### Key findings from FE sector college inspections published between December 2001 and July 2002

Introduction

1. Following the disbanding of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) inspectorate on 31 March 2001, responsibility for the inspection of provision for learners aged 16-19 in further education and sixth form colleges passed to The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).
2. Inspections are carried out jointly by OFSTED and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) against the criteria set out in the *Common Inspection Framework*. This report provides summaries of the inspection reports on FE sector colleges published between December 2001 and July 2002.
3. Each summary provides a brief description of the college and its provision, and picks out the main strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors.
4. The quality of provision was at least satisfactory in 89% of curriculum areas and good or better in 50%. Leadership and management were satisfactory or better in 82% of colleges.

A summary of curriculum and leadership and management grades awarded in the inspections from April 2001 is show below:

COLLEGE SUMMARIES

Bridgwater College

Bridgwater College, a tertiary college in Somerset, provides the main progression route for young people leaving local secondary schools at 16. In 2001-02, the college had 9,278 students, 25% of whom were full-time. 75% of students are aged 19 years or over. Provision in eight curriculum areas is outstanding and it is good in the remaining seven. Leadership and management are outstanding. Key strengths include highly effective governance, very good teaching and learning in all curriculum areas, regular, thorough and fair assessment of students’ work, outstanding guidance and support for students, the wide range of courses and enrichment opportunities and outstanding accommodation and equipment. The low retention and pass rates on a few courses were the only significant weaknesses.

The Calderdale Colleges Corporation

The Calderdale Colleges Corporation is a medium-sized general FE college in West Yorkshire. The main site has two centres, one of which is a sixth form centre. Community education is provided at over 20 sites across the area. The college has around 16,000 enrolments annually, of which 75% are by students over 19 years of age. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is 15% and is higher than the proportion of persons from such groups in the local population. Some 64% of students are female. Provision is good in three curriculum areas, satisfactory in five and unsatisfactory in a further five. Key strengths include successful strategies for inclusiveness, support for individual students, the wide range of facilities provided for students and the provision for international students. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory and the quality assurance system is ineffective. Weaknesses include low retention and pass rates, insufficient sharing of good practice by staff, some poor group tutorials, inaccuracy of data for decision-making, and the college’s financial position.

The Sixth Form College Colchester

The college has about 2,000 students. The overwhelming majority of students are full-time and a significant minority travel from outside the Colchester area. Provision in five curriculum areas is outstanding and good in the other five areas inspected. There is a good range of courses and the college has managed the introduction of curriculum 2000 well. The college is effective. Leadership and management are good. Most students make at least the expected level of progress given their levels of attainment when they joined the college. A strong feature of the college is the way in which it promotes and sustains equality of opportunity. Provision for students with physical disabilities is good. Retention rates are high. Students receive excellent support and guidance. Many progress to higher education (HE). There is insufficient monitoring of classroom teaching and of the effect of poor accommodation upon teaching and learning and students’ development of the skills of working on one’s own.

Hartlepool Sixth Form College

Hartlepool Sixth Form College is the largest provider of General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCS AS) and Advanced level (GCE A-level) courses in Hartlepool borough. There are 472 full-time students aged 16 to 18 years. Provision is outstanding in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), good in six curriculum areas and satisfactory in a further two. Leadership and management are good and governors and staff at all levels are involved in reviewing the college’s direction. Key strengths include high and increasing pass and retention rates on most courses, high and increasing value-added scores, effective guidance and support for individuals, good assessment and monitoring of students’ progress and good overall attendance. Weaknesses include the narrow range of teaching methods in a few subject areas, insufficient sharing of good practice by staff, insufficient use of information technology (IT) in teaching and learning, some aspects of accommodation, students’ poor oral and study skills and the financial position of the college.

Hartpury College

Hartpury College is a specialist land-based FE college some five miles north west of the city of Gloucester. The college attracts a significant proportion of its students from outside Gloucestershire, including overseas. The college enrols approximately 1,460 full-time students annually, of whom 45% are on FE courses. Of these, 73% are students aged 16 to 18. The overall quality of provision is adequate. Education and training are good in agriculture and countryside, animal care and sport and leisure and satisfactory in equine studies and horticulture. Teaching and learning have improved in many areas since the last inspection. Leadership and management are good and governors and senior managers provide a clear strategic direction. Among staff, however, there is insufficient awareness of the importance of promoting and monitoring equality of opportunity. Key strengths include excellent resources, effective quality assurance and good individual support for full-time students. Many students progress to HE or employment. The college has strong links with industry. Weaknesses include the poor quality of training and assessment in the workplace, some ineffective teaching of key skills, unsatisfactory health and safety procedures and some provision for part-time and level 1 students.

