

Hadlow College
Reinspection of General Resources: December 1999
Report from the Inspectorate
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 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. In these circumstances, 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.

Satisfactory provision may also be reinspected if actions have been taken to improve quality and the college's existing inspection grade is the only factor which prevents it from meeting the criteria for FEFC accreditation.

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.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

Assessments use grades on 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 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.

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Hadlow College South East Region

Reinspection of general resources: December 1999

Background

The college was inspected in March 1998, and the inspection findings were recorded in the FEFC's inspection report 82/98. Provision for general resources was graded 4.

The strengths of the provision were: well-maintained grounds; the high quality of facilities for IT on the Hadlow site; and a good refectory. The main weaknesses identified at inspection were: the lack of an accommodation strategy; the underuse of accommodation; poorly maintained accommodation; inadequate resources at the satellite centres; poor access to some areas for students with restricted mobility.

The college's commentary of progress against the post-inspection action plan and the general resources reinspection action plan provided a good basis for planning and conducting the reinspection. The college identified strengths including: improvements to the estate and its facilities since the last inspection; effective accommodation strategy and estates masterplan in place; planned maintenance programme in place and operating; efficient use of teaching accommodation; easy access to high-quality IT; well-maintained grounds and a high-quality refectory service. The main areas of weakness identified included a need to develop resources at the satellite centres, some poor quality accommodation and limited access for students with restricted mobility.

The reinspection was carried out by one inspector working over three days in December 1999. The inspector inspected facilities and equipment, had meetings with managers and scrutinised documents including the accommodation strategy.

Assessment

Progress has been made in most areas of weakness identified in the last inspection. Some weaknesses have been eliminated.

An accommodation strategy and accommodation masterplan have been produced in accordance with Council Circular 97/19, *Accommodation Strategies*. The plan supports the aims and objectives of the college strategic plan. The accommodation strategy is now being implemented to support the needs of the curriculum. There are still examples of poor accommodation and accommodation that is poorly maintained. A thorough maintenance survey has been carried out and the college has produced a five-year planned maintenance programme. The programme of repair has started and is focusing initially on the areas of greatest need in the central campus.

Room usage has improved but room utilisation is still low compared with other agriculture colleges. A computer-based timetabling package is now used and a room utilisation survey has been carried out. There has been some rationalisation of room usage as result of the implementation of the accommodation strategy. The college has secured funding through a capital project support bid to make changes to accommodation that will further improve space utilisation.

Improvements have taken place in the learning resource centre. An electronic cataloguing system has been installed. There has been an increase in the bookstock with most noticeable growth in animal care, equine and general sciences. IT equipment in the learning resource centre has been replaced with 11 new machines. Students are now able to access the Internet, networked CD-ROM and the online public access catalogue.

Access for students with restricted mobility is limited. The learning resource centre and some of the communal areas are on the first floor and there is no lift available. Some reorganisation of space is improving access to classrooms, and a capital bid includes a lift.

There has been some improvement in the resources at the satellite centres at Canterbury, Mottingham and Maidstone. There are now modern computers available at Canterbury and Mottingham but they are not networked to the main campus although there is an electronic mail link. Collaborative agreements with general further education colleges close to the satellite centres at Maidstone and Canterbury allow students to access library and IT facilities. Planning permission has been granted for the building of two further classrooms at the Mottingham site.

The strengths identified in the previous inspection are still a characteristic of general resources. The grounds are well maintained and support the delivery of the curriculum. There is a well-run refectory that provides good-quality food. The college has improved its ratio of students to computers since the inspection. The computers have been updated and are fully networked. The open access areas are open for 15 hours a day and at weekends. All student computers on the main site have access to the Internet.

Revised grade: general resources 3.