

Bromley College of Further and Higher Education

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

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

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Grade Descriptors

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses
- grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses
- grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses
- grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths
- grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.

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

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

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

Retention and Pass Rates

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

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

Summary

Bromley College of Further and Higher Education

Greater London Region

Inspected December 1997

Bromley College of Further and Higher Education is a general further education college in the London borough of Bromley. Since its previous inspection, the college has improved the quality of its provision and it has expanded the range of its courses. The college's self-assessment process is good. The college's self-assessment report contains sound evidence. It fails, however, to emphasise some significant strengths and it understates some weaknesses in curriculum areas. The judgements in the self-assessment report on the quality of college services are broadly similar to those of the inspectors.

The college offers courses from foundation level to higher education to meet local needs. It has increased the range of courses for adults and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Courses in childcare and in construction have been introduced in response to local demand. Courses in five programme areas were inspected together with aspects of cross-college provision. The teaching is generally good. The proportion of lessons graded one or two by inspectors has risen by almost 19 percentage points since the previous inspection. Provision in all the programme

areas inspected was good with strengths which clearly outweigh weaknesses. The college's quality assurance system has improved over the last four years. Extensive welfare advice and careers guidance are offered to students. There is an excellent course tutors' handbook. The quality of most tutorials is good but in a few instances, tutorial practice is poor. Governors have a wide range of experience and expertise and they work well with the principal and senior managers of the college. The college is well managed and managers have clear roles and responsibilities. There have been some improvements in accommodation since the last inspection. The college should improve: the accuracy of some management information; the quality of self-assessment of curriculum areas; poor retention and pass rates on some courses; and some poor accommodation.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Construction	2	Support for students	2
Engineering	2	General resources	2
Business	2	Quality assurance	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2	Governance	2
Adult basic education, ESOL and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2	Management	2

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Bromley College of Further and Higher Education is situated on two sites in the London Borough of Bromley. The main buildings were erected in 1959 on a green field site south of Bromley town centre. In 1995, the college took over the lease of the former town hall in the centre of Bromley and renovated the building to English Heritage standards. The town centre site provides accommodation for higher education courses and for most of the professional education courses offered by the college.

2 Since the last inspection, the college has been developing its mission which is 'to be the first choice provider of the widest possible range of high-quality education and training services which are relevant and accessible to individuals, employers and the community as a whole'. It has widened its range of courses to attract groups of students previously under represented in the college, such as students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and adults. The college has established 'outreach' services in deprived areas of the borough. Courses are now offered in nine of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas from pre-foundation to higher education level.

3 The college has close working relationships with local schools including several with sixth forms. It has productive links with the Crystal Palace regeneration project, the Bromley business partnership, and a number of overseas links through such projects as Leonardo. The college has 'associate college status' with the University of Greenwich and as a result, opportunities for students to progress to higher education have been strengthened.

4 The college's strategic goals for 1998-99 are:

- to be recognised locally, nationally and internationally as a regional centre of excellence for a range of specialist educational and training services from

foundation to higher education levels

- to make a significant contribution to the achievement of education and training targets in and around the area of the South London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC)
- to pursue a strategy of continuous quality improvement of services to customers
- to maintain and develop a well-qualified workforce
- to continue to grow as an efficient and effective business
- to play a major role in economic regeneration and development, thereby contributing to the social, cultural and economic well-being of the local community.

Context

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected in December 1997. Before the inspection, inspectors studied the college's self-assessment report and information about the college provided by other FEFC directorates. The inspection was carried out by nine inspectors and an auditor working in the college for a total of 40 days. They observed 65 lessons and examined students' work and documentation relating to the college and its courses.

6 Sixty-two per cent of the lessons observed were rated good or outstanding and 3 per cent were less than satisfactory. These proportions compare favourably with averages of 61 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively for all lessons inspected in 1996-97, according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. An average of 9.5 students attended each of the lessons observed compared with a figure for all colleges in 1996-97 of 10.8 as reported in the chief inspector's annual report. Attendance at lessons observed during the inspection was low at an average of just under 60 per cent. The following table shows the grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GNVQ	3	6	2	0	0	11
NVQ	5	11	9	0	0	25
Basic education	1	6	6	0	0	13
Other vocational	4	4	6	2	0	16
Total	13	27	23	2	0	65

Curriculum Areas

Construction

Grade 2

7 The inspection covered all aspects of construction offered by the college including electrical installation. The inspection findings accord with those in the college's self-assessment report. In its self-assessment, however, the college paid insufficient attention to the quality of teaching and learning, and to students' achievements.

Key strengths

- some comprehensive schemes of work and learning materials
- a good balance between practical and theory work
- good teaching in over 40 per cent of the classes observed
- some good examination pass rates and retention rates
- many well-researched, high-quality portfolios of students' work
- clearly-documented records of students' progression

Weaknesses

- disruptive behaviour by a minority of students in a few lessons
- insufficient opportunities for students to develop information technology skills in some craft classes
- poor attendance in just over half of the lessons observed
- pass rates below national figures on a few courses
- the unsatisfactory learning environment provided by some classrooms
- some inadequate specialist accommodation

8 The college offers full-time and part-time technician and craft courses. Courses have been

introduced in response to local market surveys and enrolments have increased by 17 per cent over the past three years. Courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels are available for full-time students. Most craft courses lead to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 and 2. There are clear progression routes for students and the college's self-assessment report identifies these as a strength in the provision. A significant number of craft and technician students gain relevant employment or progress to more advanced courses.

