

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Bournville College of Further Education

April 1997

**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 the 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 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-96

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	59%	29%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	14%	50%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	12%	54%	30%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 31/97

BOURNVILLE COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected March-December 1996

Summary

Bournville College offers an extensive range of courses, well adapted to meet the needs of its students. It has strong links with local employers, the TEC and institutions of higher education. There is a firm commitment to equal opportunities. Members of the corporation have given strong support to the college and have effectively reviewed their own performance. The latest strategic plan has been developed to promote a more entrepreneurial approach by the college. Potential students are offered effective and impartial advice. The tutorial, careers and counselling services work well. Much teaching is of a good standard. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively supported by the college and frequently achieve well. There are good retention and pass rates on courses sponsored by employers. Teaching and support staff are enthusiastic and well qualified. The accommodation is attractive, well maintained, and mostly offers good access for those with physical disabilities. The college's financial weaknesses have led to substantial redundancies and cuts in budgets. The college has adopted a comprehensive quality assurance strategy but its implementation is inconsistent and the self-assessment report lacks rigour. Other weaknesses include the incomplete analysis of the additional learning needs of some students, poor examination results and unsatisfactory retention and attendance on some courses. The library bookstock is insufficient. There are too few computers and students' access to them is very limited.

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		3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		2
Quality assurance		3
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	4
	accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Computing	2	Psychology, sociology and teacher training	2
Mathematics	3	English	3
Floristry and horticulture	2	Modern languages	3
Business studies	2	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and supported learning	
Business management and professional courses	2		
Health, social care and applied social work	2		2
		Adult basic education/ESOL	2

INTRODUCTION

1 Bournville College of Further Education was inspected in four stages. The college's induction and enrolment procedures were inspected at the start of the autumn term 1996. Specialist inspections took place in March and October 1996 and were followed by an inspection of aspects of cross-college provision in December 1996. Eighteen inspectors spent 76 days in the college. They visited 173 classes, involving 1,936 students, and scrutinized students' work. Meetings were held with members of the corporation, college senior managers and staff, students, parents, local employers, members of the local community and representatives from local schools. Discussions also took place with representatives of the local training and enterprise council (TEC). Inspectors examined statements of college policy, the strategic plan, minutes of committees, working papers and documents.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Bournville College was founded by Cadbury Brothers in 1913 as a day-continuation school for boys and girls. It was taken over by Birmingham City Council and became Bournville College of Further Education in 1963. The college moved to its present site between 1972 and 1974. Located on the A38, the college recruits primarily from the south, south-east and south-west sectors of the city, but more widely for some specialist provision. The college operates in a highly-competitive environment. There are seven other further education colleges and three sixth form colleges within Birmingham, and at least 15 other sector colleges within reasonable travelling distance of the city centre. There are also a large number of schools with sixth forms and a growing number of private training organisations in Birmingham. The college recruits students from a wide range of city schools and from beyond the city boundaries. Students are enrolled throughout the year and the college is open each week for six days and four evenings over a 50-week year. During 1995-96 the college had 9,216 student enrolments of whom 1,272 were aged under 19 and 7,593 were aged 19 and over. The age of 351 enrolments was unknown. Students from minority ethnic groups made up 20 per cent of all enrolments and 15 per cent of part-time enrolments. Sixty-two per cent of students are female and 38 per cent are male. Student numbers 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 246 full-time equivalent staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

3 The unemployment rate in Birmingham is 14 per cent. In the West Midlands it is 11.3 per cent. In the college catchment area the unemployment rate varies from 7.7 per cent to 32.2 per cent, with an average of 14.4 per cent. The college's catchment area is diverse. It includes privately-owned estates, several areas that demonstrate outer-urban deprivation and a number of large companies. In its provision the

college seeks to meet the different educational and training goals of the many and various client groups. In particular, the growth in recent years of evening and weekend provision, increased provision for unemployed people and the development of the Bournville Business School have been specific responses to identified needs.

4 The college's mission has been revised to meet the changing demands in further education. Within a context that makes clear the need for financial efficiency, the college through its mission, emphasises the necessity for quality assurance in all areas of work. There is a strong commitment to meet the needs of those who have suffered educational or social disadvantage. The college's five key aims are: to provide a sound financial base; to provide a broad range of education and training appropriate to varied needs; to encourage participation by individuals and groups not traditionally involved in education and training; to expand partnerships; and to develop links with external organisations in order to take advantage of the many opportunities such partnerships present. The college seeks to apply a philosophy of continuous improvement to all operational levels of the teaching and support services within the college.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

5 There is a widespread awareness of the need to contribute to the changes and developments within vocational education. The college has increased the number of courses that offer general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) to both adults and to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a variety of modes of attendance that includes full-time and part-time provision, day and evening classes, Saturday courses and a small provision through open learning. There has been significant growth in enrolments through the weekend college and on evening classes.

6 The range of courses offered by the college is extensive. There are courses for NVQs and GNVQs at advanced, intermediate and foundation levels. Many other vocational courses are provided. They include programmes leading to awards from the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) and the RSA Examinations Board (RSA). The college also provides courses for professional qualifications, for example, those of the Chartered Institute of Marketing and the Institute of Legal Executives. Twenty-nine subjects are offered at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), and 19 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects. There are six access to higher education and three access to further education courses. Higher education programmes are offered in applied science, business information technology and management studies. Students from groups under represented in further education have been recruited to, for example, the certificate of further education course for students aged 16 to 18 who have left school without any qualifications. There is a range of programmes for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Some

aspects of these programmes are not sufficiently tailored to meet the specific needs of some students. The opportunities for curriculum enrichment are not well developed.

7 Employers speak well of the college. Links are strong and the college responds effectively to the needs of local businesses through its business school. An NVQ programme for public services finances was designed in partnership with Birmingham City Council. The provision of short courses for specific groups is good. These include modules for customer services for staff from medical practices, and courses in language and key courses for a major motor manufacturer. There are several full-cost recovery programmes; those in computing involve 250 people from 16 different companies. The college regularly teaches and assesses a significant number of programmes in the work place.

8 The college works closely with a number of local schools. It is a key member of Impact, a careers education business partnership which provides the opportunity for local schools and members of the local business community to meet regularly. Schools' representatives were appreciative of the help they received from the schools' liaison officer of the college. Pupils visit the college for open days and for specially-arranged events. College staff attend careers days at the schools. Although curriculum links are not strongly developed, a local secondary school found that the industrial realism given to their home economics courses by a college catering teacher was helpful.

9 There are good links with a number of higher education institutions. These include Newman and Westhill Colleges, Staffordshire and Coventry Universities and the further education residential college of Fircroft. A compact with Staffordshire University provides progression to higher education courses in information technology. Coventry University, of which Bournville is an associate college, franchises a number of higher education courses to the college. In a meeting with inspectors, higher education representatives commented favourably on the ability of students from the college.

10 Links between the Birmingham TEC and the college are good. The TEC works closely with the college in developing the strategic plan and in preparing the college for assessment for the Investors in People award. It believes that the college meets the education and training needs of the local community well. The college has been successful in making bids to the further education development fund which is held by the TEC. Out of six possible grants for further education in Birmingham, Bournville College of Further Education was successful in obtaining two. These were for the development of key skills in NVQs in the workplace, and for work with small to medium enterprises.

11 The college has developed new off-site collaborative provision with care. The corporation approves and takes a careful interest in each off-site contract. A steering group, chaired by a member of the senior

management team, oversees the provision. Responsibilities are clearly defined and understood both within the college and by the off-site partner. The clear and effective lines of communication ensure that the college knows how well off-site partners are performing. Regular scheduled and unscheduled visits are made to monitor the provision. The quality assurance practices of partners are checked to ensure conformity with the college's standard. All premises that are used are checked by the college's health and safety officer. Students receive the same entitlements as other college students. Off-site collaborative provision represents 5 per cent of enrolments.

