

Thomas Rotherham College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1998-99**

**THE
FURTHER
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FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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Contents

Paragraph

Summary

Context

The college and its mission	1
The inspection	6

Curriculum areas

Computing and information technology	9
Science	15
Business	21
English	26
Psychology and sociology	31

Cross-college provision

Support for students	36
General resources	43
Quality assurance	50
Governance	60
Management	66
Conclusions	73

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

Thomas Rotherham College

Yorkshire and Humberside Region

Inspected April 1999

Thomas Rotherham College is a sixth form college situated in Rotherham, South Yorkshire. The college's self-assessment report was detailed and comprehensive, and all staff were involved in its production. It was developed through a thorough process which was linked to its annual quality assurance cycle and included a rigorous programme of lesson observations. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report but they considered that, in the main, the college had been overgenerous in its grading. The college had made good progress in implementing its action plan by the time of the inspection.

The college is well managed and its communication systems are good. Its financial position is strong. It has well-established links with its partner schools and provides a high level of support to students. It has broadened its provision considerably since the last inspection to respond to the needs of local business and mature students. It has a thorough and effective quality assurance system. Governors monitor the college's financial and academic performance closely. The college has significantly improved its accommodation and equipment since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is high in the areas inspected, and outstanding in business. Overall, students'

achievements compare well with national averages for sixth form colleges. The achievements of 16 to 19 year old students at level 3 show a steady pattern of improvement over the last three years. Retention rates have fallen slightly over the same period, and for 16 to 19 year old students they are around the national average for sixth form colleges. The college should: ensure that provision in all curriculum areas matches the needs and abilities of students; improve the quality of group tutorials; increase retention rates on part-time courses; strengthen aspects of operational planning; continue to address some shortcomings in its accommodation.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Computing and information technology	2	Support for students	2
Science	2	General resources	2
Business	1	Quality assurance	2
English	3	Governance	2
Psychology and sociology	2	Management	2

The College and its Mission

1 Thomas Rotherham College was established as a sixth form college in 1967, on the site of a boys' grammar school which dated back to 1483. It is voluntarily controlled by the Feoffees of the Common Land of Rotherham, who are currently represented by two foundation governors. The college is located on a single site, one mile from the centre of Rotherham. The borough of Rotherham has three other colleges of further education, eight schools with sixth forms and nine schools for the 11 to 16 age group. The college has 11 partner schools, comprising the nine Rotherham 11 to 16 schools, one school in Sheffield and one in Doncaster. In 1998, 73% of the college's full-time students came from these partner schools, and 16% from 11 to 18 schools in outer Rotherham.

2 Rotherham has a population of 250,000 people. It was previously a centre for the coal, steel and glass manufacturing industries, but these have declined markedly in recent years. The borough of Rotherham has pockets of severe deprivation, and an overall unemployment rate of 10%, compared with the regional rate for Yorkshire and Humberside of 5.4%. In 1998, the proportion of year 11 pupils leaving school with five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) grades C or above was 36.8%, compared with a national average of 46.3%.

3 In November 1998, the college had 1,769 students, 1,191 of whom were studying full time. Student numbers have grown by 85% over the last five years. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds represent 4% of the local population and 10% of college students. Of the full-time students, 80% are enrolled on level 3 programmes. The college's provision includes 30 subjects at general certificate of education advanced/advanced supplementary level (GCE A/AS level), 16 GCSE subjects, and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes in four vocational areas. The

college has continued to diversify its activities since incorporation. Courses in nursery nursing and sports coaching have recently been introduced. A programme of continuing education has been established on three evenings a week, and includes an access to higher education programme. The college is developing its provision of customised training and development for local businesses and an outreach programme in the local community.

4 The curriculum is grouped in 19 subject departments, co-ordinated by three curriculum managers. The senior management team consists of the principal, vice-principal, the director of finance and resources, two assistant principals responsible for student services and college information systems, respectively, and the curriculum managers. In November 1998, the college employed 71 full-time equivalent teachers and 53 full-time equivalent support staff.

5 The college's mission is 'to be a leading provider of a high-quality learning experience in a supportive and stimulating environment in order to enhance the educational, vocational and personal development and attainment of post-16 students'. In 1998, the corporation extended this mission specifically to include lifelong learning and business training within the Rotherham community.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected in April 1999. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and had studied information held by other divisions of the Further Education Funding Council (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 data on students' achievements for 1998. Inspectors checked these against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining

Context

bodies and found them accurate. The college was notified approximately two months before the inspection of the sample of its provision to be inspected. Eight inspectors and an auditor carried out the inspection over a total of 40 days. Inspection team members held meetings with college governors, managers, staff and students. They consulted representatives of the local education authority (LEA), business and community groups and headteachers of local schools.

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons observed and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the lessons observed, 76% were judged to be good or outstanding and 1% were less than satisfactory. This compares favourably with the national averages of 65% and 6%, respectively, for all colleges inspected during 1997-98. The proportion of lessons judged to be outstanding, at 34%, is significantly higher than the national average for sixth form colleges of 24% in 1997-98.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	15	14	6	0	0	35
GCSE	2	3	6	0	0	11
GNVQ	2	2	0	0	0	4
Other vocational	2	5	1	0	0	8
Other*	3	5	3	1	0	12
Total (No.)	24	29	16	1	0	70
Total (%)	34	42	23	1	0	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*

*including group tutorials

Context

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. The attendance rate varied from 88% in science to 69% in computing and information technology (IT).

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Thomas Rotherham College	11.8	81
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

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 2

9 Inspectors observed 13 lessons covering the range of provision in computing and IT. They agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report relating to specialist computing courses. Inspectors identified some weaknesses in the basic IT courses designed to supplement students' main programmes. The self-assessment report did not include an evaluation of these courses.

