

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Bexhill College

May 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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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 every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses. The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 64/95

BEXHILL COLLEGE SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected September 1994 – February 1995

Summary

Bexhill College is on the south coast between the holiday resorts of Hastings and Eastbourne in East Sussex. Students mostly come from a four-mile wide strip extending 20 miles north to the Kent border. The college has a good range of GCE A levels and is beginning to offer adult education courses. Twenty-five per cent of students are on vocational courses, which were first introduced a decade ago. High standards of teaching lead to very good examination results especially at GCE A level and GNVQ advanced levels. Teachers provide good guidance and support to students. The college is well managed and governed. There is considerable self-help to make the best of the poor accommodation. The college should establish a consistent, college-wide quality assurance system; seek ways of reducing the workload of senior managers by rationalising some responsibilities; continue to improve the accommodation; increase the number of modern computers; and improve its library.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	1
Governance and management	2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	1
equipment/learning resources	3
accommodation	4

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics	2	Art and design	3
Life sciences	2	English and performing arts	2
Business studies	2	Modern languages	3
Health and social care	2		

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INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of Bexhill College, East Sussex, took place in three stages. The college enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term of 1994. Inspection of courses took place during the weeks of 26 September and 22 November 1994 and of cross-college provision from 13 to 15 February 1995. Eight inspectors took part in the inspection for a total of 46 inspector days. Inspectors visited 110 classes and examined a sample of students' work. Meetings took place with members of the corporation, the senior management team, teachers, students, parents, employers and a representative of the Sussex Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). An inspector attended a corporation meeting during the cross-college phase of the inspection. Inspectors also examined college policy statements, and documents relating to aspects of college organisation.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Bexhill College is a sixth form college and was formed in 1977 as a result of post-16 reorganisation in East Sussex. The predominantly rural area served by the college is four-miles wide and stretches 20 miles north, from the coast to the Kent county boundary. Many students have lengthy journeys to college, using transport provided by the local education authority (LEA). The college has four partner schools: two in Bexhill itself and two community colleges serving the rural areas of Robertsbridge and Battle. Last year, half the year 11 students from each of these schools progressed to Bexhill College. The staying-on rate of school leavers in the area exceeds 80 per cent. Although the college does not promote its courses beyond its traditional catchment area, it attracts students from the neighbouring towns of Hastings and Rye. Thirty per cent of students come from grant-maintained and independent schools.

3 At the time of the inspection there were 1,005 full-time and 233 part-time and adult education students. The college has met its target growth of 8 per cent for the last two years. It mainly serves full-time students aged 16-19 who are taking General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level), advanced supplementary (AS) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects. The first vocational courses in secretarial studies, and family and community care were offered 10 years ago. Twenty-five per cent of students are now enrolled on one or other of an expanding range of vocational courses. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are given in figure 3. The college has 70 full-time equivalent teachers and 27 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is given in figure 4.

4 Bexhill has a population of 41,200 and the Rother District, of which it forms a part, has a population of 85,000. Bexhill has one of the highest proportions of elderly people in Europe, with 42 per cent of its inhabitants of pensionable age. The Rother area has the fastest rising population of

pre-school children in the county. There is very little manufacturing industry in Bexhill and the surrounding area. Caring, a low wage occupation, is the major source of employment in the town. The availability of trained carers is critical if local residential homes are to meet the needs of the large number of very elderly people. Other sources of work are distribution and retail services, leisure and tourism, and banking. Unemployment in the area is almost 10 per cent, but in some council wards it exceeds 16 per cent.

5 The college's stated mission is to provide students with the opportunities to develop their individual potential through balanced, flexible and appropriate learning.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 All staff are aware of the government's aims and policies for further education, the national targets for education and training and the requirements of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college's strategic plan makes explicit reference to them. The growth targets set by the corporation were met in 1993-94 and 1994-95. The corporation and the staff share a clear view of the college's mission and educational character. There is a wide range of general education and vocational courses for the 16-18 age group and for adults. New courses are added in response to demand and courses that are no longer needed are discontinued. There are 37 GCE A level, 18 AS and 28 GCSE subjects. The college believes that the conventional GCE A level programme is too narrow and requires all full-time general education students to study four areas for at least one of their two years. Some students take four GCE A level subjects. Others take two or three, with a GCE AS or GCSE subject or a vocational course such as keyboard skills, basic business information processing or foreign languages at work. The college also offers a baccalaureate programme requiring the study of a broad range of subjects but no students are currently following this course.

7 Vocational provision has grown substantially since 1992. General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate level programmes are available in art and design, business studies, health and social care, hospitality and catering, and leisure and tourism. GNVQ advanced courses are provided in business studies, health and social care, and science. Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma and National Nursery Examinations Board diploma courses are offered in nursery nursing, and there are National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3 in business administration. The college does not offer GNVQ foundation courses but it is considering their introduction. Currently its own foundation course provides a range of basic qualifications in numeracy, life skills, science, information technology, health and hygiene, first aid and catering, together with the Duke of Edinburgh's bronze award. The college plans to widen the scope of its vocational curriculum still further.

8 The college mission is supported by the LEA, the careers service, employers, parents and partner schools. Its external links are maintained by the vice-principals and through the efforts of teachers. The Bexhill Consortium is a focus for communication with schools. It is funded by the schools and colleges involved and is concerned with curriculum and staff development, and arrangements for guidance and progression.

9 All full-time students take part in a recreational and general studies programme for at least one year of their time at Bexhill. It includes sport and such activities as a video club, a philosophy study group and a course on health issues. The many cultural activities include drama productions.

