

Basford Hall College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council 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.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Inspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in the work they inspect. A member of the Council's audit service works with inspectors in assessing aspects of governance and management. All colleges are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

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Grade Descriptors

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect 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.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision, curriculum areas and lesson observations, for colleges inspected during 1996-97, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	59	30	2	–
Cross-college provision	18	51	27	4	–
Lesson observations	19	42	31	7	1

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report.* Grades were awarded using the guidelines in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*.
Sample size: 122 college inspections

Retention and Pass Rates

Where data on students' achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in two ways:

- as a retention rate, which is the proportion of students who completed a course in relation to the number enrolled on 1 November in the first year of the course
- as a pass rate, which is the proportion of students which passed examinations in relation to the number entered. Pass rates for GCE A level are quoted for grades A to E unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for GCSE courses are quoted for grade C or above unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for vocational and professional awards are for successful completion of the full award.

Summary

Basford Hall College

East Midlands Region

Inspected October 1997

Basford Hall College is a general further education college on the outskirts of Nottingham City. Inspection took place in five of the 11 curriculum areas identified by the college in its self-assessment. The self-assessment report produced by the college was helpful to inspectors in carrying out the inspection. In all cross-college areas inspectors agreed in most respects with the overall judgements and grades reached by the college. In specialist curriculum areas some weaknesses were not given sufficient emphasis.

The college displays a firm commitment to widening participation by the range of its provision, the flexible arrangements for study and the college's productive partnerships and other links with local organisations, employers and the community. Standards of teaching are generally good. Well-planned programmes of study are taught by experienced staff. The curriculum provision in childcare is outstanding. There is a range of good student support services, including excellent childcare facilities. Some of the accommodation is of high quality and provides a stimulating environment. IT resources are good and being further developed. The college corporation effectively exercises its responsibilities for determining the direction of the college. The management

information system is well developed and there is good financial management. The level of students' achievements is good in some areas, but below the national average in several others. The college should: address poor pass rates, retention and attendance on a number of courses; make necessary improvements to some accommodation; provide more consistently key skills and additional learning support; integrate its quality assurance initiatives more effectively with a coherent cycle of planning and review; and ensure more focused action planning at the operational level.

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Trowel and finishing skills	3	Support for students	2
Wood processing and furniture studies	2	General resources	2
Childcare	1	Quality assurance	3
Hairdressing and beauty	2	Governance	2
Art and design	3	Management	2

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Basford Hall College is located on three sites. Its main site is set in 16 acres of grounds at Basford on the north-west outskirts of Nottingham. It is two miles from the M1 motorway and close to the Derbyshire border. A second centre is in the small town of Hucknall about five miles away. A third centre at A'Court Street is about two miles from the main site on the edge of the city centre. Two further sites have recently been acquired, one at Bulwell, due to open shortly after the inspection, and the other at the Lace Market in Nottingham City Centre, due to open in 1998. An increasing number of courses are provided at centres in the community. In the area covered by the Greater Nottingham Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), 66 per cent of the workforce are in service industries, 23 per cent in manufacturing and 7 per cent in construction. Nottingham City is an area of high social deprivation. Unemployment in the Greater Nottingham TEC area in January 1997 was 8.5 per cent and 13.3 per cent for Nottingham City. This compares with 7.1 per cent for the East Midlands region and 7.9 for the United Kingdom.

2 The educational achievements of school-leavers in the north-west Nottingham area, the main catchment area for full-time students for the college, are well below the national averages. The participation rate of students in post-compulsory education at the age of 16 is 57 per cent in Nottingham compared with a national figure of some 70 per cent. Secondary education in the area is organised in a variety of ways, including some schools with sixth forms. The college is one of eight colleges in the further education sector in the Nottingham conurbation: six general further education colleges and two sixth form colleges. Each further education college offers particular specialist vocational curriculum areas in addition to foundation level programmes.

3 In 1996-97, the college had 13,227 students of whom 81 per cent were known to be aged 19 years and over. It had 11,181 students enrolled on courses funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and 2,046 students on other programmes. During the last three years, the volume of provision at the college has increased by some 68 per cent. The college employs 422 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 152 are support staff. The curriculum was divided into 11 areas for self-assessment: information and learning technology; building services and construction technologies; trowel and finishing skills; wood processing and furniture studies; business, management and office technologies; childcare; health and social care; hair, beauty therapy and floristry; design studies; basic education; and access courses. Inspection took place in five of these areas. Since there is a high proportion of work in construction and health and social care, two grades were awarded in each of these programme areas.

4 The college began a major revision of its mission statement in January 1997, involving consultation with partners. The revised statement was approved by the corporation in July 1997. It states that the college will work in partnership to regenerate Nottingham and the region so that all can prosper by providing access to learning in 'centres of excellence' in chosen areas to inspire staff and learners, to increase individual achievement and success and to raise standards. The main strategic aims of the college are: to provide an inclusive curriculum which supports individuals; to manage finances and resources in an effective, efficient and enterprising way; to develop a motivated flexible staff; to develop college facilities which provide an inspiring environment; and to pursue policies which show a concern for the environment.

Context

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected during the week beginning 20 October 1997. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other divisions of the FEFC. The college submitted data on students' achievements for the years 1994 to 1997 which were validated by an inspector against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. This information was found to be generally accurate. Due to the timing of the inspection, evidence of some students' achievements in 1997 was added during the inspection. The tables in the curriculum sections of the report are based on college data supplied in advance and during the curriculum inspections. There was some difficulty in recording achievements of students who gained their qualification after the normal duration of their course. The inspection was carried out by nine inspectors, working for 39 days, and an auditor for four days. They observed 70 lessons, and examined students' work and a variety of college documents. Inspectors met governors, managers, college staff and students, representatives of the Greater Nottingham TEC and local employers.