Key strengths

- the high quality of most teaching
- the availability of accredited IT courses for all full-time students
- students' high levels of achievement at GCE A level
- good-quality course materials
- effective course management

Weaknesses

- the slow progress of some students on IT courses
- failure to match some courses to students' needs

10 The range of computing and IT courses includes GCE A level computing, the Cambridge IT certificate, RSA Examinations Board (RSA) computer literacy and information technology stage 1, and South Yorkshire Open College Network modules in IT. The college also offers a small amount of basic provision in the community and some customised courses for local businesses; customer satisfaction on these courses is high. All full-time students who do not possess an IT qualification, and for whom IT is not otherwise part of their learning programme, are expected to take the RSA course. Students of GCE A level French may be

assessed in French. The college acknowledges that the range of IT courses for full-time students is insufficiently matched to students' needs and abilities, and that the courses do not offer enough progression opportunities. The self-assessment report referred to the college's plans to increase the range of IT courses.

11 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that curriculum organisation and management are of a high standard. Schemes of work, produced in a standard format, are detailed and describe the teaching methods to be used. The schemes for GCE A level include tasks to extend the knowledge and skills of the more able students. Course teams meet regularly and minutes of their meetings clearly record actions to be taken. Detailed action plans enable teachers to monitor progress against targets, and have led to improvements. For example, having identified rates of retention at GCE A level as a weakness, teachers paid more rigorous attention to following up poor attendance. At the time of the inspection, the retention rate of first-year students had risen by 5%.

12 As the self-assessment report indicated, teaching is of high quality. Of the 13 lessons observed, seven were good and five outstanding. In theory lessons, teachers use a variety of appropriate methods to retain students' interest. These include stimulating lectures supplemented by worksheets, and the use of simple but effective aids to help students to understand complex processes. GCE A level computing students used revision cards to revise data structures in pairs. Each pair worked on different data structures and gave a presentation to the group. Students were confident in their presentations and the tutor was supportive in clarifying any issues and helping them to develop ideas. In most practical lessons, students worked on their own using pre-prepared learning materials, with support from the teacher when required. In a few practical lessons, the pace was too slow and the students

Curriculum Areas

were working at an inappropriate level. Some students in the basic IT lessons said that they would have welcomed the opportunity to progress more quickly to higher level courses.

13 Students' achievements are consistently high in GCE A level computing, a strength noted in the self-assessment report. Of those students who completed their courses in 1998, 94% passed and 63% achieved grades A to C, compared with the national figures for sixth form colleges of 81% and 44%, respectively. Comparison of students' grades with their achievements at GCSE indicates that students achieve, on average, almost one grade higher than predicted. Approximately three-quarters of the students progress to higher education, and half of these enrol on degree courses related to

computing. The quality of students' coursework is good. Homework is set regularly, marked constructively and returned promptly. Most students achieve good levels of practical skills, though some spend a great deal of time repeating basic skills.

14 Students benefit from the good IT facilities in the learning resource centre, the central IT suite and specialist classrooms. They have access to a suitable range of books and to the internet. The computing classrooms contain attractive display material, including students' work. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, the ventilation in these rooms is poor, and the resulting extremes of temperature have an adverse effect on teachers' and students' concentration.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in computing and information technology, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
RSA computer literacy and information technology	1	Expected completions	*	*	169
		Retention (%)	*	*	87
		Achievement (%)	*	*	67
Cambridge IT (wordprocessing module)	2	Expected completions	50	60	69
		Retention (%)	86	80	92
		Achievement (%)	96	100	100
GCE A level computing	3	Expected completions	37	28	32
		Retention (%)	+	70	68
		Achievement (%)	97	89	94

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

*course not offered

+reliable data not available

Curriculum Areas

Science

Grade 2

15 Inspectors observed 12 lessons, covering GCE A level and GCSE courses in biological sciences, chemistry, geology and physics. The self-assessment report for the curriculum area was detailed and rigorous, and inspectors agreed with its assessment of strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- effective and lively teaching
- good support for students
- effective course management
- regular setting and thorough marking of work
- high retention rates in GCE A level physics and geology
- students' good achievements in GCSE sciences in 1998

Weaknesses

- a narrow curriculum
- ineffective co-ordination of the work of science departments
- poor retention rates on some courses
- low pass rates in GCE A level chemistry

16 The number of students taking science subjects at GCE A level has remained high, against a national trend of declining enrolments. The college also maintains viable numbers on its GCSE science courses. Attempts to market adult and vocational courses have been unsuccessful and the range of science courses offered is narrow. Individual courses are well managed, and teachers make good use of extensive documentation. Action plans and course reviews include analysis of key data and the effective use of performance indicators. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that there is insufficient

co-ordination of the four science departments. For example, geology teachers operate very much in isolation from those in the other subjects, and there is little long-term strategic thinking for science as a whole.

17 Teaching is good and most lessons are well managed. However, lesson plans vary in quality and some are insufficiently detailed. Most teachers use a well-designed standard proforma, whereas others use departmental variations which sometimes contain only brief notes on the topics to be covered. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that a variety of teaching methods is used which helps to maintain students' interest. Teachers have a love for their subject which leads to lively lessons with plenty of good humour. Students work effectively in pairs and small groups. For example, in some lessons, students worked in small groups and prepared answers to past examination questions. Their answers were displayed on overhead transparencies and shared with the whole group. There was considerable debate when students working in pairs marked scripts prepared by the teacher. The scripts deliberately included answers which were incorrect or ambiguous. Students corrected the answers using texts provided in the laboratory. Teachers set work regularly and mark it thoroughly.

18 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that teachers provide students with a high level of support in their studies. Teachers give up much of their non-teaching time to help them. There is a well-publicised rota of the times when each teacher is available, on a voluntary basis, in the science workshop. Many of the lessons were part of a thorough and useful revision programme. Geology students whose entry qualifications are low or who perform poorly in internal examinations are offered extra lessons and these are well attended.