12 European links are good. College activities which include student and staff exchanges, educational visits and work experience are available for courses in catering, leisure and tourism, business studies, information technology, and health care, and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The countries involved are Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Malta, and the Netherlands. Catering students and staff have worked in restaurants and kitchens in Birmingham's Italian twin city of Milan for three weeks in 1995, and in 1996 in Birmingham's French partner city of Lyon.

13 The effectiveness of the college's marketing varies. In 1995-96, the college under recruited significantly in many areas. Enrolments on the evening, weekend and business school courses have shown steady growth in the autumn of 1996. The trends within the local and regional labour market are understood, and the requirements of different client groups are known. Recruitment methods are reviewed and discontinued if unsuccessful. Prospectuses and course leaflets are attractive and produced in a corporate style. Relations with the media are managed with care. Students' achievements are regularly reported in the press. Some professional courses in higher level business management are run despite moderate size, and in a few instances, very small groups.

14 The college's commitment to equal opportunities is emphasised in its mission statement. A committee of the academic board promotes and monitors equal opportunities. A regular programme of staff development relates to equal opportunities issues. Equal opportunities feature prominently in staff selection procedures. Students are aware and appreciative of the college's approach to equal opportunities. A recent popular event that further raised awareness for equal opportunities was the staging, by a professional company, of 'Kicking Out', a play about racial discrimination.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

15 Bournville College of Further Education has had to face difficult financial issues since incorporation. In 1994-95, following negotiations, the college repaid a deficit to Birmingham City Council. The failure to reach its recruitment targets in 1995-96, led inevitably to the repayment of money to the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Efficiency

savings have been achieved through two major rounds of redundancies and reductions in budgets other than staff pay budgets. The college is continuing to contain expenditure and seeking to expand its income through increased recruitment and improvements in the retention and achievements of students. Financial stringency has significantly constrained the college's ability to support its work, particularly in the provision of resources for learning.

16 The members of the corporation are clearly committed to the college and have worked hard to support managers in implementing difficult decisions. There are 18 members of whom 13 are independent, two are co-opted, one is the nominee of the TEC, one is a non-teaching member of staff and the principal. There are two vacancies for one staff and one student member. Fourteen members are male, four are female. Five are from minority ethnic groups. There are governors with expertise in industry and commerce, banking, law, schools, further and higher education. One member is a city councillor and others have strong community links in Birmingham. Ten members served before the college was incorporated. A search committee with clear terms of reference has been established to consider proposals for new members. Governors' expertise has been used to support the college, particularly in key personnel issues involving redundancy and in helping to establish clear financial priorities.

17 The corporation has seven committees: finance; audit; employment policy; remuneration; special; appeals; and a search committee. All committees are advisory to the corporation and have clear terms of reference, some of which have been revised recently. Meetings of the corporation and its committees are well attended and the decisions are clearly minuted. All members have completed a register of interests which has been extended to the senior management team. Members have many links, both formal and informal with the college, and regularly attend a variety of college functions. The corporation began to evaluate its own effectiveness in 1995 and has adopted indicators by which to measure its own performance.

18 Scrutiny by the corporation of major management decisions has become increasingly thorough. Information on enrolments and students' achievements are submitted to the corporation which also takes account of key performance indicators, for example, retention. The flow of financial information has steadily improved and governors have a realistic overview of the college's finances. They demonstrate a clear understanding of the distinction between governance and management and give priority to strategic policies while remaining willing, both formally and informally, to assist senior managers. The corporation is aware that greater financial strength, in particular the creation of surpluses sufficient to fund future development, is an important priority.

19 College strategic plans have been reviewed each year. The 1996 plan marked a significant change in emphasis. The joint strategic plan working

group, which has a membership drawn from both corporation and senior management played a major role in developing aspects of the plan. The college's new strategic plan emphasises financial stability as a key objective and, for the first time, has an operating statement which specifies how proposals will be implemented. An interim review of the progress made with these proposals has been submitted to the corporation. Another major element in the strategic plan is the stress on finding new ways of constructing courses to make them more responsive to education and training needs. The model of the college's business school, which has succeeded in creating a more entrepreneurial approach fully attuned to customer needs, is being extended to other areas, in particular health and community care, science and adult education. Although the college's approach to strategic planning has been shared with senior and middle management, detailed development plans do not exist at faculty and programme area level, with the exception of the business school. There is, however, good general awareness among the staff of the key aims of the strategic plan on which, it is clear, that they were consulted. The strategic plan has set indicative retention and completion rates for specific courses.

20 In addition to its policy on the major redundancy programmes, the corporation took a strategic decision to make increasing use of part-time agency staff, who would neither be employed nor recruited by the college. The aim is to reduce staff costs and to maintain a balanced and responsive workforce. These agency staff are undertaking a significant amount of teaching. College managers intend to increase their use. Managers have considered a number of alternative agencies and are satisfied that the procedures for staff selection of the agency they prefer are sufficiently rigorous. Individuals recommended by the agency who are not considered to be satisfactory have their assignment terminated. The college's ability to deploy its staff in a flexible way is constrained by the fact that not all full-time teachers are employed under the same contractual conditions.

21 The pursuit of efficiency gains has led to two reorganisations of the management structure in two years. The college management team comprises 12 senior managers, of whom four are senior postholders. Faculty heads manage a number of programme areas and cost centres, and carry some cross-college responsibilities. Administrative support staff are managed either by the faculty to which they are assigned or by heads of relevant cross-college services. Senior and middle management meet regularly. Faculty staff meet once a term and there are other arrangements for meetings of teams of teaching and administrative support staff. The principal committees are: college management; personnel and finance; and curriculum managers. Committees have a brief statement of purpose but no developed terms of reference. In practice, the key committee appears to be personnel and finance where initial discussion of some key strategic issues takes place. Meetings are minuted with indications of those responsible for subsequent action. Issues discussed range from the substantive to the minor. Communications

within the college are mostly good and are assisted by the regular production of a principal's newsletter. Staff reported that the management had been frank about the college's budgetary problems, had published clear information about redundancies, and had given support for the redeployment of staff.

22 The quality of management of the curriculum varies. In some areas where roles and responsibilities are not explicit, management is not always effective. For example, there is no clear focus for the management of modern foreign languages across the college, and little formal communication or joint planning between adult basic education and learning support. In other areas, such as business and health, there is a clear and well-understood management structure. In some cases, new line-management structures established during the reorganisation in the summer have not been fully worked out.

23 Although managers have worked hard to emphasise the importance of enrolling and retaining students and improving achievements, their approach has not yet succeeded. Student retention in some areas has been poor. Some curriculum reviews imply that retention is outside their control. Data provided by the college indicated that so far enrolments for 1996-97 are better than for the corresponding period last year. Information on students' destinations is significantly incomplete in many areas. Good practice in some areas, for example in business studies, should be extended across the college. Targets are set for retention, attendance and achievement but actual performance has not always been systematically reviewed. There is some evidence that efforts are beginning to be made to seek improvement to these key performance indicators but effective results have not yet been achieved.

24 The college's average level of funding in 1995-96 was £17.77 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges was £18.13. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The failure to achieve the funding target in 1995-96 sharply raised awareness of the value of setting and achieving targets. College staff who met inspectors were able to quote a significant number of targets that were relevant to their work. Budgets for equipment and consumables are delegated to senior and middle managers. Bids are submitted to the senior management team who then allocate funds in the context of the college's financial priorities. Until 1995-96, budgets had been based on bidding on a historic basis but they are now set against target units actually earned from the FEFC. Monthly reports are sent for budget holders to check. A system of unit costing, involving all senior managers, has been developed.

25 There is little direct on-line access to the computerised management information system. Most middle managers have to rely on printed reports. They cannot directly access the central system which reduces their capacity to use management information to develop and evaluate alternative strategies. Inspectors found some evidence of dissatisfaction with the

management information system in, for example, the business area and in some areas of adult education. In other areas, there was sometimes a failure to appreciate ways in which good management information can be used. The quality of the management information system has much improved recently and information can increasingly be supplied with a degree of accuracy which commands staff confidence. The introduction of faculty administrators has been helpful in resolving inconsistencies in management information.