10 There are 150 students aged 19 or over on vocational courses and 70 on general education programmes. As part of its plan to increase the participation of mature students, the college is piloting an evening programme of five GCE A level and two GCSE subjects, together with short courses in information technology and counselling skills. There are also new work-based care qualifications to provide for this major area of local employment. They include an advanced diploma and NVQ levels 2 and 3 in childcare and education, and NVQ levels 2 and 3 in care. There is also a distance learning programme supported by the Sussex TEC which offers learning packages with tutorial support in several general and vocational subjects to those unable to attend regular classes.

11 The college keeps in close touch with parents. Well-attended open days and evenings enable them to get to know the college and its staff. Parents are kept well informed of the progress of their children and regular consultations are provided. There are good links with universities and other higher education institutions. Some college departments have regular contacts with their university counterparts, which include attendance at meetings, use of university equipment and laboratories and supervision of university students on teaching practice in the college.

12 Most employers in the Bexhill area run small businesses, often in the service sector. The college has good contacts with many of them through the Bexhill Education Employer Partnership. Links are well established with schools and others caring for young children. The college trains NVQ assessors in care through the early years consortium. The college has been allocated TEC funding for staff training in GNVQs and to support the development of distance learning. Although 25 per cent of students are on vocational courses the college has received limited support from Sussex TEC.

13 A comprehensive equal opportunities policy is in operation on gender, ethnicity and disability. Some departments have produced their own policies which adapt the general policy to their particular subjects. Equal opportunities issues are considered in student tutorials. The college offers a learning support programme in English and mathematics for students

with learning difficulties. To increase its support for such students, it is appointing a specialist tutor and setting up a new learning disabilities unit in association with a local special school.

14 A daily act of Christian worship, in accordance with sections 44 and 45 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, is open to all students. Religious education classes are also offered at times convenient for the majority of full-time students. A non-denominational Christian group meets weekly for a varied programme, which includes Bible study.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

15 The governing body has a membership of 20. There are 10 independent members, three co-opted members, two parents, two staff, one student, a nominee from the TEC, and the principal. There is a vacancy for one co-opted governor. Governors have a valuable range of experience in business, finance, law, insurance, medicine and local government. They are aware of their responsibilities and have a good working knowledge of the instrument and articles of government. The five committees of the corporation deal with finance, personnel, property, audit and remuneration. Co-operation between governors and senior staff is a strong feature of the college's management. Papers for corporation meetings arrive in good time and are comprehensive. Financial reports are circulated monthly. Governors are kept well informed by the principal and other managers and are able to exercise their responsibilities properly.

16 The college has a clear mission statement which was developed after consultation with all staff. It sets the context for the strategic and operating plans which are also drawn up in collaboration with staff and governors. The strategic plan sets targets and allocates responsibility for meeting them. The college has recently conducted a review of its progress in meeting its goals. Each department has its own development plan, but they vary in quality. Some show the actions to be taken, by whom and when; others just describe what a department has achieved and its intentions. The least satisfactory give no more than a brief statement of hopes and wishes. The preparation of a common form which all departments are required to use would ensure that development plans are consistent with the college's strategic plan.

17 The principal's committee, consisting of the principal, deputy principal, two vice-principals and the senior principal tutor, is the senior management forum of the college. The deputy principal has responsibility for administration and all personnel matters. The vice-principals and senior principal tutor are primarily responsible for students and courses and also carry a range of cross-college responsibilities. The staff handbook gives details of the management and committee structure and the responsibilities of key post holders. There are college committees dealing with finance and resources, pastoral care, budget planning and the curriculum which bring together senior staff, heads of department and other specialist groups. Heads of department have considerable autonomy;

they decide syllabuses, schemes of work, and teaching styles. Their lines of communication to senior managers and with their own staff are well defined and effective. Staff know that any proposals they make will be considered. The college intends to restructure its management to alleviate the workload of managers, to meet changing circumstances and to remove anomalies.

18 The college's average level of funding per unit is £18.71. The median for all sixth form colleges is £19.81. The college is concerned that continued funding below the median will constrain its ability to improve its accommodation or offer new services. Budget allocation is made after a process of bidding which is perceived by staff to be fair and open. Bids are made to a timetable prepared by the controller of finance and are considered by the budget committee. Proposals are submitted to the governors' finance committee. The college's external auditors have expressed satisfaction with the quality of financial procedures. The college's income and expenditure for the 16 month period to July 1994 are given in figures 5 and 6.

19 The management information system is the further education version of the schools' information management system. It is used effectively to process records of students' applications, progress through courses and eventual destinations. It is also used for examination administration, personnel and payroll, college accounts and timetable analysis. The system has 14 workstations and two more are planned. Training has been provided for some staff but the college recognises that more is needed. A strategy document explores management information system needs up to the year 1999. Performance indicators are used to measure efficiency. They include enrolment data, retention and completion rates, examination performance and students' destination statistics. Course and unit costing methods are being developed. Managers and governors regard the use of such indicators as a vital aid to their work.

20 Health and safety matters receive proper attention and key responsibilities are clearly allocated. A health and safety committee meets at least once a term. A full premises inspection and safety audit are conducted annually and there are procedures for notifying potential hazards.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

21 The college has good relationships with its four partner schools and works effectively with them, and with another college, in a consortium. This arrangement ensures that potential students have impartial guidance and access to the range of information they need to make informed decisions. There are well-organised day events when prospective year 10 students in the partner schools can sample subjects that interest them and experience life at the college. These 'taster' days are well attended and students find them helpful in making initial choices. Advisory interviews

take place in schools in year 11, and each pupil receives a written summary of the discussion held and the action to be taken. A bridging course in the summer helps year 11 students intending to study mathematics and sciences make the transition between GCSE and GCE A level study in these subjects. Open days, a separate information evening for adults and an introductory event for parents provide further opportunities for prospective students to confirm or modify their study plans.