Kingston College

Kingston College is a general FE college in Kingston town centre. In 2000-01 there were 2,587 full-time and 4,360 part-time students on FE courses and 759 students on HE courses. Some 73% of the college’s students live outside the borough. Provision is good in mathematics, health and social care, English and modern foreign language courses, and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision is satisfactory in a further eight curriculum areas. Provision in hairdressing and beauty therapy is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors give strong support to the college and are closely involved in setting the strategic direction of the college. Students are given a great deal of help and support. They benefit from a wide range of curriculum enrichment activities. Other key strengths include the wide range of courses and productive links with business and external educational organisations. Weaknesses include low retention and pass rates on some courses, some poor teaching, insufficient use of data in self-assessment, ineffective quality assurance and students’ lack of attendance and punctuality.

Leyton Sixth Form College

The college is located in the London Borough of Waltham Forest which is classified as one of the most deprived in the country. Some 90% of the 2,100 students are from minority ethnic groups. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) classifies the relative deprivation of students at the college as ‘very high’. Education and training are outstanding in visual and performing arts and media and good in health, social care and childcare. Provision is satisfactory in a further five areas. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Pass rates on many courses are high. Students receive particularly good guidance and support. Accommodation and specialist resources are good. Staff and students give high priority to respecting and promoting equality of opportunity. Retention rates on some courses are low. The quality assurance system is not wholly effective. The roles and responsibilities of middle managers are not entirely clear.

Leeds College of Art and Design

The college is one of four specialist art and design colleges in the FE sector. About 34% of the approximately 3,000 students come from outside Leeds. About half the students are aged 16 to 18 and of these, almost 80% are on level 3 programmes. The inspection divided the art and design programmes into five discrete areas. Two areas are satisfactory, two are good and one, the foundation diploma course in art and design is outstanding. Leadership and management are good. There are high pass rates. The standard of many students’ work is high. Many students progress to courses at a higher level. Other key strengths include successful initiatives to widen participation, good resources for teaching and learning and effective arrangements for students’ guidance and support. Weaknesses include low retention rates, students’ poor attendance and lack of punctuality and some unsatisfactory teaching.

Leeds College of Building

Leeds College of Building is the only specialist construction college in England and construction programmes account for over 90% of the full-time equivalent students. The college has approximately 80 full-time and 4,000 part-time students. The overall quality of provision is good and it is outstanding in timber studies. The leadership and management of the college are good. Governors and managers provide a clear sense of direction. There are high retention and pass rates, mostly good reaching, high standards of student’s work and good attendance. Other strengths include good learning support, the wide range of specialist resources and equipment and very good learning and social accommodation. Some teaching of theory, however, is poor and there are low pass rates for adults on courses leading to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at level 1. Other weaknesses include unsatisfactory arrangements for the quality assurance of assessment and work-based learning, poor procedures for initial assessment, inadequate strategies for widening participation, lack of access to computerised management systems for staff and the narrow range of curriculum activities.

Ludlow College

Ludlow College, a small designated sixth form college serving a large rural catchment area, has approximately 1,655 students of which approximately 400 are full-time. The college is effective and significant improvements have taken place in most, though not yet all, curriculum areas since the last FEFC inspection. The quality of education provided is satisfactory overall and it is good in many curriculum areas. In some areas, however, some teaching is poor and there is a lack of curricular coherence. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Students’ levels of attainment on General Certificate of Education A-level (GCE A level) and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) courses are high. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced, provide good support for students and have managed the introduction of curriculum 2000 well. There is good communication across the college. Weaknesses include some unsatisfactory assessment practice, students’ low levels of attainment on level 1 and level 2 courses, the inaccessibility of some parts of the site to persons with problems of mobility, and insufficient monitoring of the effectiveness of the equal opportunities policy.

Merrist Wood College

The college is a specialist land-based FE college near Guildford, Surrey. Student numbers have declined from 2,053 in 1996 to 1,300 in 2001-02. The college recruits students from all parts of the country and many overseas countries. Provision is good in countryside, golf and sports turf and satisfactory in the other five areas inspected. In many areas, students receive good personal support from teachers and practical training, specialist resources and links with industry are good. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory and many aspects of curriculum planning and development of learning resources are weak. The college has taken little specific action to widen participation and there is no provision on the main college campus for students with special needs. Other weaknesses include insufficient support and training for teachers and curriculum managers, inadequate tutorial arrangements for students, unsatisfactory initial assessment methods, some poor accommodation and few links with external agencies.

