

Cambridge House Adult Education Centre

**Inspection of FEFC-funded provision
in external institutions**

March 2000

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-2000**

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 assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

Reinspection

The FEFC has agreed that colleges with provision judged by the inspectorate to be less than satisfactory or poor (grade 4 or 5) should be reinspected. A college may have its funding agreement with the FEFC qualified to prevent it increasing the number of new students in an unsatisfactory curriculum area until the FEFC is satisfied that weaknesses have been addressed.

Reinspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Reinspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports and confirm that actions taken as a result of previous inspection have improved the quality of provision. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. The opinion of the FEFC's audit service contributes to inspectorate judgements about governance and management.

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circulars 97/12 and 97/22. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and other aspects 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*

In the first two years of the current four-year cycle of inspections, 26 external institutions were inspected. A single grade was awarded for the overall quality of FEFC-funded provision in each institution. The grade profile is shown below.

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
8%	31%	46%	11%	4%

Source: *Chief inspector's annual reports for 1997-98 and 1998-99. Grades were awarded using guidelines in Council Circular 97/12, Assessing Achievement*

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Context

External Institution 29/2000 Inspection of FEFC-funded provision in External Institutions

Cambridge House Adult Education Centre

**Inspected January 1998
Re-inspected April 1999
Second re-inspection March 2000**

1 Cambridge House Adult Education Centre is a part of the Cambridge House and Talbot settlement. The settlement is a voluntary organisation for social action and community education based in Camberwell, in the London borough of Southwark. It is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Its mission is to 'tackle the effects of poverty and discrimination by providing resources and promoting work for the advancement of education and providing support to community groups and voluntary organisations'. The adult education centre is one of seven projects managed by Cambridge House and Talbot. The centre provides courses to improve the basic education of disadvantaged adults; all provision is funded by the FEFC. Cambridge House and Talbot has a council of management and the settlement's director oversees all projects. A deputy director manages several projects including the adult education centre. The centre has a full-time manager and six part-time teachers. The accommodation comprises three classrooms and an office in the Cambridge House and Talbot building.

2 Most students are recruited from the local area. Of these, 75 per cent are aged 30 or over, 55 per cent are women and 65 per cent were recorded as being from minority

ethnic groups. In 1998-99, the centre achieved 146 student enrolments. The retention rate decreased from 66% in 1997-98 to 62% in 1998-99. At the time of the second re-inspection, 108 students were attending the centre's courses. The students follow part-time courses in literacy, numeracy, English for Speakers of Other Languages, computer literacy and word processing. The centre provides opportunities for students to gain qualifications awarded by the Associated Examination Board, Pitmans Examination Board and Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations. In 1998-99, 31 students achieved qualifications compared with two students in the previous year.

3 Provision at the time of the inspection in January 1998 was judged to have weaknesses which clearly outweighed the strengths and was awarded a grade 4. The provision was re-inspected in April 1999. It was again judged to have weaknesses that outweighed the strengths and was awarded a grade 4.

4 The main weaknesses identified during the first re-inspection were:

- ineffective self-assessment
- inadequate arrangements for reviewing performance
- weak strategic planning
- deficiencies in curriculum management
- inadequate specialist training for teaching students with learning difficulties
- low rates of students' attendance and retention
- insufficient progress made by many students

Context

- declining standards of teaching
- inadequate students' learning plans and records of progress
- inappropriate learning objectives for some students.

The Second Re-Inspection

5 The second re-inspection took place in March 2000. Two inspectors held meetings with managers and teachers. Relevant documentation was examined, including information about the courses and students' achievements. The inspectors observed nine lessons, held discussions with students and examined samples of students' work. Three of the lessons were judged to be good or outstanding, five were satisfactory and one was unsatisfactory. The attendance rate of the students in the lessons observed was 69%, and the average class size was eight.

6 After the first re-inspection, the centre produced an action plan with clear objectives and responsibilities for actions. An updated self-assessment report was prepared before the second re-inspection. It was a thorough document and used the headings in *Circular 97/12*. The report stated strengths and weaknesses but lacked sufficiently detailed evidence to support some judgements. The report contained a description of action taken to improve provision.

7 The centre has taken the following action since the time of the first re-inspection:

- changes have been made to the management structure and a new appointment made
 - managers have carried out classroom observations and have conducted supervision interviews with teachers
 - a self-assessment of standards has been conducted
 - meetings have been held with students to collect feedback on their satisfaction with the provision
 - the council of management has considered regular reports of the centre's progress
 - a working group, including council members and the director, has been established to guide the centre's self-assessment process and future direction
 - meetings have been held with the sponsoring college and other local external institutions
 - two tutors have left the centre and one new tutor has been appointed
 - two additional computers have been acquired and new software has been purchased.
- consultants have been employed to train teachers in appropriate teaching methods
 - students' achievements were celebrated at an awards ceremony attended by the mayor of Southwark

Conclusions and Issues

8 During the inspection in January 1998 and the re-inspection in April 1999, strengths were found which were confirmed during the second re-inspection. These include: pre-enrolment interviews and advice; the steady progress made by many students; the success of the centre in widening participation by recruiting students who would not usually engage in further education; and the gains in confidence made by students from their attendance at the centre.

9 The developments during the last year have resulted in some further improvements. The appointment of a deputy director has provided more effective leadership and supervision of staff. The requirements of the FEFC are better understood and the self-assessment process is more thorough. Teaching methods have improved and lesson planning is more effective. Teachers give more attention to the assessment of students' work. The number of students gaining qualifications has increased.

10 Inspectors found that some significant weaknesses remain. These include: a minority of lessons that are unsatisfactory; poor levels of attendance and retention on courses; the high proportion of students who do not achieve their learning goals; records of students' progress and achievements that are insufficiently evaluative, especially for those students not taking external tests; deficiencies in the management of the centre and its courses; the lack of procedures for course review and

evaluation; and insufficient specialist training for some teachers. All of these weaknesses were identified during the previous inspection and re-inspection.

11 To improve the quality of FEFC-funded provision further the centre should:

- continue to improve standards of teaching
- increase levels of attendance and rates of retention
- provide more effective support for students' additional learning needs
- maintain more effective learning plans and records of students' learning gains
- review the curriculum and qualifications offered to students
- collect, report and use accurate information for monitoring and planning of courses
- introduce an annual cycle of course evaluation linked to clear performance criteria
- address the need for additional specialist training for some teachers.

12 The FEFC-funded provision was judged to be satisfactory with strengths but also some weaknesses and was awarded a grade 3.