26 The academic board has oversight of the academic work of the college. It reports to the principal and college management team on standards, planning, co-ordination and development. It is an effective working body, well supported by the work of its two subcommittees for equal opportunities and the library. There are clear policies in the college for equal opportunities, as well as for health and safety and the environment. The equal opportunities committee meets twice a term. There are policies and codes of practice for disability, gender and race. The disability code of practice has recently been rewritten as a disability statement in line with legal requirements. The health and safety committee, which reports to senior management, is effective. Its procedures are designed to ensure that the college provides a healthy and safe working environment. Risk assessments are carried out and there is regular communication with the health and safety executive.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

27 Advice and guidance before enrolment is effective. Practice includes visits to schools and careers conventions, advertising in the local press and public libraries, open evenings and the targeted distribution of leaflets. Course information leaflets are detailed, informative and attractively presented. No information is provided in community languages. For a minority of courses information was sparse. Enrolment is for the most part efficiently organised, and advice and guidance is generally effective and impartial. The careers adviser and careers staff are available to give advice during the process. Advice on finance, hardship and accommodation is also available to students. The college makes some provision for students with children of pre-school age. Recent changes to childcare provision have included the closure of the college nursery and the establishment of a childcare fund to provide assistance to students with children of pre-school age who wish to enrol on programmes at the college.

28 Induction programmes for courses were carefully structured and assessed. They were mainly effective. Induction is co-ordinated by a senior manager and organised in curriculum programme areas, except for students on GNVQ and GCE A level courses whose induction is organised across the college. Course content and course requirements were clearly explained to students. The library induction was clear and well planned. Most students expressed satisfaction with the induction process, although

some second-year students complained of a lack of planning and organisation.

29 Systems to identify the need for learning support which may be required by full-time students on entry to college are not fully effective. Students taking the GNVQ and certificate in further education are screened through the study centre for literacy, numeracy and information technology skills. Progress is monitored systematically. For adult students, initial assessment of language and numeracy skills is used effectively to ensure that programmes match students' abilities. Access students are monitored on their courses by tutors and support is provided in an access workshop. For other full-time students on GCE A level and GCSE courses, the subject tutors and personal tutors have the responsibility to identify those in need of support for literary and numeracy. Students are referred to the learning centre for GCE A level students. Support for students is then available in the open learning centre. It is unclear, however, to what extent tutors identify the need for support. The current referral system is of very recent origin and has yet to be firmly established in practice.

30 Tutorial support is well managed and effective. All students are allocated a personal or course tutor who is responsible for providing advice, guidance and support. Tutorial time is identified within the college timetable. For full-time, and some part-time students, a structured tutorial programme is provided. Tutorials include sessions on study skills, guidance on application to higher education and reviews of students' progress. Students are encouraged to maintain records of achievement which are accredited by the West Midlands Group for the Accreditation of Records of Achievement. Written reports on progress are provided on a regular basis for full-time and part-time day students. Unsatisfactory rates of retention in previous years have led to a more systematic monitoring of attendance by tutors. There is a system to deal with cases of persistent absentees in which the early involvement of parents of younger students is a central feature. Students wishing to change courses initially contact their personal tutor. Guidance and counselling interviews enable students to discuss the options available and the appropriateness of the proposed transfer. Changes are recorded on register and personal file and on the management information system. The process is clear and well understood by students.

31 The college has a qualified careers adviser who manages the information and advice centre and is available to all students to provide careers guidance. Additional advice is also available from staff of the Birmingham Careers Service partnership who attend the college twice weekly to provide group and individual guidance. A good range of careers information is provided on employment and on higher education in the information and advice centre. Students have access to the college counselling service for assistance with personal problems and advice on a range of welfare issues. Staff are professionally qualified. The service is currently staffed by one full-time and one part-time counsellor.

Appropriate use is made of outside agencies for additional help. Students make good use of the counselling service which is currently overstretched in relation to the demands which are made on it.

32 The college enjoys the confidence and support of parents. Parents appreciate the level of support offered to students, the range of courses on offer and the accessibility of staff at all levels. The warmth of parental support was evident during the inspection when a group of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities performed a version of Cinderella to a full house of parents and friends.

33 The college handbook includes the students' charter and outlines the students' complaints procedure. A section headed 'what the college expects from you' advises students of their responsibilities and of the level of commitment expected from them. Broader guidance on rights and responsibilities is provided through the tutorial programme and, on an individual basis, by the counselling service. There are opportunities for religious worship in the Christian and Muslim prayer rooms. The college's procedures for student discipline and general security achieve a balance between the need for order and the provision of a pleasant, adult learning environment.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

34 Inspectors observed 173 lessons. Of these, 60 per cent had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. In 6 per cent of lessons the weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The average attendance in the lessons inspected was 80 per cent. The average attendance at the specialist inspection in March 1996 was 66 per cent and for the specialist inspection in October 1996 and the induction inspection it was 84 per cent. An average of 11 students was present in each class. Fifty-seven per cent of the classes observed had 10 or fewer students. The following table shows the grades awarded to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		4	13	16	1	0	34
GCSE		1	4	7	6	0	18
GNVQ		3	10	9	2	0	24
NVQ		11	11	4	0	0	26
Other vocational		1	8	6	2	0	17
Access to further and higher education		2	3	2	0	0	7
Basic education		5	9	5	0	0	19
Other		7	11	10	0	0	28
Total		34	69	59	11	0	173

35 Much of the teaching was good. Many lessons were carefully prepared. The majority of lessons effectively developed students' knowledge and skills. Relationships between staff and students were positive. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities received good support in most areas. Teachers did not always fully meet the different learning needs of students. Teaching and learning aids were not always used effectively. In some lessons, teachers did not check that students were learning and teaching methods sometimes lacked variety and were inappropriate. Most students on vocational courses undertake well-organised programmes of work placements, although not all vocational students have the opportunity to engage in work experience.

36 Practical lessons in computing were good despite the limitations caused by the slowness of some machines and the age of some software. Relations between staff and students were cordial. Staff encouraged and maintained the interest of most students. They provided effective support for students in lessons. The encouragement of students to use specialist technical language was a strong feature. In some theory lessons, the teaching approach was inappropriate and, as a result, teachers did not engage the attention of students. No account was taken of different abilities in some lessons. Some students' assignment work was carefully marked and included helpful comments on how the work might be improved. Some vocational students' work contained poor grammar and spelling. Poor punctuality went unquestioned in a few sessions.

37 In mathematics, lesson plans were thorough. Classroom activities had a clear purpose. In numeracy lessons, staff working relationships with students were a particular strength. There was also good use of sign language support workers to help profoundly deaf and hearing impaired students. Teachers did not always encourage their students to take an active part in sessions, did not often challenge their understanding nor test their knowledge with questions. Marking of classwork and

assignments was careful and comments were supportive. In some lessons teaching was impeded by the small size and shape of temporary accommodation and the unsuitable arrangement of furniture.

38 The teaching of technical skills in floristry and horticulture was of a high standard. NVQ criteria were used well as the basis for programmes of learning. Theory sessions related well to practical sessions and provided appropriate knowledge. Floristry lessons gained from the competent use of current trade practices. Some teachers rarely checked if learning had taken place. The quality of handouts was variable and occasionally unsuitable. Some lessons lacked organisation and, in others, question and answer sessions were not well used to develop students' understanding.

39 The teaching of business administration was mostly effective and some lessons were of a particularly high standard. Teaching programmes were coherent and comprehensive. The aims and objectives for lessons were clearly introduced by teachers. The work set for students strengthened their skills and understanding. Record keeping and action planning were of a high standard. There were clear and agreed dates for the completion and the return of marked work. A number of lesson plans suffered from a shortage of detail and some staff did not complete plans. Handouts were of variable quality; some were poorly produced and a number contained spelling mistakes. Students' course files were not regularly checked for their accuracy and organisation.

