

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Cadbury Sixth Form College

May 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to FEFC's quality assessment committee.

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 38/95

CADBURY SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected May 1994 – January 1995

Summary

Cadbury Sixth Form College, Birmingham was established in 1983. The college has the largest GCE A level entry in the city. It attracts students from a wide area of Birmingham. The college has close relations with local schools and higher education institutions. The college's strategic plan is thorough in its needs analysis and assessment of curriculum implications. The governors are actively involved in and highly supportive of the college. A good working relationship exists between governors and senior management. There are high-quality recruitment, guidance and support services for students which involve all staff. Staff are well qualified and experienced and standards of teaching are high. Students achieve good results in external examinations, particularly at GCE A level. The provision of equipment and the quality of accommodation is good. The college should make progress with its charter; develop an effective strategy for quality assurance; review the amount of teaching undertaken by senior managers; strengthen its links with employers; extend its data collection on students' destinations; ease overcrowding in some of its teaching accommodation and increase students' access to information technology.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science	2	Art and design	2
Mathematics	2	Design technology	2
Business studies	2	Sociology	1
		English	1
		History and politics	2
		Modern languages	2

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INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of Cadbury Sixth Form College in Birmingham took place from May 1994 to January 1995. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term, specialist subjects areas during May and November 1994, and aspects of cross-college provision from 16 to 19 January 1995. In all, 13 inspectors spent a total of 63 days in the college. They visited 114 classes, examined representative samples of students' work, and held discussions with governors, college staff, students, local employers, parents, teachers from local schools and representatives of the community and the Birmingham Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Cadbury Sixth Form College, one of four sixth form colleges in the city of Birmingham, was established in 1983 in the premises of a former 11-16 secondary school. This was part of a major reorganisation of secondary education which made many secondary schools 11-16 schools. The college lies in the south-west of Birmingham in the ward of Kings Norton, and is bounded on the east by two council estates and on the west by a mixed estate of private and council-owned property. The overall unemployment rate in the area is 16 per cent. This is slightly higher than the city rate of 15.6 per cent, but significantly lower than some inner-city areas which have unemployment rates of over 30 per cent.

3 The growth of the local economy is expected to yield only a modest expansion of employment opportunities. These will be principally in managerial and professional occupations and in personal and protection services, particularly in the tourist and leisure industry. Local unemployment is disproportionately high in the 18-24 age group at 30 per cent in comparison with 18 per cent for the general population.

4 The proportion of year 11 pupils in Birmingham schools is set to increase modestly until January 1996 and then to level out in the following two years. Participation rates for post-16 full-time education in the city have risen very sharply from 49 per cent in 1990 to 61 per cent in 1993. In 1993, 35 per cent of school leavers in Birmingham were from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of college students from these groups is around 25 per cent. This is substantially higher than the minority ethnic population of areas near the college.

5 The initial student intake came almost entirely from neighbouring 11-16 schools. The development of the college has taken place against a background of considerable competition in Birmingham since sixth forms remained in most of the larger and often prestigious schools. Some colleges of further education in the city also had long-standing general educational provision. The proportion of students from 11-18 schools has increased steadily and in September 1994, 35 per cent came from the original feeder schools, while almost 60 per cent came from schools which themselves had sixth form provision. Approximately 5 per cent of students had previously attended schools in adjacent local education authorities (LEAs). The proportion of minority ethnic students has grown steadily. Enrolments by age and level of study are given in figures 1 and 2.

6 The college has pleasant grounds, although sporting facilities on site are limited. The original building was substantially adapted in 1983-84. Subsequent improvements have increased the flexibility with which accommodation can be used, as well as meeting increased specialist requirements.

7 The college's internal organisation is based on six faculties: business and economics; communication; creative arts and design; humanities; mathematics and computing; and science and sport. Faculty heads coordinate curriculum planning and teaching through their departments and are also responsible for the pastoral care of students. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are given in figure 3. The college's senior management comprises the principal, two vice-principals and three assistant principals, supported in strategic planning by two curriculum leaders. Key support staff are the finance officer, the college secretary, the site manager and the registration officer. The college has a staff of 70 full-time equivalent teachers, and 15 full-time equivalent support staff. A profile of staff, expressed as full-time equivalents is shown in figure 4.

