

**Wirral Metropolitan College**  
**Reinspection of Basic Education and Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties**  
**and/or Disabilities: November 2000**  
**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.*

*Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT  
Telephone 02476 863000  
Fax 02476 862100  
website: <http://www.fefc.ac.uk>*

© FEFC 2000

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

**Wirral Metropolitan College  
North West Region**

**Reinspection of Basic Education and Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities: November 2000**

**Background**

Wirral Metropolitan College was inspected in March 1999 and the findings published in inspection report 69/99. Provision for basic education and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was awarded a grade 4.

The key strengths were: good communication and teamwork; good-quality accommodation and resources, including access to IT; and the opportunity for students to sample vocational areas. The weaknesses were: much ineffective teaching; the inappropriate goals set for some students; ineffective review processes; low attendance, retention and achievement rates in basic education; few independent learning opportunities for students; and a lack of staff training to support curriculum changes.

Reinspection took place in November 2000. Inspectors observed 18 lessons covering adult basic education and supported entry provision, examined a range of documents, including students' work and achievement and retention data, had meetings with managers and staff and spoke with students from a range of courses.

**Assessment**

Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. The number of lessons judged to be good has increased from 33% to 39% and only one lesson was unsatisfactory compared with 21% last time. The college is still below the national average for this programme area but overall teaching is satisfactory. Attendance and average class size at 68% and 6.9 also remain below the respective national averages of 72% and 8.3. The curriculum has been revised in both basic education and supported entry courses since the last inspection and appropriate staff development has taken place. There is now effective focus on personal learning goals and regular review of students' progress in tutorials. In the better lessons there were clear teacher explanations and good attention to inclusive teaching methods, for example using drama, visits, video activity, computers and other practical methods to help students learn. However, in supported entry provision there is still a lack of opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills. Personal goals for students are not effectively linked to other aspects of the curriculum. For example, skills analysis for vocational areas focuses on communication and behavioural skills rather than on more specific vocational competences. In basic education there are students who have attended college for a number of years and are not making progress. The college is aware of the need for further curriculum and staff development.

The achievement rates for students taking qualifications in basic education have improved substantially and are often above national benchmarking data. C&G numeracy and communications level 1 qualifications and AEB achievement tests in literacy all had pass rates above national averages in 1999-2000. Retention in basic education has improved since the last inspection but is still below national averages for some courses. Attendance at basic education lessons observed was below the national average for this programme area. Attendance and retention is high in supported entry provision and 68% of students from the

vocational access course in 1999-2000 progressed to level 1 courses. The college is aware of the need to broaden the range of courses available for progression.

Strengths identified at the last inspection remain in teamwork, communication and resources to deliver courses. There are also good links with external organisations. However, in basic education there is insufficient monitoring of lessons and sharing of good practice. The college recognises the need to make stronger links between basic skills and other areas of the college work. There is currently no programme team leader for basic skills.

**Revised grade:** basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities 3.