19 In 1998, the proportions of students who gained grade C or above in GCSE science

Curriculum Areas

subjects were above the national average. The corresponding proportions in physics and geology were outstandingly high at 85% and 82%, respectively, and these were well above the national averages for sixth form colleges of 44% and 48%, respectively. In 1998, results in GCSE chemistry were poor and the proportion of students gaining grade C or above was only 20%. Results in GCSE chemistry in 1996 and 1997, however, were good. At GCE A level, students' achievements in most science subjects are at the national average. The exception is chemistry, where the proportions of students gaining grades A to E and grades A to C, respectively, have been consistently below national averages for the last three years. Retention rates for GCE A level physics and geology have been above the national average

for sixth form colleges for three consecutive years. However, retention rates in GCSE geology and GCE A level biological sciences have declined, and in 1998, they were below the national average. Students work conscientiously and their attendance rate is high.

20 Resources are managed effectively. Technicians provide a valuable service and ensure practical lessons run smoothly. Laboratories are well organised and tidy, with appropriate levels of equipment. Furniture is old fashioned but well maintained. Wall displays are used effectively, providing each laboratory with a clear subject identity. The science learning workshop contains a good selection of texts, periodicals and computer software.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE sciences (chemistry, human physiology and health, geology and physics)	2	Expected completions	104	129	96
		Retention (%)	83	74	70
		Achievement (%)	38	34	60
GCE A level biological sciences (biology and human biology)	3	Expected completions	100	106	110
		Retention (%)	88	72	69
		Achievement (%)	57	83	86
GCE A level chemistry	3	Expected completions	52	57	66
		Retention (%)	94	75	76
		Achievement (%)	60	74	72
GCE A level geology	3	Expected completions	25	34	37
		Retention (%)	100	79	81
		Achievement (%)	82	78	83
GCE A level physics	3	Expected completions	41	48	37
		Retention (%)	95	83	81
		Achievement (%)	74	81	86

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

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 1

21 Inspectors observed 14 lessons covering courses in business studies, economics and wordprocessing. They agreed with most of the judgements contained in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- students' outstanding achievements
- high retention rates
- well-organised lessons
- high quality of teaching
- integration of business principles and practice
- students' understanding of business theories and concepts
- good specialist resources

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on the part-time GCE A level business studies course

22 The college offers a range of business courses for full-time students aged 16 to 19. This includes GNVQ programmes at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels, GCE A levels in business studies and economics, and also courses in text processing and wordprocessing. Many of these are also available to part-time evening students. There has been a significant growth in the number of students taking GCE A level and wordprocessing courses over the past three years, but GNVQ enrolments have declined. Enrolments for GCE A level economics have been consistently high although the national trend is declining. The college also offers some full-cost management courses to local businesses. At the time of the inspection, GNVQ and GCE A level courses, separately managed hitherto, were being brought under the administration of a single department.

There is now a sharing of resources and teaching expertise between GNVQ and GCE A level courses. Courses are well managed, and internal verification procedures are effective.

23 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that teaching is of high quality. All lessons were good or outstanding. Furthermore, the quality of teaching is consistently high across all courses and subjects in this curriculum area. Schemes of work and lesson plans are comprehensive. Teachers use suitably varied methods and good-quality learning materials. They illustrate theoretical concepts effectively with relevant case studies. For example, in a GCE A level economics lesson a video case study concerning third world debt helped students understand theories of economic development. Students are encouraged to play an active part in the lessons, for example by giving presentations of the results of their classwork to the rest of the class. They demonstrate a good understanding of their subjects and are able to apply business theories and concepts to practical applications. Teachers regularly check that students understand their lessons. In all lessons, teachers started by revising what had been learned previously and concluded by summarising the key points of the lesson. Wordprocessing lessons begin and end with a presentation by the teacher with individual practical work in between. In these lessons, students mark each other's work under guidance from the teacher, who then undertakes a final assessment. Students' work is of a good standard and teachers' marking includes extensive written feedback. Students speak positively about the quality of the teaching and support. GNVQ students benefit from work experience and talks from visiting speakers.

24 Students' achievements are outstanding on most courses. In 1998, the pass rates on the full-time GCE A level courses in business studies and in economics were 96% and 97%, respectively. The proportion of higher grades A to C for these courses was significantly higher

Curriculum Areas

than the national average for sixth form colleges, and students gained higher grades than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE scores on entry. In 1998, the pass rate on the part-time GCE A level business studies course was low, at 29%. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that retention rates are high. They have improved markedly during the past three years, and on most courses they are significantly above the national averages for sixth form colleges. Of the 118 full-time students who started their two-year GCE A level business studies course in 1996, 92% completed it.

25 Teachers are appropriately qualified and most have recent experience of working in an aspect of business. The teaching accommodation is of a high quality. All rooms are modern, carpeted and well decorated. There are excellent classroom and corridor wall displays of students' work and other business material. Courses have base rooms with good-quality resources. The business section of the college has dedicated and networked computer facilities. In addition, students use the college's learning resource centre where they can use the internet and intranet and a range of business resources produced by teachers. The centre has a good stock of relevant books, journals, videos and CD-ROMs.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate business	2	Expected completions	30	23	19
		Retention (%)	87	65	95
		Achievement (%)	88	73	89
Text and wordprocessing, stages 2 and 3	2 and 3	Expected completions	51	173	192
		Retention (%)	73	96	95
		Achievement (%)	84	90	91
GVNQ advanced business	3	Expected completions	35	32	21
		Retention (%)	83	53	86
		Achievement (%)	80	67	78
GCE A level business studies (full time and part time)	3	Expected completions	90	107	130
		Retention (%)	85	75	90
		Achievement (%)	77	98	92
GCE A level economics	3	Expected completions	29	46	36
		Retention (%)	90	76	89
		Achievement (%)	81	97	97

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

Curriculum Areas

English

Grade 3

26 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering GCE A level and GCSE courses in English. They agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the college's self-assessment but considered that students' achievements had been overstated. They identified some important weaknesses which were not mentioned in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- good teaching and learning on GCE A level courses
- good provision of learning support
- a stimulating learning environment

Weaknesses

- low achievements in GCSE English
- failure to match provision to the needs of some students
- insufficient use of learning resources outside the classroom

27 English courses available to full-time students comprise English language and English literature at GCE A level and GCSE. The same courses are offered to adults studying in the evenings. In addition, English is available as a component of the access to higher education course. Teachers in the English department work well together as a team, and have been responsive to the college's objective to develop adult provision. However, some provision is failing to meet the needs of students. By the time of the inspection, half the students who initially enrolled on the GCE A level and GCSE evening sessions had left the course. The self-assessment report did not identify as a weakness the absence of suitable courses for those full-time students for whom grade C at GCSE is an unrealistic learning goal.