8 Numbers have grown steadily from 350 when the college opened to 1,127 in September 1994. In the three years before incorporation the average annual growth was 7.6 per cent. Concern about accommodation influenced the college to restrict its growth in 1993, although there was still an 8 per cent increase in student numbers between September 1993 and September 1994. In September 1994, the movement to a continuous day which involved teaching across the lunch period, enabled the college to accept a planned growth in numbers of 11 per cent. The strategic plan envisages growth of 7 per cent and 5 per cent in the next two years.

9 The proportion of students taking General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses has increased substantially beyond that foreseen when the college was founded. Since 1990, about 75 per cent of new enrolments have embarked upon two or more GCE A levels. Cadbury now has the largest GCE A level entry of any school or college in the city. The college also offers a wide range of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses and some National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses. Nearly all the students are full time and in the 16-19 age range. Adult education, managed by Birmingham adult education department, is available in the evenings.

10 The college's mission statement refers to the rich variety of its student intake as one of its most rewarding features. The college has committed itself to offer an educational experience of high quality which, it believes, can only be effective within an environment which is 'supportive, co-operative and conducive to learning'. The college aims to equip students with academic expertise and the personal skills and confidence which will enable them to make a valuable contribution to their communities.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

11 There is a clear commitment to the national targets for education and training in the college's strategic plan. There is strong emphasis upon the development amongst students of the broad skills of self reliance and

flexibility. Given the nature of the college, life-long learning targets are largely restricted to staff-development opportunities for college employees.

12 The college has close relations with local schools, in particular the twelve 11-16 schools from which it draws many of its students. The college is planning to develop franchising with one local school. There is some curricular liaison with local schools, in theatre studies, design technology and in history where there is good awareness of the significance of key stage 4 for progression beyond 16. There has been joint work with the other sixth form colleges in Birmingham on personnel issues. There are some links with higher education institutions, for example the University of Birmingham, where the college has been part of a case study designed to give more precise information upon the reason for accepting and rejecting applicants. There are links with the City of Birmingham Record Office. In social care, there are good contacts with local agencies, and arrangements have been made with three local colleges of further education to assure progression from the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma in social care.

13 The relationship with the Birmingham TEC is largely through the Birmingham Education Business Partnership which has assisted in the work placement of students. The college has appointed a member of staff to liaise with the TEC and he has regular meetings with the TEC representative. There is a TEC-nominated governor on the college corporation. An industrial advisory committee meets regularly and is attended by college, industrial and commercial representatives. It discusses issues arising from work experience and has evaluated the contribution the education business partnership can make to improving students' access to and awareness of industry.

14 The strategic plan includes a thorough needs analysis of the local labour market. This assists the college in meeting its commitment to enable young people to gain relevant qualifications. The plan identifies the greater demand for management skills in the local economy and the need to provide equal opportunities to break down barriers which impede access to employment.

15 There are useful links with industry but they vary considerably in their nature and effect. There is no central database of all college contacts with employers. Students in some curriculum areas, for example, design technology, business administration and physics, undertake work experience at local firms, including Rover. Those interested in applying for teacher training courses have the opportunity to undertake placements in schools on Wednesday afternoons. Employers offered differing views on the quality of liaison between the college and companies. In some cases, there were close and fruitful relations which were of mutual benefit to students, staff and employers. In other cases, companies who had made a considerable commitment to providing opportunities for students to enhance their personal skills were sometimes disappointed by the response of staff and students. There was difficulty in agreeing times and dates for particular activities and, on occasions, students' attendance was less than anticipated.

16 The college's major course provision focuses on the needs of the 16-19 age group. The flexibility of subject combinations available to students is assisted by the completion of the following year's timetable after the main admissions process has been completed. Thirty-three courses are offered at GCE A level, including 18 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses, and 30 at GCSE. The college also offers GNVQ intermediate level in business, engineering, health and social care and NVQ levels 2 and 3 in business administration.

