

North Warwickshire and Hinckley College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1998-99**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100
Website <http://www.fefc.ac.uk>*

© FEFC 1999 You may photocopy this report and use extracts in promotional or other material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings are not misrepresented.

Contents

Paragraph

Summary

Context

The college and its mission	1
The inspection	6

Curriculum areas

Engineering	10
Business and management	17
Hospitality and catering	24
Leisure and tourism	29
Child studies	34
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	39
English and communication	44
Basic skills and ESOL	49

Cross-college provision

Support for students	55
General resources	64
Quality assurance	71
Governance	78
Management	86
Conclusions	95

College statistics

Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1997-98, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	60	29	2	-
Cross-college provision	18	54	24	4	-

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*
Sample size: 108 college inspections

Student Achievements

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

- as expected completions, which is the number of initial enrolments on qualifications where the student expected to complete the qualification in a given year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which the students have completed as expected (or are continuing with the prospect of late completion). For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not shown.

Summary

North Warwickshire and Hinckley College

West Midlands Region

Inspected February 1999

North Warwickshire and Hinckley College is a large general further education college serving north Warwickshire and south Leicestershire. It has two main sites, several smaller sites, and a network of outreach centres. Self-assessment is an established part of the college's quality assurance arrangements. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. However, the report did not adequately summarise teaching and learning and students' achievements.

The college offers courses in all the programme areas funded by the FEFC. Six of these programme areas were inspected together with aspects of cross-college provision. The college has a long-standing commitment to widen participation and provide educational opportunities for all. Strong and productive partnerships with the community help towards achieving these goals, as does the outstanding provision in basic skills and ESOL. The college benefits from effective management and a clear strategic direction. There are well-defined procedures that help to ensure accountability and openness in the college's governance.

Recently, significant errors were found in the calculation of the college's income but prompt and effective action has been taken. The quality of teaching is high. Provision in hospitality and catering and hairdressing and beauty therapy are outstanding. The profile of lesson observation grades awarded by inspectors is well above the average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Students' achievements are good in most areas. There is excellent support for students; pre-entry guidance and initial assessment of students' needs are thorough. Most of the accommodation is of a high standard and is well maintained. Several areas have been attractively refurbished and provide a welcoming environment for students. The college should: improve aspects of its self-assessment process; take action on some unsuitable temporary buildings and unsatisfactory social areas for students; improve the minority of teaching which is below satisfactory standards; place more emphasis on following up findings from its surveys of students' perceptions; improve some aspects of governance including the attention given to self-assessment; and further the reliability of ISR data and the accuracy and timeliness of returns to the FEFC.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Engineering	3	Support for students	1
Business and management	2	General resources	2
Hospitality and catering	1	Quality assurance	2
Leisure and tourism	2	Governance	2
Child studies	2	Management	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	1		
English and communication	2		
Basic skills and ESOL	1		

The College and its Mission

1 North Warwickshire and Hinckley College is a general further education college serving north Warwickshire and south Leicestershire. It is the product of a merger in 1996 between Hinckley College and North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art, both founded in the 1890s. The college's catchment area now straddles parts of two counties and two regions and has a population of over 200,000 people. The two main sites, in Nuneaton and Hinckley, are 5 miles apart. Almost all full-time students study at one of these sites. The college also has a network of a dozen permanent outreach centres, which are situated mainly in local community settings, in Nuneaton and Hinckley, and in the smaller towns of northern Warwickshire. The outreach centres serve the learning needs of adults in local communities and the needs of young trainees from North Warwickshire and Hinckley Training, a Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) funded managing agency which is a part of the college.

2 The college has links with the schools in its catchment area, seven of which have sixth forms. It collaborates with King Edward VI Sixth Form College, based in Nuneaton, with which it has a joint admissions procedure and a common general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) timetable. In July 1998, there were 21,628 enrolments of whom 2,824 were students studying full time. In addition to its Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) funded provision, the college recruits students to non-vocational adult education programmes, higher education franchised programmes, programmes serving industry, school link provision and TEC-sponsored programmes.

3 The college has a commitment to the development of lifelong learning which has been part of its mission since the merger and was part of North Warwickshire College's mission since the early 1990s. An increasing amount of

work at national vocational qualification (NVQ) levels 1 and 2 is done on employers' premises. The college works in partnership with local authorities and voluntary organisations to support the unemployed and underemployed in a geographical area which suffered substantial industrial and manufacturing decline in the 1980s. It is the lead college in a partnership which includes three other further education colleges and many other organisations, seeking to widen participation. It led a group of colleges in the first stage of the 'Inclusive Learning Quality Initiative' project.

4 There is provision in all FEFC programme areas. The college has higher education links with five universities, and is an associate college of the University of Warwick and of Coventry University. Higher education franchised programmes have been developed in art and design, engineering, teacher training, social studies, business and management and information technology (IT).

5 The college works with Warwickshire County Council to provide non-vocational adult education in Warwickshire, and with Leicestershire County Council on some aspects of community education. It has taken part in local authority economic development strategies. Recently, the college has built an innovation centre at a new industrial park to the south of Nuneaton, in collaboration with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and Warwickshire County Council.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected during the week beginning 8 February 1999. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used data on students' achievements drawn from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1996 and 1997. The college submitted its own data on

Context

students' achievements for 1998 which were checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The inspection was carried out by 14 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 59 days.

7 This college was one of 30 in the current cycle of inspections which agreed to participate in the joint Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and FEFC assessment of careers education and guidance. The joint assessment was guided by the inspection framework, with careers education assessors contributing to judgements made by inspectors. The emphasis in this report on careers education and guidance will help colleges and careers services to improve the quality of the careers education and guidance they offer and help the DfEE to disseminate good practice.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level and GCSE	3	4	2	1	0	10
GNVQ	8	9	5	1	0	23
NVQ	12	11	3	3	1	30
Basic education	8	3	1	0	0	12
Other vocational	7	7	6	1	1	22
Other	1	3	2	0	0	6
Total (No.)	39	37	19	6	2	103
Total (%)	38	36	18	6	2	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

Inspectors observed 103 lessons. They examined students' work and a wide range of documentary evidence on aspects of the college's provision. They held meetings with governors, managers, college staff and students. Staff from Warwickshire County Council, Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise and Leicestershire TEC were also consulted about their links with the college.

8 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the lessons inspected, 74% were rated good or outstanding. This is higher than the average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98 largely due to the exceptionally high proportion of lessons rated outstanding. The figure of 8% for lessons rated less than satisfactory or poor is slightly worse than the average.

Context

9 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
North Warwickshire and Hinckley College	10.5	77
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

Source for national average: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 3

10 The self-assessment report was comprehensive and evaluative. Inspectors agreed with its overall conclusions on the quality of engineering provision.

Key strengths

- good teaching of practical work
- strong links with local industry through in-company NVQ schemes
- good accommodation
- good engineering learning resource centre

Weaknesses

- some dull and uninteresting classroom teaching
- some low retention and achievement rates
- inadequate use of information and learning technology
- insufficient development of key skills
- lack of careers guidance for some full-time students

11 Engineering courses are provided in a variety of locations, and at times to suit students and trainees. Some courses which were previously provided on a day-release basis are now offered as either evening classes or as 'fast track' full-time programmes. Some courses are taught on Saturdays. There is a successful in-company NVQ scheme which is highly regarded by the companies and trainees involved. As highlighted in the college's self-assessment report, the in-company NVQ schemes are a good example of widening participation. Overall, the college is making a significant contribution to national training targets in engineering.