9 Most courses are well managed. Schemes of work are detailed. An extensive range of learning materials enables students to study by themselves. Learning packs which have been devised by teachers make it possible for students who join courses after the start of term to catch up with the rest of the class. The inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the learning packs represent a strength in the provision. Some students lack the necessary study skills to enable them to work successfully on their own. Staff keep detailed records of students' progress. Students have a well-balanced timetable of varied practical and theoretical tasks. Most courses have a one-hour tutorial period each week.

10 The majority of lessons were well planned. Students were required to perform tasks which enabled them to develop appropriate professional skills. A few classes were disrupted by a minority of students, who lacked the skills to work effectively on their own. Poor attendance and punctuality by students are shortcomings that were not identified in the self-assessment report. The key skills of communication, application of number and information technology are an integral part of technician courses. Craft level students have insufficient opportunities to develop information technology skills.

Curriculum Areas

11 Much of the students' work is of a high standard. Portfolios of students' work are clearly indexed, neatly presented and well researched. A student on the GNVQ advanced course in the built environment, won the Southern Area Edexcel Student of the Year award in 1996-97. The standard of students' practical work is appropriate for their level of study. On approximately 75 per cent of courses, pass rates and retention rates are equal to, or better than, the national averages.

12 Most classrooms provide a satisfactory teaching and learning environment, and are equipped with appropriate teaching aids. The inadequacies of some huts have been identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Workshops are too small to accommodate some classes. Facilities for testing materials, particularly concrete and mortars, are inadequate. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Staff development has concentrated on training to enable staff to become qualified assessors and verifiers and serve in those roles within the college. A few teachers are updating or improving their technical and educational qualifications.

Examples of students' achievements in construction, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Construction and the built environment	Retention (%)	87	57	69
	Pass rate (%)	*	30	65
Electrical installation	Retention (%)	80	76	85
	Pass rate (%)	65	96	60

Source: college data

**data not available*

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 2

13 The inspection focused on electronic and motor vehicle engineering. The inspection team agreed with most of the findings in the college's self-assessment report. The inspectors, however, identified a few strengths and weaknesses which were not included in the college's report.

Key strengths

- an effective variety of appropriate teaching methods
- many well-planned courses
- the teachers' careful monitoring of students' progress
- the students' success in developing professional skills
- good retention rates on most craft courses
- some good pass rates on motor vehicle and higher technician electronics courses
- effective course team meetings on curricular issues
- the appropriately-qualified and experienced staff

Weaknesses

- the poor development of common skills by BTEC students
- the failure of some teachers to ensure students' full participation in lessons
- some pass rates below national figures
- poor retention rates on two-year electronics technician courses
- students' poor attendance and lack of punctuality on some courses

14 Over the past two years, enrolment patterns for electronic and motor vehicle engineering courses have changed significantly.

In electronic engineering, enrolments have fallen by almost 50 per cent and there has been a 40 per cent decrease in the number of full-time students. The number of part-time students on motor vehicle courses has dropped by 75 per cent but at the same time full-time enrolments have increased by 700 per cent. Many students on motor vehicle engineering courses are funded through the TEC.

15 The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time craft and technician engineering courses. There are motor vehicle engineering craft courses leading to NVQs at levels 1 to 3, and electronics engineering courses at craft, technician, and higher technician levels. The provision of specialist short courses for industry is underdeveloped. Most courses are effectively managed. Course teams meet regularly to review the way courses are taught, to monitor students' attendance, punctuality and progress, and to address curricular issues. Recent course team meetings have reviewed arrangements for providing students with additional learning support. Good-quality course handbooks set out assessment schedules and grading criteria.

16 The inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report, that much of the teaching is good. Most courses are well planned and schemes of work are comprehensive. The objectives of lessons are made clear to students. Students' interest is maintained by a variety of appropriate teaching methods. In some lessons, the use of commercial engineering equipment was particularly effective in helping the students to understand operational details. Teachers have up-to-date subject knowledge. Most teachers check regularly that the students understand the lesson. In laboratory sessions, teachers test the students' understanding of fundamental principles of engineering by asking them questions which challenge them to think and apply their knowledge. On some Edexcel courses, teachers did not give enough attention to helping the students to develop common skills. This weakness was not identified in the

Curriculum Areas

self-assessment report. Some students are not given sufficient encouragement to participate fully in lessons.

17 As the self-assessment report states, there was a significant improvement in motor vehicle engineering pass rates in 1996-97 and these are now above the national averages. Pass rates on higher technician courses have also improved. Retention rates on craft courses have been good, but they have been poor on two-year electronics technician courses. In 1996, a student at the college was awarded a City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) silver medal for practical work in electronics. In lessons, most students worked diligently, gaining expertise and developing requisite skills. They used equipment and instrumentation competently and safely. Attendance is poor on some courses and course team minutes indicate that this issue is being addressed.