6 Of the 70 lessons inspected, 69 per cent were rated good or outstanding and under 2 per cent were less than satisfactory. This profile is better than that for all colleges inspected during

1996-97, according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected was 66 per cent, below the average for all colleges of 77 per cent. There was low attendance in art and design (48 per cent) and some small class sizes in trowel and finishing skills. Highest attendances were in wood processing and furniture (79 per cent) and in childcare (84 per cent). The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GNVQ	0	2	4	1	0	7
NVQ	7	22	11	0	0	40
Other vocational	5	12	6	0	0	23
Total	12	36	21	1	0	70

Curriculum Areas

Trowel and Finishing Skills

Grade 3

7 The college's construction provision in painting and decorating, sign making, bricklaying, plastering and wall tiling was inspected. Inspectors observed 14 lessons. Although inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified in the college's self-assessment report, in some instances, notably students' achievements, the college understated its weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good teaching and flexible arrangements for students to study
- well-designed learning materials
- efficient tracking and recording of students' progress by most teachers
- realistic working environments in most workshops
- assessment which is clear and well understood by students
- the recruitment of a relatively high number of female students

Weaknesses

- variable pass rates and some that are poor
- low student attendance and poor punctuality
- deteriorating student retention in many areas
- some unsatisfactory specialist accommodation
- ineffective student target-setting

8 The wide range of courses available in this area, including foundation studies and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) from levels 1 to 3, meets the needs of students and employers. Enrolment on these courses is approximately 7 per cent of the college's total. Students make

good use of the opportunities available to learn at times and in ways that suit their personal circumstances. The proportion of female students and those from minority ethnic groups is higher than normally found on construction courses. Thirteen per cent of students are female.

9 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report which identified teaching and the flexible arrangements for students to study as a strength. Teachers use a variety of appropriate teaching methods and provide clear briefings for students. A few teachers fail to use questioning techniques effectively in order to ascertain students' understanding. There are well-designed learning materials in each of the craft areas. Assessment criteria are clear and understood by students. Teachers' marking of students' work is accurate but some written comments lack sufficient detail to show students how they can improve their work. Most students carry out practical work competently and safely. However, there is some inconsistency in the application of health and safety practice in a few areas. Most students are developing skills appropriate to their level of study. Students' key skills are being imaginatively developed in vocational studies. In some classes, students are unable to experience effective teamworking because of the low numbers.

10 Most students show confidence in following a variety of learning activities. A minority of students, however, were not attentive and learned little. Attendance and punctuality are poor. A few pass rates on NVQ craft programmes are poor and in certain cases below the sector average as recorded in the FEFC's curriculum area survey, *Construction* published in April 1997. Students' retention in recent years on many programmes has been below the sector average. On one-year programmes for NVQ level 2 the retention rate has fallen from 81 per cent in 1995 to only 46 per cent in 1997. Whilst low retention was

Curriculum Areas

recognised in the self-assessment report, the significant decline in some courses was understated. Inspectors considered that the weaknesses concerning students' achievements were not given sufficient weighting by the college when reaching its overall judgement for this area. Pass rates are declining on a few courses. The college acknowledged that the social and economic climate of the area affects construction students' achievements relative to sector averages. However, the college was unable to show that it had taken action to set appropriate targets, and measure and record the personal achievement of students relative to their previous attainment.

11 Certain aspects of the curriculum are well managed. The deployment of staff is carefully monitored. Students' progress is, for the most part, efficiently recorded and students are kept well informed of how they are doing. Communications are generally good, with some exceptions in those with the A'Court Street Centre. Up-to-date health and safety records are maintained. Targets set for students' achievements and course completion are not challenging. Detailed data are not used to evaluate trends in students' achievements.

Liaison with employers is underdeveloped. There are some training partnerships and work placements arranged with industry. However, employers' views are not sought on the college provision and they are not involved in curriculum development.

12 Teachers have appropriate industrial experience but, for most, this is not recent. There are sufficient technician and business support staff. Brickwork, plastering, painting and decorating workshops provide generally good facilities and realistic working environments. Some aspects of specialist accommodation are unsatisfactory. For example, the workshop area for sign making is too small for the number of students using it. In the plastering and painting and decorating sections, there are too few storage lockers for students. The A'Court Street Centre, which houses plastering and wall tiling, has poor general and specialist facilities. The college has recognised this in its self-assessment and plans are in hand to relocate workshops. The display of student's work is good. There is a good stock of up-to-date text books in the main library which complements that held in the specialist resource areas.

Examples of students' achievements in trowel and finishing skills, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Foundation vocational NVQ level 1 (one year)	Retention (%)	+	96	94
	Pass rate (%)	+	68	41 *
Intermediate vocational NVQ level 2 (one year)	Retention (%)	81	67	46
	Pass rate (%)	41	35	43 *
Intermediate vocational NVQ level 2 (two year)	Retention (%)	67	48	50
	Pass rate (%)	45	63	60 *
Advanced vocational NVQ level 3 (two year)	Retention (%)	40 **	86	82
	Pass rate (%)	100 **	63	65 *

Source: college data

+course not offered

*some students yet to complete

**student numbers less than 10

Curriculum Areas

Wood Processing and Furniture Studies

Grade 2

13 The inspection covered courses in carpentry and joinery, machine woodworking and furniture. Inspectors observed 14 lessons. Inspectors concluded that the college's self-assessment report accurately identifies many of the strengths of this provision. In a few cases, the college understated its weaknesses.