28 Teaching and learning at GCE A level are of high quality. Lessons are well planned, and each subject has a clear and comprehensive scheme of work. The schemes are attractively produced and contain useful information and guidance for teachers. The college is taking part in a pilot scheme to assess the key skill of communication through the GCE A level English course. Teachers encourage students to work together co-operatively in pairs or small groups. In one lesson, small groups acted as editorial boards and after linguistic analysis of several advertisements taken from colour supplements, produced their own advertisements. In some GCSE lessons, teachers made good use of topical materials, and gave the students imaginative tasks. The GCSE course was inappropriate for some students, however, and it did not meet their needs. They found some of the learning materials difficult to understand, and their responses and level of understanding were poor. Students whose previous achievement in English is low receive an extra hour's tuition and additional support sessions. Students on all English courses appreciate the extra help they receive from their teachers, both informally and in well-organised revision sessions. Teachers monitor students' progress frequently. They provide useful study guides and theory packs for GCE A level students, and they arrange talks from visiting speakers. Students have opportunities to visit theatres and cinemas, and to become involved in national poetry week. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, the use of IT to assist teaching and learning is at an early stage of development.

29 Pass rates for GCE A level English language and literature have been below the national averages for sixth form colleges for the last three years. However, the proportion of students gaining grades A to C in GCE A level English literature exceeded the national average in 1998. Retention is broadly in line with national benchmarks. Students' achievements at GCSE are poor; of those completing the one-year course, 22% gained grades C or above in

Curriculum Areas

1997 and 29% in 1998. In 1998, 60% obtained the same or a lower grade than their previous result. Students following a programme of three GCE A levels who have already obtained grade D in GCSE English resit the examination in the following November; in 1998, 69% of the 35 students who took the resit examination gained grade C. Many students who have obtained low grades repeatedly follow the course again in order to obtain a grade C and most are unsuccessful. The college has not identified an alternative qualification course for these students.

30 Lessons take place in attractive classrooms in a separate building used for the teaching of English. Displays include students' work and model essays which students can borrow. A resource centre has been established with a small but developing bank of learning materials and six computers, two of which provide access to the internet. In its self-assessment report, the college acknowledged that the department has poor links with the resource centre and fails to make good use of it to extend the breadth of students' learning activities and to help students develop research skills. The department's action plan outlines ways of improving these links but progress on implementing it has been slow.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE English	2	Expected completions	150	187	224
		Retention (%)	81	75	84
		Achievement (%)	45	22	29
GCSE English literature	2	Expected completions	23	13	16
		Retention (%)	83	77	81
		Achievement (%)	84	30	62
GCE A level English language	3	Expected completions	128	144	161
		Retention (%)	90	75	80
		Achievement (%)	85	83	86
GCE A level English literature	3	Expected completions	59	67	88
		Retention (%)	88	81	81
		Achievement (%)	75	76	86

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

Curriculum Areas

Psychology and Sociology

Grade 2

31 Inspectors observed 12 lessons, covering GCE A level and GCSE courses in sociology and psychology, and the access to higher education course in social sciences.

Inspectors agreed with many judgements in the self-assessment report, but found some strengths and weaknesses which the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- much well-organised and lively teaching
- high students' achievements in sociology
- good responses from students in oral and written work
- effective revision classes and study guides
- thorough marking of students' work

Weaknesses

- undemanding and insufficiently varied activities in some lessons
- insufficiently detailed schemes of work

32 The college offers GCE A/AS level and GCSE psychology and sociology to full-time and part-time students. An access to higher education course in social sciences has recently been established. Student numbers on GCE A level courses have grown considerably over the last three years. The management of the psychology and sociology courses is good. Teachers of these subjects work well together to plan and review courses, discuss teaching methods and devise learning materials. Students said that they found the course handbooks and other documentation useful. The handbooks contain assessment criteria, outline schemes of work and a marking and homework policy. Whilst schemes of work are

generally well constructed, they focus on the teachers' role and course content and make insufficient reference to learning objectives, assessment criteria and teaching methods. Staff teams for both psychology and sociology calculate the extent to which value is added to students' achievements, by comparing the final examination grades which students obtain with the GCSE results they held when they joined the college. As the self-assessment report indicated, links with higher education and other external agencies are weak. The college is attempting to remedy this by organising an appropriate programme of visiting speakers and outside visits.

33 Most lessons are well planned, and include a variety of suitable activities to engage and sustain the students' interest. Teachers aim to develop students' grasp of technical terms and understanding of concepts. In most lessons, they use good-quality handouts. Teachers encourage students to use IT. Teachers ensure that students are fully engaged in learning activities by organising them to work together in pairs, small groups and as a whole class. For instance, in a sociology lesson on pressure groups, students worked in groups on posters which were to be presented to the rest of the group and then displayed in the classroom. In some psychology lessons, teachers failed to give the students demanding tasks and merely required them to listen whilst they read out information, or made them copy from the board or text book. Many students spoke enthusiastically of the support received from their teachers. In most cases, students have a purposeful approach to learning and they work well with their teachers. On occasions, however, students' group work is sometimes not organised and structured properly and the students' progress is adversely affected. In some instances, teachers do not use a sufficiently wide range of appropriate methods to excite and hold the interest of the less-motivated students. These shortcomings were not identified in the self-assessment report.