18 The engineering provision has adequate specialist accommodation. In general, there is sufficient modern equipment for the engineering courses. Lecturers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Some teachers and support staff lack recent industrial and commercial experience.

Examples of students' achievements in engineering, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Motor vehicle engineering craft courses (full time)	Retention (%)	*	75	87
	Pass rate (%)	40	84	96
Motor vehicle engineering craft courses (part time)	Retention (%)	*	90	90
	Pass rate (%)	22	52	79
Electronic engineering craft courses	Retention (%)	90	89	72
	Pass rate (%)	60	54	46
Electronic engineering technician courses	Retention (%)	*	33	51
	Pass rate (%)	69	65	70
Electronic engineering higher technician courses	Retention (%)	*	69	50
	Pass rate (%)	88	56	86

Source: college data

*data not available

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 2

19 The inspection focused on general business and professional courses. The judgements in the self-assessment report accorded with those of the inspectors. However, they did not refer in detail to national averages for students' achievements and for retention rates. A few strengths were overstated in the report.

Key strengths

- outstanding pass rates on all GNVQ business programmes and on the NVQ level 3 business administration course
- students' success in progressing to further or higher education, and employment
- well-managed courses and comprehensive schemes of work
- effective tutorials and good action planning to facilitate students' progress
- lively lessons and the skill of most teachers to excite and sustain the students' interest
- comprehensive systems for the marking and internal verification of assignments
- the wide range of courses
- well-qualified teachers with up-to-date professional experience
- the effective arrangements to deal with poor punctuality and attendance

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some two-year courses
- low levels of achievement on the NVQ level 2 business administration course
- incomplete information about retention rates and students' achievements on modular programmes

20 Teaching on business courses is generally good and it is well planned. Lessons are lively and most involve students in a range of appropriate activities. Teachers sustain students' interest throughout lessons. Relationships between students and teachers are friendly and productive. Students who do not arrive for lessons on time are required to explain why they are late. They are then made to settle down quickly and become fully involved in whatever learning activity is taking place. Teachers follow up absence assiduously. Assignments are of an appropriate level for the courses. Most marking of assignments is accurate and students are informed of ways of improving their work. There is a well-established and effective system of internal verification for GNVQ programmes. There is scope to make the teaching and learning of key skills more integral to foundation level courses. The tutorial system on GNVQ business courses is well developed. It incorporates the college-wide practice of reviewing students' progress regularly and of identifying activities which will enable students to improve their learning and attainment. The inspectors agreed with the judgement in the college's self-assessment report that this practice is a strength.

21 As stated in the college's self-assessment report, the pass rates on GNVQ and NVQ level 3 courses are outstanding. For example, 92 per cent of foundation students passed in 1996-97 compared with the national average of 37 per cent; at intermediate and advanced levels pass rates of 81 per cent compared with a national average of 60 per cent. On other courses, many pass rates are in line with national averages. The poor retention rates on two-year programmes such as national certificate, higher national certificate and law courses are not explicitly identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Many students progress, often within the college, to further or higher education courses, and many progress to employment.

Curriculum Areas

22 Business courses are well managed. There are regular course team meetings and action is taken to address weaknesses in provision. There is an appropriate range of courses offered, both full time and part time. The college does not recognise in its self-assessment report that many students have the opportunity to gain qualifications in addition to the one for which they are studying primarily.

23 Staff across the curriculum area are enthusiastic in their subject knowledge, up to date, and appropriately qualified. The qualities of the staff are recognised as a strength in the self-assessment report. Teaching accommodation is generally of a good standard. Students on business courses have good access to industry-standard information technology.

Examples of students' achievements in business, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Foundation GNVQ in business	Retention (%)	100	69	100
	Pass rate (%)	50	100	92
Intermediate GNVQ in business	Retention (%)	91	71	69
	Pass rate (%)	81	90	81
Advanced GNVQ in business	Retention (%)	100	48	65
	Pass rate (%)	100	81	81
RSA computer literacy and information technology	Retention (%)	87	71	82
	Pass rate (%)	53	78	71
National certificate in business studies (part time)	Retention (%)	*	100	67
	Pass rate (%)	*	100	89

Source: college data

*college not started until 1995-96

Curriculum Areas

Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy

Grade 2

24 The inspection covered courses leading to NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 in hairdressing and beauty therapy. The inspectors agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report on strengths and weaknesses. Actions are proposed to address weaknesses and individual members of staff have been identified as having responsibility to ensure that these are carried out.