40 Preparation of lessons in business management and professional studies was thorough. Teachers were generally enthusiastic and used a variety of teaching methods. They also helped their students to value and learn from their own experiences. Lesson materials were generally of high quality and most were used effectively by teachers to develop students' ideas. There was clear explanation of tasks. Practical exercises often helped to reinforce learning. Most lessons engaged and sustained the interest of students. Teachers were sensitive to the needs of adult students. In a minority of lessons, staff talked rapidly and at length with little indication of whether notes needed to be taken. This led to students being passive and bored. In some lessons, learning aids were not used.

41 A suitable range of teaching methods was used in health, social care and applied social work. Group work was particularly successful and lessons that employed team teaching were a strength. Classroom management was effective. There was careful attention to students' individual requirements and their knowledge and understanding developed well. However, many lesson plans were weak. Staff understanding of the use of learning objectives was poor. Few checks were made on students' progress. There was no coherent marking policy for marking students' work. The usefulness of written comments by teachers on students' work varied.

42 All English classes had lesson plans. Schemes of work were available for all courses, although they varied in quality. In the better lessons there

was effective debate between staff and students and among students. A good feature was the critical analysis of teaching sessions in the staff record and planning book. There are clear guidelines for the assessment of students' work which enable teachers to have a shared view of standards when marking work. Staff gave useful feedback to students on their written work. There was a lack of variety in teaching methods. Little group work or use of audio-visual aids were observed. Poorer lessons were not well organised and did not effectively meet the learning needs of students. A significant weakness, especially in this subject, was that there were some spelling errors in teachers' boardwork and in handouts. The needs of students of differing abilities were not met well.

43 All courses in modern languages had schemes of work and each class had a lesson plan, although some lacked detail. Most teachers encouraged students to speak the foreign language that they were studying. In the better lessons, teachers made particularly extensive and sensitive use of the foreign language being studied and regularly checked students' understanding. Weaker lessons suffered from a lack of pace in the work, too much reliance upon the teacher and textbooks and little use of the language being learned. Teachers did not always take into account the wide range of students' abilities in some groups. Some teachers were not sensitive to the needs of adult learners. There was little evidence of work that teachers had assessed; in the small amount that was seen some serious errors had not been corrected.

44 Teaching schemes for psychology were detailed. There was thorough coverage of the syllabus. For GCSE and GCE A level courses, subject material was chosen carefully to reinforce major topics and illustrate key statistical and research methods. Careful planning of project work and assignments took place, although students often missed deadlines. Lesson plans were variable. The marking of students' written work also varied in its usefulness. Most teaching of sociology was good. Teaching methods and learning activities were mainly effective. Lessons generally had a clear structure. There was effective use of teaching aids though the presentation of overhead projections and some handouts were poor. Most teaching was set in context and linked to previous and forthcoming lessons. Question and answer sessions were effective. The written feedback and annotation provided by teachers on students' work were useful and supportive. Schemes of work were underdeveloped and some lesson plans were inadequate. In a few lessons, teachers needed to ensure that all students fully understood the sociological concepts being used. Tutors for teacher training were enthusiastic and made good use of a variety of teaching methods. High-quality teaching aids and materials were skilfully used. Group work was handled well. Most lessons were challenging. Marking of students' work was thorough and constructive. However, in a few lessons, the tasks set were too easy and the work was conducted at too slow a pace.

45 The lessons for basic education students and ESOL students were effective. Teachers regularly discussed students' progress with them. In literacy and numeracy, students worked at an appropriate pace and received useful one-to-one teaching and support. Good use was made of materials such as railway timetables and driving handbooks to give reality to the work. There was little work in pairs or groups. In ESOL, teachers used a variety of methods but the work was not always appropriate for students' needs.

46 Most teaching for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was effective. There was particularly useful support and teaching for students who are hearing impaired or deaf. Teachers generally checked on a regular basis to see if learning had taken place. Staff were usually responsive and aware of individual requirements. Verbal communications, sign language and lip-reading were used effectively. Clear records were kept of students' progress. Links between teachers and support staff were constructive. The use of information technology and media to support classroom activities was good, particularly with students who are blind or have a visual impairment. Some teachers had unrealistic expectations of students' ability and behaviour. Some support staff provided students with too much assistance to encourage their development of independence. The help provided for some students to develop their basic skills was poor. Students were not encouraged to evaluate their own work.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

47 Over 7,000 students at the college completed their courses in the 1995-96 academic year. Most students at Bournville College of Further Education are enrolled on accredited professional, vocational and pre-vocational programmes which are not included in national performance tables. Seventy-seven per cent of students completing these courses in 1996 were successful. However, only 31 per cent of students who had enrolled in 1994-95 obtained their qualifications in the minimum expected time. The achievements of only 200 students are included in national performance tables. Employer-sponsored courses have good retention and pass rates. Students of floristry gained second prize in the National Interflora competition. Students in business and management studies gained notable prizes awarded externally. These included the 1995-96 Chartered Institute of Management Accountants and the Association of British Insurers' first prize for the design of a brochure on financial services available to 16 to 19 year olds. The college has a continuing problem with the number of students who register for courses but do not attend.

48 Eighty per cent of the 121 students in their final year of study on advanced vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's (DfEE's) 1996 performance tables were successful. This places the college among the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. Thirty-seven per cent of the 116 students on intermediate vocational courses were successful. This

places the college in the bottom 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. Students taking GCE A level account for 8 per cent of the course enrolments. Many are aged 19 and over. The 108 students aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1995 scored, on average, 2.9 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). Those entered in 1996 scored 2.5 points per entry. This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure based on the performance tables published by the DfEE. The college has no procedures for analysing the value added to students' achievements by comparing their actual performance at GCE A level with their predicted performance based on GCSE achievement.

49 Students entering vocational computing courses generally attained appropriate standards. Examination results for most of these courses were satisfactory. The pass rate in GCE A level computing has been poor for over three years and well below the national average for the sector. There were poor examination results for GCSE. Students of mathematics had a clear understanding of the principles and methods that they had been taught; their assignments and notebooks were neatly presented with well-drawn graphs. GCE A level examination results in mathematics have been considerably below the national average for the past four years. Passes at grades A to E for GCE A level mathematics subjects fell from 57.7 per cent in 1995 to 40.7 per cent in 1996, significantly below national averages in both years. The proportion of students achieving grades A to C in GCSE mathematics improved slightly in 1996 but was well below the national average. Attendance and retention rates are low.

50 Most students of floristry and horticulture generally attained good standards in their practical work. The practical work which they undertook for work experience was also good and some was outstanding. Students planned and executed display work for conferences, exhibitions and church decorations. The practical standard achieved by NVQ level 3 students was particularly good. Some good examination results were achieved. Students who completed their courses were generally successful in achieving NVQs. In 1994-95, there was a 100 per cent pass rate for the NVQ level 2 in horticulture. In 1996, 61 per cent of floristry students who completed their course went into employment or stayed in further education. Retention is poor on some courses.

51 Students in business studies worked effectively in groups and developed appropriate levels of knowledge and skill. Students' achievements in external awards were good. The 1996 results for some GNVQ business courses were a substantial improvement over those of the previous year. Students did not always achieve some GNVQ awards in the expected time. Examination successes and retention in the foundation GNVQ course were good. Students achieved a high standard of presentation in their work. Assessed work was generally at an appropriate

standard. Reports from external verifiers were positive. Mature NVQ students taking management courses developed confidence in gathering evidence for their portfolios. The portfolios examined were carefully constructed and thoroughly documented. Some pass rates for full qualifications were consistently high and, in others, the pass rates in individual elements were often above national averages. Retention rates for 1995-96 were generally high and were exemplary on the business school and weekend programmes. In some areas, the number of students achieving qualifications at different stages of courses was low.