Curriculum Areas

Teachers review students' progress regularly against agreed targets, and organise extra revision sessions for those who are not performing to the required level. Students value these sessions and their attendance at them is high. Teachers have produced high-quality study guides to support these sessions. Most students' work is marked thoroughly and teachers provide students with detailed and constructive feedback on how they can improve their performance.

34 The quality of students' written and oral work is high, a strength not included in the college's self-assessment report. Many essays demonstrate a well-developed understanding of the subject, and some coursework shows that the students have acquired good levels of knowledge and analytical skills and that they can organise their work well. In lessons, students displayed oral skills confidently. Examination results are mostly at, or above, the national averages for sixth form colleges.

Examination results in GCSE sociology are outstanding; in 1998, the pass rate at grades C or above was 100%, compared with the national average for sixth form colleges of 64%. However, students' results in GCSE psychology declined in 1998. As the self-assessment report identified, retention rates in this curriculum area are broadly similar to national averages. They are, however, declining on GCSE courses and the action plan in the self-assessment report includes detailed plans to reverse this trend.

35 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that teachers are well qualified in their subjects. Many are experienced examiners. Students benefit from being taught in specialist rooms which have stimulating displays of students' work, although the sociology rooms are too small for the number of students using them. The curriculum area has a plentiful supply of books, videos and resource packs to enable students to carry out research on their own.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE sociology	2	Expected completions	32	25	35
		Retention (%)	81	76	71
		Achievement (%)	81	89	100
GCSE psychology	2	Expected completions	64	60	55
		Retention (%)	70	70	69
		Achievement (%)	84	76	55
GCE A level psychology	3	Expected completions	49	65	117
		Retention (%)	76	69	70
		Achievement (%)	86	87	90
GCE A level sociology	3	Expected completions	42	46	92
		Retention (%)	81	70	76
		Achievement (%)	76	88	89

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

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

36 Inspectors agreed with most of the college's judgements relating to support for students, but identified some weaknesses which were not included in the self-assessment report. They observed seven group tutorials.

Key strengths

- close links with partner schools
- informative pre-entry guidance
- effective learning support
- an enthusiastic and active student executive body
- effective reviewing of the progress of individual students
- high-quality careers provision

Weaknesses

- some ineffective group tutorials
- shortcomings in the arrangements to support evening students

37 The college has successful arrangements to ensure that full-time 16 to 19 year old students enrol on appropriate courses. Prospectuses and information leaflets provide helpful information, and links with the college's partner schools are strong. The college provides a range of sporting and curricular activities for school pupils, to ease their transition to college. Liaison staff visit partner schools regularly and get to know prospective students. Each full-time applicant is interviewed by college careers staff who give impartial guidance. Open evenings give prospective students opportunities to meet curriculum specialists and current students. Responses to questionnaires indicate that students are well satisfied with the pre-entry information and guidance they receive.

38 Full-time students find induction helpful. An induction day in July enables prospective students to sample a variety of curriculum activities and inform themselves about the college. In September, students refine their choices before signing their learning agreements. They receive course guidelines and a student diary which includes the college charter. A senior manager checks all learning agreements and subsequently reviews the progress of students who have been identified as likely to require further assistance. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that some adults who attend college in the evenings have not been made sufficiently aware of the support services and college facilities available to them and that induction arrangements for them are inadequate.

39 In 1998, the college modified its tutorial arrangements and established a small team of specialist personal tutors. The team has developed comprehensive guidelines and materials, and an annual programme of activities. The programme is followed by all full-time students during one hour each week and it includes group activities and progress reviews of individual students. These reviews are effective and there is good liaison between personal tutors and subject teachers. Students expressed their appreciation of the opportunities to review their progress towards implementation of their action plans and the achievement of the examination grades predicted for them on the basis of their previous examination results. Although the updating of students' records of achievement is encouraged, it is not closely linked to the individual reviews of progress. The group tutorials are less successful than the individual reviews. Many students state that aspects of group tutorials are inappropriate to their needs. The grade profile for tutorials was lower than that for lessons in curriculum areas. Some group tutorials were poorly attended, gave students insufficient opportunity to express their views and were not well sequenced within the overall tutorial programme. Students are

Cross-college Provision

complimentary about the personal support they receive from teachers. Many of the students, however, said that they were not aware of the professional counselling service which is currently available to them on two days a week.

40 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that students have access to considerable additional learning support. At the time of inspection, 10% of full-time students were receiving such support. Since the last inspection, a manager has been appointed to co-ordinate learning support arrangements across the college. All full-time students are given tests in literacy and numeracy on entry. These tests, however, are not sufficiently differentiated to take account of the levels of literacy and numeracy required of students on the courses they will follow. In 1998-99, 88% of those students identified as requiring support have taken it up. The support is available within classes, through mathematics and English workshops, by individual appointment or by self-referral at the learning resource centre. The progress of students attending additional support sessions is carefully monitored. In 1997-98, students who had attended the sessions achieved higher GCSE English grades than those who did not attend. The college provides good support for students with dyslexia and uses a range of specialist agencies to meet students' particular needs.

41 The student council executive meets weekly and offers a lively forum for discussion of college issues. Each month, through principal's question time, tutor group representatives on the student council have a good opportunity to express their views to college managers. Students are represented on several college committees and make a useful contribution to them. They are currently helping to revise the student charter. Successful extra-curricular sporting, social and community events are held throughout the year. Students are encouraged to participate in college societies, though few show interest in some of them and attendance at meetings is poor.

42 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the well-developed programme of careers education and guidance is a major strength. The college's careers staff are closely involved in the guidance of students before entry and at all stages of their courses. Their work is effectively co-ordinated with that of careers service advisers, schools liaison tutors, work experience co-ordinators, personal tutors and the learning support team. All these staff work well together to help students to progress within the college and to higher education and employment. Almost half the full-time students take up a work placement offered through the well-organised work experience programme.

General Resources

Grade 2

43 Inspectors agreed with the record in the self-assessment report of the improvements in accommodation and other general resources made since the last inspection.

