Bexley College

THE FURTHER EDUCATION
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 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.

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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.*

By June 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-95

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 14/96

BEXLEY COLLEGE
GREATER LONDON REGION
Inspected May-November 1995

Summary

Bexley College offers a wide range of courses from pre-foundation to higher national diploma level. However, the range of courses at foundation level is insufficiently developed. There is a supportive governing body which has a range of relevant expertise. The management structure provides effective communications. The guidance and admissions unit increasingly provides the main guidance for potential and existing students. Tutors offer full-time students strong support; the college is expanding tutorial support to part-time students. Systematic diagnostic testing of full-time students for additional learning needs is provided, but attendance by students who require support at learning support workshops is poor. Retention rates and examination pass rates are poor on some courses. Teaching staff are well qualified and show a high level of commitment to the college. There is a comprehensive staff-development policy linked to appraisal for full-time staff. European links are being actively developed in exchanges and through the curriculum. Some specialist equipment and accommodation is of a high standard. Management information, other than that relating to finance, is not sufficiently available to inform decisions. There is limited collection of data and use of performance indicators. The college needs to formalise its quality assurance strategy to implement its quality assurance policy successfully.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Sciences, mathematics and computing	3	Hairdressing and beauty (including floristry)	2
Construction	2	Art and design	3
Engineering	3	English and modern languages	3
Business	2		
Leisure and tourism	4	Law, history, economics, psychology and sociology	4
Health and community care	3	Access/students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3

INTRODUCTION

1   Bexley College was inspected during the summer and autumn of 1995. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected early in September. Between May and the end of October, 17 inspectors spent a total of 45 days on specialist subject inspections. Inspectors visited 211 classes involving 2,070 students and examined a broad range of students' work. In the week beginning 30 October 1995, seven inspectors spent a total of 28 days inspecting aspects of cross-college provision. During the inspection there were meetings with members of the corporation, students, parents, college managers, staff, representatives of local industry and commerce, and the South London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The inspectors also had access to extensive documentation relating to the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2   Bexley College is a general further education college in the London Borough of Bexley. It lies in the area covered by the South London TEC. The college has three major sites in the north of Bexley: Tower Road, Erith Road and St Joseph's. There is a small fourth site in Sidcup to the south. The college also makes use of accommodation at the Eltham site of the University of Greenwich to the south-west. The major sites are reasonably well served by public transport and the college's main catchment area extends south of the Thames from the Medway towns in the east through to Deptford and Lewisham to the west. The majority of students are able to complete their learning programmes at a single site. There is minimum split site working for students.

3   There are a few large employers in the vicinity of the college, notably BICC and the Woolwich Building Society. Generally, employment is provided by small companies employing fewer than 60 people. Many local residents travel to London for employment. The college is a substantial local employer.

4   At the time of the inspection there were 2,044 full-time students and 3,643 students enrolled on part-time day or evening classes. There was also a substantial number of adults studying on community programmes through the college company. Enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. The college employs a full-time equivalent staff of 155.6 teachers and 112.6 support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5   During the last 10 years, the college has increased its size by between 2 and 4 per cent annually. Since incorporation, an improvement in college facilities has supported an increased rate of enrolment towards the higher annual increase in enrolments of 4 per cent. In 1994-95, the college came close to achieving the student recruitment target agreed with the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC).

6   The college is organised into two faculties, each led by a director of teaching: the faculty of pre-vocational education and the faculty of vocational and continuing education. The directors manage 10 schools of study, each led by a head of school. The schools of hair and beauty therapy, art and design, community care, business and tourism, and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) studies are within the faculty of pre-vocational education. General and communication studies, building crafts, computing and electronic engineering, automobile and mechanical engineering, and professional building are managed within the faculty of vocational and continuing education.

7   The local area is well served by further education colleges. There are at least 12 other colleges within easy travelling distance of the college. Most schools in the borough have sixth form provision, and in neighbouring boroughs selective schools attract many able students.

8   The college's mission statement says that: 'Bexley College seeks to meet and satisfy the educational, training, social needs and aspirations of the people of Bexley. Concurrently, the needs of industry and commerce within and beyond the catchment area of the college will be addressed. Bexley College will positively develop and enhance its systems, facilities and teaching delivery methods in order that the needs of its various clients are met satisfactorily.'

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9   The college is committed to responding to the educational and training needs of the local community, and to those of employers within and beyond its catchment area. A wide range of provision has been developed to meet these needs. Curriculum areas covered by courses in the college include computing, construction, mechanical and production engineering, business studies, leisure and tourism, health and community care, art and design, English, and modern foreign languages. In 1995-96 the college is running 79 full-time, 192 part-time, five block-release and four short courses, covering a wide range of subjects, at levels from pre-foundation to higher national diplomas. The college runs GCE A level courses in 18 subjects over two years, and one-year GCE A level courses in 13 subjects. Fourteen subjects are available at GCSE level. Pre-foundation courses are available for students with learning difficulties. Higher national diplomas are offered, in association with the University of Greenwich, in law, humanities and health and social care. A pre-access course and access to higher education courses enable adults with few formal qualifications to progress into higher education.

10   The range of provision is underdeveloped across the college at foundation level. There is only one General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) at foundation level, and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at level 1 are available only in hairdressing, floristry and construction.

11 Courses for unemployed adults teach skills which are needed in the local labour market in construction, plumbing, electronics, electrical installations and computing. A new programme provides opportunities for women to sample a range of vocational areas. A women into management course prepares women who have had a break in their career to re-enter employment. An all-women painting and decorating course has been introduced this year in response to identified local job opportunities. The college has submitted a bid to the South London TEC for finance to operate a converted bus as a mobile college which will visit deprived areas of the borough that have inadequate transport facilities. This will make information technology, numeracy and literacy provision available to people who would not be able to travel to the college.

12 There is a strong commitment to include a European dimension throughout the curriculum. There is provision to enable students in all the college's schools to learn a European language. The European co-ordinator has bid successfully for European Union funding to promote this work. The college now has links with five countries. Arrangements for GNVQ advanced business and finance students to have a three-week work experience placement in Austria, Spain or Belgium, provide opportunities for employment in Europe. Students on vocational courses which provide work experience placements in Europe are taught basic language skills and an appropriate technical vocabulary. The provision includes opportunities for staff to learn a language during their lunchtime break and two sessions a week which the French assistant runs for the children in the college creche. Although they have not recruited many students, some courses, such as those in GCE A level French and Spanish, are safeguarded to maintain the range of modern language provision.

13 In spite of considerable efforts over many years by the college and the careers service, it has proved impossible for the college to establish formal links with other schools in the borough of Bexley. However, there are successful links with schools and colleges outside the borough. There is a franchise arrangement with Dartford Grammar School, in Kent, for the delivery of the advanced GNVQ in business studies. Abbey Wood School in the neighbouring borough of Greenwich has forged formal links with the college and, last year, 65 of its 150 leavers transferred to the college. Both schools express considerable satisfaction with the arrangements. A joint project with Woolwich College, in the London Borough of Greenwich, is underway to develop teaching materials to interest disaffected young people. A link course with one Bexley school, Woodside School for children with learning difficulties, enables some young people from the school to make a successful transition from school to college.

14 In engineering, business studies, and construction, links with employers are strong and effective. Advisory groups with employer representatives ensure that the views of employers are available to the college in these vocational areas. However, there are few effective links

with employers for the vocational art and design courses. There is no central database of employers which could be used to inform curricular planning across the college.

15   Collaborative work by the college in a consortium with social services and the local group of the Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults has resulted in the creation of the Bexley Twofold project which prepares adults with learning difficulties for employment. Eight students have moved into employment in the three years since the project began.