Key strengths

- good teaching in most lessons
- the competent and safe working practices of students in all practical lessons
- the good quality and appropriate standard of students' written work
- the good retention rates on hairdressing and beauty courses and pass rates matching national averages
- the suitability of the curriculum for students of different abilities
- the effective assessment and internal verification systems
- the analytical approach of staff to curriculum review
- the linking of staff development activities to operational plans

Weaknesses

- insufficient opportunities for the accreditation of students' attainment in key skills
- NVQ level 2 pass rates slightly below national averages
- some specialist accommodation of insufficient size for the number of students using it

25 The college has made substantial improvements in the provision in hairdressing and beauty therapy since its first inspection. The range of courses offered has been extended. Students now have the opportunity to progress from NVQ level 1 to levels 2 and 3 in both hairdressing and in beauty therapy. Additionally, courses in Afro-Caribbean hairdressing and specialist areas such as reflexology have been introduced. In 1996-97, over 1,000 students took courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Most lessons had strengths which outweighed weaknesses. Theory was linked effectively with practical work. Students were able to undertake assessments under working conditions which matched those found in industry. Students and staff participate successfully in many regional and national competitive events.

26 Students worked safely and competently in all practical lessons. As stated in the college's self-assessment report, they demonstrated a good understanding of assessment procedures and what was expected of them in order to achieve their qualification. Work placements are compulsory for all students and they are an integral part of the students' learning experience.

27 The inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report that the lack of opportunities for students to have their attainment in key skills accredited, represents a weakness of curriculum provision. Pass rates on NVQ level 2 hairdressing and beauty programmes are below national averages, but those for NVQ levels 1 and 3 beauty courses are in line with national figures. Retention rates are good across the curriculum area. In general, students' work on assignments and portfolios is of a good standard but there is little evidence of the use of information technology in students' written work.

28 The self-assessment report identified as a strength the rigour and consistency of systems for monitoring, recording and cross-checking

Curriculum Areas

students' achievements across the curriculum area. There is a well-established and effective procedure for internal verification of the assessment of students' performance.

29 Teachers and support staff are enthusiastic and encourage students to achieve their full potential. The curriculum area is well managed. Targets for students' enrolments and achievements are set within the curriculum area. The inspectors, however, agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that there is a need to raise staff awareness of both target-setting and the importance of monitoring progress towards reaching targets. Considerable progress has been made since the last inspection to ensure that relevant staff obtain appropriate assessor qualifications. Teaching teams have good technical support. The professionally-qualified hairdressing technician provides valuable help to teaching staff in setting up additional assessment opportunities for students. Staff are analytical and objective in their approach to self-evaluation and the review of the curriculum. The college has improved the standard of the hairdressing and beauty accommodation since

the last inspection, but as the self-assessment report notes, some salons are too small for the large class sizes.

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

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
NVQ level 1 hairdressing	Retention (%)	*	72	91
	Pass rate (%)	*	42	100
NVQ level 2 hairdressing	Retention (%)	90	61	85
	Pass rate (%)	37	39	43
NVQ level 3 hairdressing	Retention (%)	*	50	50
	Pass rate (%)	*	50	50
NVQ level 1 beauty therapy	Retention (%)	*	*	76
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	76
NVQ level 2 beauty therapy	Retention (%)	94	93	87
	Pass rate (%)	32	55	59

Source: college data

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Adult Basic Education, ESOL and Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Grade 2

30 The inspection covered adult basic education, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and courses for students with learning difficulties. The self-assessment report identifies many of the provision's strengths and weaknesses. However, the report overstates the quality of the teaching for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key strengths

- an increasing number of courses to meet the needs of a wide range of students
- well-planned and accredited courses
- opportunities for students to progress to further study or employment
- the success of much sound teaching in engaging the students' interest
- the range of activities available to students, including work experience
- the range of well-presented, appropriate learning materials and assignments
- the good retention rates and the students' success in gaining externally-accredited awards on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- good pass rates for those who complete 'return to learn' and ESOL courses
- the good and creative work by some students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Weaknesses

- the failure of some poor teaching to meet the students' differing needs
- poor retention rates on 'return to learn' and ESOL courses
- some teachers who lack relevant qualifications and experience
- some inappropriate accommodation

31 Since the previous inspection in 1993, the college has increased its basic education provision. It now offers a good range of courses which aim to cater for students with moderate to severe learning difficulties, behavioural difficulties, and physical disabilities. There are link courses for pupils in special schools, and courses for 'adult returners' and speakers of other languages. There is a choice of vocational and practical options for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The courses are organised to facilitate progression to other courses and to employment. The inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the course team for the adult returners programmes has successfully responded to demand by organising a course which is flexibly arranged to meet the needs of individual students. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities take part in drama training and theatrical performances with the college's Green Goose Theatre Group.

32 Teaching is generally sound and teachers are enthusiastic. Most teachers involve students in group activities and in as many practical and realistic tasks as possible, to encourage them to learn to work on their own. Staff have developed some high-quality teaching materials and assignments to enable students to study successfully by themselves. However, these are not always used effectively. In some lessons, teachers did not vary teaching strategies sufficiently to ensure that they were suitable for the wide range of students' abilities. In a few lessons, teachers and support workers did too

Curriculum Areas

much for students instead of allowing them to learn for themselves.