12 As the self-assessment report indicated, the teaching of engineering practical work is good. Students are set appropriate tasks which relate to their current employment or chosen career. Teachers manage the resultant range of practical activities effectively, enabling all students to progress at their own rate. Most teachers have clear schemes of work, detailed lesson plans and records of work completed. Students generally have well-presented and comprehensive files. Their work is usually of a high standard and is appropriately graded by staff.

13 Many teachers make little use of IT in the preparation of teaching materials. Students studying computer-aided engineering use appropriate equipment but other engineering students make insufficient use of information and learning technology. Some of the classroom teaching is uninspiring and teachers fail to involve all students in learning activities. Too much time is spent simply copying notes from the board or overhead projector screen. Students are attentive and most staff have a good rapport with them. All college-based students benefit from good tutorial support. This support is valued, particularly by the part-time students.

14 As identified in the self-assessment report, there are poor retention and achievement rates on some courses. For example, the most recent retention rate for NVQ level 2 courses in engineering is 47% as compared with a national average of 78%, and for part-time advanced technician courses the rate is 51% compared with 80% nationally.

15 Students on full-time technician courses are able to study a modern European language, take an additional NVQ, and have the opportunity to resit general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) if they need to do so. However, there is a lack of careers guidance on some full-time courses and many students are not given opportunities to develop key skills.

Curriculum Areas

16 Classroom and laboratory accommodation is of a high standard. There are good audio-visual aids. Most of the engineering workshops, apart from the motor vehicle workshop at North Warwickshire, are spacious and well equipped. The engineering learning resource centre is centrally located and provides an appropriate

range of learning aids. Provision of books and journals in the library is good and students have access to other materials, such as video and compact disks in the library. The computers in the computer-aided manufacturing area are dated and they are not on the college network.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in engineering, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
C&G vocational part 1	1	Expected completions	55	71	41
		Retention (%)	89	93	98
		Achievement (%)	100	56	93
C&G vocational part 2	2	Expected completions	57	48	75
		Retention (%)	89	85	84
		Achievement (%)	100	76	59
NVQ	2	Expected completions	77	343	191
		Retention (%)	60	83	47
		Achievement (%)	100	76	100
NVQ	3	Expected completions	24	92	77
		Retention (%)	96	93	90
		Achievement (%)	100	20	54
BTEC national diploma and certificate programmes	3	Expected completions	**	40	60
		Retention (%)	**	95	57
		Achievement (%)	**	93	85

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

**accurate data not available

Curriculum Areas

Business and Management

Grade 2

17 Inspection findings confirmed some strengths and weaknesses in the college's self-assessment report. The report did not refer to students' achievements and inspectors disagreed with its judgement on retention of students.

Key strengths

- well-planned teaching
- good pass rates on levels 2 and 3 business and management programmes
- access to a wide range of additional qualifications for all full-time students
- good provision of off-site management programmes
- well-equipped resource rooms

Weaknesses

- falling retention rates on one- and two-year full-time programmes
- poor achievement on some accounts and marketing programmes
- poor punctuality on some programmes
- failure to implement strategies for dealing with students of differing abilities

18 The college offers full-time and part-time business and management programmes. The range of provision includes general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) and GCE A level business studies, NVQ and professional programmes in management, and programmes in accounts and book-keeping. School link courses are offered at both main sites. Management programmes have been developed in response to the particular requirements of local employers. These often involve teaching on employers' premises. In the case of one major employer, programmes are taught in-

house at times that do not disrupt the shift patterns of the company. All full-time students have opportunities to undertake a range of enrichment activities. The Young Enterprise Scheme is a well-established aspect of GNVQ advanced programmes. Residential periods are valued by students on programmes offered by the National Examining Board for Supervision and Management.

19 As the college's self-assessment report indicates, the quality of teaching is good. Most tutors organise their teaching effectively and use resources appropriately to reinforce learning. Lesson plans and schemes of work are prepared in a standard format, and the aims of individual lessons are explained to students. The teaching links theory and vocational practice well. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that strategies for teaching students of differing abilities are not adequately implemented. Punctuality is poor on some business and management programmes. There is low attendance on some part-time evening courses.

20 Students' vocational work is of a good standard. Assignments are designed to encourage students to gather evidence from relevant sources, including employment. Students' work is marked fairly and recorded appropriately. Teachers' written feedback to students is helpful, but their work is not consistently annotated and errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation are not consistently corrected. Teaching schemes and assignment briefs highlight opportunities for the development of key skills. Despite this, the quality of key skills work in students' portfolios is low. Students' progress is reviewed regularly and students are encouraged to develop individual action plans in order to improve their work.

21 Pass rates for GNVQ intermediate and advanced programmes exceeded the national averages for all students in further education colleges in 1995-96 and 1996-97. Of students on the intermediate programme, a healthy 71%

Curriculum Areas

progressed to the advanced programme in 1998 and many go on from there to higher education or employment. There are good pass rates for part-time vocational programmes in business. Pass and retention rates at levels 2 and 3 on some management programmes significantly exceeded the national averages from 1996 to 1998. However, there are poor pass rates for some accounts and marketing programmes. The college's self-assessment report did not mention the recent decline in the retention rate for GCE A level business studies to below the national average.

22 Staff on the two main sites co-ordinate the planning of their programmes. They use standardised assignments and the same documentation. Quality assurance files are maintained for all major programmes but some of the files are more comprehensive in their information and analysis than others. The setting and monitoring of targets, at programme level, have only recently begun.

23 There are well-appointed, specialist resource rooms at both main sites providing good access to subject-specific learning resources and support staff. Students make good use of these facilities and value them. Business and management students also make good use of centralised learning resources. For example, some part-time students used specialist multimedia facilities to prepare high-quality illustrations for group presentations. Good-quality handouts are produced for some accounting programmes.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in business and management, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate	2	Expected completions	75	35	30
		Retention (%)	91	77	63
		Achievement (%)	71	89	95
Introductory award in supervisory management	2	Expected completions	**	52	99
		Retention (%)	**	100	98
		Achievement (%)	**	98	94
GCE A level (one year)	3	Expected completions	20	62	30
		Retention (%)	100	85	63
		Achievement (%)	60	39	89
GNVQ advanced	3	Expected completions	64	71	79
		Retention (%)	86	93	67
		Achievement (%)	85	94	87
BTEC national certificate	3	Expected completions	101	26	64
		Retention (%)	60	90	55
		Achievement (%)	93	86	97
Certificate in supervisory management	3	Expected completions	33	24	35
		Retention (%)	100	83	83
		Achievement (%)	100	95	100
Higher national certificate	4	Expected completions	*	41	54
		Retention (%)	*	100	78
		Achievement (%)	*	85	93

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*course not running

**less than 10 expected completions

Curriculum Areas

Hospitality and Catering

Grade 1

24 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and the few weaknesses identified by the college in their self-assessment of the hospitality and catering provision.