Key strengths

- clear and comprehensive schemes of work
- effective monitoring of, and action planning for, students' learning
- some good students' achievements
- efficient curriculum management
- a good range of equipment and consumable materials

Weaknesses

- the poor quality and use of some learning materials
- some teachers do not take into account students' existing industrial knowledge
- inconsistent compliance with health and safety requirements
- some poor and declining pass and completion rates

14 The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time courses from foundation to degree level. Part-time provision is well matched to the needs of local and regional industry. Links with industry are well established. There is a comprehensive range of short courses for both industry and local schools. There are also good links with specialist colleges in Italy. The area's management team work well together and communicate effectively with staff. They have a clear understanding of the need to improve

further the quality of their students' experiences. For example, there is increasing emphasis on the internal verification of the quality of work on courses undertaken in collaborative provision. However, management does not yet sufficiently analyse data on students' achievements.

15 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers share clear and comprehensive schemes of work with students. Assessments meet the requirements of awarding bodies. There is regular review of students' progress accompanied by effective action planning for future learning. Students receive useful course handbooks. However, teachers do not always indicate appropriate teaching methods in their lesson plans. For example, there is little use of visual aids to maintain students' interest and increase their understanding. The quality of learning materials, which do not challenge students to work on their own, is poor. Teachers do not always take into account their students' existing industrial knowledge. The self-assessment report makes little reference to issues related to the poorer teaching.

16 The self-assessment report recognises the high quality of students' work in this area. Most students frequently produce items of high quality and most can explain the theory behind their practical activities. Last year a student received a prestigious national award for the reproduction of a Sheraton style bookcase. Most students' portfolios are very well presented and include photographic evidence. However, at times, some students do not comply with health and safety requirements. Many part-time students are enrolled on unit-based courses for NVQ qualifications. Because they often find employment on the basis of the knowledge and skills they have gained, some do not complete sufficient units to attain the full award. Achievements and retention rates are low on some courses, especially those for the unemployed or those undertaken in collaborative provision at centres outside the college. The retention of students on two-year

Curriculum Areas

intermediate courses is particularly low. Some courses now have retention and pass rates below the national average as recorded in the FEFC's curriculum area survey report on construction. The self-assessment report fails to recognise the significance of these weaknesses. A high proportion of advanced level students complete their course successfully, but this proportion is much lower at the intermediate level.

use of visual displays to encourage students' learning.

17 Teachers have sound industrial knowledge and experience. Some have recently gained the further qualifications required to teach a range of new courses. There are sufficient technician staff to support teachers and students. The college's resources centre has a wide range of books and visual aids. Students have ready access to information technology (IT) equipment in central resource areas. There is a good range of equipment and consumable materials. Tools and equipment are well maintained. However, some workshops are untidy and students are unable to store their possessions safely. Some workshops and classrooms are too small for the number of students using them. There is little

Examples of students' achievements in wood processing and furniture studies, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Intermediate vocational (one year) NVQ level 2	Retention (%)	62	77	71
	Pass rate (%)	54	70	31 *
Intermediate vocational (two year) NVQ level 2	Retention (%)	80	47	48
	Pass rate (%)	82	80	68
Advanced vocational (one year) NVQ level 3	Retention (%)	88	83	92
	Pass rate (%)	57	63	82
Advanced vocational (two year) NVQ level 3	Retention (%)	77	100	100 **
	Pass rate (%)	85	36 +	100 **

Source: college data

*some students yet to complete

+pass rate at end of two years – most students continue to third year

**student numbers less than 10

Curriculum Areas

Childcare

Grade 1

18 The inspection covered a range of childcare courses from foundation level to level 4. Inspectors observed 20 lessons, including some taught by collaborative partners. Inspection findings confirmed most of the strengths identified in the college's self-assessment report. Its analysis of students' achievements was supported. Inspectors considered that insufficient emphasis was given to some strengths in connection with collaborative provision.

Key strengths

- a high proportion of outstanding teaching
- extensive integration of students' work experience with teaching and learning
- high retention and pass rates
- regular, thorough assessment and verification in all areas
- a range of provision well matched to needs of employers and students
- well-developed collaborative provision arrangements

Weaknesses

- failure of some teachers to vary their teaching methods appropriately
- a low level of small group work on some courses
- little integration of the key skills of numeracy with vocational work

19 In 1996-97, childcare courses enrolled over 1,250 students, representing 67 per cent of the health and social care students in the college and 14 per cent of total student numbers. The section offers an extensive range of courses. NVQs are offered at levels 2, 3 and 4 in a variety of programmes and modes. Six full-time and

20 part-time courses lead to recognised qualifications. There are 40 collaborative partnerships with schools, nurseries and other centres, with some 200 students following NVQ levels 2 or 3 whilst working as students or volunteers. Twenty-four of these partners have accommodation of high quality for this provision. The remainder use the main college or one of the other partners' sites for lessons and tutorials.

20 The college's self-assessment report identifies the breadth and variety of provision in childcare as a significant strength. Inspectors agreed with this assessment. Mature and young adult students follow separate pathways. The curriculum area achieves considerable flexibility by offering alternative modes of attendance and length of courses, most of which lead to recognised qualifications. Recruitment on some courses can take place throughout the year. Students can extend their studies for one or two terms in order to fully complete a programme. They can transfer from full-time to part-time or to employment-based NVQs. Customised courses are provided for social services and a large private nursery organisation. On a number of courses, accreditation of students' prior achievement and learning is used to give mature students credit for parts of the course to enable them to complete the qualifications in a shorter time. Students can progress at various speeds through their programme. For example, some students can complete an NVQ level 3 in one year while others may take up to two and a half years. This leads to some difficulties in tracking and recording achievement against 'normal' course lengths.