17 The great majority of students, 85 per cent of those on roll in September 1994, are pursuing GCE A level courses. The range of GCE A level courses is wide and includes humanities, science, and art and design as well as some less commonly available courses such as sports science, textiles and fashion design, theatre studies, and design technology. In English and history, there is a choice of syllabuses. In art and design, the work of the area could usefully be widened to include photography, graphic and communication design and computer-aided design. There is a strategic commitment to the development of modular courses and these are now offered in business studies, science and mathematics. In science and mathematics, the take-up has increased in accordance with government priorities. The unit nature of modular courses has enabled the expansion of GCE AS options, since students are able to obtain an AS award on the basis of the completion of a set number of units. The formal curriculum is also enriched by a wide range of other activities, including concerts, religious and cultural activities, drama productions and sport. There have also been exchange visits to France and Germany. There is no clearly-established college policy on entitlement to modern foreign languages. Most students are therefore not able to maintain or improve the language skills with which they entered the college.

18 Recently there has been an emphasis on encouraging students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to apply to the college. Students with visual and hearing impairment have come to the college and there is one student who uses a wheelchair. The college sends letters to local schools to encourage students to come to study there. A separate committee for disability, primarily concerned with improving access within the college, meets regularly. It has identified barriers to access for disabled students and this has helped to push forward initiatives to establish ramps, better stair rails, toilets for the disabled and slip-proof flooring. However, access to many parts of the college remain difficult or impossible, including the entrance area, the library and the design suite.

19 About 9 per cent of students are taking GCSE subjects and some 6 per cent are taking vocational courses. Although the college's vocational provision is relatively small, the senior management is committed to widening students' opportunities in this area. The college has undertaken to survey GNVQ courses in local schools to ensure that its own curriculum can build upon the existing skills which students have before entry. In addition to its 16-19 provision the college offers adult evening provision on site. This is funded by and jointly managed with, the Birmingham LEA. A recent initiative funded through the schools' section of the LEA brings local women and dependent children into college on Wednesday

afternoons. Children are cared for by creche workers while the women take a short 'return to learn' course.

20 Marketing is effectively managed by a vice-principal. There is a marketing committee, broadly representative of college faculties, which evaluates marketing policy and its implementation. It has considered college publicity, press and advertising, and the nature and quality of links with schools. The committee is critically aware of relevant issues. A survey of students' perceptions has led to action to reduce the time lag between students' applications and interviews, and to ensure that the receipt of applications is acknowledged. The college produces an attractive and informative prospectus, which has improved markedly in quality over recent years. There are also individual subject brochures which are reviewed by the marketing committee. Though they are produced to a broadly common format they vary in quality.

21 The college recruits students from about 80 schools in and near Birmingham. The marketing programme includes the distribution of packs of information to feeder schools as well as regular visits to schools and careers fairs to inform 16 year old pupils of the curriculum which the college offers. There is a college induction day in the summer term when those who have been offered places receive introductions to their chosen subjects and inspect the college's facilities. School representatives spoken to during the inspection, reported favourably on the quality and nature of communication between the college and their schools and on the favourable comments which their pupils reported on their visit to Cadbury. A much appreciated feature is the information on pupils' subsequent examination achievements which the college sends to schools. The college's continuing success in recruiting students underlines the effectiveness of its marketing.

22 If proposals for new courses are supported by the heads of faculty they are then submitted to the senior management team. Criteria for approval include resource requirements, market research evidence and consideration of the views of local higher education institutions. The college actively seeks to encourage applications by those who have not normally entered post-16 education. About 25 per cent of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are established procedures for the admission of non-standard entrants and small numbers are admitted.