Key strengths

- high-quality teaching
- high standards of practice in the realistic work environments
- good rates of attendance and retention
- high pass rates on most courses
- well-planned, industry-related assignments
- thorough assessment and feedback to students
- close contact with students at their workplaces
- good course and curriculum management

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to some students' individual learning needs

25 The college offers NVQ and GNVQ programmes for full-time and part-time students at foundation, intermediate, advanced and higher levels. Courses are available at both main sites and also through partnership arrangements at other nearby locations. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the off-site provision is well managed and meets the needs of local industry. Students are well supported with regular telephone tutorials, visits, and lessons in the workplace. These arrangements have enabled employed students to gain qualifications from foundation to higher levels. The hospitality and catering provision is well managed. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood by academic and

support staff. Course teams work well together to review and develop courses. The contribution of part-time teachers is valued and they participate regularly in curriculum planning meetings.

26 Hospitality and catering teaching is of a high standard. Inspectors agreed with the college that students learn through a useful and varied range of activities. Teaching in restaurants and kitchens is well planned and students develop working practices to the best standards found in industry. All full-time and most part-time students complete a hygiene award early in their course, and maintain high standards in food preparation areas. Students' progress and achievements are effectively monitored. Tutorials are used well to review students' work and to give constructive feedback. Assignments are carefully devised and vocationally relevant. NVQ programmes include interesting, industry-based assignments. These develop students' skills in communication, IT, numeracy and enterprise. As the self-assessment recognised, strong links with industry contribute to the quality of the teaching. Teachers are aware of, and responsive to, the requirements of students with moderate learning difficulties. They provide thorough and sensitive induction to the kitchen and restaurant working environments. Good teaching and support has resulted in students with moderate learning difficulties progressing to level 2 courses. In a minority of lessons, teachers pay insufficient attention to students' different learning requirements.

27 Students' achievements and retention are good. The retention rates for students studying level 2 food service in 1998 was 100%. Pass rates at level 2 for food preparation and cooking and for food service are good; for example, 91% in food preparation in 1998. Pass rates at level 3 were very high in 1996 and 1997. Students on NVQ advanced craft and supervisory management programmes achieved above average results in 1998. Nearly all students progress to higher education or to employment

Curriculum Areas

in the hospitality and catering industry. Students enjoy and write well about visits to local firms and contributions from guest speakers. They speak enthusiastically about opportunities to gain work experience in a variety of catering establishments both locally and abroad. Some students have achieved French vocational qualifications. In 1998, students won the 'Student Pub Food Menu Planning' award from the Midland Counties Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association. They were also winners of the North West finals of the European Caterers Association's Catering quiz.

28 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that most accommodation and facilities are appropriate for the programmes on offer. There is effective use of specialist resources. These include five realistic work environments

which are equipped to industry standards. They are well maintained and popular with customers. Storage areas and facilities on both sites are adequate. The transportation of commodities and equipment to kitchens at the North Warwickshire main site has been unsatisfactory but the problem is now being solved by the addition of further specialist facilities. A poor-quality room houses learning packages and class sets of text books and videos. The library is well stocked with material suitable for use by students on the NVQ and GNVQ programmes. A limited range of specialist journals is available. Students make good use of the college's library facilities. Teachers have wide experience of the hospitality and catering industry and make good use of their expertise in their teaching.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in hospitality and catering, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
NVQ hospitality and catering (food preparation, cooking)	2	Expected completions	163	59	44
		Retention (%)	88	98	86
		Achievement (%)	52	72	91
NVQ hospitality and catering (serving food and drink)	2	Expected completions	42	60	31
		Retention (%)	97	82	100
		Achievement (%)	56	71	88
Advanced national (GNVQ/NVQ)	3	Expected completions	54	55	51
		Retention (%)	92	87	89
		Achievement (%)	100	92	70

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Leisure and Tourism

Grade 2

29 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. Some were understated and some of the weaknesses had been dealt with by the time of the inspection. There were insufficient references to teaching and learning and students' achievements in the overall self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-planned lessons
- good range of teaching methods
- well-managed courses
- effective tutorials
- good range of additional vocational qualifications
- high standards of students' portfolios
- good retention and pass rates on GNVQ intermediate courses
- good range of indoor sports facilities

Weaknesses

- failure to maintain students' interest in some lessons
- poor attendance, particularly in key skills sessions
- poor pass rate for GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism in 1998
- inadequate specialist resources for travel services programmes

30 The college provides a good range of leisure and tourism courses, including GNVQ leisure and tourism programmes at intermediate and advanced levels, the Association of British Travel Agents certificate, Association of British Tour Operators certificate, British Airways Fares and Ticketing, and the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management certificate. Inspectors

agreed with the college's self-assessment report that students benefit from the wide range of vocational qualifications available. Courses are well managed. Teaching staff meet regularly and are involved in course planning and target-setting. There is a comprehensive and effective internal verification system. Course teams have worked hard to move towards consistent timetabling, programme delivery and assessment procedures across the two main sites.

31 Lessons are generally well planned and, when appropriate, include a range of teaching and learning activities. Teachers make effective use of question-and-answer sessions, group activities and role-play. In practical lessons, students receive clear instruction from teachers and support staff. Assignment briefs are written clearly and set within realistic vocational contexts. Most teachers return marked work promptly and marking is fair and consistent. In a few instances, teachers have not returned major assignments within the specified timescale. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that tutorial support meets the needs of students. Students' progress is monitored well through a regular programme of group and individual tutorials. An attendance referral system is used to identify and to improve students' attendance but key skills teachers have yet to adopt it fully. In cases of particular concern, students agree a time management plan with their personal tutor to ensure they do not fall behind with their studies. In some lessons, teachers failed to maintain students' interest or to allow sufficient time for an adequate summary of the topic. The college's self-assessment report did not draw on any evidence from lesson observations.

32 Pass and retention rates are consistently high on the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course. For example, the 1998 retention rate was well above the national average. Pass rates on GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism were above the national averages

Curriculum Areas

for all colleges submitting ISR data for 1996 and 1997, but fell below the national average in 1998. The college's self-assessment report did not identify these strengths and weaknesses. Most students' work is of a high standard. Students' portfolios are well structured and organised. Attendance at key skills lessons is poor, particularly in numeracy. The current average attendance for numeracy lessons for the second-year GNVQ advanced group is only 20%. Progression for GNVQ intermediate students completing the course is good, with 73% progressing onto a level 3 programme.