22 The pre-entry and enrolment process is largely carried out by the principal tutor team. Enrolment is well organised. Sufficient flexibility is built into the programme to allow it to offer further guidance for students and to deal with new applicants. With the increasing range of vocational courses, and differences between them which are sometimes subtle, the college should consider involving departmental subject staff at an early stage in the selection process to ensure that the most informed guidance is available for students.

23 Induction of students into the college and into their programmes of study is planned carefully, but its effectiveness varies from course to course. Positive features include an outline of the course and some imaginative ways of helping students adapt to college life. In many departments the right balance between settling in and getting on with the work has not been achieved. Some students view induction as a waste of time.

24 The accreditation of students' prior learning is at an early stage of development. There are very few requests for it and its use is restricted to two or three departments. As GNVQ and NVQ provision expands the college will need to consider the matter further.

25 The tutor system is the major focus for the guidance and support of students. Principal tutors are the main point of contact with students prior to enrolment and they also monitor students' progress from pre-entry to exit. The college integrates the pastoral and academic aspects of development by assigning each student a personal tutor from the area in which he or she studies and by making that tutor answerable to a principal tutor with teaching responsibilities in the same area. The college has recognised the particular needs of one-year students, and personal tutors in departments offering GNVQ and other vocational courses are aware of the particular responsibilities which their tutorial role carries. Principal and personal tutors meet to ensure consistency in tutorials. The tutorial system generally works effectively, but some staff are overloaded. Students have daily contact with their personal tutors for registration and notices. The weekly tutorial period is planned by the relevant principal and personal tutors. Students value the components which prepare them for the next step in their career but those sessions which deal with issues related to personal and social development are less effective and are described by students as irrelevant or repetitive of school work. A review of the tutorial programme is taking place.

26 Students' progress is monitored regularly and reviews take place at pre-determined published intervals. Students' files are kept up to date and provide principal tutors with an accurate record of their programmes and performance. Attendance is monitored and appropriate action is taken for absences. An innovative pilot study is taking place which makes one-year students responsible for their own records of attendance.

27 Literacy and numeracy support is offered by the English and mathematics departments. Attendance is voluntary and the service is mainly used by students of GCSE English and mathematics. The college does not routinely screen entrants for basic literacy and numeracy skills. Students' work shows that the numbers who need help are increasing, especially among those taking GNVQ intermediate level courses.

28 Students of all ages and parents speak highly of the support and guidance received from teachers. Parents, in particular, feel that the college is sensitive to their concerns and that teachers know their children well and are committed to their best interests. They value the way in which students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and are expected to produce work on time. Part-time and adult students mostly take vocational courses. Many are returning to education after a long absence. They are given understanding support by their personal tutors.

29 There is a thorough and well-planned guidance for progression to higher education. On the evidence of the numbers obtaining places at university, it is effective. It includes advice on the application process and helps students to present themselves in the best light. It also helps to prepare them for life at university. Former students are sometimes invited back to contribute to this process.

30 The college has the support of a county council careers officer for 64 days a year. Careful identification of priorities ensures that the best use is made of the days available. The programme of careers advice is effective. Interviews are recorded and a copy is given to the student, identifying the action to be taken and the responsibility for taking it. Provision for one-year students is good but few students on two-year courses make use of the service.

31 The student services unit has been in transition for some time. The senior principal tutor is its temporary head and the person giving welfare advice is also temporary. Counselling is provided by three teachers who have some remission from their teaching for this purpose. The service is valued highly by the students who use it. The careers officer and the teacher responsible for liaison with the college advisory council are members of the unit. The service needs consolidation with the establishment of permanent posts and proper accommodation. A number of students at the college have personal and social problems which impede their ability to realise their potential. The increasing number of adults recruited is also likely to increase demands on the service.

32 Senior students make a valuable contribution to the college. They arrange social events to raise money for charity. They have been able to help students in financial difficulties and have also contributed to the funding for the college counsellors. The student chair of the college advisory council is a member of the governing body, which receives a regular report from the college advisory council. Attendance by tutor group representatives at college advisory council meetings is, however, often poor.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

33 Of the 110 sessions inspected, 65 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed the weaknesses. In none of the sessions inspected did weaknesses outweigh strengths. The following table summarises the grades given to each of the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		6	33	15	0	0	54
GCSE		2	6	9	0	0	17
GNVQ		3	10	13	0	0	26
NVQ		0	2	2	0	0	4
Other		4	5	0	0	0	9
Total		15	56	39	0	0	110

34 There are good relationships between staff and students. They are fostered by tutorials and the friendly approach of teachers. Students find teachers approachable and ready to assist them on both academic and personal matters.

35 Most teachers plan their teaching well and use detailed schemes of work. In the mathematics department, for example, all the sessions observed had schemes of work which included targets which teachers were able to use to check on the effectiveness of students' learning. Teachers meet regularly to agree objectives and to co-ordinate the curriculum. In all areas students are provided with detailed course handbooks that give information on course content and structure, aims and objectives, and a timetable and criteria for assessment.