16   The college is developing innovative ways for distributing information and giving advice and guidance to potential students. With the aid of funding from the South London TEC and the European Social Fund, the college has employed an adviser for lone parents and an ethnic minority guidance worker to facilitate access for such students to the college. They have visited playgroups, libraries, health centres and minority ethnic groups to distribute information and to make contacts. Two temples were visited during festivals to distribute literature and to give advice. A number of women received information about the college at a 'lohri' or celebration of the birth of a baby boy.

17   Bexley Management Services is an independent company, created by the college, to act as the managing agent for work funded by TECs and other bodies. This work includes the provision of eight job clubs to meet the needs of the unemployed and full-cost training to meet the needs of employers. Eighty per cent of the work is for the Department for Education and Employment. The South London TEC regards the work of Bexley Management Services as instrumental in making Bexley College particularly successful as a managing agent and as a key contributor to training in the local area. The commercial division of Bexley Management Services is particularly responsive to the needs of employers. For example, it responded quickly to a request from the London Fire Brigade for emergency training for staff in health and safety procedures and was able to arrange a programme for the following day.

18   The college employed external consultants to aid it in drawing up its marketing plan. Work is continuing on gathering statistics on ethnicity, gender and home area of students to aid marketing. Targets have not been set for increases in enrolments of students from under-represented groups identified through this process. The small marketing unit, which undertakes the general marketing of the college, is overstretched.

19   The college enrols few students who have restricted mobility or those with a visual impairment. The college buildings present major obstacles for such students. At present, one student with a hearing impairment receives additional support.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

20   Prior to incorporation, the governing body was renewed to achieve a wide representation of the various interests served by the college.

A minority of governors, including the present chairman, provided continuity by continuing as governors after incorporation. The corporation board is large. There are 19 members, comprising eight independent business members, five co-opted members, one member nominated by the TEC, two teaching staff members, one non-teaching staff member, a student member and the principal. Having more than two members who are members of staff of the institution contravenes the regulations covering the government of further education corporations. The college is rectifying the situation. There are only two women on the board. Corporation meetings are held once a term. They are well attended. There are four subcommittees: resources, services and operations, audit, and remuneration. All subcommittees have appropriate terms of reference. Their meetings are well attended and conducted in a businesslike fashion. Members are provided with informative papers which enable them to carry out their function effectively, and meetings are well minuted. The college accountant acts as the clerk to governors. In the years since incorporation the governors have concentrated on achieving prudent financial management. They have taken part in training events to equip them for this role.

21 The governors have a wide range of expertise, including those with experience of the legal professions, finance, construction, industry, commerce, education and the local community. There are four vocational advisory boards each of which has at least one member who is a governor. Two of the boards are chaired by governors. This enables governors to act in an advisory role to the college whilst keeping updated on the courses offered by the college. A community liaison group was established in 1994 to provide a bridge between the college and the local community. A governor with a minority ethnic background was sought and found with the aid of the liaison group. The governors have no formal system for evaluating their own performance.

22 The members of the corporation and the principal have a clear understanding of the distinction between governance and management, and this informs the good working relationship that exists between them. The principal and his deputy act collectively as the principalship. They hold regular meetings with the chair of governors.

23 In 1995, the college management group and the middle management group were reorganised. The permanent members of the college management group comprise the principal, the deputy principal, the directors of teaching of each of the two faculties, the quality manager and the director of administration. The team meets fortnightly to conduct the business of managing the college. Meetings are well documented and minuted, with named individuals designated to carry tasks forward. An unusual feature of the membership of the team is the attendance, with voting rights, of two members of the middle management group rotated on a termly basis. This brings the views of middle managers to the college

management group while at the same time providing the individuals concerned with experience of operating as senior managers. The middle management group which meets on alternate weeks to the senior management group comprises the 10 heads of schools of study and is chaired by the deputy principal. Other middle managers, responsible for various cross-college functions in the college who previously attended by right, now attend by invitation, or to speak on particular agenda items. The interchange of the minutes of each group's proceedings aids effective communication. Communication is reinforced by weekly meetings of faculty heads with their heads of schools, and, in most cases, by regular meetings of members of each school. A weakness of the system, recently addressed, has been the tendency of teachers to meet to discuss administrative matters at their meetings rather than curricular and subject issues.

24   The roles of post holders are described in their job descriptions and are generally well understood in the college. There are policies covering all major matters. Responsibility for health and safety, marketing and personnel rests ultimately with the deputy principal, while the principal covers matters relating to estates. Responsibilities are also allocated for equal opportunities and student support, learning resources, and staff training and development. Heads of schools and their deputies carry substantial teaching responsibilities. Some schools and sections hold regular meetings, but others meet irregularly. With the decrease in the number of senior managers, heads of schools are being asked to perform more management functions without commensurate administrative support. They find it increasingly difficult to be active in developing their curriculum areas. The college has reduced their teaching commitment for 1995-96 to 11 hours per week and intends a further reduction to 10 hours per week in 1996-97.

25   With the numerous matters to be put into place following incorporation, the college has only recently addressed the issues arising from the way the academic board functions. The academic board inherited from the college's previous existence under local authority control was predominantly drawn from the management of the college and its work overlapped with that of college management groups. It did not discuss academic or curriculum issues. The academic board has been reconstituted and now contains elected members from each of the schools of study together with representatives of the non-teaching staff. The new structure is designed to allow teachers to participate in advising the principal on matters relating to the curriculum and to report back to their respective schools. The newly reconstituted board met for the first time in September 1995 and will require some time to develop and demonstrate its effectiveness.

26   Budget holders are consulted throughout the drafting of the college's budget, prior to final scrutiny by the governors. The total amount of finance

for capitation is designated as two-thirds revenue, one-third capital. It is allocated between the two directors of teaching who, in turn, devolve sums down to the heads of schools who are budget holders. Amounts are determined on a basis of the historic costs of weighted full-time equivalent students. Unit costings have so far not informed budget allocations. There are separate budgets for building maintenance and cross-college functions. The 20 budget holders receive monthly financial monitoring statements. A monthly report is also sent to a college financial management group composed of members of the college management group which, in turn, monitors adherence to budget profiles and recommends action to correct excess variance. This monitoring system forms the basis of the principal's advice to governors through its resources committee. The system is well understood by all major post holders.

27   All members of teaching staff have transferred to new locally-negotiated contracts. Staffing decisions are taken centrally. A full case for new or replacement staff has to be made to, and agreed by, the college management group. Heads of schools negotiate for sessional staff with the director of administration who holds the budget for this activity.

28   Access to the college's management information system is strictly limited. Senior managers can receive reports on request, but the full potential of the system has not been exploited to inform curriculum managers. Class lists are available at the start of the academic year but the monitoring of attendance, retention, students' progress, examination results and destinations is not currently part of the system. Performance indicators, such as retention rates, are just starting to feature in the management of individual schools. However, data relating to performance indicators that do exist are paper based, collected and stored by individual course leaders and are not routinely available to senior managers in an easily accessible form. As a consequence, middle managers are constantly approached to supply information. Although enrolment targets are set and monitored, targets for retention and achievement have not yet received sufficient attention. There is no readily available information to assist marketing and strategic planning. Specialist inspectors of curriculum areas found that, almost universally, there was a lack of sufficient, up-to-date management information concerning the courses on offer. Examination results, attendance data and retention rates were not readily available. Some subject areas did not collect systematic destination data. It was difficult to see how course tutors and heads of schools kept themselves sufficiently well informed concerning the courses they administered. The extension of the college management information system to provide them with up-to-date data would yield significant benefits. The college has recently appointed a new manager for its management information system. One of his early tasks should be to analyse the needs of the college for management information and prepare a strategy to deliver it. There will be a consequent need for training of key post holders.