33 The general standard of accommodation at both main sites is good. There is an effective

range of indoor sports facilities including a purpose-built sports hall, two fitness rooms, two dance studios and a fitness testing laboratory. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that access to outdoor sports facilities is limited at the main college sites and the lack of a travel shop restricts the learning opportunities for students on travel programmes. Students at Hinckley have limited access to IT and internet facilities. All teachers have a teaching qualification and most have a relevant vocational degree or professional qualification. The library contains an appropriate range of relevant texts and journals.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in leisure and tourism, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management certificate in leisure operations	2	Expected completions	*	*	16
		Retention (%)	*	*	50
		Achievement (%)	*	*	75
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	Expected completions	37	73	45
		Retention (%)	81	84	96
		Achievement (%)	80	86	84
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	Expected completions	95	**	82
		Retention (%)	51	**	70
		Achievement (%)	100	**	69

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*course not running

**accurate data not available

Curriculum Areas

Child Studies

Grade 2

34 Inspectors agreed with the majority of statements in the self-assessment report but found some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good teaching
- effective teamwork between personal tutors and placement supervisors
- extensive community links
- well-managed and well-integrated work experience
- strong development of equal opportunities
- good students' achievements in core courses
- well-used, well-resourced child studies learning resources centre

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped key skills
- declining retention in some programmes in the last two years
- inconsistent monitoring of retention and achievement targets at course level
- failure of teachers to take account of the different abilities of students

35 Child studies provision includes full-time, part-time, and 'flexi-time' study on courses from levels 2 to 4 which have been accredited by the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education. The provision is based at the North Warwickshire main site and includes courses in six outreach centres which are widening participation and promoting effective links with schools and local communities. A pro-active approach is taken to equal opportunities. For example there are 'taster' days for 'Men left holding the baby' to advise men on employment

and training opportunities in childcare education. A range of short courses is offered for updating professional knowledge and skills. Work placements make an effective contribution to students' learning. The judgements of placement employers and trainers are used regularly to inform students of their progress. There are also regular meetings between nursery managers and college staff. These help to ensure that good practice is discussed and teaching is delivered to consistent standards. The six-week block patterns of study and work placement for the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing was introduced in response to employers' preferences and helps to ensure that there are effective links between theory and practice. Recently-introduced work files help students to develop case studies of children they have observed.

36 Most of the teaching in child studies is well planned and effective. Teachers use a variety of appropriate teaching and learning methods, including group and pair work, role-play, a games workshop, practical sessions, and whole-class teaching. However, they do not take sufficient account of the different abilities of their students. Most teachers incorporate equal opportunities and health and safety issues into lessons, particularly when discussing the planning of activities for children. There is insufficient development of key skills in all child studies programmes and few teachers make the link between national curriculum key stage 1 and students' classroom activities. Students understand the purpose of assessments and what is expected of them. However, they make little use of IT in their assignments.

37 Potential students receive appropriate guidance during interviews. Targets are set for achievement and retention but these are not consistently monitored. In 1998, students completing the main courses achieved results above the national average derived from ISR data. However, retention has declined in four

Curriculum Areas

out of the six programmes over the last two years. Full-time students study a range of additional courses including British Sign Language and first aid. In 1998, 90% of students from the national diploma in nursery nursing progressed to employment and 10% to higher education. Students' attendance was high at 88% in the classes observed during the inspection. Tutorial records are regularly updated and effectively used to organise and plan learning.

38 The specialist equipment and other resources are adequate. A well-resourced child studies learning resources room at the North Warwickshire site is well used. There is a parents' room at Furnace Field. Neither has internet access and the outreach sites have no computer links to the main college sites. This weakness was noted in the self-assessment report and has been tackled through the delivery of additional textbooks and learning resources to these sites.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in child studies, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing	3	Expected completions	*	*	76
		Retention (%)	*	*	70
		Achievement (%)	*	*	85
NVQ in early years	3	Expected completions	23	12	18
		Retention (%)	74	100	100
		Achievement (%)	100	64	100
Higher level childcare qualifications	4	Expected completions	18	23	18
		Retention (%)	100	100	61
		Achievement (%)	100	100	81

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*accurate data not available

Curriculum Areas

Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy

Grade 1

39 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report and found additional strengths which were not identified by the college.

Key strengths

- good teaching in all lessons
- effective use of study packs in many practical lessons to link theory to practice
- attainment of commercial standards in practical classes
- high achievement rates
- spacious and well-maintained accommodation
- specialist equipment of a high standard

Weaknesses

- lack of attention to students' differing abilities in theory lessons
- inadequate attention to the recording of key skills

40 The range of provision in hairdressing, beauty and sports therapy is good. The work is well managed. Staff work well together. They hold team meetings which contribute effectively to developing the curriculum areas. Students value the well-organised structure of their courses. They enjoy the opportunities offered by contacts with visiting speakers, competitions and industrial placements. Several one-year intensive courses have been developed to cater for mature students. These begin in September, January and April. The starting and finishing times for the teaching day fit in with the needs of students who have family commitments. Evening-only courses complement the intensive day courses and help to widen participation.

Programmes are organised to take account of employers' preferences.

41 Teaching and learning in most lessons are good, especially in practical lessons where commercial standards are being achieved. Newly-recruited students on intensive study courses quickly reach these standards. Learning objectives are explained to students at the beginning of lessons and are reinforced throughout their programmes. The study packs used in some practical hairdressing lessons help to provide a link between theory and practical skills. The study packs are not as well used in beauty therapy lessons where there is greater reliance on handouts and notes. Insufficient use is made of diagrams to illustrate key points. Students have opportunities to practise key skills but the acquisition of key skills is not systematically recorded. Some work produced by students on sports therapy courses was particularly well presented: they wrote well about the results of surveys they had carried out; used IT skills to wordprocess their reports; and included diagrams to summarise their data. In some cases, students received job offers from employers who had provided their placements. Some teaching took insufficient account of the needs of students with different abilities.

42 Tutorials are used effectively to review students' progress. Tutors help students to schedule their work so that they keep up with the requirements of their courses and achieve their qualifications on time. Students commented to inspectors on their enjoyment of their courses and said that they particularly valued the additional study opportunities which they felt improved their employability. Retention levels across the programme area are generally good but declining. Achievement rates are also good and most are above national averages. NVQ level 2 beauty therapy has improved from a 73% pass rate in 1995-96 to 86% in 1997-98, and level 3 has greatly improved from 60% in 1995-96 to 100% in 1997-98. However, over the same period, retention declined from 100% to 67%.

Curriculum Areas

43 The college has spacious, well-maintained salons housing specialist equipment of a good standard. There are four hairdressing and four beauty salons served by common reception and dispensary areas. There is a dedicated tutorial room and a resource room. Away from the main accommodation is a dance studio and fitness suite which is open to the public.

Use is made of the sports halls at the North Warwickshire main site for sports therapy, and students have access to a swimming pool. The equipment is of a good standard and provides a realistic working environment. Staffing levels are good. All staff have commercially relevant qualifications as well as assessor qualifications.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
NVQ hairdressing	2	Expected completions	*	145	56
		Retention (%)	*	78	70
		Achievement (%)	*	85	84
NVQ beauty therapy	2	Expected completions	46	56	47
		Retention (%)	89	73	75
		Achievement (%)	73	83	86
Sports therapy diploma	2	Expected completions	**	51	64
		Retention (%)	**	74	80
		Achievement (%)	**	89	71
NVQ beauty therapy	3	Expected completions	56	48	43
		Retention (%)	100	92	67
		Achievement (%)	60	80	100
Sports therapy masters	3	Expected completions	**	27	82
		Retention (%)	**	85	78
		Achievement (%)	**	74	93
Advanced holistic therapy	3	Expected completions	24	246	237
		Retention (%)	100	93	82
		Achievement (%)	96	79	76

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*less than 10 expected completions

**accurate data not available

Curriculum Areas

English and Communication

Grade 2

44 Although inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report, they considered it did not give sufficient weight to some weaknesses, particularly those relating to retention.