23 The college is strongly committed to providing equal opportunities for its students. There is gender and ethnic monitoring of enrolled students. There has been a college training day on equal opportunities which some governors attended. The conclusions of working parties for equal opportunities were also reported to governors. There is a clear equal opportunities policy and statements of the college's approach are included in both the strategic plan and the college charter. A standing committee has replaced previous separate working parties on gender and race. An interesting aspect of the equal opportunities programme has been the setting of targets by departments and the survey of responses. This showed a lively commitment to equal opportunities issues, containing examples of changes in curriculum offered to reflect the interests of minority ethnic students and evaluation of examination achievements by ethnicity and

gender. A newsletter focusing on equal opportunities issues was produced in March 1994.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

24 The college has developed a three-year strategic plan with the main objectives of increasing student numbers and maintaining its position as a major provider of GCE A levels and GCSE courses. The plan is sound and consists of an effective needs analysis, a risk analysis and a strategic overview that covers the key points of concern. The operational statement is clear but lacks sufficient detail. It does not identify sufficiently the tasks which need to be done or assign responsibilities for carrying them out and monitoring their progress. There is no costed policy for staffing or for the maintenance and replacement of equipment. The corporation was actively involved in the formulation of the college's mission statement and they approved the final version of the strategic plan. Various performance indicators are used in the college such as enrolment targets, retention rates, examination results, student/staff ratios and value-added analysis. Unit costs are not calculated.

25 The corporation comprises 17 members, including the principal. There are five women, one of whom is the chairperson and one member is from a minority ethnic background. There is a nominee of the Birmingham TEC and eight governors represent industry, business and the professions. Staff, students and parent groups are also represented. A good working relationship exists between members and the senior management of the college. The corporation elected to have two meetings each term and those are well attended. Meetings are supported with comprehensive and efficiently-presented reports and minutes. There are subcommittees for personnel, finance, remuneration, premises, and audit. They have clear terms of reference from, and direct reporting lines back to, the full board. Members of the board are actively involved with, and highly supportive of, the college. They receive and discuss Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) Circulars and, where necessary, seek further clarification of these documents from the executive and from consultants. Members see their function as being strategic, and they require the senior management group to manage the college from day to day. Since incorporation, members have concentrated their efforts on financial, personnel, premises and audit issues. The college has drawn upon the individual expertise of members who have provided skills in personnel, construction and financial management.

26 The senior management group consists of the principal, two vice-principals and three assistant principals who have cross-college responsibilities. The principal provides sensitive leadership. Senior management are open, approachable and seek to support all staff. Two curriculum leaders assist the senior managers in curriculum development. Incorporation has brought many new responsibilities to the senior management group. As the college has increased in size, there has been a move towards formal management procedures and a greater emphasis on team commitment. Nevertheless, several senior staff still undertake a significant amount of teaching. The six faculties, which each comprise

two or more departments, form the academic organisation of the college. The college management structure and the faculty structure are well defined and staff have clear job descriptions and areas of responsibility. The responsibilities for implementing and monitoring policies relating to equal opportunities, health and safety, student support and environmental issues are clearly allocated. The governing body has made a strong commitment to health and safety. Faculties have expressed similar commitments but most have yet to complete the appropriate surveys.

27 Many departments are well managed and have an effective organisational structure. Throughout the college there are series of regular meetings which review and evaluate the accomplishment of tasks and functions. Effective forms of communication include staff briefings by the principal twice a week. At these briefings all staff are able to present information or ask questions. The use of noticeboards in corridors and in staffrooms helps to maintain the flow of college news. The regularly updated staff handbook contains useful information on the college's mission, strategic objectives, governors, college conduct and other policies and procedures

28 In general, the staff and other resources are appropriately deployed to meet the present needs of the institution. The finances within the college are the responsibility of the vice-principal (finance). The payroll is controlled by the principal. Budgets for capital items and supplies and services are devolved to middle management. All budgets are approved by the corporation. The basis for allocation is historical but adjustments are made for any additional items identified in the strategic plan, any increases in student numbers or for specific grants from the FEFC. In monitoring the allocations, monthly financial reports of actual expenditure against budget are produced from the college's management information systems. Modifications to allocations are negotiated between budget holders and the vice-principal who, in turn, must obtain approval from the corporation. The budgetary control system is clear and easy to understand. Funding to departments is adequate to meet needs.

29 The college's average level of funding for 1994-95, as recorded in the FEFC report, Funding Allocations 1994-95, is £18.68. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.81 per unit. Summaries of the college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

30 The management information system is effective in producing information on student enrolments, attendance figures, and the gender, age and ethnicity of students. There is also data on personnel, payroll, students' course options and examination results.