29   After incorporation, the principal prepared the first draft of the strategic plan having first consulted the whole college. Most schools do not have their own operating plans. In discussion between the directors of teaching and heads of schools faculty plans were formulated and fed into the strategic plan. These were tempered centrally by a consideration of available resources. Other members of the college management group added their contributions to produce a second draft which was submitted to the whole college for comment. After this stage, the draft plan was submitted to governors for their consideration, amendment and approval. There is a strategic planning and monitoring group, comprising the principal and other senior managers, which reports through the principal to the governing body. A strategic planning commentary for the period August 1995-98 was agreed by the board of governors in July 1995. The college ethos and aims are embodied in the strategic plan. The college has recently engaged an educational consultant to bring an outside perspective to the process and to carry forward the monitoring and development of its strategic planning. He will review achievements and predict intentions in a commentary to be prepared for onward submission to the FEFC by February 1996.

30   The college's average level of funding per unit for 1995-96 is £17.78. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.84. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

31   Prospectuses and course leaflets for the guidance of potential full-time and part-time students are attractive and informative. Entry requirements for the wide range of courses offered are clearly stated. There are college-wide policies for students' recruitment, guidance and support. The college guidance and admissions centre provides an increasingly coherent focus for guidance from recruitment onwards, although course tutors continue to fulfil an appropriate advisory role which is valued by students at all stages in their courses. The centre handles all enquiries about courses, welfare and financial assistance, higher education, careers and applications for full-time programmes. The college aims to acknowledge applications within seven days. After learning agreements have been confirmed, details are entered into the management information system. Applications for part-time courses are dealt with by course tutors.

32   Students appreciate the initial guidance they receive, considering it to be balanced and impartial. An offer of a place is usually made at the time of interview, with the proviso that an alternative may be offered if grades achieved are too low for the first choice programme. Interviews take place weekly from January onwards. Some applicants are interviewed by teachers individually, others in large groups. Administrative arrangements are clear and efficient. They are regularly reviewed and

modified in the light of experience. At enrolment all full-time students undergo testing in literacy and numeracy. The initial screening test suggested that 75 per cent of new full-time applicants in September 1995 needed further diagnostic testing to identify specific learning needs. Subsequent, more detailed tests suggested that 56 per cent of full-time students required some form of learning support. Learning agreements have been amended to include support workshops for those who require them. Although course tutors are asked to ensure that students attend numeracy and literacy workshops there is considerable absenteeism. Cross-college co-ordination of learning support is not yet strong, although a committee meets regularly to develop practice across programme areas. The take up of information technology support opportunities, particularly by GCE A level students, is variable.

33   Induction programmes organised by individual schools provide a sound introduction to services, facilities and course content. They are considered useful by all students, especially those with little previous experience of, or success in, formal education. There is no college-wide system for the accreditation of students' prior learning. However, assessment and accreditation take place in some vocational areas, such as hair and beauty and business studies, where mature students often have considerable practical skills and experience at enrolment. It is usually possible for students to switch courses during the first half of the autumn term and the college makes every effort to make changes later in a course. Flexible attendance arrangements, which can be negotiated individually for adult students, are particularly valued by those with domestic responsibilities.

34   A student welfare officer provides financial and personal counselling, linking with local agencies when required. Students speak highly of the advice they receive, both academic and personal, and welcome being treated as responsible adults. Guidance and counselling arrangements are a significant part of student support. Their entitlement to this support is emphasised in the college charter, extracts of which appear in the student handbook. All full-time students have a one-hour tutorial session each week. Until recently, there has been no regular provision for part-time students but financial support from South London TEC has enabled tutorials for part-time students to be put into place and tutorial training for staff to be introduced. A well-designed tutorial framework is being introduced to support the process of learning by providing academic and pastoral support for students to build individual portfolios, to draw up and regularly review personal action plans, to prepare and update records of achievement, and to plan applications for higher or further education. The success of this scheme will be monitored by the staff-development team.

35   Reflecting the priority of the college to help mature students, recruitment to programmes designed to provide access to higher education is promoted actively. Some of these courses fail to meet their target for

students from minority ethnic groups. Progression of students into access courses and subsequently onto higher education is carefully monitored and full individual records are kept. Students who it is considered are not yet able to benefit from access courses can be offered a return to study programme as a prerequisite. Other potential students are offered advice on alternative routes for progression either by course staff or the guidance and admissions unit.

36 Parents of younger students at the college generally echo the high opinions of the support and guidance expressed by their children. Parents of students on the programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly appreciative of the opportunities provided for these students to work in a wider and challenging environment which can enable them to progress to independence.

37 Attendance and punctuality in some classes are poor, and this is a cause of concern to college management. There are established procedures for keeping proper registers to monitor attendance at classes. Course tutors frequently telephone students who are absent without notice. Registers are routinely audited each half-term for the individual student record and, from time to time, internally by heads of schools. Firm action is taken by the college to rectify the errors and omissions which occur in maintaining registers. In spite of this action, attendance and retention remain a problem on some courses.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

38 The strengths outweighed the weaknesses in 47 per cent of the teaching and learning sessions inspected. In 10 per cent the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The average attendance in the classes inspected was 77 per cent. The following table summarises the grades awarded in the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A level	1	17	17	2	0	37
GCSE	1	8	5	4	0	18
GNVQ	1	9	14	5	2	31
NVQ	3	18	16	6	0	43
Access to higher and further education	1	4	2	1	0	8
Other vocational	10	21	27	2	0	60
Other	1	5	8	0	0	14
Total	**18**	**82**	**89**	**20**	**2**	**211**

39   Schemes of work are drawn up for all courses according to a college-wide format. In some cases, such as courses validated by the London Open College Federation, schemes of work are required by the validating body. Generally, schemes of work indicate that the course content is being covered, but the quality and amount of detail recorded varies between, and sometimes within, course teams. Students on some courses are provided with helpful course booklets. Individual lessons are well planned, usually in line with the schemes of work, but the objectives of teaching sessions are not always communicated to students.

40   Most mathematics and science lessons extend students' skills, knowledge and understanding. In a small number of lessons, however, the differing levels of ability of the students were not addressed. The teachers impart information clearly, homework is set and marked regularly, and there is thorough coverage of the syllabus. Students' progress is closely monitored. A variety of teaching approaches is used, including the use of teaching aids and practical work. For example, a GCE A level chemistry lesson contained a good balance of theoretical explanation, discussion and practical investigation by individual students. There are generally good relations between teachers and students, although in some GCSE classes these were undermined by the lateness, absence and lack of discipline of some students.

41   In computing, sessions are well planned and succeed in motivating the students, particularly in practical work. Assignments are regularly set, marked and promptly returned to students. In the more effective classes, skilful use of questions enabled students to make substantial contributions to whole group work. Teachers of information technology engage their students in tasks relevant to their main areas of study. In some cases the insufficiency of compatible equipment, and poor planning by the staff, have an adverse effect on learning.

42   Students on construction courses benefit from good specialist equipment and workshop accommodation. The staff often use their industrial experience to illustrate their teaching. In most classes the work is well paced, students enjoy the work and their learning is extended. Many teachers use a variety of teaching aids to make the work interesting, but in a minority of classes inspected the teaching was slow and dull. Effective use is made of information technology in professional building courses. There is good record keeping, particularly on NVQ courses, and work handed in for marking is returned quickly.