Key strengths

- effective use of the communication and English workshop
- good GCSE pass rates
- significant improvements in GCSE and GCE A level grades in 1998
- the wide range of provision
- regular visits to theatres and conferences
- the wide range of learning resources

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on many courses
- not enough attention to the aims and objectives of courses
- poor attendance and punctuality in some lessons

45 The English and communication courses are managed well, and the teachers work well together as a team to develop the courses and learning resources. Course team and divisional meetings take place regularly. Curriculum content, organisation and management are frequently revised and improvements are evident. The range of English and communication courses is broad, as noted in the self-assessment report. A recent innovation has been a fast-track GCSE English course running on Saturdays, between January and June, which has recruited well.

46 Much of the teaching of English and communication is good or outstanding. In eight out of the 12 lessons observed, the strengths

outweighed the weaknesses. Schemes of work are well developed and detailed, but some pay insufficient attention to the aims and objectives of programmes. As identified in the self-assessment report, the well-resourced communication and English workshop is used effectively and provides opportunities for students to study on their own. The staff in the workshops also offer help to individual students, either on a 'drop-in' or a referral basis. Voluntary sessions on a range of topics are offered to students preparing for GCSE and GCE A level examinations, and very useful revision packs have been produced by the teachers. Students take advantage of the frequent opportunities to go on theatre visits, workshops and residential courses.

47 Punctuality and attendance are poor in some lessons. The quality of students' work is generally good. Written assignments are marked carefully and contain constructive comments from teachers to help students to improve their performance. Students enjoy their courses and work well together in small groups. They have good note-taking skills and contribute well to classroom discussions. There are some good examination results. In GCSE English, results are generally good, with part-time adult students performing particularly well. In 1998, all the students who sat the GCE A level English literature examination passed and the value-added analysis used by the college indicates that the students are obtaining better grades in this subject than would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE grades. As identified in the college's self-assessment report, the grades achieved in GCE A level English examinations have been improving in recent years. However, results for the two-year GCE A level English language courses are still below the national averages for students aged 16 to 18 in further education colleges. The retention rates for most of the courses completed in 1998 are below the national averages, but the self-assessment report mentioned this weakness only in relation to one course.

Curriculum Areas

48 There are outstanding resources to support learning, particularly in the workshop which contains revision packs, worksheets, key skills assignments, videos, audio cassettes and CD-ROMs. Many of these resources are also available in the college libraries, which have up-to-date and appropriate collections of language and literature texts.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in English and communication, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE English	2	Expected completions	284	383	271
		Retention (%)	89	84	62
		Achievement (%)	76	90	58
GCE A level English language	3	Expected completions	160	172	115
		Retention (%)	94	84	62
		Achievement (%)	56	55	72
GCE A level English literature	3	Expected completions	28	13	26
		Retention (%)	93	77	54
		Achievement (%)	46	40	100

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills and ESOL

Grade 1

49 Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report and also found some additional strengths.

Key strengths

- very good teaching
- high-quality additional support for students with learning difficulties
- excellent initial assessment materials in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
- negotiated, individual learning plans with clear goals
- effective management
- access to a wide range of appropriate accreditation
- 100% achievement of primary learning goals
- well-resourced study workshops

Weaknesses

- little use of IT in some lessons
- failure to schedule initial assessment interviews

50 The inspection concentrated on the college's provision in basic skills and ESOL on six college sites. The basic skills and ESOL section is well managed. Effective quality assurance arrangements were in place at all six sites. The college has gained the Basic Skills Agency (BSA) quality mark and, as noted in the self-assessment report, uses its standards consistently across the service. However, there were no properly scheduled times for conducting initial assessment interviews. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

51 Most teaching was outstanding. Lessons were well planned and carefully organised; thorough lessons plans in ESOL ensured that all students undertook activities to improve their language skills. All ESOL courses have schemes of work which are well thought out and match the language needs of the students. In basic skills lessons, teachers provide good individual teaching and give students clear instructions. All students had individually negotiated learning plans, with clear, achievable short and long-term goals and targets. In the most effective lessons, learning activities took into account the interests and the experiences of the students.

52 Teachers use a variety of classroom activities and resources. In an English lesson, students with learning difficulties made effective use of cue cards, pictures, stencils and handouts. In ESOL, carefully differentiated teaching for students with different abilities helped them to practise their speaking and listening skills. In one class, the topic of St Valentine's day was used as the basis for an informal discussion which was followed by an effective vocabulary-building exercise. In another, the teachers used six handwritten letters to teach the format of letter writing. Good use of IT in an English workshop allowed an elderly student to gain confidence in using computers and simultaneously to practise her literacy skills. Record-keeping by students and teachers is excellent. In ESOL, students are given homework regularly; its completion is seen as an integral part of the course.

53 Most students are highly motivated. They gain confidence during their time at the college and develop relevant skills. Some students on basic skills courses do not seek accredited awards but work towards their own primary learning goals. Most students are clear about what they have to learn and the areas they have to develop. As identified in the self-assessment report, there is 100% achievement of primary learning goals. Assessment of all students is rigorous and systematic, whether they are

Curriculum Areas

working for external accreditation or working towards individual learning goals. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that students have access to a wide range of qualifications. The standard of students' work is high, their files are well presented and marking is thorough.

54 All teachers are highly qualified; many have two or three teaching qualifications. Most have an assessor's award and a specialist qualification, for example, in basic skills. In mathematics and English, especially in classes for students with learning difficulties, the low student to teacher ratio allows teachers to provide high-quality, individual support to students. The college provides good-quality specialist teaching accommodation on four of the sites visited. In these, students and teachers have access to appropriate IT and good-quality learning materials such as study packs, tapes, videos, and CD-ROMs. The ESOL initial assessment material used to assess students' language competence is excellent. There were some excellent wall displays: for example, in the ESOL workshop, students typed up biographies and displayed these together with photographs and maps of different countries which added to the character of the room.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 1

55 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgements about the quality of support for students. The self-assessment report gave a full account of the strengths and weaknesses of this area.

Key strengths

- comprehensive pre-entry guidance, admissions and induction
- good use of additional learning support
- well-managed access to additional financial support
- effective management of student services
- consistent and effective tutorial support
- careers education and guidance well attuned to students' needs
- thorough counselling support

Weaknesses

- the lack of analysis of transfers between courses

56 Student services are well managed. The teams that provide guidance, counselling, and additional learning support work well together to meet students' needs. They maintain a high profile, for example, they run a help desk in the refectory. Surveys are conducted regularly to identify areas for future improvement.

57 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that initial guidance is thorough. There are effective links with King Edward VI Sixth Form College and with schools in Nuneaton. The college holds three open days a year. There is a wide range of publicity which gives students helpful information on courses available to them. The effectiveness of guidance is evaluated and changes made where necessary. Applications are handled efficiently.