21 All courses are planned and managed well. Most teaching is of a high standard. Whilst communication and IT skills are integrated with many courses, the development of numeracy is given slight attention. Some teaching does not use small group work as effectively as it might. Video equipment and flip charts are not easily accessible in each teaching room.

Curriculum Areas

22 The quality of student's written work is generally high. Their practical work is professionally sound. Across the range of courses, pass rates and retention are good. Pass rates for NVQ level 2 were disappointing in 1996, but when expected late completions have been included students' final results should show a distinct improvement. The proportion of full-time students progressing into employment is very high. Nearly all of the students completing qualifying programmes obtain employment, often as a result of the quality of their portfolios and work experience. A significant number are offered employment upon completion of the course in one of the establishments which have offered work placements. Few students progress directly to other further or higher education courses. However, the college is providing an increasing number of courses at levels 3 and 4 for those already qualified in childcare. Some past students have later qualified as assessors.

Examples of students' achievements in childcare, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Higher education advanced diploma	Retention (%)	86	91	71
	Pass rate (%)	92	100	*
Advanced vocational CACHE diploma in nursery nursing/NNEB	Retention (%)	85	78	97
	Pass rate (%)	89	83	84
Advanced vocational national diploma in caring services (nursery nursing)	Retention (%)	88	65	72
	Pass rate (%)	43	77	72
Advanced vocational NVQ level 3	Retention (%)	91	79	90
	Pass rate (%)	84	72	*
Intermediate vocational NVQ level 2	Retention (%)	83	51	74
	Pass rate (%)	47	48	*

Source: college data

*courses not completed at the time of inspection

Curriculum Areas

Hairdressing and Beauty

Grade 2

23 Inspectors observed nine lessons which included practical and theory work.

Inspectors agreed in general with the college's assessment of this area. In some instances, the college overlooked important weaknesses and did not give sufficient emphasis to some strengths.

Key strengths

- a good range of full-time and part-time courses
- well-planned programmes of study
- teaching of high quality
- effective course management and strong teamwork
- well-organised assessments with appropriate supporting documentation
- effective use of IT in the curriculum
- students' competent and confident practical work

Weaknesses

- aims of lessons and summaries of learning not always shared with students
- inadequate beauty therapy accommodation
- poor retention on some courses

24 The college offers a good range of full-time and part-time courses which meet the needs of prospective students and those of local industry. Courses prepare students for NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 in hairdressing and level 2 in beauty therapy. These courses enable students to progress to higher levels or directly into employment.

25 Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Most course teams prepare well-structured schemes of work and lesson plans. Teachers

use a variety of methods appropriately to take account of the learning needs of students. Students are provided with well-designed learning materials of good quality. They are able to work on their own at a pace which suits them. In some lessons, however, teachers did not share the aims of lessons with students and did not summarise the learning for students. As identified by the college in its self-assessment, inspectors found that teachers did not extend students' basic skills and the integration of key skills such as numeracy and communication with vocational studies is underdeveloped. Work placements, provided by local industry, are part of the students' learning experience. However, this is in an early stage of development and not yet used enough by teachers to extend students' learning. The progress of students is well recorded and documented. Teachers' comments on portfolios are helpful and valued by the students. Course team meetings are effective. Courses are well managed by a team of staff who work closely together.

26 All the students work competently and confidently in the salons and develop relevant professional skills. This was emphasised in the self-assessment report. Practical work is of an appropriate standard. Students' written work is well presented and their course portfolios are generally well organised. Students use IT skills effectively in their assignments. Pass rates on hairdressing courses have steadily improved in recent years; students are now achieving 70 per cent pass rates at NVQ levels 1 and 2. Retention rates on some courses have been poor. For example, only 37 per cent of NVQ level 2 hairdressing students who started in 1994 completed the course in 1996. The college is addressing the situation in a number of ways, for example, by improving the programme and the accommodation and by providing additional support for some students. Retention and pass rates improved for NVQ level 2 hairdressing students completing their studies in 1997.

Curriculum Areas

All 14 students who started the level 2 hairdressing course in 1996 have continued into the second year, giving 100 per cent retention so far. On the new two-year beauty therapy course 76 per cent of the students enrolled have so far proceeded to the second year.

27 The hairdressing and beauty therapy section has been located at the Hucknall Centre for a number of years. The hairdressing salons have a wide range of mostly modern equipment matched to professional standards. Beauty therapy accommodation is inadequate; the salon is too small and inappropriate. The college plans to upgrade the accommodation for hairdressing and beauty therapy.

Examples of students' achievements in hairdressing and beauty, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
NVQ level 2 hair (two-year course)	Retention (%)	*	37	53
	Pass rate (%)	*	50	70
NVQ level 1 hair (one-year course)	Retention (%)	*	70	70
	Pass rate (%)	*	59	70

Source: college data

*course not offered

Curriculum Areas

Art and Design

Grade 3

28 The inspection included courses in art and design and interior design. Thirteen lessons were observed by inspectors. The evidence from the inspection does not fully support the judgements made in the college's self-assessment report, where insufficient emphasis had been given to some of the weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good supportive teaching to groups and individuals
- enrolments that demonstrate widening participation
- good progress made by some students
- opportunities for students to gain additional related qualifications
- good, industrial-standard IT equipment

Weaknesses

- teaching which does not cater sufficiently for the needs of students when groups are combined
- lack of a work experience programme on advanced vocational courses
- poor punctuality and attendance
- key skills and additional learning support not fully established on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes
- low retention on some programmes
- inadequacies of specialist accommodation

29 The provision for art and design at the college has expanded in recent years. There are full-time courses in art and design at foundation, intermediate and advanced level GNVQ and for the BTEC national diploma in interior design. In addition, there is a range of part-time courses

which includes general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) courses and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) programmes. The expansion of work in art and design complements existing provision in the wider curriculum area of construction, hairdressing and beauty courses. The profile of student enrolments demonstrates the college's commitment to widening participation. Women returners and lone parents are particularly well supported and there has been good progression by these students from part-time to full-time programmes.