43   Teachers in engineering sessions make effective use of the facilities available. There is a mix of theoretical and practical activities on electronics courses. Students gain experience of handling a range of electronic components and circuits, and learn to use up-to-date measuring and test equipment. Workshop sessions provide highly-relevant practical experiences for students on motor vehicle, and fabrication and welding courses. Students receive clear instructions and assessment plans, and

their work is supported by good-quality handouts. High priority is attached by staff to the provision of theory to support the practical work of NVQ students, but some sessions are too long, particularly for younger students. The teaching on some courses lacks variety and there is unimaginative use of some teaching aids, as for example, when overhead projectors are used for students to copy notes. Work placements are monitored carefully.

44   There is a good rapport between staff and students on business courses. Rigorous standards are demanded of students on higher level business and management courses. Academic studies are related to mature students' own experience of the world of work, enabling staff to draw out the best in all their students, including the less confident ones. In a legal secretarial course, students worked simultaneously on a variety of clients' files, in a way which prepared them for the pressures they will experience in legal offices. On management courses, the evidence gathered from the work place is carefully scrutinised to determine the extent to which NVQ criteria have been met, and progress is reviewed in one-to-one sessions. Management of GNVQ is less effective. The combining of three advanced groups into one resulted in a large group which was noisy and difficult to manage and, in consequence, little learning took place. The attendance and punctuality of students on this course are poor. Assignments are usually set at an appropriate level. Marking is fair and consistent and teachers provide helpful guidance on how improvements might be made. Most work is returned promptly, but some students on GNVQ programmes have had to wait for two months or more for their work to be returned.

45   Classroom-based activities for students on the advanced GNVQ in leisure and tourism course are relevant and set at an appropriate level. Teachers generally manage the sessions well, ensure that students are acquiring knowledge, and check regularly that individual students understand the work. However, there is inadequate specialist equipment and accommodation to provide a realistic work environment. Time is set aside for the development of the core skills of communications and application of number, and for students to build their portfolios. Work experience is built into all courses. However, students on the intermediate GNVQ made no educational visits last year. Some teaching is uninspiring and fails to elicit an enthusiastic response from students. In some cases, learning is also weakened by poor organisation and assessment practice and by inappropriate teaching and course materials.

46   Hairdressing and beauty therapy students have access to a wide range of courses, flexibly timed to suit their needs. There is good integration with the workplace, and opportunities for students to participate in European exchanges, and local and national competitions. Teachers display a sound knowledge of their subjects and provide accurate, up-to-date information at a pace which suits the needs of the students. A beauty therapy practical session observed was introduced in a lively, enthusiastic manner which set the tone for the lesson. Preliminary

questioning demonstrated that the students' knowledge, only three weeks into the term, was thorough and detailed. However, some outdated and inadequate equipment and accommodation place constraints on training opportunities for students. On floristry courses, students benefit from supportive relationships with staff who draw upon their own experience in their teaching and provide an appropriate mix of practical and theoretical work.

47   The teaching on health and social care courses is sound. Staff are well qualified, hard working and enthusiastic about their subjects. However, there is a need for updating on current professional practice. Teachers ensure that the students are clear about the aims of their sessions, what is expected of them, and the criteria for success. A range of teaching methods is employed and there is particularly effective use of group work. The atmosphere in the classroom is relaxed but businesslike. The college has excellent links with employers to provide health students with suitable work placements but appropriate placements are in short supply for social care students. Information technology is not yet integrated with the curriculum for many care courses. There was some inaccurate marking of test papers of some health students.

48   Teaching on media studies and art and design courses is particularly effective in situations where teachers demonstrate practical skills, such as the operation of a video camera. It was less effective when students were required to listen to teachers dictating from notes, without the help of visual aids. Most art and design sessions involve students working alone on a task while the teacher circulates giving advice and feedback. Although this works well in most cases, the quality of the preparation by staff is not uniformly good. Some unimaginative tasks are set, and others are not clearly explained to the students, some of whom become bored and distract others from their work. The teaching of drawing and painting is good, but there are limited opportunities for students to develop skills in new technologies. Media studies students have access to effective work experience placements.

49   The better English sessions observed were well structured. Students were given clear instructions and discussions were handled with skill and sensitivity. For example, the contributions of GCSE students to a discussion on a short story were valued by the teacher and this encouraged the quieter students to participate. GCE A level students are given guidance in study skills, and receive a helpful handbook which includes induction material. Newspaper articles dealing with contemporary issues are regularly used in the development of comprehension and discussion skills. Essays are usually carefully prepared and supported by informative handouts. However, in about half the classes inspected, students were given inadequate instructions or explanations and teachers did not set out the learning objectives of the sessions. As a result, some discussions lacked form or discipline and the students learned little from them.

50   The modern languages staff work hard to provide courses for growing numbers of adults on part-time evening courses and full-time students taking language units on vocational programmes. The assignments and materials for these units are carefully designed to provide students with the vocabulary and skills relevant to their professional studies. They include packages such as 'French for the building trade' and 'Spanish for hairdressing', developed in partnership with industry. Many students also have the opportunity to take part in work-related visits to Europe. Some younger students, new to the course, resent being obliged to learn a foreign language and are unresponsive or hostile in class. In the evening classes, teachers are skilled in building the confidence of their students and have established a lively and productive learning environment. However, the language being learned is underused in some classes and little use is made of available teaching aids such as video. The small numbers of students studying GCE A level languages are not all being challenged by the tasks set.

51   In classes in humanities and social science subjects, including law, history, economics, psychology and sociology, the work is usually well paced. Previous work is reinforced at the beginning of lessons. A variety of activities is provided within sessions to actively involve the students. Staff show enthusiasm for their subjects and inject an element of humour into their classes to maintain students' interest. Many handouts are carefully prepared and are particularly suited to the more able students. Oral work is not always reinforced by visual material such as board work, and overall, questioning is not effective in involving the less confident students. In marking work in sociology and psychology, staff do not all use the same system of grading and often provide few written comments to enable students to improve their grade.

52   Students on access to higher education courses receive detailed course booklets and are clear about the requirements of their courses. The teaching encourages group work and independent learning, with the aim of developing self-confidence. In the best classes, there is a good mix of exposition, group and individual work. For example, in an access to law session the teacher explained the legal background to a specific case relating to the sale of houses and asked students to predict and justify the ruling. This produced a lively, focused debate which encouraged decision making and stimulated judgements based on the evidence provided. In some sessions, there was an over reliance on group activity as a learning method when exposition and guidance by the teacher would have been more effective.

53   In courses for students with learning difficulties there is a good level of support for students. A variety of learning styles is provided which succeed in maintaining the students' interest. An agenda of weekly topics, supported by a bank of source materials, forms the framework of the programmes. However, some materials are of poor quality and in several

sessions observed, a restricted range of teaching and learning aids was used. There is a shortage of vocationally relevant teaching materials. Relations between the teachers and students are very good and, in some instances, especially with adult learners, there is negotiation over the content of the courses.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

54   The college's management information systems are not yet sufficiently developed to give accurate data on completion and examination pass rates. However, according to the data in the 1995 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment, 91 students aged 16-18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1995 scored, on average, 3.2 points per entry. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

55   Students starting science and mathematics courses at the college tend to have the minimum entry qualifications. This is reflected in generally poor examination results at GCE A level, in some cases below national averages for further education. However, value added studies undertaken using the college's own system suggest that more than 30 per cent of students exceed their predicted grade at GCE A level. Many students spoke knowledgeably about the subjects they were studying and said that they were enjoying their studies. Some students, however, expressed the view that the work was difficult and uninteresting and these students were not making progress in the sessions observed. There were few opportunities in classes for students to develop their skills in the use of information technology. Computing and information technology courses have very poor retention. For example, of the last two cohorts of students on the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma in computer studies, fewer than 50 per cent of the students originally enrolled were successful in gaining the full qualification. Students on the computer literacy and information technology course at levels 1 and 2 have a good pass rate over the past three years of between 70 and 90 per cent.

