

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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# **Bilborough Sixth Form College**

**May 1996**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

*The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education 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**

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

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 58/96

**BILBOROUGH SIXTH FORM COLLEGE**

**EAST MIDLANDS REGION**

**Inspected February 1995-January 1996**

## Summary

Bilborough Sixth Form College provides a wide range of subjects at GCE A level. These are complemented by a well-supported curriculum enrichment programme of over 40 activities. Governors have a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are committed to furthering the college's success. The college maintains effective liaison with local schools. The achievement of students at GCE A level is high. The college has taken steps to improve the quantity and quality of resources, including equipment. The college has made progress in implementing its accommodation strategy. A number of matters require attention. The curriculum is comparatively narrow in its range. There is no systematic approach to ensuring the improvement of the overall quality of provision. The college's organisational structure is complex and lines of accountability for staff are unclear. There is poor access for wheelchair users. Many areas of the college are uninviting and untidy.

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

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science	3	Creative arts	2
Mathematics and computing	2	English and communications	1
Business studies	2	Humanities including languages	2
		Social sciences and religious studies	1

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 The college was inspected between February 1995 and January 1996. Seventeen inspectors spent 62 days assessing the quality and standards of the college's provision and observed 148 classes attended by approximately 1,250 students. They examined students' work and college documents. Discussions were held with governors, staff, students and representatives from industry, the local community and from the Greater Nottingham Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The strategic plan and policy documents were used in determining the success with which the college was progressing towards the targets it has set itself.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 Bilborough Sixth Form College is situated on a large campus shared with a primary school and an 11 to 16 comprehensive school. It is located on the north-western boundary of Nottingham, three miles from the city centre, one mile from the M1 and close to the Derbyshire border. The college opened in 1957 as a county grammar school and became a sixth form college as part of comprehensive reorganisation in 1975. There is strong competition between local providers of post-16 education and training. Within Nottingham there is another sixth form college, a tertiary college and five general further education colleges. There are three denominational schools with sixth forms, two independent high schools, a city technology college, two sixth form centres with partner schools and several 11 to 18 schools in the county area immediately surrounding the city and near to the college.

3 The college recruits students from a wide area including the inner city of Nottingham and also Derbyshire. Statistics provided for the Greater Nottingham TEC area show 5.9 per cent of the population are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Approximately 15 per cent of students come from minority ethnic groups, the greatest proportion of whom are Asian. Enrolments rose steadily in the first two years after incorporation but fell at the beginning of the 1995-96 academic year; this decline was mainly due to a decline in students on one-year courses. On 1 November 1995 there were 635 full-time students at the college of whom a little over half came from more than 50 secondary schools. A small programme of evening classes was introduced in September 1995 and this has attracted 26 part-time students. Enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

4 Greater Nottingham TEC produced a labour market survey for 1994-95. This showed a shift from manufacturing to service sector employment and a tendency for a range of jobs at all levels to require a higher level and broader range of skills. These skills include personal effectiveness, communication, management, literacy, numeracy and computer literacy, all of which are developed through various courses at the college.

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Unemployment in Nottingham is 14.8 per cent and in the county 10.1 per cent compared with an average for England and Wales of 9.1 per cent. Participation in education and training after compulsory schooling is rising in Nottingham but is still below many other areas of the country.

5 The college states that its mission is to provide 'academic excellence in a supportive environment to serious and committed students'. The general aims of the college are to offer a wide range of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses for those students capable of benefiting from them; to build a community in which individual students work together for the common good; to encourage intelligent interest in the wider community by way of study and service; to provide students with skills necessary to proceed to the next step of their education, employment or leisure and be responsive to local and national needs.

### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

6 The college's provision has a strong focus on GCE A levels. The college offers 33 GCE A level and 17 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects. New subjects include English language, music technology, psychology, sociology and performing arts at GCE AS or A level. The range of languages includes French, German, Italian, Spanish and Urdu. Some modular schemes have been introduced although their flexibility has not yet been fully exploited. In most areas there are effective mechanisms for reviewing courses and syllabuses.

7 The college is approved to offer General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate level business. The governors decided that the college should not introduce specific vocational courses because these are already well provided in the city. The college is revising its GCSE programme. Currently the GCSE provision covers 19 subjects. There has been a decline in the number of students on the one-year GCSE course from 100 in 1994-95 to only 50 in 1995-96. Last year 35 per cent of the GCSE cohort stayed on at the college to study at advanced level. For some students, the GCSE programme offers a valuable second chance to improve their GCSE grades.

8 A particularly strong feature of the college's provision is the enrichment programme. This includes opportunities for students to participate in 44 different activities including a range of competitive sports and leisure pursuits. Outdoor activities include a major expedition once a year. There are opportunities to take part in drama productions and musical groups, including a choir. A course for the basic food hygiene certificate assists students who work part time in catering establishments. The well-organised physical recreation scheme provides all students with the opportunity to take part in activities which are competitive or non-competitive. Systematic coaching is available in a wide range of sports. The young enterprise scheme gives students a chance to experience the business world by running a company for themselves. Students who

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take one or more GCE A level subjects also take GCE A level general studies. Language courses are also offered in the enrichment programme. The RSA Examinations Board (RSA) certificate in information technology is taken by students across a range of courses. The youth award scheme leading to bronze, silver, gold and platinum awards is currently followed by 27 students. The community service programme involves some 50 students who help in local schools and hospitals.

9 Schemes to attract those school leavers who would not normally continue in post-compulsory education and training have met with limited success. In the city of Nottingham the percentage of young people staying on in full-time education is low at 56 per cent. Some 20 per cent of school leavers in Nottingham become either unemployed or their destinations are unknown. There is currently a development fund project with Greater Nottingham TEC and Arnold and Carlton College to support post-16 students who do not normally continue their education. This project is closely linked to use of the TRAC programme and also includes the provision of staff development, market research and equipment. The TRAC programme is run by a charitable organisation with a centre in Nottingham and provides students with an introduction to the world of work. It arranges work experience for them and helps them to develop specific vocational skills. The college planned to place 30 students on this programme in 1995-96 but so far only 12 students have participated in it, at a cost of £12,000 to the college. Co-operation with Greater Nottingham TEC has involved the college in a number of collaborative projects in recent years. These have had limited success.