30 Inspectors agreed with the college assessment that students' work and achievements on full-time courses are of an appropriate standard for the level of their studies. Some of the students' work on the GNVQ courses is imaginative and good standards are being achieved by interior design students. There are problems with poor punctuality and attendance. The college recognised that there are low retention rates on some programmes. Some of the courses inspected are new and final achievements are not available since students have not completed a full course.

31 Staff work well as a team to provide good learning experiences for students. Curriculum assignments are well planned and co-ordinated to give students a coherent learning programme. There is no standard format for assignment briefs. Some assignment briefs are enriched with additional supporting material, but, in other briefs, teachers do not always include enough information for students about deadlines and other assessment arrangements. Records of students' progress and assessment files are well kept, to a standard format. When groups of students working at different levels are combined, as they frequently are, teachers often fail to use methods which take sufficient account of the learning needs of all of the students. Generally, students are not given enough information to enable them to set subjects in

Curriculum Areas

context. Communication between curriculum area staff and teachers of key skills is poor. The college recognised that as a consequence, key skills and additional learning support have not been fully established in the GNVQ programmes.

32 There is an adequate amount of technical support. In general, the range of equipment for the demands and level of the courses offered is insufficient. A significant exception is the recent provision of a computer-aided design studio. IT is well integrated with aspects of course programmes and most students have good access to computers. The college has responded to the accommodation needs of this growing area of work but there are some inadequacies which reduce the effectiveness and efficiency of the teaching and learning in this area.

Examples of students' achievements in art and design, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Intermediate vocational (GNVQ)	Retention (%)	43	88	75
	Pass rate (%)	50	71	67
Advanced vocational (GNVQ, national diploma)	Retention (%)	+	85	43
	Pass rate (%)	+	91	67

Source: college data
+course not running

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

33 Inspectors concluded that the college's self-assessment report accurately identifies many of the strengths and weaknesses relating to this area. The report was written in June 1997 and identifies some areas of weakness that have been the subject of subsequent improvement. There are also some weaknesses not identified within the report that relate to new initiatives such as the development of key skills.

Key strengths

- well-managed arrangements for initial advice, guidance and enrolment
- the effective recruitment programme for school pupils
- the well-planned careers guidance programme and links with the careers service
- effective personal advice and guidance services
- the generally effective personal tutorial system
- systems for identifying the additional support needs of full-time students
- the policy and commitment to key skills
- excellent childcare provision

Weaknesses

- inconsistent implementation of key skills support systems and procedures
- some ineffective aspects of additional learning support programmes

34 In its self-assessment report the college recognised the well-managed and documented process for ensuring that all students receive impartial guidance and advice when enquiring about, or enrolling on, courses. The system is supported by a well-designed database that

records and tracks all enquiries. Interview and guidance checklists ensure consistency between all the staff involved. All prospective full-time and many part-time students have an interview. In addition to information on the choice of courses, they receive information on student support.

35 College publicity material is generally attractive and informative. There are specific campaigns and supporting literature to target particular groups as part of the college strategy for widening participation. A video-conferencing facility linked to youth and community centres is used to provide information and advice for young people who may be reluctant to enter further education. There is an extensive programme arranged for school pupils of 'taster' days and student shadowing in the college. College staff also attend school parents evenings and careers events.

36 Most full-time students have a well-organised induction which includes a range of useful activities. The induction thoroughly covers students' rights and responsibilities and raises awareness of the various guidance services available. As part of the review process, a quality survey was conducted on the 1997 induction. Inspectors agreed with the majority of the findings of this survey. An issue which was subsequently identified by inspectors and staff was that, in a minority of courses, the induction programme failed to introduce course-related material at a sufficiently early stage. The student charter and a student diary provide a continuing reminder to students of their rights and responsibilities and of the guidance and advice services available.

37 Additional learning support is provided for students in the key skills learning centres at each site and also, when appropriate, during lessons. There is good support for students with hearing or visual impairment and a high-quality specialist service for students with dyslexia. During induction, all full-time students complete

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screening tests to identify any needs they may have for additional support with literacy or numeracy. Subsequent detailed diagnosis of learning needs results in an agreed learning programme. This process is generally well managed and is recorded in a central register of students requiring additional learning support. The commencement of learning support by students on one-year programmes is sometimes late. The learning support facilities in the key skills centres are generally of a good standard. Feedback on students' progress is not consistently available to personal tutors when required for individual tutorials.

38 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the development of key skills for all full-time students is a strength. The development of key skills is managed through the key skills learning centres. All key skills programmes lead to accreditation. There has been work with curriculum teams to provide assignments and learning materials which develop both the underlying key skills and encourage the application of the skills in an appropriate vocational context. Progress on the implementation of the new system has been variable across the college. Some curriculum areas have made good and rapid progress while others have yet to contribute to the development of suitable materials.

39 All full-time and most part-time students have a personal tutor. The majority of tutorials are used to cover academic progress and planning work schedules, records of achievement and any personal issues a student may wish to discuss. Some tutorials are used for other purposes. For example, inspectors found one tutorial being used for additional teaching. There is an effective system for recording actions arising from tutorial discussions and follow-up activities. The information and learning technology curriculum area has developed a useful computer-based system for this purpose. Careers programmes are provided for all full-time students and

students develop career action plans. The careers officer from the local careers service is a member of the guidance team and contributes to the careers tutorial programme.