The College of North East London

The college is a large general FE college which recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas and offers a wide range of provision meeting the needs of students in the local communities. In 2000-01 the college enrolled 13,308 students. Some 87% were 19 years of age or over and 21% were on full-time courses. The proportion of students who attend the college from each ethnic group closely matches the proportion of ethnic groups in Haringey. The college is inadequate. Leadership and management are inadequate. Education and training are good in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and basic skills, unsatisfactory in business and management, hair and beauty, art and design and humanities and satisfactory in the other five curriculum areas. Weaknesses include low retention rates on courses for adults and failure to promote the learning of key skills consistently across all provision. There is also inadequate monitoring of the promotion of equality of opportunity in the workplace and of learners’ achievements on work-based programmes and those courses on which learners may enrol throughout the year.

North East Worcestershire College

North East Worcestershire College is a large general FE college with provision on two large campuses with an increasing number of community venues. In 2000-01, there were 20,985 enrolments to college courses. Of these, some 2,244 were enrolled on full-time programmes. Around one third of students are aged 16 to 18. This is an effective college. The range of provision serves the needs of the local community well. Provision is good in seven curriculum areas and satisfactory in the other five areas. Leadership and management are good and there is an open style of management and a clear strategic direction. Other key strengths include well-managed advice, guidance and support; good access to IT facilities and an inclusive approach to students, staff and the community. Areas for improvement include retention rates on adult provision, the consistent promotion of key skills across all provision, monitoring of equality of opportunity in the workplace and monitoring achievement in work-based learning and other programmes that enrol all year.

Shipley College

Shipley College is a general FE college in Bradford. The college has over 500 full-time students, most of whom are aged 16 to 18, and over 4,600 adults. Some 10% of students enrolled at the college are from a minority ethnic background, and 40% of full-time students aged 16 to 18 are of Asian origin. Provision is good in four curriculum areas and satisfactory in another four. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The college has flexible arrangements for a broad range of courses and links with organisations in the community are effective. Students are well supported by individual teachers and students’ progress is monitored effectively although some data used for monitoring performance is inaccurate. There are good resources for learning. Financial management is sound. Pass rates are high on many courses. There is, however, some unimaginative teaching. Retention rates on many courses are low. Quality assurance procedures are not always implemented with consistent thoroughness. There is inadequate co-ordination of basic skills provision.

Sir George Monoux College

Sir George Monoux College is a sixth form college in the London borough of Waltham Forest. Over 80% of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college enrolled 1,524 students in 2001, most of whom were aged 16 to 18. Provision is good in six curriculum areas and satisfactory in another two areas. Leadership and management are good. Most students do well in examinations and many progress to HE. Key strengths include, effective monitoring of students’ progress, impartial and comprehensive pre-course guidance, mutual respect between staff and students, the recognition of all students’ achievements and the pride students take in their work. Retention rates, value-added scores and pass rates are low on some courses. There is insufficient take-up of learning support and curriculum enrichment activities. Staff do not share good practice enough. Some students are persistently late for lessons.

South Tyneside College

The college is a large tertiary college in the north east of England and is the largest centre for marine education in the United Kingdom. The proportion of 16 year olds in South Tyneside choosing to continue in full-time education has increased significantly between 1998 and 2000 and the provision of education maintenance allowances (EMAs) is seen as a major contributory factor in the rise. In 1999-2000 the college enrolled 14,939 students, of whom 3,649 were full-time. Students aged 16 to 18 accounted for 26% of enrolments. The college is effective. The provision is good in nine curriculum areas and satisfactory in three. Two curriculum areas, marine engineering and nautical science are outstanding. Leadership and management are good. The college has effective strategies for widening participation and offers a wide range of courses which meet the needs of the community. There are high and improving pass rates. Teaching on most courses is good. Students are well supported. Retention rates on some programmes for adults are low. The computerised management information system for recording students’ achievements is not entirely satisfactory. Some accommodation is poor. In some areas, students are given insufficient help to develop key skills and improve their study skills.

Spelthorne College

Spelthorne College is a relatively small sixth form college with 480 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 2,283 part-time students aged 19 years and over. Four areas of provision are good, six are satisfactory and one is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors are committed to helping the college succeed and are closely involved in overseeing its strategic direction. The college fulfils its strong commitment to social inclusion and offers a wide range of appropriate courses to meet the needs of the local community. There is good teaching for adults and effective monitoring of non-attendance. The staff are enthusiastic, committed and well-qualified. The college does not engage in thorough action planning and does not set demanding targets for improving performance. Retention and pass rates are low on some courses. There is insufficient dissemination and sharing of good practice. Aspects of management, including financial management are poor.