36 Teachers use a variety of teaching styles. Good question and answer techniques are used to encourage students and to check on their understanding. In a minority of classes, however, teachers did not challenge students sufficiently and were too quick to provide answers before their students had enough time to consider the questions. In some sessions teachers justified their approach by citing the expectations of examiners rather than students' understanding of the subject. Study aids are well used. In some departments teachers have prepared course booklets and worksheets to supplement textbooks. Students made good

use of video and audio equipment to develop their skills in modern foreign language classes. Video equipment was also used to record role play in business studies courses. The use of good overhead projector transparencies was widespread.

37 In a GNVQ advanced business studies session, students planned and carried out a role-play exercise. They worked in small groups with two teachers who had previously prepared the class on the theme of customer care in the reception area at Alton Towers. The activity was well planned and appropriate to its assessment objectives. Students were interested and their enjoyment aided their learning. The lessons learnt from the session were reinforced by related homework.

38 In art and design the quality of learning is limited by the environment and the lack of resources. There is poor accommodation with inadequate light. Students get few opportunities for life drawing and where there are such opportunities they have to contribute to models' fees. In one GNVQ art and design class, students were temporarily using the basement for lettering; the room was overcrowded and there was no daylight or ventilation. One student wasted much time going back and forth from the main studio looking for his folio of work. After one period, students had to pack up their work, move to another studio, and restart.

39 In business studies and art and design, there was effective group work based upon assignments. There were detailed briefs which set out clearly the aims and objectives, and indicated appropriate reference material. The introduction of vocational courses, with their distinctive approaches to planning, management and curriculum delivery, have had a positive impact on the teaching of GCSE and GCE A level programmes.

40 Students are set regular assessment tasks which relate well to the objectives of the programmes. Students are set regular homework with deadlines for its return. Assessment is carried out with care. Teachers' comments on students' work are generally detailed and give helpful guidance on how it may be improved.

41 Study skills and core skills are properly taught in most areas. However, some students' use of English and spelling, for example in mathematics and in the health and social care intermediate course, was poor. Attention given to the development of information technology skills depends very much on the course or subject. In some areas, for example business studies, students develop a good level of computing skills. However, in art and design and humanities students have less opportunities to develop information technology skills.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

42 Students are well motivated and respond to the challenges and encouragement given by their teachers. Most enjoy their work and are developing appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding. They are

committed to learning, informed about their progress and aware of the opportunities available to them when they complete their courses. Students on GCSE repeat courses are less well motivated.

43 Where students take part in work experience they develop appropriate skills and an awareness of health and safety issues.

44 Students' examination successes in GCE A level subjects are good. In 1994, there were 715 entries and a pass rate at grades A-E of 92 per cent compared with a provisional national average for sixth form colleges of 83 per cent. In 1993, results were similarly good, with a 90 per cent pass rate compared with the national average of 82 per cent. In the 1994 GCE A level examinations, of the 181 students who entered three or more subjects 139 progressed to higher education.

45 In eight GCE A level subjects, pass rates exceeded the provisional national average for 1994 by more than 10 per cent. In English, the largest department, the results were very good, with a pass rate of 97 per cent. Mathematics, another large department, achieved 100 per cent. Other notably successful areas were business studies, chemistry, physics and sociology. Only in French and politics did pass rates not exceed the provisional national averages. In 1994, the average GCE A level score for students taking two or more subjects was 15.4 (where A=10, E=2). The average point score per entry was 5.4. This places the college among the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education.

46 In 1994, 143 students took GCE AS level examinations in 20 different subjects. Of these 71 per cent gained pass grades A-E. In nine subjects there was a 100 per cent pass rate, but in some of these student numbers were small.

47 In 1994, students took a total of 533 GCSE examinations in 23 subjects. In 51 per cent of these, students achieved grades A-C, compared with the average for sixth form colleges of 50 per cent. This is a slight fall on the previous year's performance. As well as retaking GCSE subjects in which they had not done well at school, students took a wide range of new subjects. The most popular were psychology and sociology, but others included business, electronics, modern foreign languages, and Esperanto. In English language and English literature, physics and sociology the grade A-C pass rate exceeded the average for sixth form colleges by more than 10 per cent. Subjects in which the results fell below the sector average included mathematics, media studies and electronics.

48 In 1993, the college offered GNVQ intermediate courses in business studies, art and design, and health and social care for the first time. A total of 36 students were enrolled and all but one achieved the award at the end of the year. Eight students gained a distinction and 14 a merit. In 1994, the GNVQ in intermediate leisure and tourism was added. Fifty students were enrolled on intermediate courses and of these 42 successfully

completed in one year. Ten gained a distinction and 22 gained a merit. The first groups of GNVQ advanced students completed their business studies, and health and social care courses in June 1994. Of the 27 students who enrolled, all but one completed the course in two years. Eleven of them gained distinctions and seven merits. The number of students achieving their awards in the minimum time and gaining good results is a credit to the college.

49 All 19 students who enrolled on the one-year GNVQ intermediate course in caring in 1993 successfully completed the course; four gained distinctions and nine gained merits. In 1993, full-time secretarial students followed a course leading to the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry secretarial studies certificate. There was a pass rate of 80 per cent including two distinctions. In 1994, the pass rate was 83 per cent including one distinction. In 1994, secretarial students were successful in a range of RSA Examinations Board single subjects.

50 The college systematically tracks the destinations of its students. Over the last two years, 53 per cent went on directly to higher education and a further 13 per cent deferred entry for a year. Twelve per cent continued with further education and 15 per cent entered employment.