10 There are few adult students at the college. The college's strategic plan includes provision of general education programmes for part-time students, possibly through afternoon or evening study. Evening classes have been offered this year but recruitment to them has been disappointing. Information technology has attracted students, but recruitment has been low in 10 other subjects including accounting, Spanish and English literature. The college's only initiative with adults in the college's immediate community is the pilot project for the charity Women's Action for Mental Health. The college is investigating ways in which it can contribute to education for women on a local housing estate. Few students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are enrolled on mainstream courses and there is no discrete provision for them.

11 The college's marketing strategy aims at steady growth in the GCE A level market. There is a lack of purpose within the college about marketing the one-year GCSE programme and provision for adult students. Recruitment focuses on well-qualified school leavers. Much of this recruitment is a result of word-of-mouth recommendation and liaison with feeder schools. A budget of £19,500 is currently allocated to cover the cost of publicity. This includes a prospectus, leaflets, advertising in newspapers, on radio and buses. The college produces a newsletter.



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12 There are isolated examples of curricular links with schools. Planned collaborative activities with local colleges have had limited success. A number of curriculum initiatives were proposed with Basford Hall College but were not taken forward. Joint promotions with High Pavement Sixth Form College in Nottingham emphasise the general benefits of sixth form college education. The college has compact agreements with Derby, Nottingham Trent and De Montfort Universities. There is also a programme of outside visits to universities.

13 Links between the college and local business are uneven and comparatively undeveloped. Some links, nevertheless, have been strengthened through the technical and vocational education initiative. There is little involvement of employers in the development and review of courses. There is a small programme of work experience for students. Visits to local firms are arranged and employers are sometimes invited to address the students.

14 The college is developing a number of useful links with continental Europe. A team has been set up to produce a European policy for the college and construct plans for a three-year period. There are links with France and Germany for modern languages students. An exchange scheme with Sweden is open to all students. An exchange of music staff is taking place with Rome. The college is involved in setting up links with Poland as part of a twinning project with the city and county councils.

15 There are opportunities for students to develop their spiritual ideas and beliefs. Religious studies is offered as a modular GCE A level. There is a Christian union, an Islamic society and a Sikh group. Rooms are made available for prayer. A chaplain attends the college for one hour a week making himself available as an additional counsellor for students. The college does not hold a weekly act of worship for students.

16 The college has an equal opportunities policy. An equal opportunities group representing staff and students, has identified the need for a more substantial policy document, an action plan and monitoring arrangements. There has been some limited staff development in relation to equal opportunities.

## **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

17 The governing body has a membership of 15. There are seven independent members, two staff (one teaching and one business support), one parent, the Greater Nottingham TEC nominee, one student, two co-opted members, and the principal. The independent members come mainly from professional and business backgrounds. One is a member of the teaching staff of a neighbouring college. Attendance at meetings by governors is good. There are six committees with clear remits. They deal with strategic planning; employment, policy and finance; audit; remuneration; nominations; and appeals. The quality of the papers presented to governors has improved steadily over the past two years.

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The governors have a clear understanding of their role and their relationship to the principal. Good use is made of the expertise and experience of the governors.

18 The strategic plan was prepared by senior management after extensive discussions with staff. The draft was then considered by the governors' committee on strategic planning. This committee has a membership of five governors and a remit to oversee the preparation and review of the strategic plan and related activities. The college has planned for a modest annual increase in student numbers that is well below the target set for the sector. The college's mission and corporate objectives are understood by its teachers. There is a shared vision of the college's main market but how far new markets should be developed is a matter of debate. There are no operational plans for human and financial resources to support the achievement of the college's objectives. There are few dates set for the completion of tasks.

19 The principalship comprises the principal, the vice-principal (operations) and the vice-principal (development and resources). The principalship team meets weekly to deal mainly with everyday items. There is also an extended senior management team that includes not only the principal and vice-principals but also the director of studies, the short course (enrichment provision) manager, the manager for careers guidance and support and the staff development manager. The extended senior management team meets monthly and its main business is the discussion of policy issues. Policy statements on a range of issues have been approved by governors.

20 The management structure below the principalship is complex. Management responsibilities are, in theory, diffused across 20 departments based on 28 subject areas, several of which involve only one member of staff. In practice, lines of accountability are unclear. As a result, the principalship has to deal with many management issues which could be dealt with at a less senior level. The number of departments is disproportionate to the size of the college. There are overlapping lines of communication which sometimes cause confusion for staff. Communication between departments relies, in effect, upon informal contacts between staff. There are six divisions which have responsibility for pastoral care and divisional leaders meet regularly. In contrast, there is no management group which has overall responsibility for the planning of the college's curriculum. Attempts to form a curriculum board have been unsuccessful because some staff showed little enthusiasm for such a body. At present, decisions on curricular matters are often made on an ad-hoc basis and are not necessarily clearly informed by resource implications and market intelligence.

21 The college has efficient systems for collecting management information. Applications, enrolments, retention rates, achievements and student destinations are monitored by senior managers. There is limited

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use of management information by departments and no mechanism by which the wealth of data available is fully used at strategic and departmental levels. Financial allocations are held centrally and there is only limited delegation to departmental level. The college is taking steps to reduce its unit costs. Its average level of funding reduced from £22.01 in 1994-95 to £21.02 in 1995-96. The median for sixth form colleges in 1995-96 is £19.37. The college will underachieve significantly on its tariff target for 1995-96. The shortfall in units and the consequent estimated clawback in funding by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has budgetary implications for the current year. The college's income and expenditure for 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6. Costs for the each subject area are calculated but at the present time little use is made of this information.

### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

22 There are good links with a number of traditional partner schools, particularly the local comprehensive school, and improving relationships with others. Liaison is through both personal and formal contacts at a variety of levels. Increasing competition for GCE A level students has led the college to establish links with many other schools in both Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. In response to demand, the college now operates four contracted bus services because access to the college by public transport is not always easy. There is an extensive programme of school visits, participation in promotional events and opportunities for school pupils to visit the college and take part in 'taster' lessons. The prospectus has been redesigned in the last year. Subject leaflets are produced for all courses in the identifiable house style.