33 Strengths and weaknesses in students' achievements are highlighted in the self-assessment report. The standard of students' work is generally good. Some of the work carried out by students with learning difficulties is creative and it has clearly challenged them to think and use their initiative. The retention rate for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and the pass rate on their courses is high. The majority of leavers progress to other courses or employment. In 1996-97 retention rates for students on 'return to learn' and courses in ESOL were poor. Pass rates for those who complete the courses are good and many students progress to further courses. All students are involved in assessing their own skills and in the rigorous recording of their progress.

34 The management of the curriculum is good. Course teams meet regularly. They set targets for improvement, and clearly identify necessary action to meet these. The self-assessment report recognises the administrative difficulties created by the high numbers of new and part-time teachers. Some teachers are not

qualified or experienced in the area in which they are teaching. Some are undergoing training. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that more staff development is needed to help teachers and as a means of sharing good practice.

35 Classrooms are mostly satisfactory and are enlivened by displays of students' work and photographs that celebrate students' achievements. Students have access to computers but some of the accommodation for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including the information technology room and the construction workshop, is drab. The college has plans to improve this accommodation. A number of lessons for adult returners are timetabled in the key skills centre, where the noise from other lessons and students can be distracting.

Examples of students' achievements in adult basic education, ESOL and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Retention (%)	79	84	97
	Pass rate (%)	*	94	97
Return to learn courses	Retention (%)	*	90	43
	Pass rate (%)	*	79	92
Courses in ESOL	Retention (%)	*	100	60
	Pass rate (%)	*	89	89

Source: college data

*data not available

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

36 The college's self-assessment report recognises that major developments in support for students have taken place since the previous inspection. However, some of the strengths identified by the inspectors were not emphasised sufficiently by the college in its self-assessment report, and a few weaknesses were understated.

Key strengths

- clear and effective management of student support services
- the quality and quantity of advice and guidance for students before, and at, the commencement of their course
- efficient and effective systems for admissions and enrolment
- the induction process for most students
- effective testing of all full-time students to identify their learning support needs
- good tutorial support for most students
- the high-quality handbook for tutors
- good financial advice, welfare support and counselling for students
- the good careers advice and guidance available from professional advisers

Weaknesses

- some delays in referring students for additional learning support
- the poor quality of induction to some courses
- some poor tutorial practice
- the slow development of a suitable database to support the work of the careers services

37 The college has effective procedures to ensure that students receive appropriate support and guidance to make the right decisions in the

light of their educational, career and personal aspirations. Information about the college and its courses is of good quality. New students receive information about course content, assessment procedures and the possible destinations to which the course may lead. Recruitment and enrolment are well managed. All full-time and many part-time prospective students have an interview before being offered a place on a course. The self-assessment report identifies improvements the college has made in responding to enquiries and the efficient way in which students are admitted to the college.

38 There is an induction process for new students. This includes a useful introduction to the college's accommodation and services. A learning partnership agreement is completed by students during induction. The agreement makes it clear what students are entitled to and what is required of them. The self-assessment report does not identify the poor quality of induction to some courses which was noted by inspectors.

39 During induction all full-time students are tested to identify their need for help with literacy and numeracy. In 1996-97, students took the Basic Skills Agency tests and around 300 students were identified as needing additional help with both literacy and numeracy. In September 1997, the college adopted a new method of assessing students and about 500 students undertook some new tests. Only 24 students out of over 200 identified as needing learning support, have so far come forward for help. The self-assessment report identifies the strengths of the diagnostic testing, but fails to recognise the impact of delays before students who are in need of support are referred for it. Since the last inspection the number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities joining mainstream courses has increased. The inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the quality of the support for this group of students is a strength. Requests have increased for students to be assessed to find out whether

Cross-college Provision

they have specific learning difficulties, and for help for students with specific learning problems. In 1996-97, 10 students with dyslexia and two profoundly deaf students received support. Fourteen students with visual impairment are currently studying at the college.

40 In its self-assessment report, the college has identified improvements in the planning and organisation of tutorials. All full-time students have a personal tutor. There is an excellent handbook for tutors. It includes sections on admissions, health and safety at work, recruitment, careers advice, induction and it specifies activities to be covered in tutorials. Tutorial support is often an integral part of part-time courses. All students have three reviews each year when they discuss their progress with their tutor and record their achievement. Students speak positively about their tutorials and value the support they receive. Although there are comprehensive guidelines on how tutorials should be conducted there is variation in the quality of tutorials and some are poor.

41 Students are given sound advice on a range of financial issues. The college's student welfare officer provides information on career development loans, grants and students' loans. The college's access and hardship funds are used effectively to assist students with course fees, travel expenses and the cost of materials. The college provides good-quality counselling for students and staff. Following the success the college has had in widening participation, there has been an increased demand for this counselling service. A full-time student union officer and three youth workers provide valuable support to students by managing and supervising the common room and refectories, and by providing an extensive range of social and educational activities. The strengths of the college's welfare services are not sufficiently emphasised in the self-assessment report.