At interview, staff use a well-devised interview checklist and students meet staff with specialist knowledge of the courses for which they are applying. Students commented that the interviews had helped them to make informed decisions about their courses. Students' prior learning is checked at enrolment. The careful monitoring of admissions provides useful information on the ratio of applications to enrolments. Course induction is well managed. Clear procedures exist for transferring students between courses. As acknowledged in the self-assessment, no analysis of transfers has been undertaken.

58 Students' needs for additional learning support are thoroughly analysed. This strength was noted in the self-assessment report. All full-time and many part-time students receive a diagnostic assessment for literacy and numeracy at three levels: foundation, intermediate and advanced. A well-designed trial assessment of students' IT skills at entry is also being carried out. Students receive additional support in the college's attractive and well-equipped study workshops. Their progress is carefully monitored and reported to tutors. When surveys showed that students in some curriculum areas made little use of workshops, programmes were started to alert students to the help that was available. Analysis of data on the take-up of additional support has shown that students who fail to make use of the help offered are more likely to withdraw from courses.

59 Careful attention is paid to equal opportunities. The college's disability statement gives information about the services available and whom to contact. The needs of students with disabilities are thoroughly assessed. Specific needs are met through the provision of extra staffing and specialist equipment. Childcare provision is available at six sites. The self-assessment report noted that the college has a substantial access fund. There are clear criteria for allocating these funds. Findings from a survey of students indicated

Cross-college Provision

that the funds provided have helped recipients to complete their courses.

60 The well-developed counselling service at North Warwickshire and at Hinckley has been extended to several outreach centres. Part-time as well as full-time students make use of the services. The level of use that is made of the counselling services, and the nature of the problems that are addressed, are thoroughly analysed.

61 The self-assessment report identified uneven standards of tutorial practice across the college as a weakness. Since the report was produced there have been major improvements. A new tutoring policy has been introduced, which includes standards and a checklist of responsibilities. Lead tutors now have a key role in disseminating good practice. The success of these changes was confirmed by inspectors who observed high-quality tutorials in many curriculum areas. Tutors gave suitable praise and criticism during tutorials and encouraged students to assess their own strengths and weaknesses. Students commented on the helpfulness of tutorials. In an effective initiative, some current students act as mentors to new students.

62 As recognised in its self-assessment report, the college is effective in meeting students' needs for careers education and guidance. There are well-thought-out partnership agreements and effective relationships with the Warwickshire and Leicestershire careers services. Work has begun on the development of the first partnership agreement with a curriculum area. It is expected to improve the provision of careers guidance. Careers advisers work closely with the college guidance team. Both main sites have careers libraries with a range of paper-based and software packages. However, at North Warwickshire the lack of a separate area for the careers library is a disadvantage. The tutorial programme provides opportunities for students to receive help with their applications for higher education.

63 The college has a chaplain and a prayer and contemplation room. Students are also supported by a student liaison team comprising mostly trained youth workers. They assist the students' union and give advice on a range of personal issues. The team has responsibility for the 30 elective subjects available to students. The college's encouragement of elective courses has resulted in a substantial increase in take-up.

General Resources

Grade 2

64 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. However, some weaknesses were understated and some strengths were overemphasised.

Key strengths

- well-maintained, attractive permanent buildings
- effective and welcoming learning centres
- extensive range of modern IT equipment
- good library provision

Weaknesses

- some poor temporary buildings
- inadequate social areas for students

65 Most of the college's 14 sites are within an 18-mile radius of the North Warwickshire main site. The college has some outstanding and attractive accommodation which includes the Atherstone and Bermuda Innovation Park sites. Most of the accommodation has been built and maintained to a high standard. In contrast, the college has 17 temporary timber buildings, most of which are on the two main sites. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that at least half of these buildings are poor and the

Cross-college Provision

rest are barely satisfactory. Maintenance is well planned and effective. The college's annual running costs are low. The budget for maintenance is appropriate. Staff rooms and administration offices are of an adequate size; most are built to a good standard and are clean and tidy. They are located close to teaching areas and contain sufficient telephones but only a few have computers.

66 Student communal areas are inadequate. They are small in size for the number of students who wish to use them. The student centre at North Warwickshire is in need of some refurbishment and that at Hinckley is particularly poor. It is housed in a temporary building which is too small. There is some damage to the walls from vandalism. Students were critical of these poor facilities. Entrance foyers to the college are welcoming and attractive. A large part of the college is readily accessible to people with limited mobility. There are sufficient toilet facilities throughout the college and most have been refurbished in recent years to a high standard. There is an adequate number of adapted toilets for people with disabilities. Wall displays of students' work and other learning materials, especially in the art and design, ESOL, sports and textile areas, are lively and stimulating.

67 The student refectory at North Warwickshire is a well-appointed area but is overcrowded at peak meal times. Student refectories at other sites including Hinckley and Atherstone are satisfactory. The coffee shop for students and the staff refectory at North Warwickshire are pleasant rooms. There are good indoor sports facilities at North Warwickshire. There is an adequate football pitch but other outdoor sports facilities are poor. The fitness room at North Warwickshire main site is well equipped.

68 Overall there is good utilisation of classrooms and other learning spaces in the college but there are areas where utilisation is low, for example, at the Bedworth and Hinckley

sites. Space utilisation has been improved by rationalising some subject areas to specific college sites; for example, all multimedia work is located at Hinckley. Signposting is inadequate on all sites.

69 The libraries are well located and welcoming. There are two small libraries at Bedworth and Atherstone. As the self-assessment report indicated, the libraries are of an appropriate size for the student population and provide good learning environments. There are sufficient private study places. The request for silence in the quiet areas in each library is observed. There are sufficient staff rooms, workspaces and storage areas. There are enough library staff on each site except Hinckley. All the library staff are well qualified. Library opening hours are good and the facilities are well used by students. There is a productive relationship between library staff and teachers in most subject areas. The bookstock and budget are adequate. Many of the textbooks are new and most are less than 10 years old. There is a wide selection of journals and other publications that meet most students' learning needs. There is sufficient audiovisual equipment of good quality. The library management systems are satisfactory at a local level, but the two main sites have different and incompatible software systems that prevent a coherent college-wide system from operating. Books cannot be transferred easily between the main sites but transfer is easier between the smaller sites served by one of the main libraries. In addition to the libraries there are learning resource centres, all of which are of a good size, provide a welcoming environment and contain good learning resource materials.

70 There has been a significant investment in IT across the college since the merger. The computer centres provide good working environments. There is a high ratio of computers to students and students consider that access to computers is good. There are sufficient numbers of computers adapted for

Cross-college Provision

people with disabilities. Most of the computers are of a high specification and the software is of an industrial standard with an appropriate range of applications. The college has a comprehensive range of CD-ROMs including some produced by the college. Access to these is good. Most computers are connected to the college's network system which is being extended. There are an adequate number of good-quality printers. The college undertakes a regular evaluation and replacement of printers. Printing is controlled carefully to reduce wastage. Access to the internet is satisfactory. The college's intranet is in the early stages of development but does include some useful information on courses. Electronic mail is well used by those staff who have access to a computer in their staff room. A significant number of staff have undertaken IT training during the past two years. There are enough technicians to maintain the equipment.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

71 Inspectors agreed with most judgements in the self-assessment report. They found some weaknesses which the college had not recognised.