23 All full-time students who apply to the college are invited for interview. All staff who conduct interviews receive training and guidance to ensure they give advice which will enable the student to make an appropriate informed choice. Guidelines for entry to courses are based on GCSE results and average predicted outcomes. Students are encouraged to enrol on courses which match their level of achievement. However, a few students enrol on courses which are not suitable for them. Full-time students are introduced to the college facilities and their tutor through a well-organised two-day induction programme in June. Students can also sample lessons in a range of subjects. Independent careers advice is available at the college throughout the year including open days, induction in June and enrolment in September.

24 The enrolment process in September suffered from organisational errors. Some students had to wait a considerable time for their one-to-one interview, there were changes in venues at short notice and the enrichment programme was announced late. The college provides an induction into courses in September but the quality of the process is variable. In art and photography there are well-produced, attractive

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induction handbooks but these are not available for other subject areas. In some subjects there is a repetition of the June induction programme. Students are given a copy of the college's handbook and the college's charter and they sign a learning agreement. Students are asked for their views on the induction process through questionnaires. Responses to these show that students enjoy their initial induction experience in June. There is a less positive response to induction in September. Changes of subject on students' timetables after the first month of the academic year are recorded. Students who change their subjects receive guidance on their new studies from subject teachers or the learning support unit.

25 The prospectus and student handbook emphasise the importance of the student's record of achievement. At interview, prospective students are encouraged to bring their record with them. Instructions to staff involved in interviewing fail to highlight the need for them to refer to this document. At enrolment many students bring their record of achievement but it was not always looked at by staff. All students are encouraged to participate in a large range of short courses and activities over and above the requirements of examination courses. This includes an activities week in July. These activities aim to strengthen the students' self-confidence and personal development in order to help them progress successfully to employment or higher education. Students compile regular reviews of their progress. They set themselves targets and action plans. There are three compacts with local universities which make use of the students' records of achievement.

26 The college has effective procedures to monitor the progress and attendance of students. These allow both good and unsatisfactory attendance and progress to be identified and action taken. Parents are able to discuss students' progress at parents meetings and are informed at an early stage of any problems.

27 The college places great emphasis on the tutorial system as a means of supporting students. Some personal and social education is delivered in college assemblies. Relationships are good between tutors and students. In the absence of a college counsellor, students with serious problems are referred to external agencies. There is a short tutorial period every day and a 20-minute tutorial period on one day each week. The staff handbook contains a clear outline of the administrative tasks which must be performed; divisional heads are expected to monitor the completion of these tasks. Attendance at tutorial sessions by students is lower than subject attendance. Time is lost by the late arrival of students and staff. The college has no system for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of its tutorial system.

28 The college has a policy for the support of learning which states that all students should have their individual needs assessed and met. All students on GCSE programmes have timetabled support with numeracy, communication and information technology. Similar support is available,

but optional, for GCE A level students. The responsibility for assessing the learning support needs of students rests with subject departments. Consequently, there is some unnecessary duplication of assessment when more than one department assesses the same student. The learning support unit, which is staffed through most of the college day and every lunchtime, is not provided with adequate learning resources. The centre is popular with students, some 28 per cent having attended so far this year. The information technology drop-in centre which is very widely used at lunchtimes is not staffed at this busy period. Provision of support in English for speakers of other languages is not adequate; only a small number of students have access to individual help. The Youth Award scheme actively supports students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

29 The aims of the careers education and guidance are clear. There is good documentation for tutors to use. The careers library, housed in the main library, is well stocked with resources some of which are provided by the careers service. A careers education and guidance programme for GCE A level students forms part of the curriculum enrichment programme in the first year of study. Attendance at sessions is variable. The careers programme for GCSE students is part of a timetabled personal education programme. According to responses to questionnaires put to students, more information needs to be provided about progression routes to employment.

30 There is an elected student executive and a student council composed of male and female representatives from each tutor group. The membership of the student executive reflects the ethnic mix of students at the college. The group makes representations on behalf of students to college managers and is involved in organising a range of activities, some of which raise substantial amounts for identified charities. A local charity is nominated for support each year and over £5,000 has been raised in each of the last two years.

#### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

31 Strengths outweighed weaknesses in 67 per cent of the lessons inspected. Weaknesses outweighed strengths in only 5 per cent of the sessions. The following table summarises the grades awarded to the sessions inspected.

##### **Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE AS/A level		28	42	29	3	0	102
GCSE		7	11	8	1	1	28
Other		3	8	5	1	1	18
<b>Total</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>148</b>

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32 The college places importance upon good attendance as a key to achievement. Average attendance for the autumn term was 87.5 per cent. In the month prior to the inspection attendance was 85.4 per cent for GCE A level and 74.5 per cent for GCSE students. Absence was defined as all non-attendance irrespective of cause, including university interviews or sports fixtures.

33 In science, some teachers were still developing schemes of work for their lessons and others did not have, or use them, at all. Practical lessons were carefully prepared and well supported by well-written handouts. Good use is made of information technology to support learning in electronics. There is, however, scope for developing the use of information technology across all science subjects. Teachers could do more to find out what their students have already covered in science subjects before coming to college.

34 Course plans in information technology showed clearly how objectives are to be fulfilled. In all lessons students clearly understood what was expected from them. Learning was usually through practical work supported by individual tuition and at times by general class discussion. In most lessons good questioning by the teacher ensured understanding was checked and reinforced where necessary. In mathematics there is an effective use of a range of teaching strategies to meet lesson objectives. At GCE A level group work is used to promote the exchanges of ideas about mathematics. A computer graphics package and graphics calculators were used effectively in GCE A level and GCSE classes to explore mathematical relationships and the presentation of information. Experiments were used to provide data for later use and to investigate experimental techniques. In a few sessions there was scope for a greater use of question and answer to confirm understanding. There was a need to review how theory taken straight from the textbook could be more efficiently presented to students.

35 In business studies, there are some clear schemes of work but others are in outline only. Most lessons were well prepared and enthusiastically taught. Students received individual attention when necessary. The questioning technique of teachers was of a high standard. Case studies to illustrate subject matter were well used in economics and business studies. There is scope for developing the use of information technology, other than wordprocessing, across all courses. GCSE students use information technology for project work. Only GCE A level business studies students use the information technology centre. There are links with local businesses and students make some visits to local firms.