31 Student attendance and retention rates are carefully documented and monitored by the college. Details are kept of the various qualification areas, and the subjects within them, and a comparison is made over a three-year period to show trends. Where there is an unacceptable level of dropout from courses, a departmental review is implemented by senior management and the staff concerned in an effort to identify the problem and resolve it. Generally retention rates are high.

32 Since September 1994 the college has started to provide more systematic information on students who complete courses. The data is collected and recorded centrally, and is used for publicity purposes. It is also used by some departments to draw attention to their success.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

33 The quality of all aspects of recruitment, guidance and support is high and this plays a major part in ensuring the high level of demand for places at the college. One vice-principal has responsibility for both the curriculum and support and guidance, and there is an effective policy of integrating pastoral and academic matters. Faculty heads are also responsible for both these aspects in their respective faculties. There is substantial involvement of all staff in the recruiting and tutoring processes which in turn contributes to an overall sense of staff community and commitment to implement college policies. Staff have coped with a significant increase in enrolments without a reduction in the quality of the service offered to students. Students speak highly of all aspects of tutorial support.

34 The other vice-principal is responsible for the effective marketing, interview and enrolment procedures. The college provides high-quality information to the schools and to other intending students. Close links are maintained with the main feeder schools using a range of strategies. The large number of feeder schools spread over a wide area precludes the development of close links with all. Most take advantage of the main open evening in November and the monthly guided tours which are arranged on demand.

35 Nearly all staff are involved in the pre-entry interview process, conducting two interviews per week when required. The popularity of the college means that there are times when steps have to be taken to reduce a backlog by an increase in this load. The vice-principal matches interviewers to applications and ensures that candidates whose applications are not straightforward are seen by an experienced or senior member of staff. In this way, impartial advice is assured and the few candidates who have made an unrealistic application are steered towards more suitable courses at other establishments. The number of applicants means that this task is now creating a heavy workload for the vice-principal. There is an informative induction day in July to which all new entrants are invited.

36 Enrolment is efficiently conducted. There are brief but effective inductions to new subjects, the library and information technology facilities. The whole admissions process is efficiently handled and recorded by the registration officer. Such effective procedures mean that there are few transfers from course to course in the first few weeks. The relatively few transfers are dealt with by heads of faculty who notify the administrative office of any changes on a weekly basis. Recruitment is buoyant and late applicants have little chance of gaining a place after the first week of term.

37 All students are issued with an informative and useful diary containing details on college routines and other useful information. Students are each allocated to a tutor group within their faculty and are in most cases tutored by one of their teachers. Those with weaknesses in English or mathematics are given special attention and there are GCSE resit courses. The college does not have a formal pastoral syllabus but there is a programme for pastoral work. Tutors interview each individual at set times in the year and encourage them to complete a personal action plan. There is no systematic use of the national records of achievement, although many students present one at interview. Despite the large number on roll, every student is well known to at least one member of staff.

38 The college does not provide for a collective act of worship as required by sections 44 and 45 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

39 The daily tutorial time is too short and the reorganisation of the timetable into a continuous day has markedly reduced the possibility of tutorial work being carried out during lunch times. The college is currently addressing this. Students speak highly of the approachability of staff and the quality of guidance and support received. There is a considerable burden of responsibility on personal tutors who produce references for their tutees as well as giving support and guidance on an individual basis. The college has recently introduced a counselling service. Its existence is not well known throughout the college, because the counsellors were not in post during the enrolment period. The college has a student guild and officers of the guild are involved in the college's consultative processes. The guild also organises a social programme for students.

40 Contact with parents is good. There are opportunities for parents to discuss students' progress on a regular basis. A meeting for parents of new entrants is held at an early stage, and another one follows the issue of the annual report. In the second year, the meeting is held in advance of the mock examinations. Parents speak very highly of the support and guidance received from personal tutors, commenting on the balance achieved between the freedom given to students and the intervention to keep them on task. Difficulties, whether with studies or personal matters, are quickly picked up and swiftly dealt with. One parent described how a number of staff across the college rallied in support of her son after a particularly traumatic experience. Parents appreciate the close interest taken by senior staff.