42 The college has a full-time, qualified and experienced careers adviser and a special needs

careers adviser. A local company which provides careers advice works closely with the college staff in providing an effective service for students. The careers information centre, which is sited close to the college reception, has a good range of materials including a careers library and various computer packages. All students are entitled to an appointment with a careers adviser. Since September 1997, 300 students have had individual careers advice interviews to discuss courses of further study including higher education, and employment possibilities. The college has identified a need to develop a comprehensive database to monitor the effectiveness of the careers advice service it provides.

General Resources

Grade 2

43 The inspectors agreed with much of the college's self-assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the college's general resources.

Key strengths

- the good-quality learning environment for adults in the building in the town centre
- well-decorated and appropriately-furnished classrooms
- the up-to-date information technology resources available for students
- the good library provision and private study areas on both sites
- the setting of standards for accommodation through the 'fit for purpose' project
- the accessibility of almost all areas of the college to students and staff with restricted mobility

Weaknesses

- some poorly-decorated classrooms and specialist accommodation in need of refurbishment

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- the lack of any systematic analysis of accommodation usage across the college

44 The college has two sites. The main site is about two miles from the centre of Bromley. In 1995, the college acquired the lease to a building in the town centre which was formerly the town hall. This building now provides a good facility for approximately 20 per cent of the college's students. There is also a small community outreach centre in a converted flat in Penge. The accommodation on the main site consists of a large multi-storey building, huts and separate workshop blocks. Most classrooms, including those at the old town hall, are well decorated, carpeted and furnished to a good standard. However, some huts and engineering block classrooms are poorly decorated and furnished. Approximately 40 per cent of the furniture on both main sites has been replaced and the majority of rooms are now carpeted. Students and staff with restricted mobility are able to gain access to almost all parts of the college.

45 The college's huts vary in quality and some are poor. There are plans to vacate some of the less satisfactory huts and make more use of accommodation in the main building. Each faculty is responsible for its own room usage, and there is some sharing of non-specialist accommodation between faculties. Although the college does not have a policy on setting room utilisation targets, some monitoring of room usage has taken place. Inspectors observed that some rooms were too small for the classes.

46 Standards have been developed for teaching accommodation through a project called 'fit for purpose'. Each classroom clearly displays a list of the furniture, audiovisual aids and computing facilities which have been specified for it. Support staff frequently check resources in each room against this list to ensure that the teaching accommodation meets the requisite standard. There are systems for

ensuring that accommodation and equipment are properly maintained. The security of equipment and fittings has been improved as a result of the 'fit for purpose' project, the effective deployment of security staff and the fitting of glazed partitions between rooms.

47 Following the previous inspection report, there has been significant expenditure on developing the college's information technology resources and on upgrading the library. The college now has some 330 networked personal computers for students to use. The library at the main site has been remodelled recently, and has a total bookstock of over 34,000 volumes. Attached to the library is a small learning centre, where students can work on their own using eight networked multimedia computers and a range of CD-ROM titles. Additionally, a well-equipped area in the key skills centre, with approximately 60 networked multimedia computers, gives students easy access to information technology packages which enable them to carry out wordprocessing and make spreadsheets. All networked computers are linked to the Internet. The college's self-assessment report acknowledges that, as a result of the students' increasing need to use the computing resources for their coursework, the computing facilities are overcrowded at times.

48 As part of the improvement of students' social facilities, the refectory has been upgraded and now includes a lounge for students. On the main site there is a refectory, a bistro and a mature students' common room. The latter has a snack bar for evening students.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

49 The college has a strong commitment to assuring and developing the quality of all aspects of its provision. It has improved its quality assurance procedures since the previous inspection. Inspectors' judgements about the quality assurance process were

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broadly the same as those made by the college.

Key strengths

- a coherent framework and clear procedures for quality assurance
- annual self-assessment leading to improvements in provision
- measurable gains in students' retention rates and achievements
- the collection and analysis of students' views on the quality of provision
- the system of staff appraisal and its effectiveness in furthering staff development and the fulfilment of the college's objectives

Weaknesses

- some curriculum self-assessments of poor quality
- insufficient use of targets and performance indicators in curriculum areas
- the failure of the college's management information systems to produce accurate data on students' achievements

50 The college has made substantial improvements to its quality assurance systems since it was last inspected in 1993. There are now clear procedures for assuring the quality of all aspects of the college's work. There have been measurable gains in the college's performance, such as improvements in the overall retention of students and in students' achievements. The proportion of lessons graded by inspectors as good or outstanding has increased by almost 10 percentage points since the last inspection. There have been improvements in facilities and services for students, and in accommodation.

51 There is a well-established system of course review, through which curriculum teams produce self-assessment reports. This system

makes extensive use of the students' responses to questionnaires about the quality of their courses and of cross-college services. The proportion of students who respond to the questionnaires is, however, small. The college has recognised this as a weakness and it has had some success in obtaining more responses to the questionnaires. The college's self-assessment report acknowledges that while some of the self-assessment reports produced by curriculum teams are good, others are poor and do not focus sufficiently on teaching, learning and students' achievements.