36 The schemes of work for theatre studies and music vary considerably in the amount of detail they contain. The balance between practice and theory is appropriate. Private study packs in theatre studies are of a high standard. Teachers responded readily and helpfully to the students' queries. Although teaching was generally satisfactory, in some classes the students were insufficiently challenged. Courses in art and design carefully

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follow the examination syllabus. A visual arts handbook is given to students and this clearly sets out the aims of the course and the associated learning methods. Teachers have devised thematic projects which develop concepts and skills progressively. In their practical work, the students receive careful and individual attention from the teachers who illustrate the guidance they give with extensive reference to contemporary and historical artists. There is scope for the classes to receive more demonstration of technique. Some of the advice which teachers give students is too direct and prescriptive and it is questionable practice for staff to draw directly onto the students' work. In photography, there is too great an emphasis on the production and content of photographs rather than the theories and techniques of photographic art. Consequently, this rather casual attitude towards technique results in the students' spoiling of prints through an unnecessary amount of bad practice.

37 In English and communications, staff prepare their lessons thoroughly. Their delivery is lively and their manner approachable. A wide range of teaching methods is employed. Students work in groups and work unsupervised in the resources room. They produce notes to be displayed and give feedback with little prompting at the end of group work. Frequent references are made to videos and visits to plays and films which reinforce learning. There are detailed schemes of work available for all courses. Two teachers are assigned to each teaching group with the intention of maintaining continuity and variety of approach. Staff regularly review and adapt their teaching methods.

38 Humanities lessons are well prepared. They are delivered with enthusiasm and conviction. The quality of geography and general studies handouts is good. All subjects make good use of relevant source material. There was a proper balance in classes between information provided by the teacher and enquiry undertaken by the students. Many sessions involved paired and small group work. Reinforcement of learning is carried out effectively in a variety of ways including presentations by students, a revision quiz and a simulation game. There is a common approach to teaching languages across the different programmes. Features include use of the languages as a medium of instruction, emphasis on spoken and practical skills and the wide use of audio-visual aids. Teachers develop students' sensitivity to cultural issues as well as the language itself and use authentic materials in the classroom. Teachers spend time with individuals who need help with specific problems revealed through assessment. The size of language classes is, however, small and this reduces the scope for group work.

39 In the social sciences there is excellent rapport between students and their tutors. Lessons are well organised and managed. A variety of appropriate teaching and learning strategies is used. There is a close reference to schemes of work, syllabus requirements and learning objectives in teaching and in assessed work. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed. There is good-quality material to support teaching and

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learning. Students are encouraged to learn in groups and on their own. Staff encourage students to express a broad range of views, interpretations and freedom of expression.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

40 Tables produced by the Department for Education and Employment list the average point score achieved per entry in GCE AS/A level examinations each year. In 1995, 264 Bilborough Sixth Form College students aged 16 to 18 were entered for at least one GCE AS/A level subject (84 per cent of all students in their final year at the college). The average points score per entry was 5.1 (where A=10, E=2). This puts the college in the top third of all further education sector colleges on this measure of performance. The average points score per entry for all sixth form college students in 1995 was 4.8. Examination success was similar in 1995 to the preceding year with the college maintaining its rank order position. The average points score of the 226 candidates who sat for three or more GCE A levels was 15.4 in 1995. The average points score of the 38 students who entered for one or two GCE A level subjects was 4.1. In 1995, 4.6 per cent of students failed to gain any GCE A level passes.

41 Some students gained outstanding success in the 1995 examinations. The overall average pass rate was 86.4 per cent but the pass rate exceeded 90 per cent in 14 subjects. Seventeen students received more than 30 points in their GCE A level examinations. One student received a special commendation from the examinations board for being in the top five candidates out of the 5,500 entries across the country in communication studies. The proportion of all passes at grades A to C was 61.3 per cent. The trend over the last three years has been one of general improvement. Subjects with markedly lower pass rates than the college average were accounts (48.2 per cent), sociology (52.6 per cent), and electronics (50 per cent). Far fewer students enter for GCE AS examinations. Of the 64 entries in 1995, 79.7 per cent obtained pass grades but only two of these passes were at grade A.

42 Success in GCSE examinations is very variable. The overall success rate at grades A to C in 1995 was 39.9 per cent. This is lower than the average success rate at grades A to C of 48 per cent in 1995 for sixth form colleges. In 1995, 13.6 per cent of all entries were late withdrawals from the examination. The largest GCSE entries are in mathematics and English. The college aims to improve grades by at least one for all GCSE entries in these subjects. In mathematics GCSE, 43 per cent of candidates achieved grades A to C in 1995. Fifty-two per cent of students improved their previous achievement by one or more grade. In English language GCSE, 35 per cent of candidates achieved grades A to C in 1995. Sixty per cent of candidates improved their achievement by one or more grade.

43 Many students on GCE A level courses are able to express themselves fluently and accurately. Some students, however, in subjects such as physical education, history, geography and sociology experience difficulties



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in expressing their ideas clearly in the writing of essays. Standards of English in GCSE work are variable and greater attention needs to be paid to syntax, spelling and presentation. Sixty-five students took the RSA basic qualification in computer literacy in 1995 and 63 obtained distinctions. Not all students, however, have sufficient opportunity to develop and practise their information technology skills. Sixteen out of 17 students gained basic food hygiene certificates in 1995. The number of students gaining the bronze Youth Award has increased; 38 per cent of students who enrolled completed their award in the standard time in 1994-95.

44 Students are frequently encouraged to learn from each other by discussing course material amongst themselves. They undertake such discussion seriously and work individually, in pairs and in groups with a high level of commitment. Some students demonstrate high level skills of research and analysis but these aspects need further development in many subjects. Students develop their self-confidence and are able to talk intelligently about their work. GCE A level students are encouraged to show initiative. For example, music students participating in a practical singing session redistributed the parts among the group to achieve a better balance without being told to by the teacher. In another lesson, two students found that their programmable calculators were giving slightly different answers to a mathematical problem. They were able to devise diagnostic tests and work out how to correct the programme. Standards in some subjects with a strong practical element, such as art and design, could be further enhanced by increasing the range of work and activities which develop technical skills. Practical work in science is generally safely and competently carried out. Students have achieved success at national and county levels as a result of the physical recreation programme.

45 The college monitors retention rates throughout the year. This includes tracking those students who participated in induction in June but who did not register in September to begin courses at the college. The dropout from GCE A level courses is low with only 3 per cent leaving between the end of October and May census dates in 1994-95. Some students do not transfer from first to second year of the two-year GCE A level programme and this results in an overall retention rate of 78.7 per cent over the two-year period ending June 1995. Dropout from GCSE courses is higher with 31 per cent of students leaving their courses between November 1994 and May 1995. The drop-out rate from the GCSE group over the autumn term 1995 has been about half that of preceding years.