Key strengths

- well-maintained buildings
- attractive and well-designed learning resource centre
- considerable investment in IT
- excellent sporting facilities
- careful monitoring of space utilisation

Weaknesses

- inaccessibility of some parts of the site to students with restricted mobility
- unprepossessing reception and social areas for students
- some overcrowded classrooms

44 The main building dates from 1876. It is imposing and attractive, with grade II listed status, and is in pleasant well-maintained grounds. The external and internal fabric of

Cross-college Provision

the buildings is well looked after. The college employs its own cleaning staff and external contractors maintain the lawn areas and sports fields. There are effective security arrangements. The self-assessment report recognised that approximately 30% of teaching rooms are inaccessible to people with restricted mobility. Most general areas of the college, such as the learning resource centre, computer suite and the sports hall, are accessible to wheelchair users.

45 Since the last inspection, the college has significantly improved the quality of its physical resources. A new sports hall, dining area and IT suite have been completed in line with the accommodation strategy. The accommodation strategy sets out sound planning for future capital expenditure. It takes appropriate account of the college's need to make the best use of space whilst ensuring that the special characteristics of a listed building are preserved. In September 1998, fire damaged a wing of the main building. This placed considerable constraints on the availability of teaching rooms during the autumn and spring terms. The affected wing has been successfully refurbished to provide high-quality language teaching facilities and office accommodation. Systems to monitor the use of accommodation are well developed.

46 A good minimum standards specification for classrooms ensures that they are well decorated and suitably furnished. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, some rooms are small and they are unsuitable for teaching and learning activities such as large group discussions or projects for which the students need plenty of space. Although the heating system has been upgraded there are rooms where the temperature control is not effective. In each subject area, rooms are close to each other and to the teachers' work rooms. Most staff accommodation is fit for its purpose, but the workroom for sports studies teachers is small and unsuitable. A large general staff

room offers an alternative work and social area. The college reception area, though centrally located, is not welcoming. The reception office and nearby student services area are cramped. The college has plans to improve these areas.

47 The college has invested considerably in IT over the last three years. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the availability of modern computers with up-to-date software represents a strength in the college's resources. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is 1:5.5, which compares favourably with the average for the sector as a whole. Many of the computers have electronic mail and provide access to the internet. A new IT suite, connected to the learning resource centre, was opened in April 1997. It is sometimes required for examinations, and when it is, students' access to computers is severely restricted. Most staff have access to computers. College managers said that they were aware that the demands from staff on IT resources will increase as a new IT strategy is implemented.

48 The learning resource centre is attractive and it is well designed on two levels. It contains 120 study spaces and 15 computer workstations. The centre is extensively used, and becomes congested at peak periods. The monitoring of the use of resources is detailed, and shows that the bookstock in the centre is adequate. In addition, departments purchase books which are available to students in departmental resource areas. There is no comprehensive catalogue showing which books are held centrally and which are based in departments.

49 Sports facilities are excellent. They include a well-equipped fitness centre, a sports hall, and playing fields which are available to students and the community seven days a week. The college is awaiting the outcome of a collaborative lottery bid to provide an all-weather pitch and an extension to the sports centre. The new refectory is attractive and

Cross-college Provision

spacious. However, there are long queues for food at peak times. The original dining room has been converted into a students' common room but it also acts as a thoroughfare. The student council executive uses part of this area as an office and this arrangement is unsatisfactory. A separate area in the main building is designed for personal study. This room is also a thoroughfare and students find it difficult to work there without interruption. These social and study areas are not well furnished or welcoming. The self-assessment report recognised these weaknesses in the accommodation.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

50 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They considered that some strengths had been overstated and that insufficient emphasis had been given to some weaknesses.

Key strengths

- long-established commitment of all staff to improving quality
- systematic gathering of the views of students, staff, parents and employers
- well-established programme of lesson observations
- thorough annual reviews by teaching departments
- steady improvements in students' achievements at level 3
- extensive staff development opportunities

Weaknesses

- insufficient integration of self-assessment with quality assurance processes

- underdeveloped quality assurance arrangements for non-teaching functions in some areas
- insufficient quality assurance of equal opportunities and health and safety

51 The college's commitment to quality and quality assurance is strong and long standing. Quality assurance arrangements are the responsibility of the vice-principal, who is supported by a quality committee drawn from staff across the college. Members of the committee also play important individual roles in assuring quality. Quality assurance arrangements are based on those which were recognised as having many strengths in the previous inspection.

52 The college has produced a self-assessment report for each year since the previous inspection. All except the most recent report were developed by managers, drawing on evidence produced as part of the college's existing quality assurance arrangements. The 1997-98 report was the first to involve staff at all levels. The quality committee, senior managers and the corporation scrutinised each section of the report and moderated the suggested grades. Although the quality assurance and self-assessment processes are linked, they do not form a fully integrated system. Some elements of the quality assurance system do not place sufficient emphasis on the identification of strengths and weaknesses.

53 The views of students are gathered systematically through questionnaires at key stages of their courses. The opinions of staff are also canvassed annually. Since the self-assessment report was written, the college has introduced questionnaires for parents and employers. Summaries of responses to questionnaires are publicised appropriately. Actions and improvements have often followed from analysis of these responses. The suggestions and complaints system is well

Cross-college Provision

promoted and senior managers respond quickly to issues raised.

54 The well-established programme of lesson observation is used to provide evidence for self-assessment and staff appraisal. All teachers are observed at least once each year by curriculum managers. Each observation results in a grade agreed between the observer and the teacher. Several departments encourage staff to arrange additional observations of one another. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment finding that the programme is a strength. The inspectors' grade profile for lessons, however, is lower than that given in the self-assessment report.