40 The system of personal support for students is well developed and is heavily used and valued by students. A guidance centre on the main site offers advice on finance, careers, accommodation and childcare. Counselling is available on the two main sites. The provision of childcare is excellent and is being extended to include care from the age of six weeks. An after-school childcare programme that caters for school pupils up to the age of 14 years is available until 21.00 hours each weekday evening. There is childcare on Saturday mornings and some provision is made during the normal college recess.

General Resources

Grade 2

41 Inspectors agreed with the overall judgement in the self-assessment report, although there were some strengths and weaknesses which were not included. These partly resulted from changes made since the report was produced. The refectory area, student common room and student union office were identified as weaknesses in the self-assessment report. Subsequent improvements to the refectory and the offices for the student union have made significant changes to the services provided.

Key strengths

- IT resources
- a variety of accessible centres, covering most sites, which provide student support facilities
- the high quality of most of the teaching accommodation at Stockhill Lane

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- capital expenditure on major improvements in accommodation and additional premises
- an effective accommodation strategy
- improved room usage in most areas

Weaknesses

- some poor accommodation at the A'Court Street Centre which lacks facilities available to students at other sites
- inadequate access for people with restricted mobility to some sites and buildings
- the Hucknall Centre provides a less than adequate environment for some students
- generally poor social facilities for students
- lack of a clear identification of planned curriculum changes in relation to building developments

42 The college has demonstrated a strong commitment to the development of resources for IT. Currently, the ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is 1:9. A clear strategy for further development is being implemented, including wiring to link all centres except A'Court Street. This is giving access to internal communications between most sites, including for example, access to a college-wide library catalogue. Teaching and support staff have suitable working areas with access to IT resources. This includes a system to enable material produced on computers in staff rooms to be transmitted directly to the reprographics centre. For students, the college has developed a variety of accessible centres for reception and guidance, learning resources, IT and key skills. Services available at sites other than Stockhill Lane vary and this is not made clear in the student handbook.

43 Capital expenditure, supplemented by successful European bids, has been used to fund major improvements in accommodation and additional premises. Since the self-assessment report was completed, an effective accommodation strategy up to 1999 has been devised and is being implemented. Space requirements have been identified for the same period and room utilisation surveys for 1996-97 show improved usage in most areas. At the operational level planned curriculum changes have not been clearly linked to new building developments, some of which are due to open in September 1998.

44 Most of the teaching accommodation at Stockhill Lane is of a high standard and is well maintained. Since the self-assessment report was written, the college has made significant changes to the services provided in the refectory and for the student union office. At the time of the inspection, new accommodation at Bulwell, the Bulwell Community College, and improvements to The Rowans on the Stockhill Lane Site were about to add to the general quality of the accommodation. The college recognises that accommodation at the A'Court Street Centre is poor and lacks the opportunities available to students on other sites. They also identify that the Hucknall Centre provides a less than adequate learning environment, particularly for business administration and IT students. There are plans to improve the accommodation for the students at A'Court Street and Hucknall during 1998. Social facilities for students on most sites are poor, as the college stated in its self-assessment report. Inspection supported the view of the college that access for people with restricted mobility to B block at Stockhill Lane, the Hucknall Centre and A'Court Street is inadequate. The accommodation for collaborative provision in care, which is mainly in schools, was judged to be of a high standard. Other sites used for the provision of care and for other curriculum areas were not visited.

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Quality Assurance

Grade 3

45 Inspectors agreed with the findings in the self-assessment report. The college recognised that until recently the main focus of its quality system has been on financial performance and that there should now be a greater emphasis on academic performance.

Key strengths

- a developing college-wide quality assurance system
- the programme review process
- the review of the college charter
- the professional development of staff

Weaknesses

- various quality assurance initiatives not yet integrated with a coherent cycle of meetings
- some inconsistencies in the initial operation of the new programme review and quality circle procedures
- information gained from student questionnaires not used systematically
- no agreed timetable for the implementation of actions following visits to collaborative provision

46 The procedures for self-assessment adopted at the college were new and used for the first time in preparation for the inspection. Existing and new quality assurance procedures, including team contributions from across the college, informed the process. The intention is for a biennial self-assessment report to form part of the strategic and operational planning cycle. Action plans to address weaknesses were put together for each curriculum and cross-college area. There was little external consultation in compiling the report, although some evidence is based upon surveys of employers' views. Team contributions from

across the college provided evidence to support the report. The quality statements from Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*, were used as a framework. There was some observation of teaching to inform the self-assessment report. Evidence on curriculum management and specialist resources was combined into cross-college sections in the report. This was not helpful in coming to judgements in some curriculum areas. Performance indicators were not widely used in the report and targets are only mentioned in some areas.

47 The college is implementing a quality assurance system which builds upon its previous practice. Many elements of a successful quality improvement system are in place or under development, but there is a need to ensure that the various elements will combine to provide a coherent system. The self-assessment report broadly recognises this point. Quality standards for a number of academic functions have been developed. Quality service level agreements have also been developed by most business support teams, for example, student administration. A quality assurance review team has been established and has considered its first review on the induction of students. Their report identified relevant strengths and weaknesses and concluded with points for action.

48 The quality of the academic provision is reviewed by programme review teams and newly-introduced 'quality assurance circles'. This structure builds upon an earlier system of programme review. As stated in the self-assessment report, the programme review process generally works effectively. The cycle of meetings allows team review meetings to feed into curriculum quality circle meetings. There are also quality circles for business support teams. The initial meetings in the new cycle varied in their effectiveness, as identified in the self-assessment report. In some cases, there was a lack of detailed statistical evidence to

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support the review meeting and some important agenda items such as retention and achievements were not fully discussed. There are comprehensive procedures for meeting the needs of examining and validating bodies.