46 Nearly 94 per cent of students who applied to a higher education institution in 1994-95 were successful in gaining a place. Some students are taking the opportunity to use the year after leaving college to widen their horizons before entering higher education. The college provides guidance on the use of this year. Thirty-five per cent of the group of students who are following a one-year GCSE course returned to Bilborough in 1995 for a further two years to take GCE A levels. In 1995, 29 students

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(13 per cent of the group completing GCE A level courses) had studied at the college for three or more years. Of these students, 21 per cent continued studying in other further education colleges, 38 per cent went on to higher education and 41 per cent entered employment. Destination data for the last three years are given in the following table as percentages of all students who completed their course.

**Destination data 1992-95: percentage of students completing their course**

	<b>1992-93</b>	<b>1993-94</b>	<b>1994-95</b>
Employment	13	15	12
Further education	8	13	14
Higher education	53	43	52
GCSE returners	14	10	12
Year out	4	2	3
Unknown	8	17	7

**QUALITY ASSURANCE**

47 The college's charter was the product of lengthy consultation with staff and some students. The charter is supplemented by other documents including the code of conduct for students, their learning entitlement and the college's policy statements on quality, equal opportunities, careers guidance and support. The associated learning agreement sets out the students' responsibilities. The college does not emphasise sufficiently the rights of the students. It is not easy for students to obtain a personal copy of the formal complaints procedure. Current commitments in the charter are not sufficiently challenging and more specific targets need to be set.

48 A clear statement of principles underpins the college's policy on quality. The 1994-95 strategic plan sets objectives for obtaining data from a variety of sources with the aim of providing an accurate information base. The need to co-ordinate this data has been recognised and a quality assurance group has been set up under the vice-principal (operations). Current members of the quality assurance group are volunteers. Not all staff with formal responsibility for quality are members of the quality assurance group.

49 Much routine monitoring is carried out at subject level. Departments are required to carry out reviews three times a year. The opinions of students are gathered through departmentally produced questionnaires or other means some of which are imaginative. In English, for example, feedback from students is part of the learning activities. Feedback from students together with data from other sources, including review by staff of courses and examiners' reports, form the basis of the curriculum review reports for senior management. In some departments this process has been highly effective leading to an agenda for action and improvements in

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provision. In other departments the process is largely ignored. Arrangements for monitoring the quality of pastoral support are underdeveloped.

50 This process of curriculum review has been used to inform the college's self-assessment report. This makes an honest and broadly accurate statement of the college's strengths and weaknesses using the headings of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Targets for action are identified and linked to the strategic plan. The report does not make sufficient use of the data which are available.

51 Despite the progress made in developing procedures for quality assurance there is a degree of resistance amongst some teaching staff to the use of rigorous instruments for monitoring quality. The existing fragmented approach to quality assurance means that the data produced cannot easily be used for year-on-year comparisons of quality across the college. The college is establishing procedures for assembling the data to meet the FEFC's requirements for performance indicators as set out in Council Circular 94/31, *Measuring Achievement*. Special attention is given to the analysis of examination results and the college is committed to measuring the progress made by all students from their starting point on entry to the college until they gain their qualifications on leaving. Data on the destinations of students are used for marketing and to give feedback to local schools. Generally, however, this wealth of evaluative data is not used in a systematic way to inform strategic planning.

52 An appraisal system for teaching staff has been negotiated which focuses on classroom practice and includes observation of teaching by a colleague. This has enabled staff to reflect on their methods and has led, in some cases, to improvements in classroom practice. Less than half the teaching staff have completed the first phase of the appraisal cycle and no staff have undertaken their annual review of targets. There are no dates set for review. The appraisal process requires individual development plans to be written but these are not aligned with departmental and college development plans. The appraisal process does not include all the college staff.

53 Training and development needs for teachers are identified by departmental meetings, curriculum and course reviews and informal discussions with managers. There is no system for identifying the needs of training in management skills for middle managers. In 1994-95 the college spent 0.57 per cent of its total income on staff development including the release of staff to attend training courses and short industrial placements. This expenditure excludes the cost of in-house training events on cross-college issues and departmentally based development activity. Full records of attendance for training and the associated costs are kept. Staff are asked to write reports of external events attended for inclusion in a file in the teaching staff room library. The opinions of staff on in-house training are collected as immediate evaluation. Recently-appointed

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teachers are well supported by their colleagues and management. An induction process is set out in the staff handbook which is primarily for teachers but is available to all staff and provides useful information about the college.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

54 There are 50 full-time equivalent teaching staff, of which 45 are full time. Visiting staff include a chaplain, nurse and careers officers, sports instructors and peripatetic music teachers. Teachers are well qualified in their specialist areas; 95 per cent have degrees, 38 per cent hold higher degrees and 93 per cent have teaching qualifications. The gender balance of staff reflects the mix of students in the college and women are represented at all management levels. Many academic staff are long serving with limited experience of work outside the college. Forty per cent of teachers have been employed by the college for more than 16 years and those in middle management posts (subject and division leaders) have an average length of service at the college of over 17 years. Staff costs account for 74 per cent of the college's total expenditure. An estimated 2 per cent of payroll costs is included in the non-pay budget and goes to meet a number of service contracts. Some small class sizes such as those for tutorial work are inefficient in terms of staffing costs. The college is making efforts to improve efficiency by combining groups and reviewing the number of teaching hours on courses but scope for flexibility is limited.

55 The 15 non-teaching support staff represent 11.4 full-time equivalents. The college has contracts with external suppliers for services such as personnel, catering, cleaning and project management and the number of staff employed by the college on these functions is small. Two full-time site supervisory staff have accommodation on the site. The technician team of two full-time and two part-time staff is lead by a senior technician. Some of the technicians have advanced qualifications and relevant experience. This technician team has shown considerable flexibility and commitment in meeting the needs of the whole college. Their services are, however, fully stretched and the increasing level of technical capability required to meet new demands in the college is not currently available in all areas, notably information technology and performing arts. The library is staffed by a full-time chartered librarian and one library assistant. The administration team comprises five staff (one of whom is full time) for secretarial, finance, reception, student admissions and college records work. This is a low level of administrative support.