56   Students on construction and engineering courses carry out their practical work with due regard for safety. Students on the electronics skills for work course have developed considerable practical skills in assembling electronic circuits. Construction students are often encouraged to work on actual projects such as contributing to the construction and fitting out of the new brick workshop at Erith Road. This project was a part of the assessment for NVQ units. A group of higher national diploma students went to Belgium in 1994-95 to complete an assignment, having first acquired the necessary competence in French. Students on motor vehicle and fabricating and welding courses showed pride in their achievements. Group work is effectively used, particularly with mature students and women-only groups, who tackle projects with enthusiasm and imagination. The students are developing good teamwork skills.

In some classes students are reluctant to take part in class discussion. The development of study skills is emphasised on many courses. Pass rates in construction courses are sound, and some are outstanding. For example, on the BTEC higher national certificate in building, and the Chartered Institute of Building and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) qualifications in plumbing, all students who enrolled achieved their final award. The majority of craft courses have now been converted to units of NVQ. As these can be started at any time of the year, annual pass rates are difficult to quantify. Assessment and recording of achievements on NVQs is satisfactory. Pass rates in most engineering examinations are at or below national averages and this is compounded by generally poor retention rates on these courses.

57   Pass and completion rates for some courses in leisure and tourism were not available. Where figures were seen, they indicated very poor retention rates. For example, over the two-year period 1993-95 only 18 of the original 43 students studying for the intermediate GNVQ in leisure and tourism completed the course and of 48 students who started the advanced GNVQ in leisure and tourism in 1994 only 12 students remain. Of those students who continue to attend the advanced GNVQ course the results in external tests are generally close to national figures. Only 26 per cent of students on the intermediate GNVQ in leisure and tourism successfully completed the course. Classes offered to leisure and tourism students to support additional learning needs were attended by fewer than 50 per cent of those on the register.

58   Most students of business studies are well motivated and enjoy their studies. Written work is generally of a good standard. Some students in GNVQ classes required systematic language support to develop their oral skills. The group activities used to enable them to achieve these skills are effective. For example, in one class a group of students were engaged in a role-play exercise in which they were debating the benefits and disadvantages of a road widening scheme. The discussion was lively and purposeful and students played their roles with conviction. Information technology skills are insufficiently developed. Study and research skills training is a feature of many business courses but the students are being impeded in the development of these skills by the outdated books in the library. Examination pass rates and retention rates are comparable with national figures.

59   Students of hairdressing and beauty therapy enjoy their studies, find activities challenging and the subjects interesting. Written assignments are presented to a high standard. Much assessment takes place through local hair salons where staff have received Training and Development Lead Body assessment training. Assessment for NVQs is available to students throughout the summer vacation as well as in term time. Students' progress in beauty therapy NVQs is hindered by the limited space in the beauty rooms and the insufficient numbers of clients to provide

adequate opportunities for assessment. Pass rates on most courses are above national averages and increasing. The BTEC national diploma in beauty therapy had a 100 per cent pass rate in 1995. The new floristry courses are managed through the hair and beauty section. Students on both part-time and full-time courses produce practical floral display work of a high standard. Although the development of portfolios was at an early stage, the standard of work seen was high.

60   The overall pass rate for students undertaking courses in health and community care is 60 per cent. This figure is depressed because of the high drop out of students of lower than average ability. The National Nursery Examinations Board (NNEB) diploma in nursery nursing in 1994-95 retained all of the students who started. Only one student was referred and will complete this year. Students present their assignments well and, in particular, provide detailed and accurate referencing. However, there was little evidence of original or creative work, and the students showed a lack of awareness or sensitivity to issues of race, culture, values and ethics. Most work seen was handwritten and only occasionally was information technology used. Students respond well to practical work placements which are an important component in the assessment of their skills' development.

61   Students of art and design and media studies are generally responsive, attentive and enjoy their studies. Some students on GNVQ programmes and on photography courses were unclear about possible progression routes. Retention on courses in this programme area has declined from 91 per cent in 1993-94 to 69 per cent in 1994-95. Examination results in GCE A levels are variable with below national average results in history of art and fashion, but above average results in art. The 66 per cent pass rate for intermediate GNVQs is above the national average. All but one student enrolled on the internally validated college diploma in foundation studies were successful. There was little evidence that students were aware of the uses of new technology in design applications. Most art and design students achieve a good level of skill in drawing, using a variety of media.

62   In English and languages most students enjoy their studies and speak well of the teaching and support received. In some English classes students were able to make valid and perceptive comments on texts and contemporary issues. In most English classes students took part in small group work effectively. Written work in GCE A level English showed that students were able to structure essays, present an argument and illustrate it with quotations and examples. In modern languages, examination pass rates at GCE A level are below national averages but at GCSE those for French are consistently above national averages. Language work in vocational courses is often reinforced by vocationally specific activities in assignments which develop students' linguistic competence. For example, a group of students on a business and finance course studying German had created their own fictitious business and were engaged in using

authentic German advertisements for secretaries, and were preparing their own advertisements in German. These activities were in preparation for a three-week period of work experience in Austria in October. The compulsory inclusion of languages in advanced GNVQ and other vocational courses provides good opportunities for development which are not always appreciated by younger students.

63   In GCE A level social science subjects students are generally well motivated and work at an appropriate pace. The pass rates in law are consistently good. In economics, history and psychology pass rates are variable, but in 1994-95 were below national averages. Pass rates and retention in most GCSE social science subjects are generally poor. Because of the timing of the inspection little written work was available for scrutiny in some subjects, but the work that was seen was of an appropriate standard.

64   There are limited progression opportunities at the college for students on the two-year course for school leavers with learning difficulties, or for part-time adult students with learning difficulties studying art, physical education, construction, information technology and basic skills. Their courses currently do not lead to a recognised qualification. However, these students gain in self-confidence and benefit from being integrated with other students for parts of their course. Of the 10 students for whom English is not their first language who received language support on mainstream courses in 1994-95, three gained qualifications at level 2 and two at level 3 on the C&G communication studies certificate. The number of students on access to higher education courses has increased from 62 in 1994-95 to 120 in 1995-96. Students on these courses are developing the skills of working both co-operatively and independently. Of eight students enrolled on the access to law course, six have progressed to degree courses. Most of the 20 students who completed the access to healthcare course progressed to higher education. Retention is poor on some courses and should be monitored more carefully.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

65   The college's quality policy statement makes a basic commitment to the provision of quality services through an internal quality management system, but there is no quality assurance plan or other overarching documentation setting out the college's procedures.

66   A college charter was issued to all members of staff in 1994. A number of commitments do not have specific performance targets. Students receive extracts of the charter in their handbook, and the full charter is explained to them during their induction. They also have access to the full charter in the libraries on three sites. The effectiveness of the charter has been monitored and, in consultation with key members of staff who hold responsibility for the services affected, it is being revised.

67   The college's quality assurance system is based on a well-established course approvals, evaluation and review process which is monitored by the course approvals board. This board, which is a subcommittee of the academic board and is chaired by the quality assurance manager, meets four times a year. Proposals for new or amended courses are presented to the course approvals board. The approvals process does not always result in a sufficiently rigorous examination of quality issues during the planning and development of courses.

68   Course review boards meet twice a year and evaluate course programmes on a three year cycle. Course tutors are responsible for undertaking performance evaluation and action planning, and for obtaining feedback on courses from students, parents and employers. The views of external moderators are also taken into account. In a few programme areas this process is undertaken very effectively. In health and community care, for example, 12 team meetings are held per term, of which part-time staff are expected to attend three. Action plans have been developed as a result of this course review process. In other areas, the evaluation framework is applied with varying degrees of rigour. In some cases, insufficient action planning is undertaken in response to identified issues, and there is little course development or improvements in methods of teaching.