52 In 1996-97, the college set itself targets for improving students' achievements and retention rates. Some curriculum teams do not pay sufficient attention to the analysis of students' achievements and retention rates in their team meetings and reviews, and their failure to do so was not identified as a weakness in the college's self-assessment report. The college's management information system has not been able to produce accurate information on students' achievements. To overcome this problem, a working group is developing ways of improving the reporting and analysis of students' achievements. There is a lack of information about retention rates on two-year courses.

53 A programme of audits has been introduced to test the rigour of quality assurance in the curriculum areas. These audits include the observation of teaching and learning and their findings have been taken into account in self-assessment reports in several programme areas. Standards for the quality of teaching and learning, including standards for assessment and tutorial support, have been introduced during the last year. It is intended that these will provide benchmarks for the observation of teaching and learning, quality audits and the self-assessment process in the future. The system for observing teaching and learning has not been fully implemented and staff lack experience of observing the work of

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their colleagues in the classroom. There is effective internal verification of the assessment of students' work. Action is taken to implement the recommendations of external verifiers, and this is monitored centrally.

54 The quality standards committee of the academic board monitors the operation of quality assurance and self-assessment procedures. Applications to introduce new courses follow a detailed procedure to ensure that the proposed provision is in line with the college's curriculum policy and reflects the college's corporate objectives. Standards have been set for services to students such as admissions, financial and welfare advice. Other cross-college services are developing standards. All services participate in the annual review process, and several have carried out their own surveys of customers' views of the provision they make. All students receive a copy of the college's charter, which has been reviewed and revised. Its function is explained in the students' diary, which also contains a clear explanation of the complaints procedure. The marketing department carries out surveys of employers' views to find out their opinions about specific courses and to ascertain the extent of their involvement with the college.

55 The college achieved the Investor in People award in 1996. All staff are appraised. The appraisal process leads to an individual development plan for each member of staff. Staff development activities reflect the college's objectives. There is a programme of in-house staff development activities, including the opportunity to gain NVQs, and staff are entitled to join any college course free of charge. There is effective induction for all new staff. The corporation staffing committee receives reports on staff development and on staff appraisal. The strengths of the staff development process are recognised in the college's self-assessment report.

Governance

Grade 2

56 The college's self-assessment report of governance was comprehensive and the inspectors agreed with most of its findings. The evidence supporting the judgements on strengths and weaknesses was clearly stated. The report included an action plan for improvements which identified those responsible for carrying it out, and the timescale within which improvements had to be completed.

Key strengths

- well-qualified governors with appropriate expertise and experience
- the effective conduct of the corporation's business
- the governors' involvement in strategic planning and in the monitoring of the college's activities
- the appropriate and effective committee structure
- sound clerking arrangements

Weaknesses

- poor attendance by some governors
- some governors' lack of knowledge of the college's courses
- insufficient communication between governors and staff other than senior managers

57 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC. The corporation has established effective subcommittees with appropriate terms of reference. There is a

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register of governors' interests, but five out of 20 governors have not provided an entry in the register. Financial monitoring by the finance committee is effective, and involves consideration of comprehensive financial information from senior managers. The corporation regularly reviews the college's targets and performance indicators.

58 The composition of the corporation has changed significantly in the last year and the skills and experience of governors are such that they are able to advise and guide the college effectively. Ten governors were appointed during 1997. Governors are involved in the strategic planning process, including consideration of the financial estimates which underpin the strategic plan. The corporation and committees receive regular monitoring reports on progress in meeting the annual objectives in the strategic plan. Governors recognise that they are not all sufficiently knowledgeable about the curriculum and that their communication with staff needs to be improved. Governors have started to assess their own performance and most members of the corporation contributed to the production of the self-assessment report on governance.

59 The college has effective procedures for the conduct of the corporation's business although, as the self-assessment report notes, corporation meetings are often very long. Recently, the corporation agreed to streamline its business at meetings. A monthly briefing paper from the principal provides governors with information which helps them in their decision-making. In 1996-97, attendance at corporation meetings by some governors was poor and attendance at several meetings fell below 50 per cent. There is a good level of attendance at committee meetings. The corporation has established an appropriate committee structure. Each committee has clear terms of reference with which it complies. The clerking arrangements are sound, and the clerk provides governors with support and clear advice. The corporation and its committees receive comprehensive

papers on aspects of the college's work and business and these provide a good base for decision-making.

Management

Grade 2

60 The college's self-assessment report was comprehensive. The inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses which were identified in the report. Some of the strengths, however, were overstated. The evidence supporting judgements was clearly presented. The report specified actions to deal with weaknesses, identified those responsible for ensuring actions were carried out, and timescales for their completion.

Key strengths

- the clear management structure and the good management of the college
- effective communications across the college
- the contribution from staff at all levels to the strategic plan
- the college's success in widening participation
- the college's strong links with external organisations
- the college's close involvement in local development and regeneration schemes
- managers' setting of targets and monitoring of progress towards reaching these
- the college's promotion of equality of opportunity
- good financial management

Weaknesses

- the inequitable workloads of some curriculum team leaders
- inadequacies in management information

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61 Bromley College of Further and Higher Education is well managed. The executive management team comprises the principal and three vice-principals. The senior management team consists of the executive management team together with the three deans of faculty and the director of the enterprise and services unit. Curriculum team leaders are assisted by course team leaders in the management of courses. Support teams provide a good range of services for staff and students. The management structure is well understood by staff. Working parties, such as the operational planning task group, facilitate the work of those with cross-college roles. In its self-assessment report, the college acknowledges that the issue of inequitable workloads for some curriculum team leaders remains to be resolved.