56 The deployment, development and roles of support staff need to be reviewed. Support staff are not closely involved with the planning of the college and they do not necessarily have a full understanding of the college's mission and objectives. Training and development opportunities for

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support staff are few. They learn on the job, with help from managers and specialist teaching staff when they can give it.

### **Equipment/learning resources**

57 The capital equipment budget has been used to improve substantially the amount and range of equipment. Departments bid annually for funds and have to justify their requests by reference to strategic objectives. A considerable investment in computer equipment has been made since incorporation. Teaching equipment, such as overhead projectors, whiteboards and videos, is generally available. Furniture is shabby in many rooms despite a substantial programme of refurbishment. Although there is a policy for replacement the college needs to review the use and deployment of equipment.

58 The college has a mixture of old and new computer equipment. There are over 30 standalone personal computers in the information technology drop-in centre with more limited amounts of information technology equipment in individual departments. There is no information technology policy and co-ordination of computer hardware and software resources is limited. The information technology centre is very busy at many times during the day. No staff are available to give help at lunchtimes. Usage is not effectively monitored. Dedicated computers exist for learning support and careers. The library has more than 20 computers including compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database players. Standard college software is, however, not uniformly available.

59 Several departments hold substantial stocks of unused books, many of which are outdated. Regular review of unused resources does not routinely take place in all subject areas although there is an annual inventory check. There is some good equipment for performing arts courses and this includes a video recording studio, sound studio and lighting loft. The art studios are appropriately furnished and equipped and have recently acquired professional silk-screen printing equipment. Apart from developers, photography equipment is barely adequate for the growing numbers of students and their need to improve the technical quality of work. Language students use some realistic language resources such as off-air video and audio recordings. This provision will be substantially enhanced by the installation of a new multi-media language laboratory which was taking place at the time of the inspection. The equipment for outdoor sports is well maintained. The range of modern indoor physical education equipment is limited. Specialist science equipment is appropriate for the level of courses. Microscope work in biology is enhanced by the use of a video microscope.

60 The college has a policy of loaning essential subject books to students. Additional supporting reference material is available in teaching rooms. Students may purchase texts that they are annotating, for example in English literature. Capital equipment money has been used to make

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substantial improvements in the provision of sufficient up-to-date textbooks in all subjects. Learning materials are generally well presented. The learning support centre lacks materials for students to use on their own and this reduces its usefulness.

61 The library provides a good service for the support of teaching and learning. The librarian has made the purchase of books a priority over recent years. The library budget is low, at £5,000 a year. Outdated books have been removed and the bookstock level is now 9,300 volumes. There is a growing collection of videos and CD-ROMs. Use of library resources is closely monitored. For example, in the autumn term the most heavily used CD-ROMs were those relating to careers and geography. The next priority for expenditure is to improve the limited supply of journals and contemporary materials. There is some pressure on library space. The quiet study area is, however, large and a total of 140 study spaces is available. There is a lack of effective communication between the library and some departments. There is low usage of the library by students from some subject areas. Some departments, however, such as languages demonstrate good practice in liaison with the library. Loan statistics are regularly analysed and the results are fed back to departments. In the autumn term 1995, the average borrowing per student was 2.3 books excluding renewals, an increase on 1994. Subject guides have been produced for each department. A security system is used to reduce book theft. The library's catalogue is computerised but it is not comprehensive as it does not yet cover materials held in departments.

#### **Accommodation**

62 The original buildings were constructed for a grammar school in 1957. Some buildings and two mobile classrooms have been added in recent years. There had been significant neglect of the condition of the buildings over a long period. Most buildings had problems arising from flat roofs and rotting window frames. The Hunter survey confirmed that the condition of the buildings was poor. The college is set in 24 acres, much of it used as playing fields. The college gymnasium is poor. Use is made of the local leisure centre, indoor and track facilities, local authority hockey pitches and the local swimming baths. Payment is made for the use of these facilities.

63 The accommodation strategy is set out in the 1994 strategic plan and was updated in 1995. This strategy has been pursued effectively. An accommodation audit has identified specialist areas no longer required, rooms that were under utilised and small rooms overused by large groups. Accommodation needs were identified as resources centres, specialist teaching bases, management space, canteen and recreation facilities. So far an additional art studio, physical education area, a new area for learning support, improved accommodation for geography and a new base for sociology have been developed.

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64 There is a maintenance strategy for the period from 1995 to 2005. At present, the college is working to improve its exterior, renovate car park surfaces, improve drainage and renew tennis court fences. Interior improvements include replacement of heaters, better floor surfaces and improved furniture. A continuing programme of decoration is improving the internal appearance of the college. However, day-to-day care of the accommodation is poor. Some toilets are marred by graffiti. There is a general shortage of storage space. Many rooms are untidy with equipment lying around. The entrance hall is used as a students' work area. As a result, the hall has a lively atmosphere but the litter left by the end of the day makes a bad impression for visitors and adult students in the evening. The overall impact is drabness alleviated by colourful posters and wall displays. A new health and safety policy clearly identifies responsibilities for each area and its effective implementation could make a significant improvement to the general appearance of the college.

65 Other improvements include a new servery and better facilities in the photographic darkroom. There have been some improvements to the laboratories since the specialist inspection in February 1995. There is a friendly, welcoming information technology drop-in centre. Art and design studios are of a good size and well lit. The studios are tidy and well managed. The arts centre used by theatre studies students is shared with the public and it is sometimes difficult to create the atmosphere some classes require. The general use of a corridor along one side of the hall can distract students. The music rehearsal rooms are bleak and cold and have an air of desolation and neglect. The learning support centre is uninviting and underused.

66 A specific objective in the strategic plan for 1995 is to review room occupancy. A space utilisation survey was carried out in 1994 but has not yet been repeated. The survey concluded that it was hard to justify extra buildings on the basis of these results alone. Only five rooms met the 64 per cent room utilisation target which is set by the Department for Education and Employment. Some curriculum changes have been made to make more effective use of existing space.

67 Another specific objective is to try to ensure access for wheelchair users. The sloping ground at one side of the college is difficult for students with restricted mobility to negotiate. Only the arts centre, reception and the staff rooms are easily reached. It is only possible to arrange access to many other areas by going round the outside of the site. Little progress has also been made in improving the buildings for use by students with other physical disabilities such as sight or hearing impairment.