55 The course review process is thorough. Departmental teams review their provision annually under a number of detailed headings. The teams are provided with helpful statistical information relating to attendance, retention and achievement rates, value-added data and surveys. In general, the reviews are thorough and analytical, a strength which is recognised in the self-assessment report. As part of the review process, course teams set targets for retention and achievement. Heads of department discuss the reviews with their curriculum manager. A member of the quality committee carries out a formal audit of each department's review procedures triennially to assure compliance with the college's quality assurance arrangements. The outcomes of the reviews contribute to each department's annual action plan which is written to a standard format. Progress in implementing this plan is regularly checked by the curriculum manager.

56 A notable feature of the quality assurance system, commented on favourably in the previous inspection report, is the college's requirement for all working groups and committees to evaluate their work annually, using agreed performance indicators. However, the review reports from some groups are insufficiently rigorous in assessing their performance and identifying areas for improvement. The groups responsible for

overseeing the equal opportunities and health and safety policies are not fully drawn into the quality assurance arrangements. These shortcomings were not mentioned in the self-assessment report.

57 Non-teaching staff teams are included in the quality assurance arrangements. All have agreed service standards which are prominently displayed near their work areas. Some have established performance indicators. They review the quality of their service regularly and draw up action plans for future improvements. Other teams have yet to do this. The views of those in the college who use the various services are not routinely sought.

58 The quality assurance arrangements have led to improvements in students' performance, particularly at level 3. Pass rates at GCE A level and at GNVQ advanced have shown steady improvement over the last three years. At level 2, students' GNVQ intermediate results have improved whilst the proportion of GCSE students gaining grade C or above has remained about the same in recent years. However, retention rates have declined on both level 2 and level 3 courses. The profile of lesson observation grades in this inspection was similar to that in the previous inspection, and the grades awarded to programme areas were also broadly similar.

59 As the self-assessment report indicated, the programme of staff development is wide ranging, extensive and well managed. The strategic plan commits the college to spending at least 1% of FEFC income on staff development. Much of the staff development programme is clearly related to strategic or departmental objectives. All staff undergo a biennial appraisal with their line manager at which performance targets are set and their training needs are discussed. Progress toward reaching these targets is reviewed at six-monthly intervals. The appraisal process is highly valued by most staff. The college achieved Investor in People status in January 1997.

Cross-college Provision

Governance

Grade 2

60 Inspectors and auditors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. The report did not identify some weaknesses relating to non-compliance with the instrument and articles of governance.

Key strengths

- governors' good attendance at meetings
- detailed monitoring of financial performance
- open style of governance
- close monitoring of academic performance

Weaknesses

- the lack of a formal programme of induction and training
- a number of non-compliance issues

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

62 The corporation has 17 members, including four women. There is one vacancy, which has remained unfilled for almost 12 months. A search committee has recently been established to consider the composition of the corporation and the additional three vacancies which will shortly arise. However, the committee has yet to formulate appointment procedures in line with the Nolan recommendations. The self-assessment report recognised the need to establish a formal induction and training programme for governors, and they have recently been invited

to assess their own training requirements. An informal review of governors' expertise is undertaken annually by the chair and clerk to the corporation, but a formal skills audit has not been carried out. As noted in the self-assessment report, governors have a wide range of appropriate skills.

63 The corporation meets at least five times a year and is supported by the finance and general purposes, buildings, personnel, audit, search and remuneration committees. All committees have appropriate and detailed terms of reference. Whilst the clerking is generally effective, there are a number of instances of non-compliance with the instrument and articles of government. For example, the corporation failed to re-appoint two of the existing governors or minute the formal approval of the strategic plan. These weaknesses were not recognised in the self-assessment report. Average attendance at corporation and committee meetings over the last 12 months is high at around 81%, and the inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that governors are committed to supporting the college and helping it to succeed. Arrangements for reporting to the corporation are good although there are no standing orders to determine the conduct of meetings. Over the last 12 months, the finance and general purposes committee has met six times. The committee conducts a detailed review of the college management accounts at each meeting, and is also kept fully informed of the college's capital projects. A joint meeting between the buildings and finance and general purposes committees has been held recently to co-ordinate the estates strategy. The most recent management accounts are also presented to all governors at each corporation meeting. The audit committee has prepared a comprehensive annual report for the corporation in advance of the requirements of the *Audit Code of Practice*.

64 The corporation conducts its business openly and has adopted an access to information policy, which details documents

Cross-college Provision

available to the public, including corporation and committee agendas, minutes and papers and the register of interests. It also sets out criteria for confidentiality. The register of interests has been completed by all governors and members of the college executive. Some of the disclosures lack detail, however, and the register does not cover the interests of close relatives of governors. The corporation has a code of conduct, which requires some updating in the wake of the Nolan recommendations, and a 'whistleblowing' policy. The college has established a website which contains the most recently approved corporation and committee minutes, in addition to a wide range of other information, such as the strategic plan and policy documents. Governors have not been sufficiently rigorous in assessing their own performance, although they have set a minimum level for individual attendance.

65 Corporation members contributed to the 1997 to 2000 strategic plan through their membership of college panels which considered different aspects of the plan. The minutes of corporation meetings show that they made a less substantial contribution to the formulation of the updated objectives for 1998-99. The corporate objectives of the 1997 plan were not formally monitored by the corporation although an individual governor, responsible for quality, reviews the annual reports of the different college committees. The conclusions from this review are not reported to the full corporation. Academic performance is closely monitored by the corporation. Governors were able to articulate confidently the successes of the college and they also demonstrated their knowledge of those curriculum areas where improvements are anticipated. Governors comply with the requirement of section 44 of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* to provide opportunities for religious education and collective worship.

Management

Grade 2

66 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They found some weaknesses in strategic planning, however, which the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- clear management structure with a broad range of committees
- effective deployment of staff
- good use of management information
- prudent financial management

Weaknesses

- some aspects of strategic and operational planning
- slow progress in the implementation of some key initiatives

67 As the self-assessment report recognised, the college has a clear management structure with good lines of communication at all levels. A broad range of committees successfully supports the work of the senior management team. Membership of the committees is wide ranging and includes non-teaching staff and students. The executive and senior management teams have recently been strengthened in order that they may monitor the work of groups of academic departments more closely and promote the development of the college in line with its mission. These teams meet weekly. The principal also holds briefing meetings with all staff each week, the minutes of which are posted in the staff room.