51 The college has a strong tradition of sport, music and drama. In 1993-94, students played in over 100 matches in a broad range of sports including hockey, football, rugby, basketball, cricket, and tennis. The college won the East Sussex under 19 league for football and basketball. Students represented local, county and national teams in football, squash, swimming and hockey. Twenty-nine students took the community sports leader award course, and 27 passed. There are several drama productions each year in which many students take part. Productions with popular appeal are mounted at the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill; other plays are performed at the college. There is a tradition of musical achievement. The college has a chamber orchestra, a rock band and smaller ensembles. There is a college choir which took part in the East Sussex schools festival at the Royal Albert Hall last year. Art and design work is exhibited in many of the communal areas of the college. In addition, the department holds a number of exhibitions each year.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

52 The college is committed to meeting the requirements of the National Charter for Further Education. All full-time students have been issued with a copy of the college charter, which is mainly addressed to 16-19 year old students. A separate charter, or an extension of existing arrangements to address the needs of the increasing number of adult students, should be considered.

53 The college is in the early stages of developing a formal quality assurance system. A detailed working document describes responsibilities, processes and procedures and a plan for implementation. Three senior managers are responsible for developing quality targets and controls. The

deputy principal, one vice-principal and the senior principal tutor are accountable for quality of administration, curriculum and pastoral care, respectively. A complex system of responsibilities has been developed to involve all staff in quality control.

54 At present, each manager is required to prepare an annual quality assurance report in June for submission to the principal. This contributes to the strategic planning process. The college's self-assessment report, which it prepared for the inspection, followed the headings in the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* and accurately identified the college's main strengths and weaknesses.

55 The college is encouraging commitment among teachers to a centrally-led quality assurance system. Teachers accept that quality measures are essential to good teaching but there is some reluctance to accept the need for a central system. At the start of each year, heads of department and principal tutors are required to produce quality standards for all aspects of teaching and learning and pastoral work. All departments are in the first year of implementing these standards. Each department has produced a grid of quality characteristics covering each phase of the student experience. The quality of these grids varies. Heads of department also analyse examination results and produce a report. Although they work to a set of guidelines the effectiveness of these reports varies. They are reviewed by the principal with each head of department and action is agreed upon. The next phase of the programme to introduce quality assurance procedures is intended to include analysis of completion rates and examination results against value-added factors.

56 Course reviews, like the analysis of examination results, take place at departmental level. Procedures for conducting the reviews lack consistency. However, some departments, for example, business studies and mathematics, have developed good systems of review that have led to demonstrable improvements.

57 Staff development is administered by a committee representative of all teachers and chaired by the deputy principal. It meets each term to consider training and development requests and to allocate funds. The present budget of £4,200 for this purpose is insufficient; the college has not therefore sought the Investors in People award. The college takes part with six other schools and colleges in joint professional-development days. This collaboration enables more topics to be covered than would otherwise be possible.

58 There is a good scheme for teacher appraisal. Many teaching staff have been appraised already and it is intended that all will have been appraised by the end of the session. Staff are appraised by their immediate manager but an alternative appraiser may be appointed by the principal. Classroom observation is an element of the process. New and part-time teachers have not yet been included. A scheme for the appraisal of support staff has been agreed with their union.

RESOURCES

Staffing

59 There are 70 full-time equivalent teachers of whom 62 are full time. There are 27 full-time equivalent support staff of whom 11 are full time. They are appropriately deployed to provide a good service to students. The planning and budgeting cycle enables heads of department to identify their staffing needs in good time. The current staff to student ratio is 1:14.7 as compared with 1:13 in 1993. Some 12 per cent of curriculum hours are taught by part-time teachers. They also work as tutors and make an effective contribution to the work of the college. The employment of foreign language assistants has benefited students of French and German.

60 The deputy principal is the personnel manager. A growing range of policies includes those for the appointment, promotion and pay of teachers. Similar policies for support staff are in draft. Procedures for grievance, redundancy, discipline and ill-health were introduced in 1993 and are the subject of continuing consultation and revision. The induction programme for new staff is better developed for teachers than for support staff but the college has recently reviewed all induction arrangements and improvements are being introduced.

61 The college's equal opportunities policy includes a statement on gender which applies to the recruitment, selection and promotion of all staff. Applications for all appointments have been monitored for gender since 1990. Monitoring for ethnicity and disability have begun recently. Four of the five members of the senior management team are men. The teaching staff has an almost even balance of women and men.

62 Teachers are enthusiastic, well qualified and appropriately experienced. They have a broad range of responsibilities arising from their curriculum and pastoral roles. All members of senior management teach and a number of cross-college middle managers are also teachers. Eighty-nine per cent of full-time teachers have a degree or equivalent qualification, and 26 per cent also have a higher degree. Eighty-three per cent of full-time and 45 per cent of part-time teachers have a recognised teaching qualification. Some teachers have recent industrial and commercial experience. Eleven teachers have a Training and Development Lead Body award as an assessor or verifier and soon, when a further 12 have completed their training, a majority of those who teach vocational courses will be similarly qualified.

63 Support staff make an important contribution to the service provided for students. The ratio of support to teaching staff is 1:3.4. They are appropriately skilled for the work they undertake.

Equipment/learning resources

64 Specialist equipment in most curriculum areas is at least adequate. The new language laboratory and the media studies room are particularly well equipped. In office studies and science some equipment is old and

needs replacing. The college has prepared an assessment of its future equipment needs. This financial year the college has initiated a depreciation fund which will support an equipment replacement programme. The principal establishes priorities for purchase. These are identified through the planning process and are budgeted outside routine allocations.