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## CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

68 The college has the following particular strengths:

- the wide range of subjects at GCE A level
- good GCE A level results
- an extensive curriculum enrichment programme
- committed governors who understand their roles and responsibilities
- effective contact with schools and students prior to enrolment
- curriculum review resulting in action to improve provision
- highly-qualified academic staff
- improvements in quantity and quality of equipment and learning resources
- progress in implementing the accommodation strategy.

69 Staff at all levels must accept responsibility for a corporate approach to the following issues:

- the absence of an overview of the curriculum
- the absence of an overview of resources
- the lack of clear lines of accountability
- the lack of a systematic approach to quality improvement
- the underdeveloped role of support staff
- the narrowness of recruitment and the inflexibility of provision
- the limited effectiveness of support for learning
- uninviting and untidy areas of the college
- poor access for wheelchair users
- absenteeism from, and lateness at, tutorials
- development of information technology across the curriculum.



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## FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1995)

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  - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1995)

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  - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area  
(as at November 1995)

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  - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at  
November 1995)

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  - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

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  - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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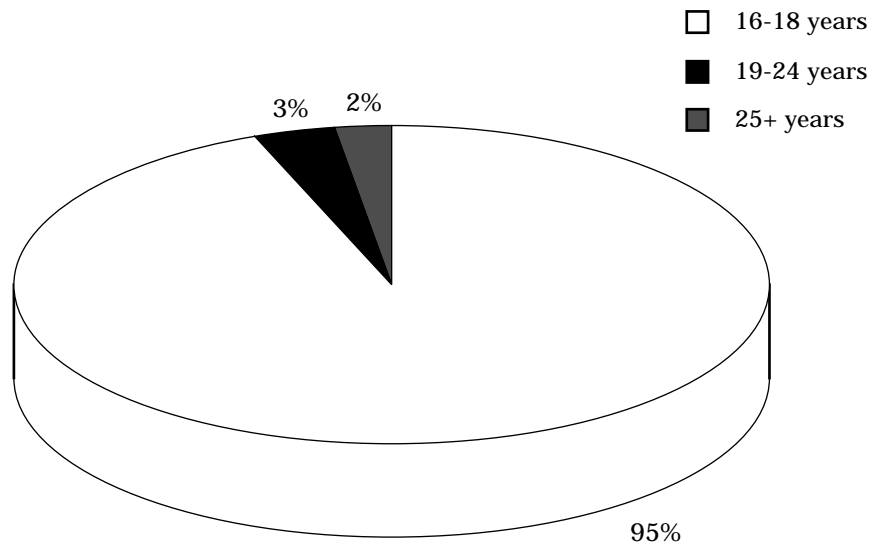
**Note:** the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

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**Figure 1**

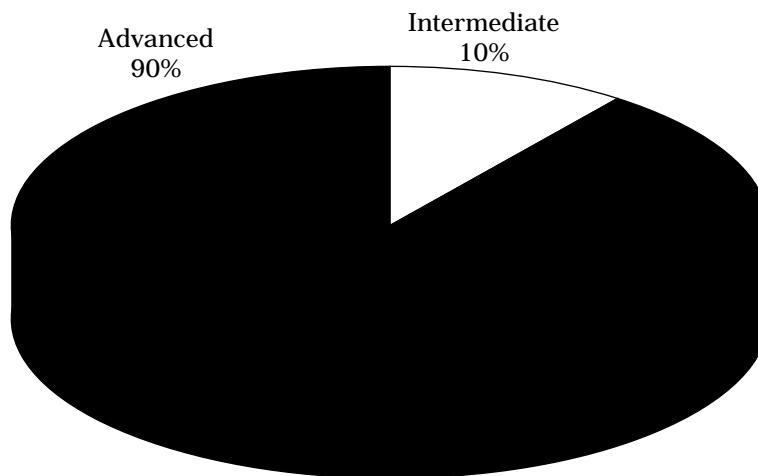
**Bilborough Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1995)**



Enrolments: 661

**Figure 2**

**Bilborough Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1995)**



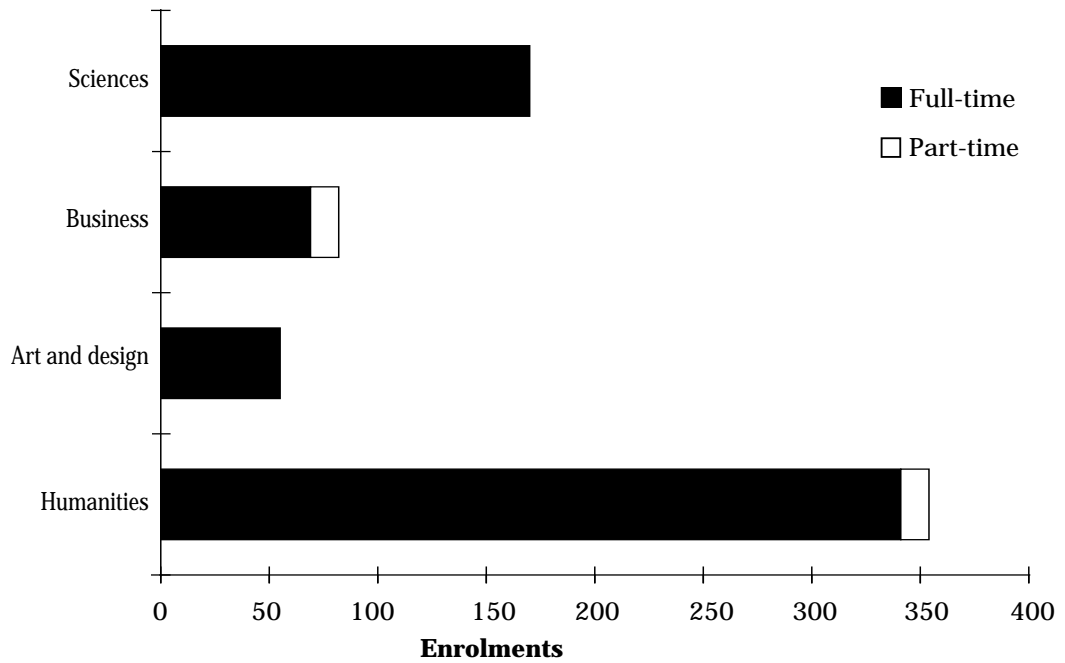
Enrolments: 661

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**Figure 3**

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**Bilborough Sixth Form College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)**