Key strengths

- effective arrangements for quality assurance
- appropriate target-setting for achievements and retention
- good overall performance against national benchmarks
- comprehensive staff development
- a thorough staff appraisal process
- strong staff support for, and understanding of, the quality assurance arrangements

Weaknesses

- inadequate evaluation by the full corporation of the college's self-assessment report
- inadequate overall analysis of students' views
- poor summary of teaching and learning and students' achievements in the overall self-assessment report

72 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that there are effective and coherent arrangements for quality assurance. These are supported by a quality framework, quality assurance portfolios, self-assessment procedures, management reviews and thorough three-yearly curriculum reviews. Comparisons with national benchmarks published by the FEFC show that the college maintained a good standard of performance in relation to students' achievements and retention between 1995 and 1997. In most areas, the college's performance was above the national averages for further education and tertiary colleges, and in some areas it was in the top 25%. Some inspection grades have improved since the previous inspection. Staff and managers understand and strongly support the quality assurance process. They are involved fully in the different aspects of quality assurance and contribute to the compiling of quality portfolios, the self-assessment process, and the three-yearly curriculum reviews.

73 As the self-assessment report notes, there are effective arrangements for setting, and reporting against, targets for achievements and retention for each qualification aim. Staff in each curriculum area set targets which take into account comparative data, past performance, and the need to improve. College-wide targets relate to the three-yearly reviews. Most cross-college service level agreements are clearly written and include measurable standards. Senior managers conduct termly reviews of the

Cross-college Provision

performance of cross-college and curriculum areas. Although managers make a record of the issues discussed and proposed actions, the detail recorded in these reviews varies and outcomes are not indicated sufficiently clearly.

74 Students' views are surveyed regularly. There are termly questionnaires and students can express their views in several college committees. These arrangements provide helpful information on how the students see the college. In student services this led to changes in the organisation of the hardship funds. However, the information gathered in the questionnaires is not well used. There are few evaluative reports or recommendations for corrective action based on the data that are collected. The college has produced an attractive and well-designed charter. There are four sections covering potential students, students on courses, employers, and the community. Part of the section on students covers students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The charter is available in Braille and on audio cassette. Some statements within the charter are too broad to give a clear indication of the nature of students' entitlements. There is a thorough system of recording and dealing with complaints. The college has completed its first annual review of complaints but it contains no evaluative comments and it is too early to judge trends in the level of complaints.

75 Managers and staff of the college were fully involved in the self-assessment process but the report was not discussed by the full corporation. This is the third self-assessment report produced by the college. The self-assessment report was evaluative and a number of judgements were clear and supported by evidence. The supporting self-assessments, produced by curriculum teams, were thorough. However, these were not always well summarised in the overall self-assessment report which did not give sufficient attention to teaching and learning and students'

achievements. The action plans arising from the self-assessment report, as the report itself indicated, link clearly to the strategic planning objectives. The action plans are clear and include responsibilities and timescales for completion but a few of the targets are not measurable. The college has produced a separate self-assessment report and a charter for off-site collaborative provision. Organisation of quality assurance for collaborative provision is clear and based on the college's quality assurance arrangements. College staff regularly observe teaching and provide feedback. They also monitor students' achievements and retention.

76 There is a well-established appraisal process for all staff who work over six hours a week. Appraisal involves direct observation of teaching or an appropriate aspect of a person's work if they have a non-teaching support role. Appraisal leads to an action plan which is incorporated into staff development arrangements.

77 There is a comprehensive programme of relevant staff development activities. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there are clear priorities for staff development based on the college's strategic aims and objectives. Staff's own individual requirements are based on the results of appraisal. The extensive range of staff development activities includes external courses and conferences, training events within the college and industrial updating. Staff who wish to improve their professional qualifications often have support from the college. Staff may attend some college courses free of charge. In September 1998, the college's Investor in People status was reconfirmed.

Cross-college Provision

Governance

Grade 2

78 Inspectors and auditors agreed with many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report, but found that some weaknesses had not been identified. The criteria contained in Council Circular 97/22 had not been clearly utilised in assisting the self-assessment process.

Key strengths

- governors bring a broad range of skills to the college
- effective procedures for accountability and openness
- thorough governor induction processes
- governors well informed about college and national developments

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped self-evaluation of governors' performance
- lack of systematic analysis of students' achievements
- formal decisions not always actioned

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

80 The corporation comprises 20 governors, including 11 business governors, three co-opted governors, two community governors, two staff governors, a student governor and the principal. Public advertising has been used to identify potential new governors, but has not yet been successful. All candidates are evaluated by the corporation's search committee before being

appointed. Governors are required to make annual declarations of eligibility. As stated in the college's self-assessment, governors bring a range of expertise to the college. This includes experience in business and management. A formal governor development and training programme has not been established, but there is a good induction process for newly-appointed governors, and regular training events take place, including two beneficial annual conferences which are organised internally. Governors also receive comprehensive information about college and national developments.

81 The frequency of corporation meetings has been increased since early 1998 to twice a term. Attendance has not been good but no inquorate meetings of the corporation have taken place. Governors have been involved in strategic planning, and receive half-yearly reports on progress against strategic targets. The corporation receives regular information on the college's financial position at almost all of its meetings. However, some of the financial information provided to governors has not been accurate owing to some unreliable student numbers data. Once governors became aware of this weakness, an investigation into its causes was promptly initiated and action was taken.

82 The self-assessment report acknowledged that there has been insufficient detailed monitoring of targets related to student retention. Inspectors considered this weakness understated, as it also related to students' achievements. The corporation has received information on students' achievements, but there has been no systematic analysis of the data and no comparison of the college's current academic performance with that of previous years or with national data. The corporation has recently established a quality and curriculum committee with a remit that includes monitoring of students' retention and achievements. It is too early to judge its effectiveness.

Cross-college Provision

83 The corporation has an appropriate committee structure, including finance and general purposes, audit, and remuneration committees together with a quality and curriculum committee. The administration of most corporation and committee business is efficient. A schedule of routine items for decision and monitoring has not, however, been established. Some formal decisions recorded in corporation and committee minutes are not clear and some have not been actioned. This weakness was not identified in the college's self-assessment report. The audit committee has only recently established a procedure by which internal audit recommendations are systematically reviewed throughout the audit committee cycle. Copies of the governing body's minutes are placed in the college library. The clerk is a member of the college's senior management team and services all of the committees of the college. All senior postholders are included in a formal appraisal process.

84 Inspectors did not agree with the statement in the self-assessment report that governors' constructive criticism of their performance was a strength. The self-assessment report on governance was limited in depth and scope, was not prepared by governors, and was not based on a structured analysis of key elements of governance. It was not formally approved by the corporation.

85 The college produces an informative annual report which is available to the general public. The corporation has adopted a code of conduct. Standing orders have recently been updated and are comprehensive. A register of interests has been established and is updated six times a year. The corporation has also approved a whistleblowing procedure. The self-assessment report indicated that the corporation had made use of documentation on governance produced by the FEFC. This has helped the corporation to improve its procedures in respect of openness and accountability.