65 There are 87 personal computers accessible to students. Nineteen were purchased during the last year and are of an up-to-date standard; 38 machines are five years old or more. The ratio of students to computers is approximately 12:1. The newly-developed independent-learning centre is equipped with the latest computers and software, but the availability and quality of computers in departments are uneven. In the modern languages department there are no computers, and in mathematics the machines are old and inappropriate. Developments in business studies and art are likely to be constrained by the pressure on computers, and in life sciences the latest software cannot be used. The college now has a purchasing policy for computers.

66 Departments purchase and manage their own general-purpose teaching aids. Most teaching rooms have an adequate selection, but the lack of central purchasing and maintenance is a disadvantage. The resource department is responsible only for photocopying and off-air video recording. Classroom furnishings vary greatly in age and quality and some are barely adequate.

67 The librarian and assistant librarian, who together equate to one full-time member of staff, provide a good service. The librarian has produced a mission statement and quality standards, a three-year development plan and a charter. Students are consulted about library matters through questionnaires. The library has recently been moved to refurbished accommodation which is pleasant and light. The area of 381 square metres provides good space for bookshelves, storage and equipment. There are 90 study spaces. There is an adequate range of equipment including a photocopier, video player, two personal computers with compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases and a computerised library catalogue. These machines also hold careers information software. Issues and returns are computerised and the catalogue is up to date for all purchases since 1993; earlier stock is now being entered. However, the bookstock is in great need of updating and expansion. At 10,373 volumes, the number of books in the library is small and about half of them are more than 25 years old. There is a limited range of newspapers, periodicals and journals. There are 12 CD-ROMs, disks, various video tapes and a sizeable careers library. The budget of £5,853 is low; it represents an expenditure of £5.61 per student. Departments are allocated £1.00 of this for departmental libraries. They also purchase textbooks for students from their own budgets. The library is not open during the evening when an increasing number of adult students attend the college.

Accommodation

68 The college operates on a single site of 20.33 acres, two miles north of Bexhill town centre. A road separates the main buildings from the day nursery and a sports field. It occupies the buildings of the former boys and girls grammar schools which were built in the 1920s and extended in the 1940s and 1950s. A number of hatted classrooms have been added since 1970. In 1993 the college built a new sports hall. The main buildings are mostly single storey and one room deep, arranged around quadrangles. The refectory and library are in a two-storey building, built onto one of the grammar schools in the 1950s. Prefabricated buildings added in the 1950s were programmed for demolition in 1986 but they continue to be used. One of these has recently been imaginatively converted into sports changing and fitness rooms. Some of the seven wooden huts bought over the last quarter century are in poor condition.

69 The campus is a hotch-potch of permanent and temporary buildings erected over the last 70 years. Most buildings were not designed for their current use and provide inflexible space and services. Some rationalisation of the duplicated grammar school facilities has been possible. Sign-posting has recently been improved to assist visitors but improvements to the temporary and hatted areas are still needed.

70 There is wheelchair access to first-floor teaching areas in the main buildings, but not to the library or the first-floor accommodation occupied by mathematics, physics and biology. The huts are not accessible to wheelchairs. Toilet facilities for students with disabilities have been provided.

71 Internal decoration ranges from good to poor. Standards are good in the newly-developed areas such as the lecture theatre, the accommodation for music, drama, health and caring, the media rooms and the library. In some of the older accommodation teachers have improved the appearance of the rooms. The college is regularly cleaned and shows few signs of vandalism. Most teaching accommodation is fit for its purpose, but in art and design a substantial proportion of the space is poor. A specialist art and design area is needed. In health and caring, office studies and life sciences, some rooms are too small for the numbers of students on the courses. Toilet facilities, in spite of some improvements, are very poor and urgently require upgrading. The college has a schedule of the state of decoration and repair of its buildings, but it needs updating. There is a planned maintenance programme in operation. College buildings are well cared for by the property manager who is also a teaching head of department.

72 The two student dining areas are inadequate for the numbers now enrolled. The main refectory seats 216. In the absence of any common room, it is also used by many students for relaxation and study. A second small cafe has recently been opened and is proving popular with students. There are a number of vending machines throughout the college.

73 General teaching accommodation is initially allocated to departments after the annual course planning round. This is later confirmed through detailed room timetabling. Specialist rooms are assigned more regularly to particular departments and most are conveniently located. The college carried out detailed space-utilisation surveys in 1993.

74 The college is working hard to improve its accommodation. The strategic plan and associated accommodation strategy are well conceived. All 20 property targets due for completion by the end of 1994 were achieved. There has been an extensive programme of self-financed accommodation projects. It has attracted a grant of £20,000 from the Sports Council towards the cost of the new sports hall. The changes now planned are the replacement of the hatted and prefabricated buildings, the provision of a community and student services centre, the rationalisation of science accommodation, the replacement of mechanical services and the extension of access for students with disabilities.

75 The college has good playing fields. The original sports pavilion was recently converted to a day nursery.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

76 The main strengths of the college are:

- a strong commitment to the college mission
- good management which gives a clear sense of direction
- high standards of teaching and commitment to quality amongst staff
- good standards of guidance and support to students
- self-help and resourcefulness in the use of funds
- a long-standing commitment to vocational qualifications
- students' achievements, particularly at GCE A level and GNVQ advanced level.