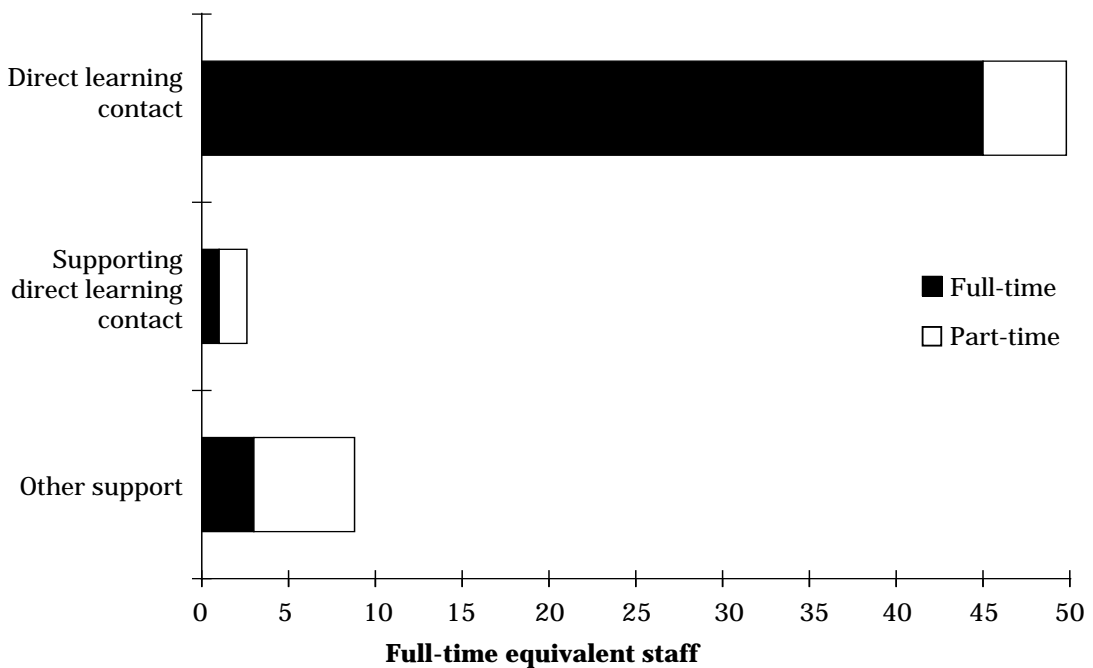


Enrolments: 661

**Figure 4**

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**Bilborough Sixth Form College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1995)**



Full-time equivalent staff: 61

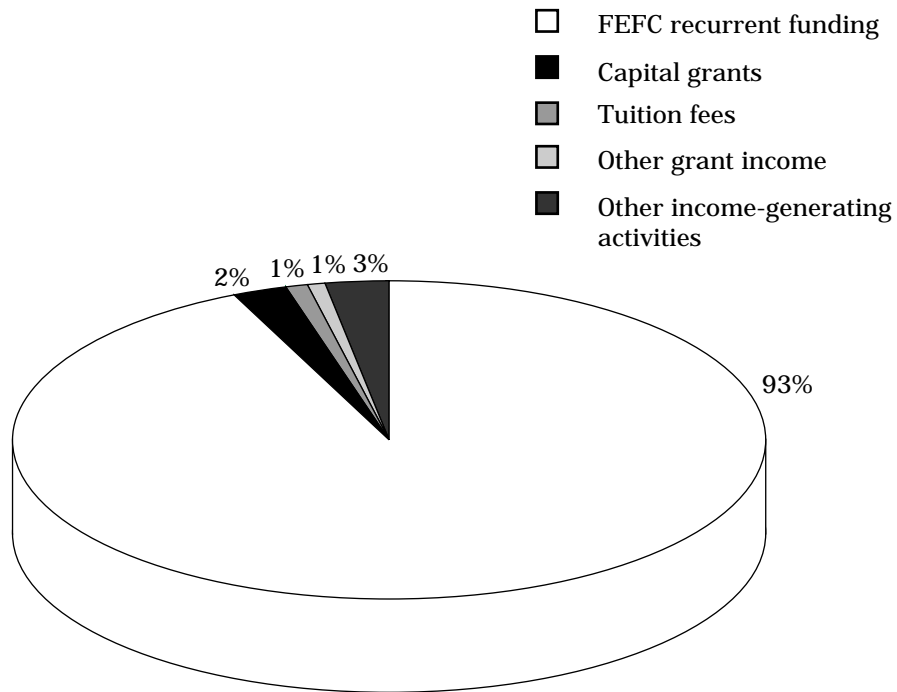
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**Figure 5**

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**Bilborough Sixth Form College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)**

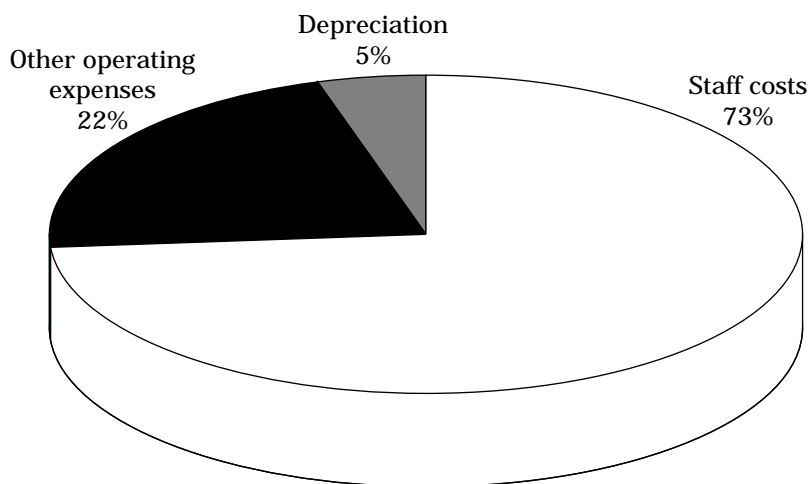


Income: £2,237,000

**Figure 6**

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**Bilborough Sixth Form College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)**



Expenditure: £2,087,000

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