

Wyke Sixth Form College
Reinspection of Governance: February 2001
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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**Wyke Sixth Form College
Yorkshire and Humberside Region**

Reinspection of governance: February 2001

Background

Wyke Sixth Form College was inspected in January 2000 and the findings were recorded in inspection report 57/00, published in April 2000. Governance was awarded a grade 4 and the audit opinion was that the governance of the college was weak.

The key strengths were: effective financial monitoring by the finance and general purposes committee and the productive working relationship of governors and senior managers. The major weaknesses were: insufficient governor training; the low attendance at corporation meetings; insufficient attention to curriculum and quality issues; shortcomings in the operation of the search committee; and the failure of the audit committee to discharge its functions adequately. Following the inspection the college prepared an action plan to address the weaknesses. The college produced a new annual self-assessment report and in preparation for the inspection evaluated its progress against the action plan.

Reinspection took place in February 2001. Inspectors and auditors examined a range of documents and had meetings with governors, managers and the clerk to the corporation.

Assessment

The FEFC's audit service concluded 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.

Inspectors judged that the strengths identified in the previous inspection report have been maintained. The college had made progress in addressing some of the major weaknesses though some weaknesses remain. For example, aspects of governor training and appraisal of senior postholders. A significant improvement was the appointment of an independent clerk in July 2000. She has been supported in an extensive programme of training to enable her to fulfil her role effectively. Governor training is now planned and systematic. A corporation development programme for 2000-01 identifies training events. These have included two strategic planning sessions and a number of briefings for governors as a group. The individual training needs of members are not systematically identified. The clerk has been effective in raising governors' awareness of good practice within the sector. The college has used funding from the standards fund category 1 to support these improvements.

The audit committee complies with its terms of reference. The search committee has appropriate terms of reference and shortcomings identified at the last inspection have been addressed. The corporation has set targets for attendance at meetings, which it is monitoring carefully. Attendance has significantly improved. Governors have recently reviewed the mission of the college and their involvement in setting the strategic direction has been strengthened. The corporation has agreed a scheme for the appraisal and development of senior postholders, including the clerk. The scheme has not yet been fully implemented so it is not possible at this stage to evaluate its effectiveness. Governors have given detailed consideration to ways of evaluating their performance. A set of draft performance indicators

has been produced. They have been discussed by the full corporation and referred for further consideration to its next meeting. They have not yet been adopted.

Governors' attention to quality assurance and standards has increased significantly through the work of the quality and curriculum committee. It has clear terms of reference. This committee meets regularly and it focuses appropriately on curriculum and quality issues, including some key performance indicators. Governors are gaining more first hand knowledge of areas of the college through an arrangement that links individual governors with one of the four curriculum divisions.

Much of the action taken is recent, and therefore its impact cannot yet be measured. The college should continue to improve and implement: governor training, appraisal of senior postholders, monitoring of student retention, achievement and enrolments through the quality and curriculum committee, and evaluation of governors' performance by finalising performance indicators.

Revised grade: governance 3.