52 Students in health care were well motivated. They developed their ability to take part in discussions and worked together in groups well. They were able to work on their own effectively and make good use of information technology. Most students demonstrated clear writing skills and achieved presentations of high quality in their assignment work. Pass rates of 90 per cent were attained in most courses. Several courses had retention rates of 100 per cent. Pass rates on intermediate GNVQ health and social care courses were below average.

53 Students' achievements in English were below national averages, although there was a sharp improvement in GCSE in 1996 over previous years. Mature students studying in evening classes have achieved better results than daytime students. GCE A level passes in English have been below national averages for the last two years; relatively few students obtained passes at grades A to C. The proportion of GCSE passes in English at grades A to C has been generally at and sometimes better than national averages for the further education sector. Students of modern foreign languages were well motivated, and enjoyed their studies. They developed their ability to take an active part in the lessons and some achieved high levels of oral fluency. Most students above beginners' level had good comprehension of the spoken language, though some students had a poor knowledge of grammar. The folders of most students showed poor organisational skills. There were no opportunities for language students to acquire information technology skills for language learning. Evening students gained a 100 per cent pass rate and good grades for GCE A level French in 1995. A pass rate of 100 per cent was also achieved by students aged 19 and over for GCE A level French in 1996. Pass rates in GCE A level Spanish were below the national averages for the sector in 1994 and 1995. The proportion of students who achieved grades A to C in GCSE French in the past two years has been above the national average. An improvement was made in 1996 in the pass rate for GCSE Italian and Spanish which had previously achieved poor results for two years. Results for GCSE and GCE A level in Urdu have been consistently poor and below the national average for the sector. However, they improved in 1996 from a pass rate for GCSE in 1995 of 21 per cent to 25 per cent in 1996. There were poor retention rates for all GCSE language classes, except French, during 1995. Retention rates on some courses were low and many adult students did not choose to enter for the examinations.

54 Students on the C&G courses for the adult teaching certificate are able to comment perceptively on educational issues. They participate purposefully in group work and articulate their personal views in question and answer activities. They develop sound analytical skills and their assignments are well presented. The challenging nature of the coursework, particularly at the higher stage, presents some students with difficulties. A few students arrive significantly late for some sessions. Retention rates and successful completion rates on both courses are good. Most students on the sociology courses show enthusiasm for their studies and some are particularly well motivated. Students work effectively, and are able to take responsibility for their own learning. Their performance in internal assessments and external examinations is generally satisfactory but attainment for GCSE varies and retention rates on some GCSE programmes are unsatisfactory. Pass rates, grades A to E, in GCE A level sociology are just above the national average for general further education colleges and pass rates at grades C and above are significantly better. Sociology students have insufficient opportunity to develop information technology skills. Students of psychology express positive views about their studies. These students develop good inter-personal skills and work well together. They achieve a good understanding of the subject and have a lively questioning approach to their studies. Students attain appropriate standards in their coursework for GCSE and at GCE A level. Information technology is used well in coursework. There is a strong commitment to foundation level information technology courses. Some assignment work on the access course is weak. Some class sizes are too small. Retention rates are low on all programmes in this area of work. Attendance rates, which were as low as 57 per cent, are unsatisfactory. In 1996, GCE A level results improved; pass rates grades A to E and grades A to C were both above the national average for general further education colleges. Results at GCSE are below the national average. The number of open learning students who enter the examination is low. Retention rates of 57 per cent for GCSE and GCE A level are poor.

55 The number of students gaining accreditation for basic education courses has increased. The college has been awarded two quality marks by the Basic Skills Agency. Students in this area developed an appropriate range and level of skills in literacy, numeracy or English language. There were some good examination results in ESOL. Students' confidence was strengthened by success in gaining the RSA text processing award. Students' achievements on the New Way access courses were good. Students appeared to enjoy their studies and worked purposefully. Significant numbers of students progressed to more advanced courses and into employment. Retention rates were good. Some results on basic education programmes were poor and below the national average. There are limited opportunities for students to develop information technology skills. In ESOL no targets were set for achievement of accreditation by students.

56 Good data are available about the achievements of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Out of 103 students enrolled on a wide range of courses, 97 completed their studies. Accreditation is achieved through a range of national awarding bodies and also through internal college moderation. Students expressed pleasure and satisfaction with their college courses. Students with hearing impairment said that their support was effective and helped them to make progress. Most students gained in confidence and contributed well to sessions, using a variety of communication strategies. Students take part in a development programme of core skills and acquire appropriate knowledge and understanding. There are clear progression routes through learning support programmes for school-leavers and adults. Particular arrangements are made with examination boards to ensure that students are not disadvantaged. There is not yet a procedure for effective feedback from all general teaching staff on the effectiveness of the support in relation to the students' achievements. Students do not retain much specific evidence of their achievements throughout the course.

57 The college has destination records for 55 per cent of the 7,096 students who completed their courses in 1996. Of these, approximately 5 per cent went into higher education, 3 per cent to employment, 48 per cent continued in employment, 37 per cent continued in further education and 7 per cent recorded alternative destinations. Sixty-one per cent of those who applied for higher education places in 1996 were successful compared with 58 per cent in the previous year.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

58 The college mission statement contains a strong commitment to quality. The college has a comprehensive and well-documented quality assurance strategy. The principles which underpin the strategy provide a clear basis for identifying operational standards. One of the objectives of the college's strategic plan is to seek continuous improvement in quality. As part of this process, the college has identified the need to place greater emphasis on target setting, monitoring and the use of performance indicators within the quality assurance strategy.

59 Responsibility for quality assurance lies with the vice-principal who is assisted by a member of the senior management team. Faculty heads and middle managers also have responsibility for matters of quality and for the implementation of targets for quality assurance. Boards of study provide the main forum for monitoring quality at faculty level. Their membership is drawn from the college's senior and middle management. Meetings are held on a monthly basis and are beginning to make increasing use of quantitative data as a means of setting and monitoring targets. In addition, the college's academic board has a strong focus on course and service review. This provides a useful means of sharing good practice across the college and of identifying areas for improvement. As a further means of disseminating its quality assurance strategy, the college produces a regular and informative bulletin entitled 'Quality Matters'.

60 The use of course handbooks that define quality and annual course reviews provide a means of establishing the practice of quality assurance at course team level. The handbooks give course teams a context for their work in monitoring and reviewing the quality of provision. Many of the handbooks are well presented, give a clear oversight of course procedures and characteristics, and are used by course teams as working documents. Handbooks in some areas are poorly organised and lack detail. The annual course review process is firmly established but its effectiveness as a means of quality control varies. Although each course team is expected to follow a standard format in compiling its handbook and carrying out its end-of-course reviews, in practice, there is considerable variation in the format used and some teams omit the required documentation which is set out in the quality assurance strategy. In general, the reviews are insufficiently evaluative and critical in their approach. Not enough emphasis is given to the analysis of retention patterns nor to a thorough and effective review of the achievements and destinations of students. No attempt has been made to calculate the value added to students' achievements by the college.

61 The methods used to gather information on students' perceptions of their courses vary in quality and effectiveness. While there are some good examples of carefully designed and systematic procedures, the reviews by many course teams reveal an over reliance on informal and unsystematic forms of feedback. There is inconsistency in the practice of appointing student representatives by course teams. Where representatives have been identified, they do not always attend meetings. Although there has been some drawing together of data which were obtained from questionnaire surveys of students' experiences of induction, there has been little attempt at detailed analysis.

62 The college has begun to introduce a system of internal quality audit. A pilot audit considered the effectiveness of pre-entry guidance. A review of a survey of students' views on this has also taken place. Findings were reported to the academic board. A particularly effective aspect of the audit process is the well-documented and genuinely critical moderation of course handbooks on quality assurance. The moderation process is detailed and systematic, and the resulting reports make valid and constructive criticisms. The college has identified the need to develop a co-ordinated, cross-college approach to internal verification. A chief internal verifier has recently been appointed.

63 The students' charter forms part of the student handbook. The style and language used in the charter is complex. The charter is introduced to all students as part of the induction process. While the charter identifies a wide range of student entitlements, these are not written in the form of measurable targets. A college charter group was established in 1994 but progress in reviewing the use and effectiveness of the charter has been slow.