69   The course review process effectively meets the requirements of the examining, validating and accrediting bodies. Favourable comments about a number of courses, for example, engineering, hair and beauty, and access courses to higher education, have been received from external moderators and verifiers.

70   Although most course reports include some statistics on enrolments, retention, achievement and destinations, the rigour of the analysis is varied, and targets against which the performance of courses can be measured are not always apparent. The school of GCE A level studies has conducted a trial value-added analysis. However, the collection and evaluation of performance indicators is not systematic across the college.

71   The college recognises the need to widen the scope and impact of the quality assurance system. The quality assurance manager is responsible for fully establishing the rigour of course review and evaluation procedures and for extending the quality assurance framework to other aspects of the college's operations. For example, presently there is no systematic evaluation of procedures for students' recruitment, guidance and support, nor does the quality system involve the monitoring and evaluation of the college's equal opportunities policy.

72   The views of students are collected through course teams who undertake initial, mid-term and destination surveys, coupled with informal group discussions and individual discussions with course and personal tutors. Managers of cross-college functions are kept advised of students' views that arise from the surveys on the areas for which they are

responsible. Curriculum area advisory boards, which exist for some curriculum areas, provide a forum for local employers to evaluate college provision and identify education and training needs. Course teams undertake surveys of employers but there is no formal collection or analysis of these views college wide.

73   A revised staff-development policy incorporating a formal system of staff appraisal has been introduced. There is scope for strengthening the links between this policy and the college's strategic plan. The needs of course teams are identified through the course review and evaluation process. Staff-development needs are identified on a one-to-one basis by formal staff-appraisal interviews. All full-time staff are appraised; appraisal for part-time staff will be introduced in 1996. A range of staff training and development activities are undertaken. Recent emphasis has been on assessor and verifier training and the provision of support for the college's rapidly expanding GNVQ provision. Staff-development activities are generally appropriate and beneficial to individual staff and the college as a whole, although they are not always consistently evaluated. There are some inadequacies in staff training and development, for example, in art and design. The college recognises that there has been an emphasis on short courses and workshops at the expense of longer-term and more substantial training and is addressing this imbalance. Staff-induction programmes are carefully planned and implemented. All new staff are given a tailor-made programme and an individually named mentor is designated to provide them with advice and support.

74   The college has produced an internal quality assessment report which is supported by a comprehensive set of relevant documentation. The report was produced by a group of staff after consultation with staff and students. The report makes use of the headings of the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*, with the exception of resources which is not mentioned in the internal quality report. The report identifies major strengths and weaknesses in each of the areas covered. Many of these coincide with the judgements made by inspectors. For example, the ineffectiveness of the academic board is identified by the college as a major weakness. The high level of commitment of governors is also identified in the report. The need for action is correctly identified in some sections of the report.

RESOURCES

Staffing

75   The college employs 146 full-time teachers, of whom 63 are women. Two of the six members of the college management group are women. There are also 16 fractional post holders (9.6 full-time equivalent) of whom nine are women. In addition there are 85 part-time sessional teaching staff; it is college policy that they should account for about 15 per cent of the teaching time. Of the teachers employed by the college, 10 per cent

have been employed by the college for less than a year and 55 per cent for more than five years, including 13 per cent who have been at the college for more than 20 years.

76   Teaching staff are generally well qualified: 66 per cent have degrees, and 78 per cent have a recognised professional qualification. In art and design, there is a shortage of appropriately qualified staff for some design-related activities, and there is also a lack of experience and expertise in the application of new technology in that area. In leisure and tourism, all full-time staff have a background in travel and tourism rather than leisure, and there is a lack of recent industrial experience and commercial updating. In computing and information technology some teachers have recent and relevant commercial experience. In hairdressing and beauty, staff have appropriate training, and some are undergoing industrial updating. In health and community care, some staff are out of date on issues of current professional practice in social care. The majority of staff teaching business studies have commercial or industrial backgrounds, but few have recent experience.

77   In addition to teaching staff, there are five full-time staff who support direct learning. In science, teaching is supported by a full-time technician, but greater integration of the technician in classroom activities is required. In floristry, support staff are undergoing appropriate technical training. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, there is strong support from technicians who manage the materials budgets and provide effective teaching support. In computing and information technology the level of technician support is inadequate.

Equipment/learning resources

78   The standard of specialist equipment varies. In construction, the general level of specialist equipment is adequate or good. Much of the woodworking machinery has been replaced over the last 10 years and the wood machining and carpentry and joinery workshops are well equipped. However, there is a shortage of small tools. In engineering there are well-equipped workshops for electronics and motor vehicle studies which provide realistic simulated work environments. Equipment and resources for floristry courses are good. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, the equipment is well maintained, but some hairdressing equipment is out of date and does not represent current industrial practice. There is insufficient up-to-date electrical equipment for beauty therapy, and there are too few beds for the beauty courses. In leisure and tourism, there are no sports facilities on the main site, some of the travel manuals used by the students are showing signs of wear, and there is no realistic work environment available.

79   There are libraries on three of the sites, Tower Road, Erith Road, and St Joseph's. There are a total of 124 group-study spaces, giving an average of one study space to every 19 full-time equivalent students across the college. However, these are not spread evenly across the college and

sometimes there is insufficient space for the needs of the students in some areas. The budget for the library for the current year is £34,000. Of this, £18,500 is for books and periodicals. There are 26,050 books, 17 compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases, 215 audio, and 719 video cassettes; 154 newspapers and periodicals are taken. There is adequate library provision for leisure and tourism; in health and community care there are useful CD-ROMs and a supply of relevant journals, but the library books and videos are out of date; in languages there is only a small stock of video and audio tapes, and there are no language magazines; in science the bookstock needs upgrading; in business and law many of the books are out-of-date editions; in psychology and sociology, there is a well-organised collection of journal and newspaper articles, but little evidence of audio/visual materials and little liaison between library and teaching staff. A new head of learning resources was appointed a year ago and is working to improve liaison between the library and the curriculum areas. The recent purchase of a new computer system has improved the cataloguing of the stock and will enable the staff to monitor the use of facilities more effectively.

80 The college had no coherent strategy for the use of information technology across all sites until July 1995 when a paper was produced to identify the needs and remedy the deficiencies. Overall, the college has 308 computer workstations; this represents one workstation for every eight full-time equivalent students. However, there is little standardisation of both hardware and software and this adversely affects users, including computing students. Open access for students to the computing facilities is limited.

81 Access to information technology varies across the curriculum. In health and community care, students have adequate access to information technology at the St Joseph's site where the computer centre is well equipped. However, when these students are working at Sidcup, the computers are not compatible and, therefore, of little use. In leisure and tourism, although there is adequate access to computers, no industrial software is available. In art and design, the application of information technology across the provision is inadequate. In hairdressing, there is no information technology in use for client records, stock control and bookings. The physics and chemistry laboratory has only one old computer and the computer in the biology laboratory is awaiting repair. The college has recently purchased a computer-based training system, which provides a versatile teaching aid with applications across a wide range of electrical and electronic engineering courses.

Accommodation

82 The main site at Tower Road has two main buildings, a nine-storey teaching and administration block and a three-storey workshop block. The buildings were erected in the late sixties. They accommodate a variety of vocational courses. In 1993-94, a new common room was built for

students. In addition, substantial internal redecoration and refurbishment has been carried out in some areas which have greatly improved the general ambience. The canteen, which has seating for about 200 has been recently refurbished.