77 The college should address:

- the development of a college-wide quality assurance system
- the continuing need for improvements to accommodation
- the need to enhance information technology facilities
- the need to increase significantly the number and range of up-to-date library books
- the need to reduce the workload of senior managers by reconsidering the range of their responsibilities.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

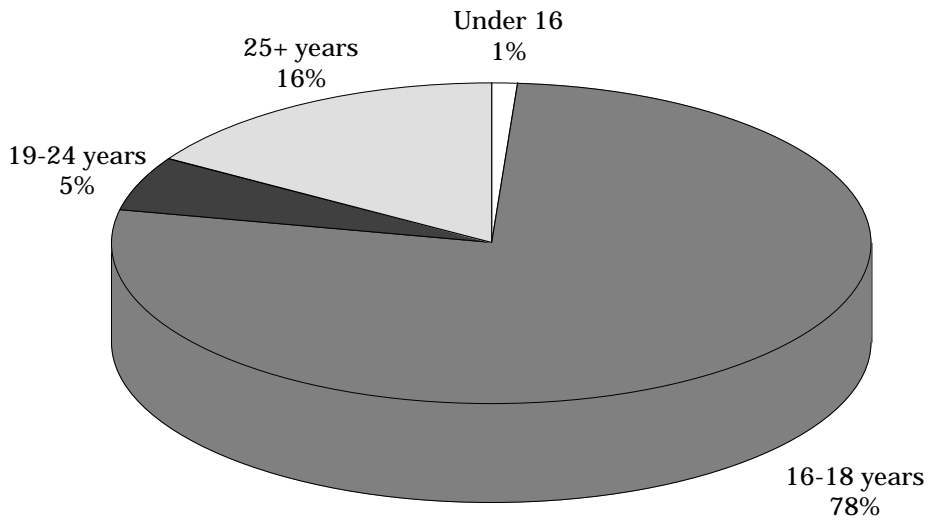
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

Figure 1

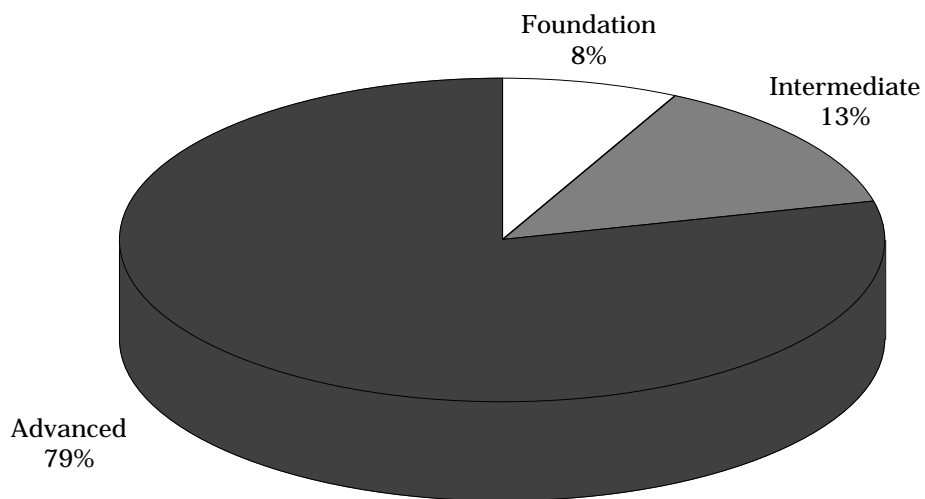
Bexhill College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)



Enrolments: 1,238

Figure 2

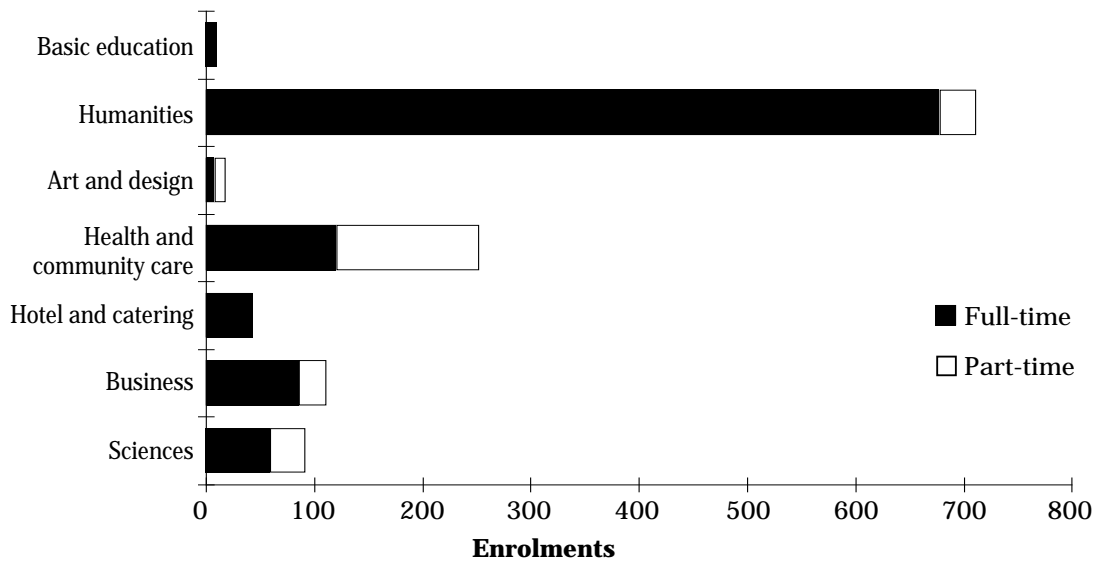
Bexhill College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 1,238