64 The college's approach to staff development has been the subject of recent review following significant changes and reductions in the full-time staffing establishment. A greater emphasis is being placed on institutionally led staff development which is closely related to the college's strategic plan. As part of this process, a series of three college-wide sessions was held in the autumn term 1996. All full-time and key part-time college staff were expected to attend. There is a need for a more effective system for reviewing and monitoring staff development and for matching individual staff-development needs with those of the strategic plan. There has been little staff development that is related to the curriculum in some programme areas.

65 An appraisal system for all full-time staff has been established. Appraisals are generally well documented and contain clear action plans. The fact that 24 full-time teaching staff were recorded as having not yet entered the appraisal system is a significant weakness, particularly as the appraisal interview forms a key mechanism for identifying staff-development requirements at an individual level. The college's concern to maintain confidentiality has restricted the effective dissemination of individual staff-development needs at faculty level. In addition to its formal appraisal process, the college operates a system of classroom observation of its part-time teaching staff. This includes the observation of agency staff by programme area heads in the first few weeks of their assignment. There was evidence that, in some areas, this had not been done in the 1995-96 academic year. There is an induction process for all new members of staff. Responsibility for induction lies with line managers. New staff are provided with a checklist to ensure that key aspects have been covered. The staff handbook is regularly updated. In 1994, the college made a commitment to work towards the Investors in People award. Progress has been delayed by changes in staff and in managerial responsibilities but a submission for assessment is expected to be made in January 1997.

66 The college has produced a self-assessment report based upon the headings set out in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Each section has been graded using the FEFC's five-point grading scheme and includes a list of strengths and weaknesses. The report lacks rigour. The college does not put forward evidence to support its judgements and no action plans linked to improvement have been identified. The judgements were less critical than those made by inspectors and omitted some significant weaknesses.

RESOURCES

Staffing

67 There are clear procedures for the recruitment and appointment of staff. Job descriptions are standardised and updated and exist for most staff posts. There are clear management guidelines to determine the duties of full-time staff and of staff who are contracted to work only in term time.

There has been no college-wide audit of the skills of current staff. The core teaching and support staff employed by the college has been reduced by 45 teaching posts and 25 support posts in the last two years. Two restructuring plans in successive years have contributed to this reduction and 43 teachers and 19 support staff have left through voluntary retirement or redundancy. Four support staff have been redeployed. The college management team has been reduced by two. Eighty per cent of full-time teachers are now on flexible contracts of employment.

68 Staff are committed to their work; they are enthusiastic and work well together. In 1995-96, six of the 114 college teaching staff were appointed on fractional contracts. The college employed over 200 staff on part-time contracts, the equivalent of approximately 35 full-time posts. Most part-time staff employed by the college are well qualified and have appropriate commercial experience and relevant professional qualifications; a few part-time teaching staff showed weaknesses in teaching techniques and session planning. In addition, over 160 agency teachers were employed for 11,100 hours. Some agency staff bring the benefit of recent commercial or industrial experience. Twenty per cent of the agency staff hours were used in ESOL and modern foreign language classes. Only half of the agency staff used in this area were teacher trained.

69 Teachers employed by the college on full-time and part-time contracts are well qualified. Seventy-eight per cent of the teachers have a degree or equivalent qualification and a further 18 per cent hold a professional qualification. Several staff have an additional postgraduate qualification. A high number of staff, 84 per cent, hold a teaching qualification. Twenty-seven staff have the training and development lead body assessor and internal verifier awards and four staff hold the award for the accreditation of students' prior learning. Many more staff have at least one of these awards. There are some areas where there are no staff with the award for accrediting students' prior learning. There have been difficulties in finding qualified staff in law and accounting. The number of full-time qualified staff in English and psychology is low. This creates problems in the sharing of good practice and is detrimental to the students since some part-time staff could benefit from more support and advice to improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

70 Specialist library, finance, counselling, and personnel staff are professionally qualified. A significant number of teaching staff possess additional qualifications specifically related to teaching students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Support staff have sign language qualifications. A few specialist adult basic education staff do not have suitable teaching qualifications, and no staff have formal qualifications in assessing dyslexia. Technical, administrative and clerical staff are well qualified and experienced. Thirteen per cent hold a degree or relevant qualification. Eighty per cent of the support staff have qualifications relevant to the post which they hold. The quality of support that they provide is high and is valued by the teachers. In some areas, there is a lack of sufficient administrative and technical support.

71 Six per cent of the full-time teaching staff, 10 per cent of the part-time teaching staff, and 14 per cent of the support staff are from minority ethnic groups. This is low in relation to the student population, of which nearly 20 per cent comes from minority ethnic groups. There are slightly more female teachers than male, and 69 per cent of the support staff are women. Five of the 12 senior managers are women.

Equipment/learning resources

72 The strategic plan for meeting equipment needs is not fully developed. The college has clear systems in place for capital and revenue bids for equipment, which help to establish priorities for expenditure. The amount of equipment to support curriculum areas varies. A positive feature is the provision of five separate workshops for learning. In almost all cases there is enough basic equipment, blackboards and whiteboards and overhead projectors and screens. There is good audio-visual and reprographic support. Workrooms, for example, for floristry, are well equipped. There is effective provision of specialist equipment for students with learning difficulties, for example, tables with adjustable heights for computers and low vision aids. Specialist equipment is mostly well used, though some instances of poor use by teachers were seen. Handouts produced by course teams for students were variable in quality; in sociology they were poorly presented. In psychology, part-time staff made little use of centrally-stored materials which reduced opportunities for students to learn. At the time of the specialist inspection, the horticultural construction unit had no electrical power or water connected on site which caused delays in practical sessions. In computing courses, poor printers, and the lack of sufficient machines in working order, sometimes hampered students' learning. A significant weakness is the lack of adequate facilities to support language teaching.

73 The college library has been underfunded in the past. The budget was more than doubled to £50,000 for 1996-97. The overall level of bookstock is below library association guidelines and a number of specific shortfalls were identified during the specialist inspection, some of which have now been improved. Students have access to a computerised catalogue. The library is a reasonable working environment, but the college has recognised that, at present, it is too small to cope with increasing demands. There is an adequate number of study places in the college as a whole. The library's opening hours are reasonable and include Saturdays and holidays. Some evening students would like a later closing time; opening hours on Monday evenings have now been extended. Staffing is sufficient and the team is headed by appropriately-qualified librarians. There is effective liaison between library staff and teachers in curriculum areas. The college is at a very early stage in the introduction of compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases to the library; there is, as yet, just one workstation and 16 titles. The CD-ROM server did not function for a considerable time, until its recent repair. Opportunities for

students to view videos in the library have only just been made available. All programme areas have access to their own video equipment.

74 There is insufficient provision for information technology. The total number of computers of industrial standard available to the 2,846 full-time equivalent students produces a ratio of 14.6:1. These computers are networked. Two machines can access the Internet. Opportunities for students to have access to computers at times of their own choosing are few and facilities are limited. There is no clear strategy for ensuring that this kind of open access to computers meets students' needs. There is no effective means of measuring students' use of computers or of calculating the demand for access to them. Prime provision is in the computer learning area which has recently been extended. Although there are clear notices showing which rooms have workstations free, none of the computers were available for open access in the first six weeks of an academic year. Published guidelines indicate that no help is available from teachers to students who are using computers in rooms when formal teaching is taking place. A number of weaknesses in the provision of information technology were identified during the inspection of programme areas. For example, in adult basic education, there are insufficient machines to enable core computing skills to be developed.