83   The Erith Road site has 17 buildings. The main, two-storey building which was originally a school, is about 80 years old. The rest of the buildings are single storey, old, and in a poor state of repair. The site is used for construction related courses. Last academic year the erection of a new 800 square metre brickwork workshop improved the standard of accommodation. This year, there are plans to erect a new, similar sized, carpentry workshop. Close to the site is an annexe which houses the college creche.

84   The St Joseph's site was originally built as a convent over 80 years ago. The buildings are not easy to use for educational purposes, but their usefulness would be improved by more adequate signposting. The site houses courses in health and community care, leisure, information technology, art and design, fashion and the college's GCSE and GCE A level provision. Last academic year part of the basement area was refurbished to provide photographic laboratories and classrooms. The refurbishment is continuing this year.

85   The college has recently purchased a small site in Sidcup. The main two-storey building, originally designed for residential use, is about 60 years old. A single and a two-storey extension have been added. A good-quality learning environment is provided for the various courses offered on the site. There is no canteen but vending machines are available.

86   An estates manager reports direct to the principal, and a condition survey carried out in 1992 has formed the basis for the college's planned maintenance programme. The college's priorities are: firstly, to continue the refurbishment of existing accommodation; secondly, to continue the redevelopment of the Erith Road site with a view to moving all construction courses from Tower Road; and thirdly to increase the college's presence in the south of the borough. Access for staff or students who use wheelchairs is often impossible. Where new accommodation is constructed or refurbishment undertaken, the college has made every attempt to improve access for staff and students who use wheelchairs.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

87   The major strengths of Bexley College are:

•   a supportive governing body with a wide range of relevant experience

•   an effective system of communications through the management structure

•   well-qualified staff

•   a wide range of courses from pre-foundation to higher national diploma level

- a strong commitment to build European links into the curriculum

- dedicated tutors introducing an improved framework for tutorial support

- systematic diagnostic testing for full-time students to identify additional learning needs

- a comprehensive staff-development policy linked to appraisal

- a guidance and admissions unit which increasingly provides a focus for all phases of guidance

- some good specialist accommodation and equipment.

88   If it is to continue to improve its provision, the college should address the following:

- poor provision of management information, other than that relating to finance, to inform decision making

- the lack of systematic collection of data and use of performance indicators at course, school and college levels

- the need for further development and implementation of the quality assurance system

- poor retention and pass rates on some courses

- the limited provision of courses at foundation level

- poor attendance by students at learning support workshops

- the need to co-ordinate curriculum initiatives and developments across the college

- weaknesses in the leisure and tourism provision.

FIGURES

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

Figure 1

Bexley College: percentage enrolments by age (1995-96)

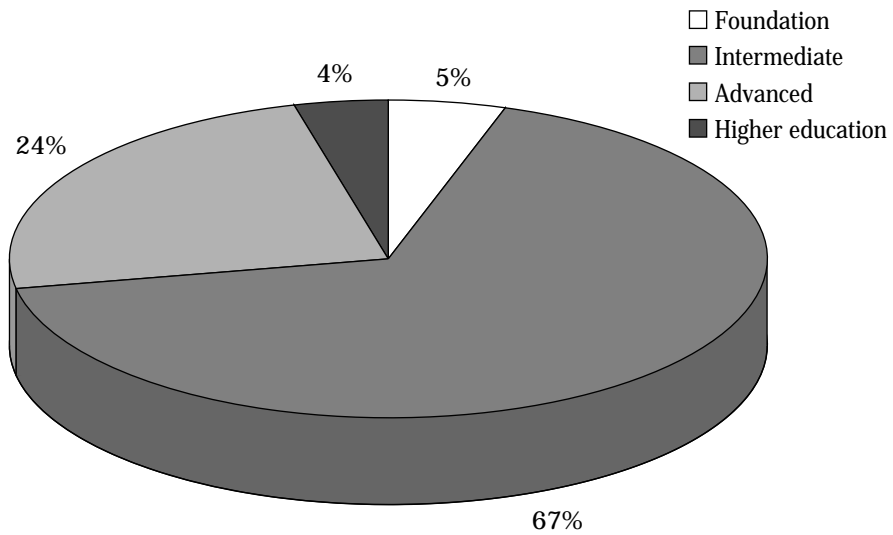

Under 16
2%

16-18 years
36%

25+ years
45%

19-24 years
17%
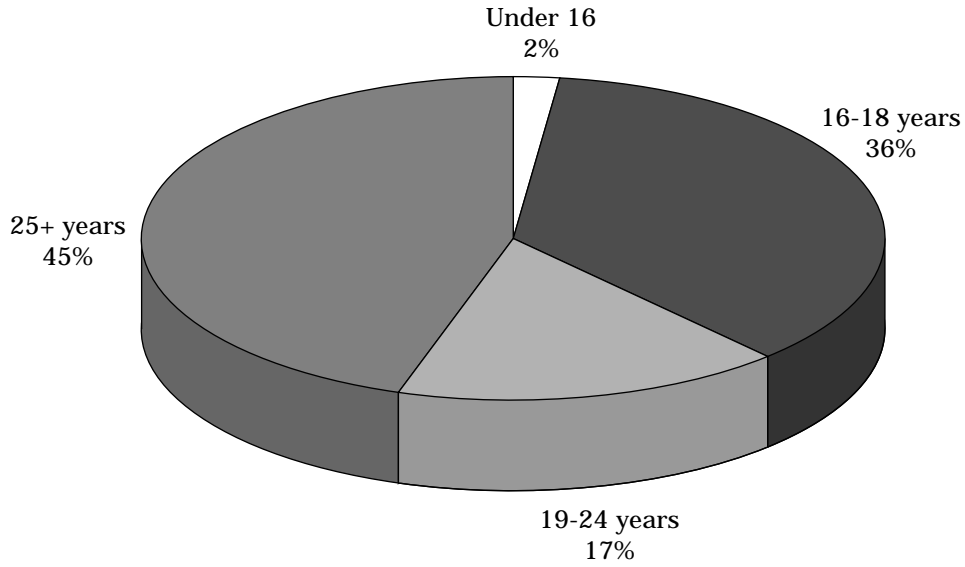
Enrolments: 5,687   *Note:* this chart excludes four enrolments whose age is not known.

Figure 2

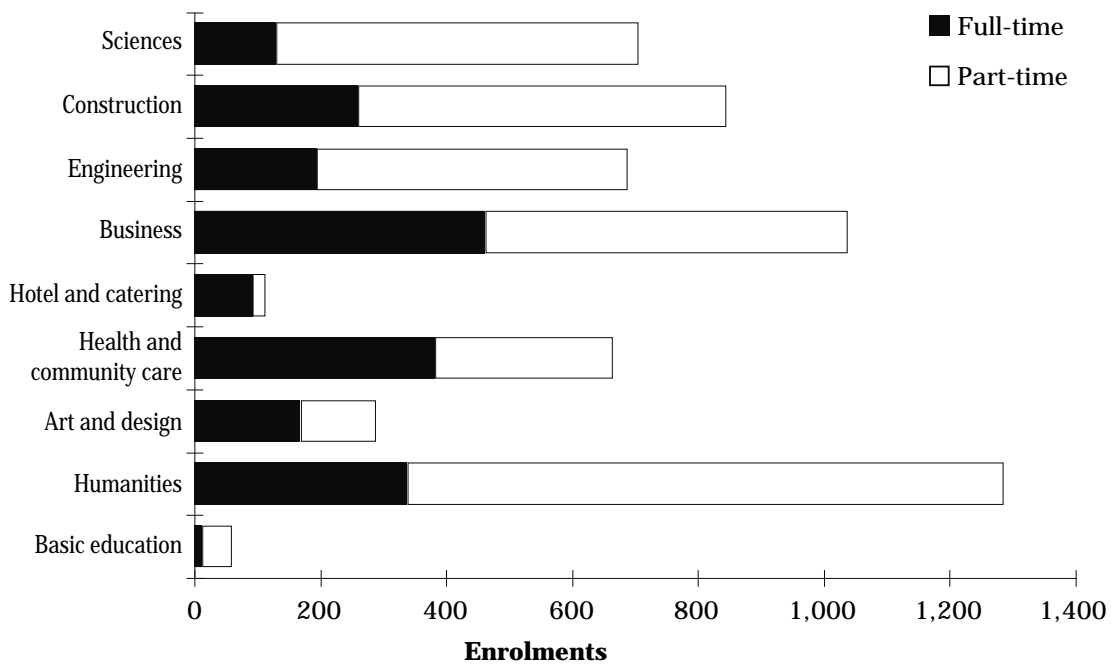**Bexley College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1995-96)**