62 Communications within the college are effective. Managers recognise the need to ensure that staff working at the old town hall site do not feel isolated and that senior managers are not perceived as remote. Staff are kept well informed about college matters and national issues in a number of ways, these include the newsletter 'Talking Point', regular briefings by senior managers and staff meetings. The comprehensive curriculum policy covers all aspects of teaching and learning and support and guidance for students. The informative course tutors' handbook gives clear guidance on all aspects of course management and college procedures.

63 The strategic plan reflects the college's changing mission and educational character and affects and influences the work of staff at all levels. The college now makes provision for a wider clientele than in the past. It aims to recruit students who were previously under represented in the college, including adults and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Courses and services to suit the needs of these students have been developed. The college has improved its collection and use of market information since the last inspection.

64 Staff at all levels have effective and productive external contacts, a strength recognised by the college. There are links with local 11 to 18 schools, special schools, employers, higher education establishments and overseas organisations. The college has good links with the local authority and with the TEC, and it is an associate college of the University of Greenwich. College managers are active members of a wide variety of groups in the local community. For example, as a result of its collaboration with a local housing association, the college provides educational advice and guidance to residents of a large housing estate in a deprived area. In addition, it has established award-winning information technology training facilities on the same estate.

65 Staff make good use of the management information which is available. The data on students are handled by the management information team and are readily accessible through the college-wide network of computer stations. Accurate data on personnel and finance and market research can be obtained from the relevant teams. Senior managers receive regular reports which they use to monitor enrolments, retention rates and students' achievements, and they take appropriate action on these when necessary. Staff are assisted in their use of management information by regular newsletters from the management information team and help from support staff. However, the college acknowledges that there have been some difficulties in recording enrolments and achievements accurately.

66 The inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that equality of opportunity is promoted in the college effectively. The comprehensive equal opportunities policy and procedures are included in the course tutors' handbook. The equal opportunities committee has developed a policy on harassment which has led to the appointment of 'harassment advisers'. Issues

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related to equality of opportunity are covered during the induction of new staff and through the staff development programme. They are addressed through the curriculum policy and in the students' questionnaires which form part of the quality assurance procedures.

67 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The budget planning process is well defined and clearly understood by staff. Managers have developed a course costing system which enables them to identify, and take action on, the cost and contribution of each course to the college's finances. Budget holders receive accurate and timely financial reports. The college's financial regulations are comprehensive. The average level of funding for 1997-98 is £17.84 per unit. The average level of funding for general further education colleges is £16.72 per unit.

Conclusions

68 The college's self-assessment process is good. The self-assessment report contains sound evidence. All staff were involved in the self-assessment process. Self-assessment of the curriculum is based on an effective course review and evaluation system which is understood and supported by staff. In some instances, this system makes use of evidence obtained from a recently-established process of lesson observation. The self-assessment report as a whole fails to emphasise some significant strengths and understates some weaknesses. It also pays insufficient attention to the quality of teaching and learning and students' achievements in some curriculum areas. Inspectors considered that the college's self-assessment of teaching observation grades is overgenerous. In general, the self-assessment reports on college services were usefully analytical, but some failed to make sufficient reference to targets and performance indicators. The judgements in these reports were generally

sound, and in most respects broadly similar to those of the inspectors.

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

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 1997)

Age	%
Under 16	1
16-18 years	31
19-24 years	19
25+ years	46
Not known	3
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1997)

Level of study	%
Foundation	11
Intermediate	27
Advanced	26
Higher education	17
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	19
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 1997)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	184	635	12
Construction	148	159	4
Engineering	408	380	11
Business	376	1,384	25
Hotel and catering	175	116	4
Health and community care	384	1,091	21
Art and design	24	14	1
Humanities	234	1,055	18
Basic education	135	163	4
Total	2,068	4,997	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1997)

	Permanant	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	144	43	0	187
Supporting direct learning contact	49	5	0	54
Other support	118	5	2	125
Total	311	53	2	366

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£9,369,000	£9,587,000	£10,011,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£18.19	£18.47	£20.10
Payroll as a proportion of income	69%	74%	*
Achievement of funding target	125%	115%	*
Diversity of income	41%	37%	*
Operating surplus	£143,000	-£626,000	*

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

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

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

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96)

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

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

*data not available

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	+	76	60
	Average point score per entry	+	2.0	3.0
	Position in tables	+	bottom 10%	bottom third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	215	195	144
	Percentage achieving qualification	64%	70%	67%
	Position in tables	bottom third	middle third	bottom third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	161	153
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	41%	58%
	Position in tables	*	bottom third	middle third

Source: DfEE

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

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

*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

+no courses offered in this year

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