68 The 1997 to 2000 strategic plan was updated in August 1998 and includes a supplementary vision statement to develop lifelong learning. Not all strategic aims are translated into corporate objectives and there is

Cross-college Provision

no annual operating statement linking objectives to specific targets and specifying timescales within which these must be met. Many of the objectives are covered in action plans of the college committees and subject departments. In the absence of a comprehensive operating statement the college has no systematic means whereby it monitors, and reports upon, progress in meeting its objectives. For example, the objectives in the 1998 plan are substantially the same as those for the previous year, yet the strategic plan states that the previous year's objectives have mostly been achieved. Staff were not widely consulted about the 1998 plan. These weaknesses in relation to the operation of the strategic plan were not recognised in the self-assessment report. College policies are comprehensive, subject to regular review and are available on the college intranet.

69 The college has been successful in meeting or exceeding its targets for funding units and for student numbers over the last three years. This has been achieved through imaginative timetabling and efficient use of resources. The more flexible timetable introduced in September 1997 has enabled the college to increase its full-time student numbers by over 11% during the past two years. The detailed monitoring of teaching hours enables the college to deploy staff effectively. The average class size has gradually risen since incorporation whilst at the same time the average level of funding has fallen from over £19 to below £16. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that college information systems are comprehensive and effective. Curriculum management is informed by a broad range of data for each subject, relating to attendance, retention, achievements and destinations. This information helps the college to measure its performance against national benchmarks.

70 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The small but effective finance department produces detailed

management accounts each month which are reviewed against a limited number of financial ratios. The college has produced an operating surplus in each year since incorporation, and the college's latest financial forecasts indicate the continuing strength of the college's finances. A high level of reserves has been established. The self-assessment report noted the college's considerable success in its bids for non-standard grant funding. Diversity of income has risen from 7% in 1994-95 to 18% in 1997-98. Budgets are prepared prudently. The college's financial regulations are up to date and largely comprehensive. The reports of the internal and external auditors indicate that the college has a sound system of internal control although internal audit work has been restricted mainly to financial systems. Returns to the FEFC are accurate and made in accordance with required deadlines.

71 The college has some productive external links, for example with the regional sixth form college network. The self-assessment report recorded the principal's membership of a number of local collaborative groups including the Rotherham economic partnership and careers forum. A recent link project with Rotherham managing agency, funded from European sources, gave students the opportunity to receive work experience, complete national vocational qualification (NVQ) units and gain an insight into the world of work. Curriculum links between teachers in the partner schools and in the college are insufficiently developed, a weakness noted in the last inspection report.

72 A number of key strategic initiatives outlined in the 1997 strategic plan are at the early stages of development. The aim to develop 'equality of opportunity in all aspects of college life' has resulted in a comprehensive audit being undertaken, revealing for example, the very low incidence of students from minority ethnic backgrounds attending part-time evening programmes. However, the action plan drawn up following the audit has largely still to be

Cross-college Provision

implemented. The objective to increase the amount of business training has not been achieved; at the time of inspection the business training unit was uncertain whether it would achieve its training hours target for 1998-99, which is set at the level achieved the previous year. The objective to investigate the needs of persons from groups under-represented in the college, and to develop lifelong learning, has led to collaborative outreach work with the local further education college in a district of Rotherham with high levels of deprivation. This initiative is welcomed by the community although, so far, it has only involved very small numbers of residents. A marketing strategy has yet to be fully implemented. The aim to provide more coherent training for middle managers, cited as a weakness in the self-assessment report, has not yet been addressed.

Conclusions

73 The self-assessment report used by inspectors was the third one produced by the college. It was rigorous, evaluative and clearly presented. The judgements within it were supported by sound evidence. The report made good use of appropriate comparators such as national benchmarks. Strengths and weaknesses were clearly identified, and accompanied by a well-structured action plan to address weaknesses. An update to the report, published shortly before the inspection, contained evidence of identifiable improvements resulting from the action plan. Inspectors agreed, for the most part, with the college's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, but considered that overall it had been overgenerous in its grading.

74 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 (November 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	1
16-18 years	67
19-24 years	6
25+ years	26
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	4
Intermediate	29
Advanced	67
Higher education	0
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	0
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	285	108	22
Engineering	20	7	2
Business	130	100	13
Hotel and catering	84	0	5
Health and community care	77	37	6
Art and design	36	28	4
Humanities	539	298	47
Basic education	20	0	1
Total	1,191	578	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 25% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	69	2	0	71
Supporting direct learning contact	3	1	0	4
Other support	48	1	0	49
Total	120	4	0	124

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£3,100,000	£3,384,000	£3,652,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£17.24	£16.11	£15.69
Payroll as a proportion of income	69%	70%	68%
Achievement of funding target	109%	120%	101%
Diversity of income	11%	13%	18%
Operating surplus	£160,000	£59,000	£138,000

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 and 1997), college (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)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Expected completions	76	51	170	26	22	7
	Retention (%)	79	57	84	69	50	78
	Achievement (%)	90	96	81	78	100	100
2	Expected completions	888	947	648	104	148	55
	Retention (%)	79	78	72	68	50	56
	Achievement (%)	62	98	97	62	96	93
3	Expected completions	1,652	1,637	1,556	81	112	31
	Retention (%)	85	78	77	75	62	47
	Achievement (%)	77	83	87	55	74	77
4 or 5	Expected completions	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Retention (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Short courses	Expected completions	16	247	279	169	351	31
	Retention (%)	94	94	95	100	93	85
	Achievement (%)	90	99	99	100	100	100
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	53	49	43	1	1	0
	Retention (%)	74	82	84	100	100	n/a
	Achievement (%)	79	85	100	0	n/a	n/a

Source: ISR

n/a not applicable

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