Stafford College

Stafford College is a general FE college that offers programmes ranging from entry level to HE. In 2001-02, the college enrolled 5,851 students aged 16 to 18 and 12,676 adult students. Most 16 to 18 year olds are on full-time courses and most adults are on part-time courses. Provision is outstanding in general art and design and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, good in a further four curriculum areas and satisfactory in another eight. Leadership and management are good and the college has made considerable progress over a short period in addressing major issues identified in previous recent inspections. The college offers a wide range of courses to meet local needs and has effective partnership arrangements to promote social inclusion and widen participation. There is much good teaching. Pass rates for adults on level 2 and level 3 courses are high. Students in some areas achieve excellent standards of work. The staff development programme is extensive and relevant. The induction process for students is well planned. Pass rates on some programmes, however, are low, as are retention rates on most programmes. On some courses, students’ attendance and the monitoring of students’ attendance are unsatisfactory. Some teaching of key skills is poor. There is insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity on work-based learning programmes. Managers do not ensure the adequate resourcing of science courses.

Telford College of Arts and Technology

Telford College of Arts and Technology is a general FE college in Telford and the Wrekin. In 2000-01, the college enrolled 12,869 students, of whom 89% were part-time. About 83% of students were aged 19 years and over. Some 36% of its courses are run at venues in the community and the college has outstanding links with employers and local communities and offers an extensive and appropriate range of programmes. The college is very effective. Provision is good in five areas, satisfactory in two areas and outstanding in basic skills. The standard of the very small amount of modern apprenticeship provision is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management are good. On many courses the teaching is good and the pass rates are high. The college promotes equality of opportunity effectively and has been successful in widening participation. Retention rates, however, are declining. There is inadequate additional learning support for part-time students. Some course reviews are not carried out well. Internal verification of assessment is insufficiently thorough.

Thomas Danby College

Thomas Danby College is a general FE college located near the centre of Leeds. The college recruits a high percentage of students from socially and economically disadvantaged areas. In 2000-01, the college had 23,150 course enrolments involving 18,513 students. Of these students, 93% were part-time and 68% were aged 25 and over. About 20% of the students come from minority ethnic communities. The overall quality of the provision is good. Education and training are outstanding in baking, good in another six curriculum areas, satisfactory in a further four and unsatisfactory in sport, leisure and tourism. Leadership and management are good. Teaching for adult learners is good. There are high pass rates on courses for adults. The college offers an extensive range of courses to meet the needs locally and further afield. It fulfils its commitment to promote social inclusion and has productive links with external bodies and employers. Students receive good support. The staff appraisal process and arrangements for staff development are effective. On some courses, retention rates are low. The standards of work achieved by students aged 16 to 18 are low. In a number of curriculum areas, students’ attendance is poor. Some learning materials are poor.

Wakefield College

Wakefield College is a general FE college serving the Wakefield Metropolitan District and adjacent communities. The college has 14,400 students. Over three-quarters of the students are over 19 years of age. The college is highly effective. Provision is outstanding in ESOL and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is good in seven other curriculum areas and satisfactory in another seven. Leadership and management are good and there is effective management of the curriculum with many pass rates above the national average and much good teaching. The college offers a wide and appropriate range of courses and there are good opportunities for progression. In some lessons, teachers fail to ensure their methods and learning activities suit students of all abilities in the class. Retention rates are low on some courses. Some students fail to take part in curriculum enrichment activities. Data on students’ performance are not used well and some information is inaccurate. The college’s financial position is not strong.

Walford and North Shropshire College

The college was created on 1 January 2001 as a result of the merger of Walford College and The North Shropshire College. In autumn 2001, the college had 9,626 enrolments. Of these students, 87% are aged 19 or over. Provision is good in five curriculum areas, satisfactory in two, and unsatisfactory in two. Work-based learning is not managed well and much of it is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management of the college are satisfactory. Key strengths include high pass rates on many courses, effective links with schools and the community, the extensive range of courses in rural locations, the wide range of activities to promote social inclusion and widen participation and the good initial guidance and support for students. Weaknesses include poor understanding of equal opportunities on the part of some staff, low retention rates on some courses, poor teaching of key skills and unsatisfactory arrangements for helping students with literacy and numeracy.

The College of West Anglia

The College of West Anglia is a large, general FE college which serves much of Norfolk and parts of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. In 2000-01 the college enrolled 15,080 students of which 15.5% were on full-time courses. Some 79% of students were aged 19 years or over. Provision is outstanding in equine studies and animal care and unsatisfactory in engineering and humanities. Provision is good in a further five curriculum areas and satisfactory in another 10. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior management team is strong and has an effective and consultative management style. The college has been successful in widening participation and meets it commitment to promote inclusive learning. The work-based learning provision is well-managed. Some aspects of curriculum management, including quality assurance, are unsatisfactory. Retention and pass rates are low in some curriculum areas. Teaching of key skills is poor and receives inadequate support.