49 Performance indicators concerned with student numbers and finance have been used with increasing effectiveness for a number of years for planning and monitoring purposes. As the self-assessment report notes, a broader range of performance indicators has yet to be used to demonstrate improvements in quality. The college is now starting to use more indicators as part of its quality assurance system. It has set five core objectives with associated performance indicators for 1997-98. The performance of each curriculum team will be monitored closely against targets, such as student retention rates. Management information systems supply useful information for tracking progress against targets, producing comprehensive printouts on a monthly basis. A student tracking and record system has been introduced to improve data on the retention of students. It automatically triggers absence reports if a student is absent for too long a period.

50 Questionnaires canvassing the opinions of students are issued three times each year. The surveys are comprehensive in their coverage and response rates have been good. Survey summary data are produced quickly but lack a commentary or comparison with previous years. Curriculum teams are free to comment on the data and can request responses directly related to their curriculum areas if they wish. More systematic use could be made of these. This was not recognised in the college's self-assessment report.

51 The college's procedures for monitoring the quality of the collaborative provision are common with those for other college provision. The college's internal verifiers are responsible for sampling the work of students and programme review team meetings are held,

using the same procedures as in the college. The self-assessment report noted that in some of the collaborative provision, such as the school-based childcare courses, these procedures work well. In other provision, there is a need to ensure that actions proposed as a result of verifier visits are carried out within an agreed timescale.

52 As identified in the self-assessment report, a comprehensive review of the college charter was undertaken by a group of staff drawn from various college teams. The student board was asked for its comments on the proposed new charter. The new charter provides relevant information in a format which is clearer than in the initial charter, indicates quantitative targets and is written more simply and clearly.

53 Procedures which support staff development were identified as a strength by the college and the inspectors. Staff report that requests for development activities that support college priorities are normally agreed. Training within the college has been provided to meet college priorities, including support for the developing role of co-ordinators. All senior management staff are studying an NVQ level 5 in management. All staff complete a personal development review with their line manager. The assessment of teaching performance involves a three-stage procedure, including self-assessment, assessment by a 'critical friend' and assessment by a manager. This procedure was used to some extent to inform the college's self-assessment report.

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Governance

Grade 2

54 The findings from the inspection broadly supported those in the college's self-assessment report. However, auditors identified important areas of weakness not included in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- effective review of the college mission
- thorough assessment of governors' own performance, with an agenda for future action
- the corporation exercises its responsibilities for the determination of the direction of the college
- appropriate selection and training of new governors
- effective committees with clearly-defined terms of reference

Weaknesses

- limited systematic attention to aspects of performance other than financial
- some low attendance by corporation members
- no standing orders to guide the conduct of the corporation
- no discrete corporation action to approve the annual budget for 1997-98
- a need to identify more clearly the data required to monitor college performance

55 The FEFC's audit service concludes 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.

56 The membership of the corporation of 15 comprises the principal, two staff governors, four co-opted governors, and eight business governors, including a TEC nominee. There is a vacancy for the TEC nominee. The corporation meets at least once every two months.

Governors conduct their business efficiently, take an active interest in the college, and clearly understand the distinction between governance and management. Agendas and papers are available at the college for public inspection, with the exception of appropriate confidential items.

57 A search committee with clearly-defined terms of reference has been active in considering proposals for new governors. New governors are required to indicate their eligibility to take up appointment but there is no formal system to identify governors' continuing eligibility. Although a register of interests has been established, it provides limited details of personal and financial interests, and does not include all governors. The corporation has had a policy of not establishing standing orders to guide the conduct of corporation and committee meetings, but it is reviewing this situation.

58 The college's review of its mission in early 1997 involved governors and meetings with partners and others with an interest in the college. The corporation was influential in the development of the new mission statement. Updated strategic objectives for 1997 to 2000 were carefully considered before the strategic plan was formally approved in July 1997. Governors were involved through committees, board meetings, seminars and training programmes. They looked at how the college should grow if the allocation from the FEFC was substantially lower than that needed to meet demand, the unit cost of provision in each curriculum area and the balance and rates of growth between curriculum areas. The corporation also considered fully the college's involvement in collaborative provision.

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59 The corporation has carried out a realistic and honest appraisal of its performance. A formal review using a questionnaire identified a number of concerns. In the planning for 1997-98, clear targets, timescales and criteria for evaluation have been agreed. Arrangements for the assessment of the corporation's performance are now laid out in the revised governors' handbook and there is a clear action plan for improvement. The work of an external consultant has helped to provide a clear focus for this initiative. An annual action plan is to be drawn up by the clerk and reviewed with the corporation's chairman. Attention to the college's academic standards is to be the corporation's first priority. Members have not previously been sufficiently aware of some quality assurance issues. In future, data relating to enrolments, retention, achievements and progression will be used more fully to inform the corporation's strategic planning and monitoring.

60 The corporation has an appropriate committee structure, and committee meetings are well attended. The decisions and recommendations of committees to the corporation are reported in a manner which assists effective delegation. Although governors are well aware of the college's financial position, they do not receive rolling cashflow forecasts for at least one year ahead or monthly forecast out-turn balance sheets. The corporation approved the three-year financial forecast for 1997 to 2000. There was no separate corporation action to approve the annual budget for 1997-98.