Accommodation

75 The college occupies a single site located in an attractive landscape, including a wildlife pond, and well-kept landscaped gardens. There are seven blocks of buildings all opened in the early 1960s. In addition, 10 good-quality mobile units were installed in 1995, replacing off-site provision. The main reception area, and the student information and advice centre conveniently located nearby, are attractive and welcoming. The college buildings have been well maintained both externally and internally. There is a systematic maintenance programme. The college, for example, is currently engaged in a major rewiring programme, and has renewed or repaired its flat roofs. The college is kept clean and tidy and is free from graffiti. Close attention has been paid to the control of energy and utility costs. The college has tried to increase car parking. Currently, it is not sufficient for students. There is no signposting to the college from nearby roads. Signposting within the college is not always sufficiently clear; budgetary provision has been made to improve this.

76 Although the college carries out room utilisation surveys frequently, there is scope for improved matching of class sizes to classrooms. Day-to-day room monitoring systems could also be improved. The college has identified the need to create a new science and technology area through the refurbishment of existing accommodation. This, in turn, will release more teaching accommodation both to replace the mobile units and to cater for the planned growth in student numbers.

77 The size, layout and furnishing of accommodation are mostly suitable for the courses and programmes of study. Many curriculum rooms are

appropriately grouped together with many adjacent staff rooms. The college has a major asset in the Bournville business school, which has been externally sponsored by industry, and which is used by a range of student groups. The Jubilee Gardens within the college also provide an attractive amenity area for staff and students and a focus for horticultural courses. The college has an attractive suite for access to higher education courses. Inspectors identified a number of weaknesses in the college's accommodation. Some classrooms, for example in languages, were too small for the size of classes; inappropriate use was made of a large lecture theatre for a sociology class; and in some computing classes the chairs available for students were unsuitable. Corridor displays are enhanced by works of art given by staff but in classrooms they vary in quality. There are stimulating displays of high quality in floristry, but in other areas, for example in the mobile units, there are limited attempts to make a visual impact. A number of improvements have been made recently. All classrooms now have noticeboards. Access to all buildings for students with restricted mobility is mostly good, with the exception of the upper floors of one block and some of the mobile units. The college has provided toilets for students with disabilities, but the doors are narrow. The college has a range of recreational facilities that include a common room for mature students, a sports hall and a playing field. Students have access to a horticultural centre at Kings Heath.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

78 The main strengths of the college are:

- an extensive range of courses well adapted to meet the needs of its students
- productive links with external organisations, including higher education and the TEC
- the interest in and support for the work of the college demonstrated by corporation members
- the joint approach of the corporation and senior management to strategic planning
- the effective and impartial advice and guidance offered to students
- good practice in the tutorial system, in learning support for adults and in careers advice
- the success of the Bournville Business School
- the good teaching in many areas
- the good retention and pass rates in employer-sponsored courses
- the success rates for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- the comprehensive quality assurance strategy and commitment to the review of quality assurance procedures

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- the enthusiastic and generally well-qualified staff
 - the good equipment provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
 - the well-maintained accommodation and the quality of the external surroundings.

79 If it is to build on these strengths the college should:

- improve its marketing
- continue the strategy to strengthen its financial position, including reaching targets for recruitment
- improve substantially the access to management information systems
- improve systems to identify students in need of learning support
- increase the staffing of the counselling service
- improve the use of teaching and learning aids
- improve the low retention, achievement and attendance rates
- increase the opportunities for some students to develop information technology skills
- improve the rigour, consistency and effectiveness in the implementation of quality assurance systems
- complete appraisal cycles and review staff-development programmes
- develop more rigorous self-assessment
- complete the skills audit of the current staff
- continue the improvement of library resources
- greatly increase the number of and access to computer workstations.

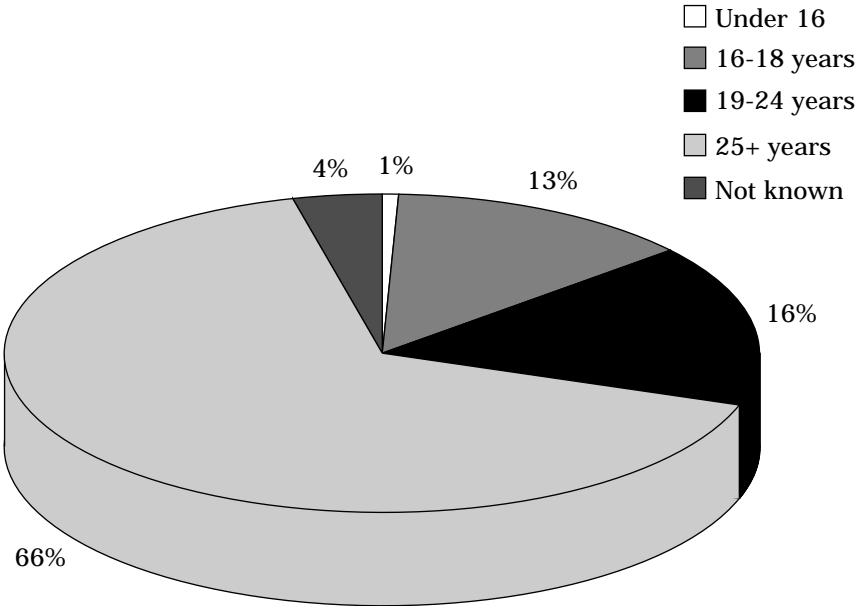
FIGURES

1	Student numbers by age (as at July 1996)
2	Student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)
3	Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1996)
4	Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1996)
5	Income (for 12 months to July 1996)
6	Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

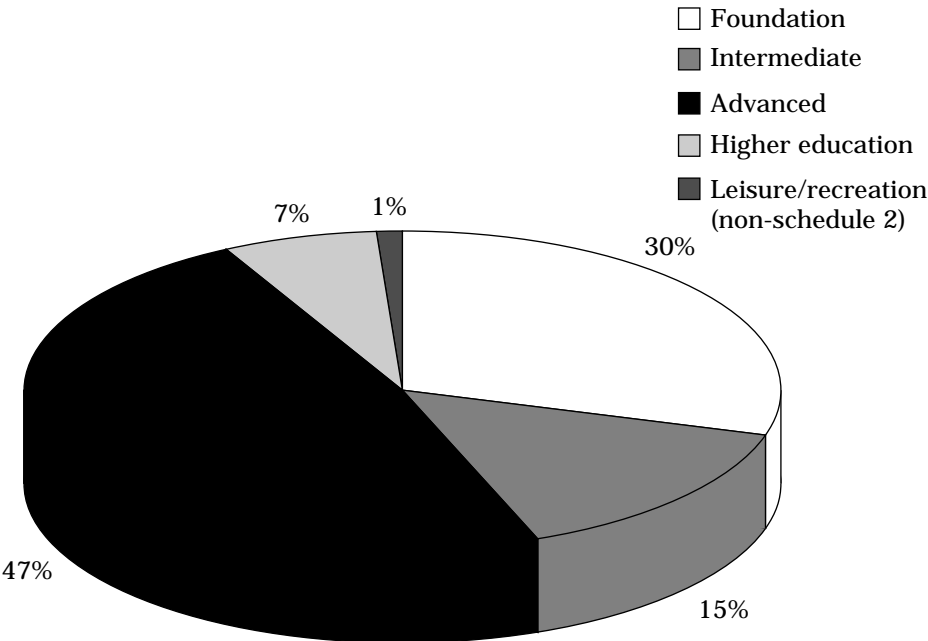
Bournville College of Further Education: percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 9,216