Figure 3

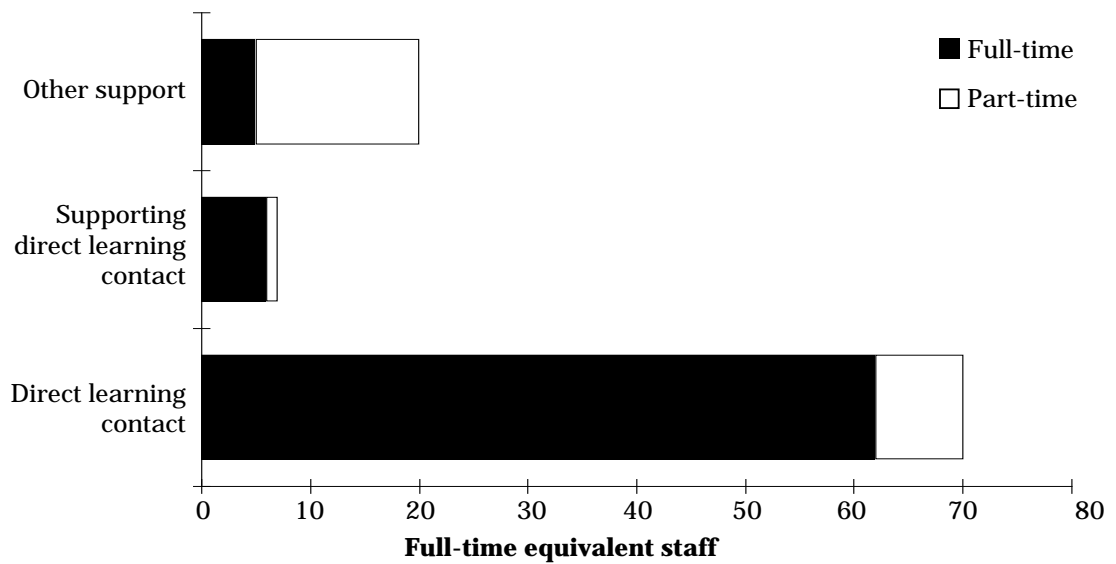
Bexhill College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 1,238

Figure 4

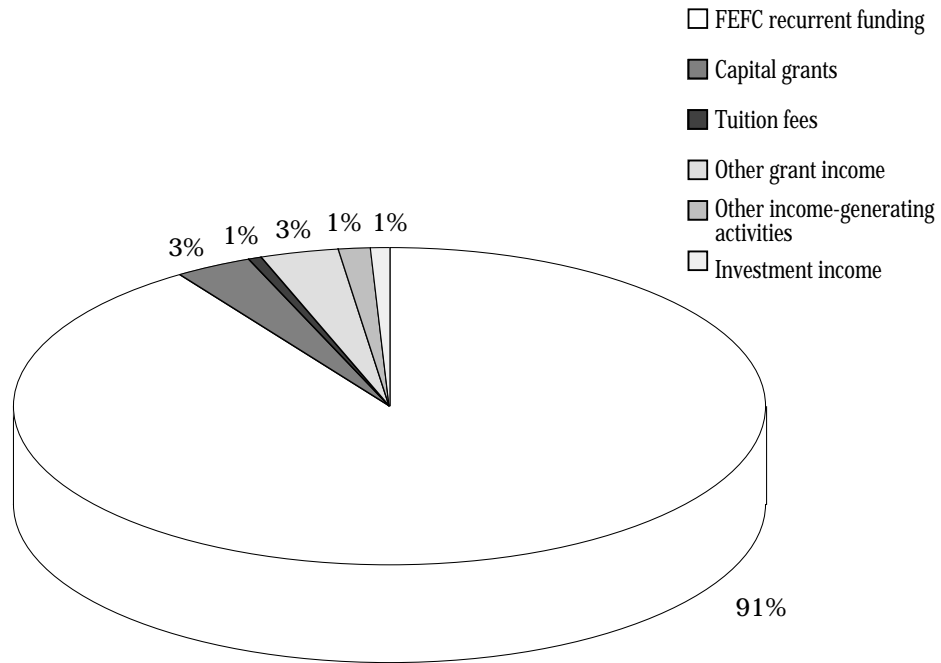
Bexhill College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 97

Figure 5

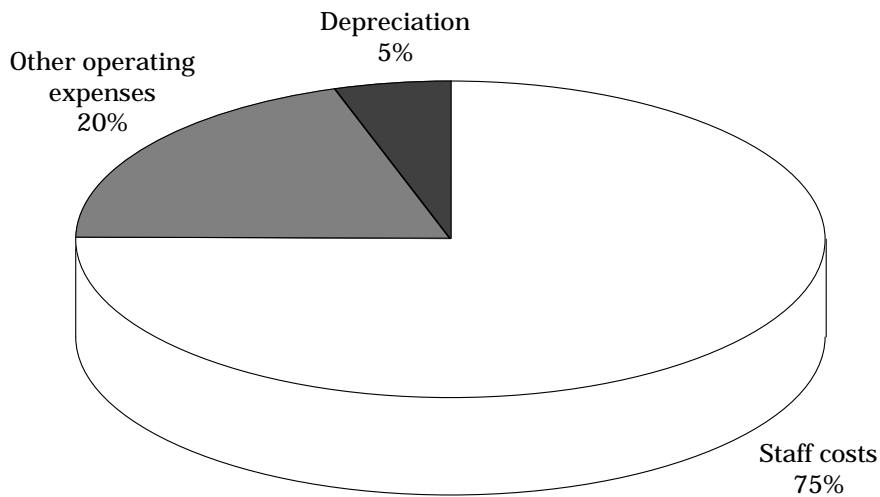
Bexhill College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)



Income: £3,465,216

Figure 6

Bexhill College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £3,391,436

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