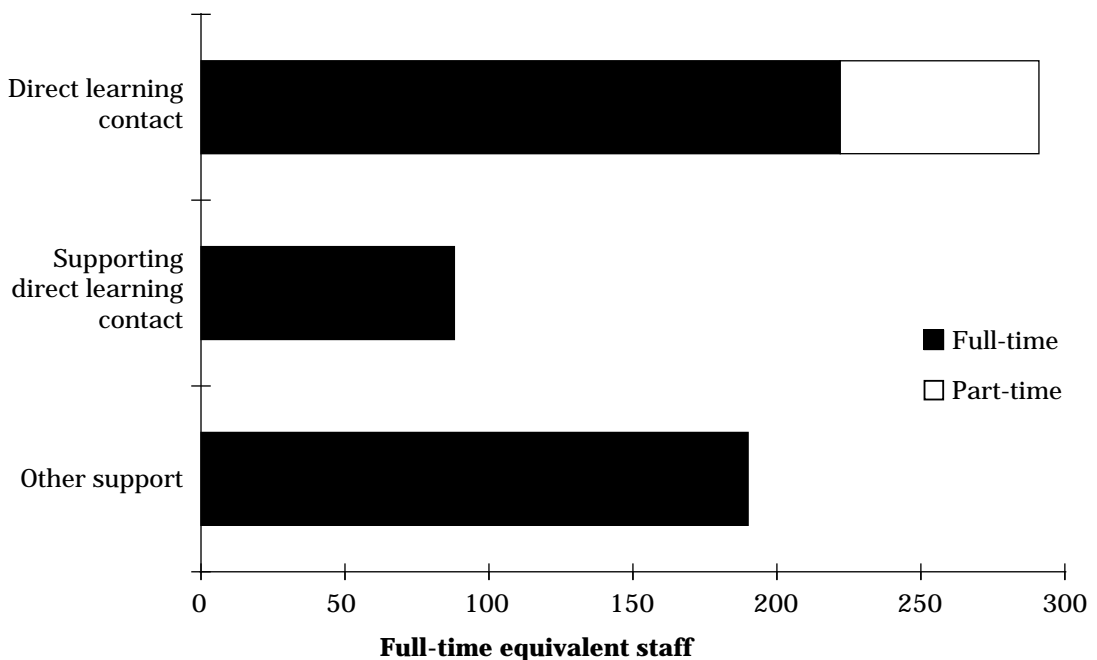
**Mid-Kent College of Higher and Further Education: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)**



Student numbers: 14,785

**Figure 4**

**Mid-Kent College of Higher and Further Education: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996)**

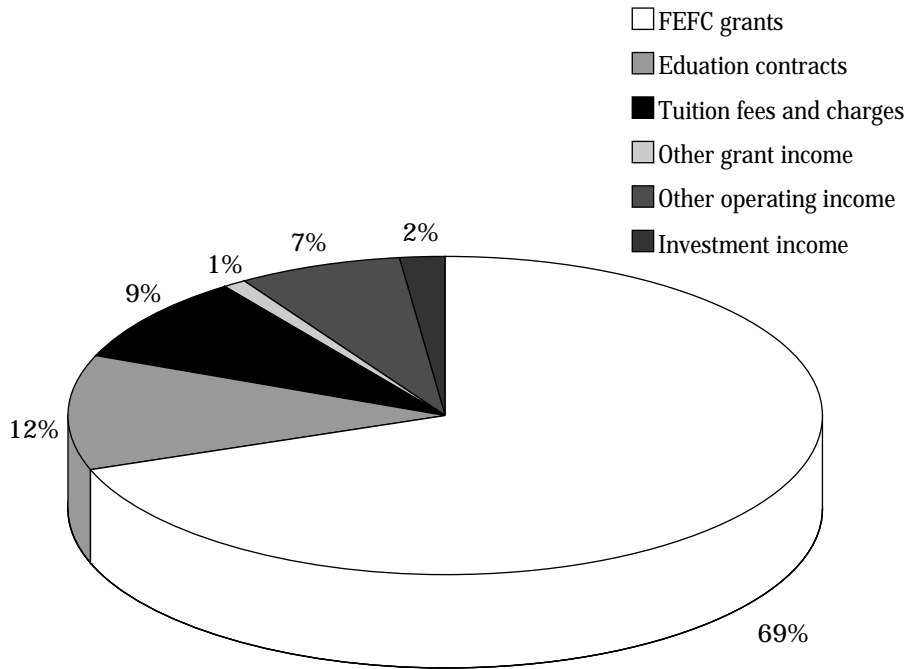


Full-time equivalent staff: 569

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**Figure 5**

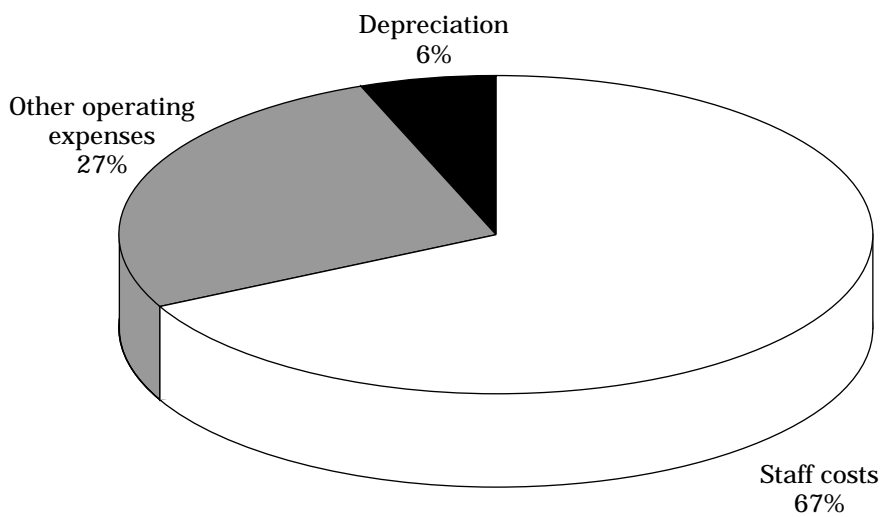
**Mid-Kent College of Higher and Further Education: income (for 12 months to July 1996)**



Income: £19,161,000

**Figure 6**

**Mid-Kent College of Higher and Further Education: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)**



Expenditure: £19,733,000



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