Figure 2

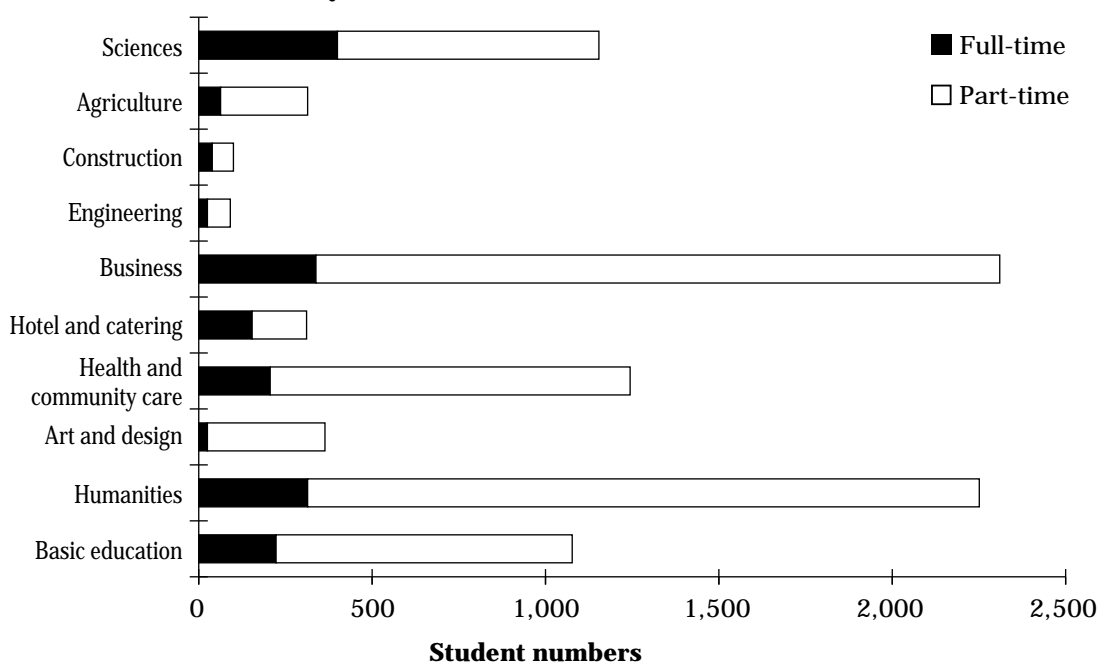
Bournville College of Further Education: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 9,216

Figure 3

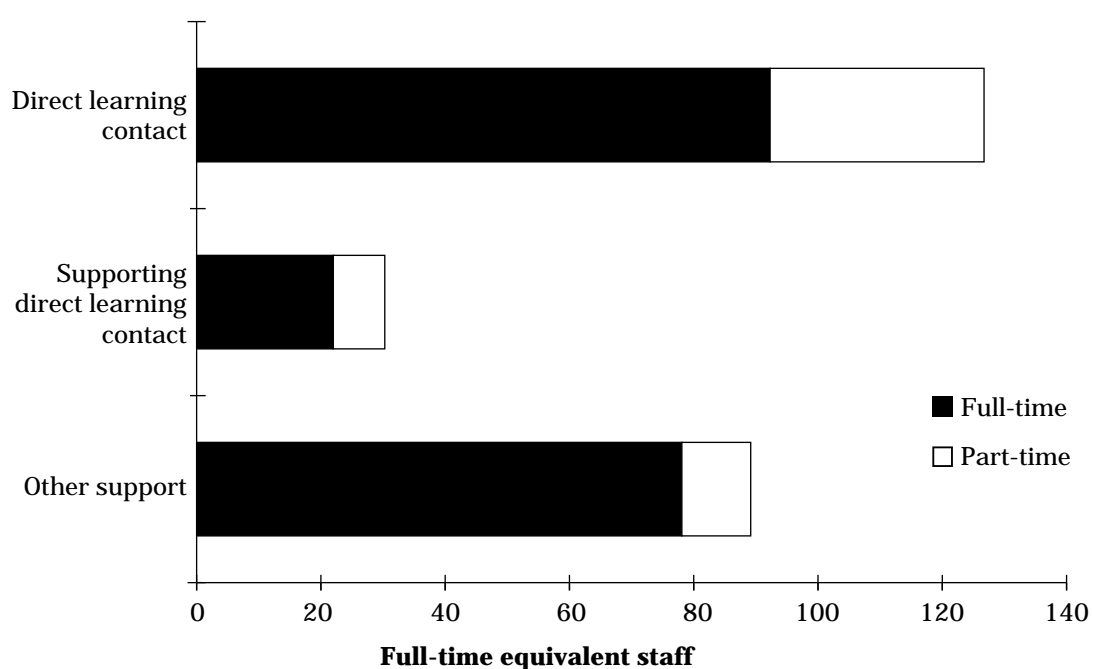
Bournville College of Further Education: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1996)



Student numbers: 9,216

Figure 4

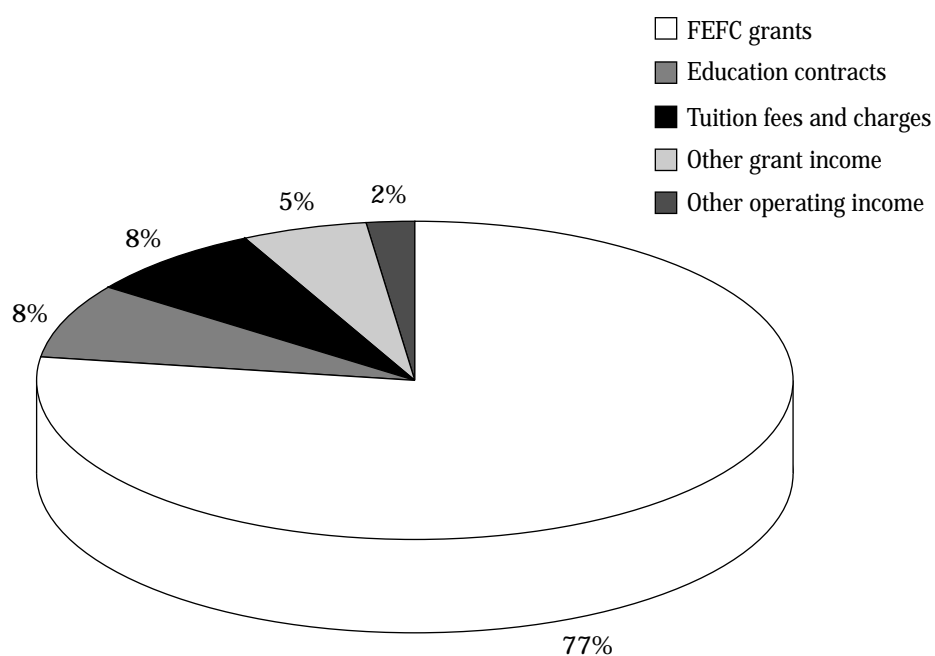
Bournville College of Further Education: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 246

Figure 5

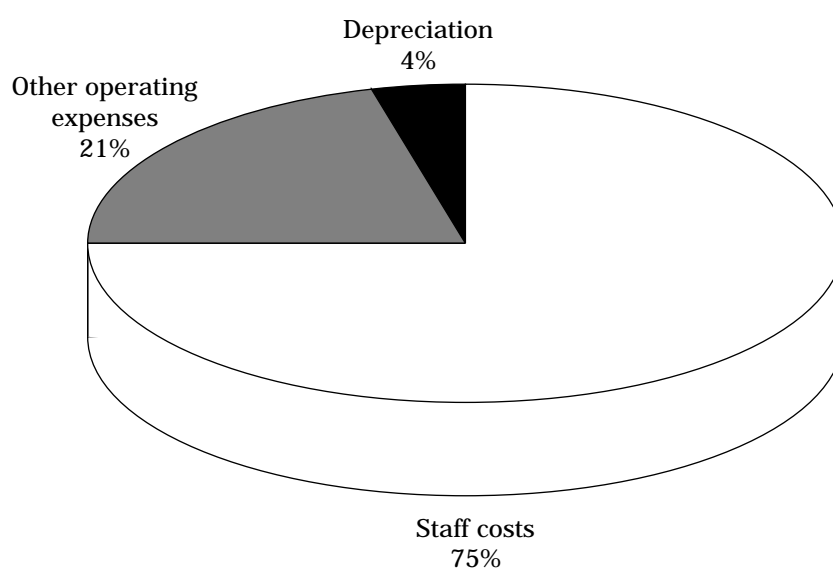
Bournville College of Further Education: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £8,002,000

Figure 6

Bournville College of Further Education: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £8,817,000