☐ Foundation
■ Intermediate
☐ Advanced
■ Higher education

4%   5%

24%

67%

Enrolments: 5,687   *Note:* this chart excludes 22 leisure/recreation
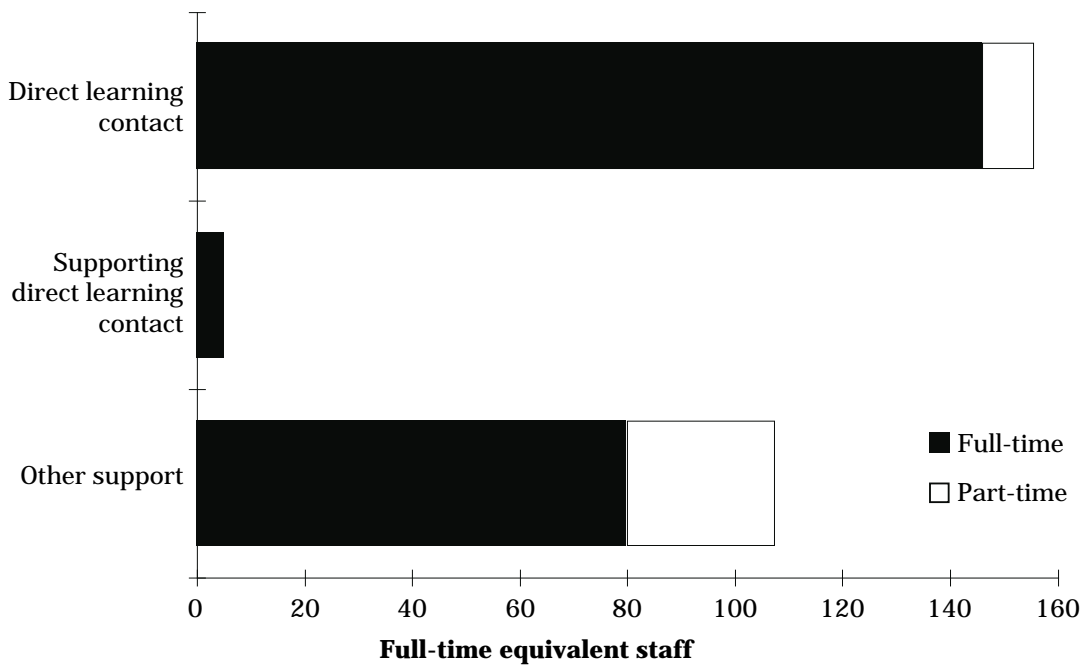(non-schedule 2) enrolments.

Figure 3

Bexley College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1995-96)

Enrolments: 5,687

Figure 4

Bexley College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)
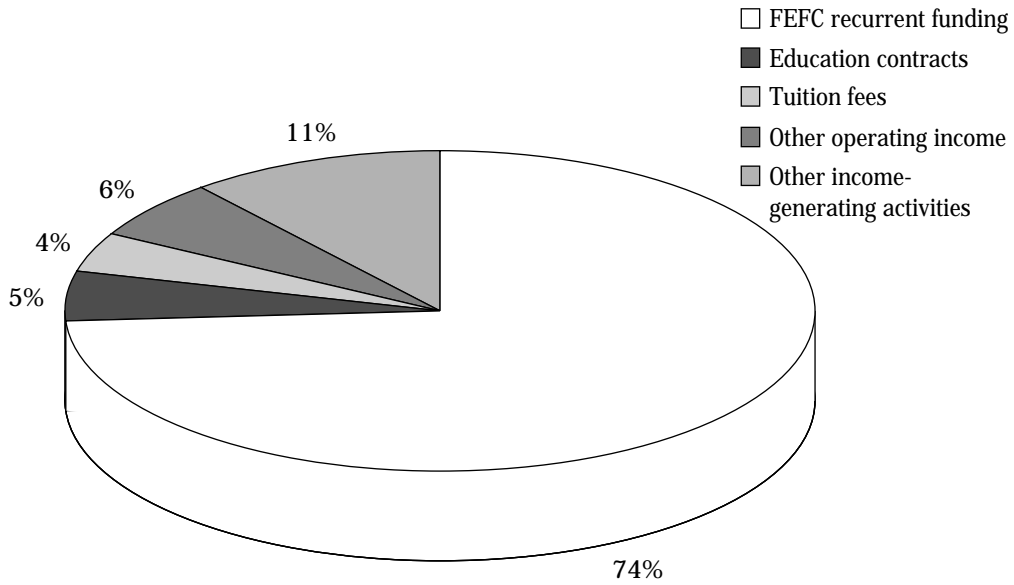

Full-time equivalent staff: 268

Figure 5

Bexley College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)

☐ FEFC recurrent funding
■ Education contracts
▨ Tuition fees
▨ Other operating income
▨ Other income-
generating activities

11%

6%

4%

5%

74%

Estimated income: £10,063,000

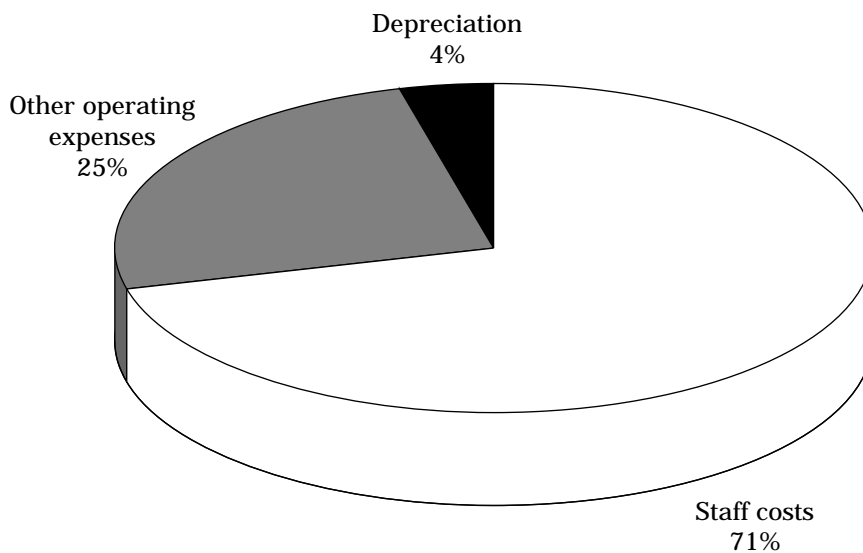*Note: this chart excludes £35,000 capital grants and £35,000 other grant income.*

Figure 6

Bexley College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

Depreciation
4%

Other operating
expenses
25%

Staff costs
71%

Estimated expenditure: £10,080,000

Note: this chart excludes £10,000 interest payable.