Management

Grade 2

61 Inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- the strategic direction provided by senior management
- comprehensive market research
- a well-developed management information system
- good financial management
- staff who generally understand and feel able to contribute to the strategic planning process
- the increasing range and use of performance indicators and target-setting
- good partnerships and external links

Weaknesses

- the failure to translate annual operating plans clearly into action at course level
- some inconsistencies in aspects of communication, particularly with part-time staff
- the lack of an action plan to support the equal opportunities policy

62 Since incorporation in 1993, there have been considerable changes in all aspects of the management structure, with the object of establishing more self-managing teams. The restructuring is still continuing and a post of deputy principal, with responsibility for curriculum delivery and quality assurance, has been advertised. The current management team comprises the principal, a vice-principal with responsibility for business and enterprise, six curriculum directors and eight business support managers.

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63 The senior management team has provided the strategic direction and drive to introduce curriculum initiatives to widen participation and diversify provision in order to meet more effectively the needs of the community. These initiatives have been based upon extensive national and local market research. However, management decision-making does not focus sufficiently on improving services to students. The college's annual operating plans are not clearly translated into implementation plans at course level. Responsibility for implementing these plans is not fully established.

64 The management of curriculum areas is generally effective and, in some areas, strong. Staff understand and feel able to contribute to strategic planning. There is an increasing use of target-setting and performance indicators for monitoring progress. Regular team meetings take place in most areas, and there is strong involvement of staff teams in course review. The role of curriculum co-ordinators, as the operational managers responsible for the delivery of the curriculum has been enhanced. Co-ordinators have received some staff development to help them carry out their managerial role. The accountability of co-ordinators to curriculum directors is not well understood and further development is planned.

65 Channels for communication, including regular staff briefings, are generally effective. A minority of staff feel that issues are filtered and diluted in this communication process and that there are few formal opportunities to communicate to senior managers issues raised at team level. Many staff take advantage of the fact that they can easily communicate directly with the principal. The effectiveness of communication with part-time staff is variable and this is recognised by the college. The student board provides an unusually strong forum for students to express their views and the college has responded to issues they have raised.

66 The management information system is well developed. It provides timely, detailed on-line information for managers on student enrolments, withdrawals and student units. Managers use it effectively to monitor progress towards the achievement of targets. However, not all co-ordinators have direct access to the system to support their growing management role in the monitoring of performance. This has been recognised as a problem by the college.

67 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The financial health of the college is also good and has improved against the sector trend. Returns to the FEFC are made in good time. The finance team, led by a qualified accountant, is appropriate for the needs of the college. The financial forecasting and budgetary process is clearly documented. Financial monitoring takes due account of variances between planned and actual expenditure. Management accounts are produced to an appropriate timetable. Budget holders are well supported by regular comprehensive reports and a frequently updated on-line information system. Financial regulations are comprehensive and regularly updated. Audit arrangements are appropriate. There are procedures in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

68 The deployment of resources is tightly controlled. It has been influenced by historical costs. There is detailed unit costing, with responsibility for budgets delegated to those who manage them. At present, there are quite considerable variations in unit costs. The college is now moving towards greater internal convergence and further improvements in efficiency.

69 The college has developed effective and productive links with a number of external agencies, particularly within the City of Nottingham, to help economic and educational

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regeneration. It works closely with Greater Nottingham TEC and has collaborated in partnership bids for funding with other further education institutions. A particularly clear example of the results of such productive links is the establishment of Bulwell Community College. This is a partnership between the college, a local comprehensive school and Nottingham City Council. The aim of the college is to provide facilities for local people, particularly the unemployed, and small to medium-sized employers. Links have been forged with the local employment services and with community and industry representatives.

70 The college's equal opportunities policy, endorsed by governors in 1994, has not been supported by an action plan. The college has recognised this as a weakness. During 1997, the college set up a task group to consider equal opportunities. A revised equal opportunities policy has been developed, accompanied by an action plan to support and monitor its implementation. It has yet to be endorsed by the corporation.

Conclusions

71 The self-assessment report produced by the college was helpful to inspectors in carrying out the inspection. In all cross-college areas inspectors agreed with the grades reached by the college and in most respects with the overall judgements. In specialist curriculum areas some weaknesses were not given sufficient emphasis. For this reason three curriculum areas were given a lower grade by the inspectors than that reflected in the college self-assessment. In arriving at some self-assessment grades the college did not give enough emphasis to poor students' achievements and retention rates or to some unsatisfactory aspects of specialist accommodation.

72 Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of this report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (1996-97)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	2
16-18 years	13
19-24 years	15
25+ years	66
Not known	4
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (1996-97)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	47
Intermediate	27
Advanced	17
Higher education	2
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	7
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1996-97)

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	129	925	8
Agriculture	1	68	1
Construction	582	1,650	17
Engineering	101	610	5
Business	303	1,834	16
Hotel and catering	8	113	1
Health and community care	855	2,816	27
Art and design	155	708	7
Humanities	26	2,098	16
Basic education	74	171	2
Total	2,234	10,993	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1996-97)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	122	148	0	270
Supporting direct learning contact	25	8	0	33
Other support	111	8	0	119
Total	258	164	0	422

Source: college data, rounded to nearest full-time equivalent

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£8,345,000	£10,150,000	£10,739,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£17.05	£16.40	£17.39
Payroll as a proportion of income	72%	60%	52%
Achievement of funding target	103%	108%	119%
Diversity of income	24%	23%	24%
Operating surplus	-£668,000	£437,000	£824,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), Funding Allocations 1996-97 (1996-97)

Payroll – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), college (1996-97)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	+	4	8
	Average point score per entry	+	3.0	1.6
	Position in tables	+	bottom third	bottom 10%
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	61	46	54
	Percentage achieving qualification	74%	54%	50%
	Position in tables	middle third	bottom 10%	bottom 10%
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	52	65
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	40%	25%
	Position in tables	*	bottom third	bottom 10%

Source: DfEE

Note: the majority of the college's students are 19 years of age or older

The achievements of these students are not covered in published DfEE performance tables

+no students entered

*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

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