Management

Grade 2

86 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses contained in the college's self-assessment report. However, the report did not include judgements on the quality of some important aspects of management, including financial management and deployment of resources.

Key strengths

- effective management to ensure good academic standards
- clear strategic direction supported by comprehensive planning processes
- an open and responsive management style
- clear communications and reporting procedures
- productive links and partnerships with a wide range of external organisations
- effective promotion and management of equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- failure to ensure the reliability of the student record system
- poor record of making statistical and financial returns to the FEFC

87 Effective management has enabled the college to ensure high standards of teaching and students' achievements. There has been good progress in meeting the college's mission and corporate objectives. College-wide targets have been established for the three-year period 1997 to 2000. Some targets associated with increasing the participation of adult learners have already been exceeded. The college recognises that some targets were overambitious and may have been based on inaccurate data. The inspection revealed that some of the data on

Cross-college Provision

students' achievements held on the central information system were inaccurate.

88 The college has well-developed planning processes. They include extensive consultation with staff. The college's plans are supported by thorough analyses of local and regional needs and well-considered responses to national priorities. The college's mission and corporate objectives set out simply and clearly the strategic direction of the college. This is reflected in the operating plans produced by curriculum and cross-college divisions. Progress towards meeting the objectives in divisional plans is regularly and carefully monitored through a system of termly management reviews conducted by senior managers. Targets have been set for students' retention and achievements for each course offered by the college.

89 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. Inspectors and auditors agreed with the self-assessment report that there had been ineffective monitoring and control of the centralised college information system. The college's student records system has not provided accurate data for management or funding purposes. There have been serious delays in the submission to the FEFC of ISR data and serious inaccuracies which led to both overfunding and underfunding. These weaknesses were noted in the self-assessment report. The annual internal audit report for 1997-98 was qualified in respect of the student records system. When the inaccuracy in ISR data was discovered in June 1998, managers acted swiftly to draw up an action plan. It is currently being implemented and has already led to some improvements. Management responsibility for student records was separated from finance until late 1998. These two areas are now the responsibility of the assistant principal, finance.

90 The college has good levels of financial reserves. However, it had deficits in 1996 and

1997 and is projecting a deficit in 1998-99.

The college aims to accommodate the repayment of its overfunding within the current financial year. The finance team is appropriate for the college's size and is managed by the assistant principal, finance, who is a qualified accountant and a member of the senior management team. Detailed monthly management accounts are produced promptly. They are comprehensive except that income and expenditure forecasts are only included in the management accounts after the start of the spring term. Budget holders receive monthly reports on expenditure and good support from the finance team.

91 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that the open management style of the college is a strength. It has helped the college to deal swiftly and positively with the problems resulting from inaccurate data. Staff feel confident that key issues are shared and discussed with them, and that management decisions are based on a careful consideration of the college's long-term future. This confidence has been enhanced by senior managers' careful response to issues arising from the college merger.

92 The college has effective communications and clear reporting procedures. Regular meetings and briefings help to keep staff well informed about college and national issues. Memorandums from the principal, and the publication of minutes of senior management meetings in staff bulletins, have increased the flow of information. The basis for allocating resources is well understood. Human resources are carefully deployed and monitored. Staff are generally clear about their roles and responsibilities.

93 The college has a clear commitment to partnerships and a wide range of productive links. The self-assessment report listed only some of the many links and partnerships. These include local authorities and TECs, community groups, schools, colleges, employers and voluntary bodies. The college has major

Cross-college Provision

contracts with the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, Training and Enterprise. The adult continuing education division works with more than 50 centres in North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire. The college has taken the lead in collaborative partnerships for widening participation and inclusive learning.

94 Equality of opportunity is effectively promoted and managed. The college's policy is clear and comprehensive. The commitment to equal opportunities is understood and respected by staff and students. An assistant principal has responsibility for co-ordinating and monitoring the implementation of the policy and chairs the equal opportunities committee of the academic board. A comprehensive self-assessment report systematically analyses the college's performance against established equality statements. Student enrolments and staff appointments are carefully monitored. The percentage of students from minority ethnic groups is double that in the local community. Publicity material is regularly reviewed to ensure that it represents college policy. The college has successfully adopted measures to widen participation, particularly amongst disadvantaged groups.

Conclusions

95 The inspection team found the college's self-assessment report to be a useful basis for planning and undertaking the inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses included in the report but found some that the college had not identified. Inspectors considered that in several sections of the report, the strengths and weaknesses did not effectively summarise the judgements in the supporting reports. The overall report lacked adequate references to students' achievements and, in some cases, to teaching and learning. This made it an incomplete document which could not stand alone, and which did not include evidence and judgements on a key element of

the grading decisions the college had made. Some of the grades in the self-assessment report did not correspond to those awarded by inspectors. One curriculum grade was higher than that awarded by inspectors and another was lower. Two of the five cross-college areas were given higher grades by the college than by the inspection team.

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

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	9
16-18 years	12
19-24 years	10
25+ years	67
Not known	2
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	47
Intermediate	17
Advanced	15
Higher education	6
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	15
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	77	1,969	9
Agriculture	1	13	0
Construction	56	343	2
Engineering	205	2,547	13
Business	500	3,213	17
Hotel and catering	384	1,045	7
Health and community care	807	2,028	13
Art and design	572	1,734	11
Humanities	164	5,118	24
Basic education	58	794	4
Total	2,824	18,804	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 9% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	198	78	1	277
Supporting direct learning contact	79	12	10	101
Other support	247	21	31	299
Total	524	111	42	677

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£18,123,000	£18,372,000	£18,300,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£16.26	£16.79	£15.53*
Payroll as a proportion of income	66%	63%	67%
Achievement of funding target	106%	99%	95%
Diversity of income	26%	24%	28%
Operating surplus	-£884,000	-£364,000	-£2,294,000+

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998)

Payroll – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996), college (1997 and 1998)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

*provisional data

+includes repayments to FEFC

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1995	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
1	Expected completions	678	1,099	986	2,256	2,722	4,212
	Retention (%)	76	85	90	73	83	81
	Achievement (%)	82	72	82	69	52	74
2	Expected completions	1,533	1,893	2,111	2,437	2,325	3,275
	Retention (%)	69	87	84	75	87	83
	Achievement (%)	77	73	79	58	64	75
3	Expected completions	-	2,384	1,482	-	2,519	2,320
	Retention (%)	-	85	90	-	89	87
	Achievement (%)	71	71	75	73	72	70
4 or 5	Expected completions	-	25	9	-	461	459
	Retention (%)	-	96	89	-	88	90
	Achievement (%)	96	100	88	84	97	82
Short courses	Expected completions	1,238	1,326	459	7,076	7,419	5,032
	Retention (%)	88	96	97	93	95	94
	Achievement (%)	91	33	90	92	69	82
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	787	351	727	1,664	3,037	2,537
	Retention (%)	72	83	85	73	90	85
	Achievement (%)	100	69	81	100	79	78

Source: ISR

-ISR data not collected

*ISR data may not be reliable

n/a not applicable

FEFC Inspection Report 58/99

**Published by the
Further Education Funding Council**

Website <http://www.fefc.ac.uk>

© FEFC May 1999