41 There is a high-quality careers education and guidance programme. Every student is interviewed, either by the personal tutor or careers staff. The head of careers has devised a well-structured programme which embraces all students and involves all tutors. The careers centre makes clever use of a space recently created in a former corridor adjacent to the library. It houses a comprehensive collection of university materials and appropriate up-to-date software. The college is assisting the University of Aston in the evaluation of a recently-produced guide to higher education recorded on a compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database.

42 Students are well prepared for entry to higher education. Many subject staff maintain contacts with universities by attendance at university open days. All first-year GCE A level students receive individual help and

guidance which culminates in the completion of Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) forms in their second year. A high percentage of students gain a university place. Destinations are carefully monitored and feature prominently in the prospectus. There is very good support for students following the publication of examination results. The help given to those who do not achieve the required grades in the summer demonstrates the commitment of staff who work in holiday time to contact admissions tutors on behalf of students. In 1994, over 100 students received help in this way, and only two had problems which required referral to the careers service. Those not going on to higher education are dealt with on an individual basis by the careers adviser attached to their faculty. The college has recently noted an increase of students in this category.

43 A newly-signed agreement with the Birmingham careers service now guarantees careers education to all students on a one-year course as part of their programme. Careers advisers are also responsible for providing three-fifths of careers interviews. Although the appointment of a clerical assistant in 1993 has reduced the amount of clerical work with which they are involved, the college staff have a demanding schedule of interviews to complete.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

44 The strengths outweighed the weaknesses in 75 per cent of the sessions inspected. The grades awarded during the inspection are shown in the following table.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		12	50	13	2	0	77
GCSE		3	11	9	0	0	23
GNVQ		1	2	2	1	0	6
NVQ		1	0	0	0	0	1
Other		1	5	1	0	0	7
Total		18	68	25	3	0	114

45 The quality of work was particularly high in English and sociology. Major strengths were the dedication and enthusiasm of teachers and students, the use of schemes of work, the imaginative management of teaching sessions and the good integration of theoretical and practical aspects of work. In some areas, project work was used effectively to develop in students a self-confident and independent approach to learning.

46 Students' attendance in class was carefully monitored and reasons for non-attendance were pursued. The reasons for particular students' absence were generally known. Lateness in attending class was generally challenged.

47 In sociology excellent course schemes informed a structured and systematic approach to teaching. Classroom management was effective, a

good range of teaching methods was used and this in turn heightened students' interest in their work. Students demonstrated a high level of analytical skill and were able to grasp complex sociological concepts, including awareness of the pitfalls of sociological research. In history and politics, relations between student and staff were based upon mutual respect. Well-informed teachers gave clear aims to their classes. Second-year students' achievements rested upon the effective work undertaken in their first year. Examination revision sessions were well taught. The quality and extent of students' contributions in class varied. Some weaker students were unable to express their ideas clearly.

48 English classes were well prepared and students experienced a range of learning activities. Teaching was rigorous and perceptive, and students were challenged to advance their understanding. An analysis of a scene from 'Hamlet' led students, working in small groups, to focus on set tasks related to style, character and staging. The high quality of the discussion raised their understanding of the issues involved in staging the scene. Students' experience in English is enriched by regular visits to local theatres and to poetry readings at Birmingham University.

49 In modern foreign languages, lessons were well planned and had clear objectives. Students worked purposefully. In German and Spanish, there were good, detailed schemes of work. The quality of teaching and learning in German owed much to the careful integration of learning resources, including software packages accessed through a computer network. The staff's fluent command of their languages, and the quality of support from foreign language assistants, strengthen the cultural and linguistic experience of students. The foreign language was not consistently used as the medium of instruction. Opportunities to provide support to individual students are limited by the stationing of video facilities inside rooms which are in frequent use for teaching. The inadequate satellite installation does not receive programmes from France.

50 The GNVQ in caring was effectively taught. Students experienced a range of methods of working and assignments were well structured. Work was well focused upon professional needs. However, teaching was primarily addressed to the needs of the less skilful students and as a consequence more able students were not always sufficiently challenged.

51 Business studies staff were enthusiastic and well prepared. They used a wide variety of teaching aids and brought rigour and persistence to their teaching. Question and answer sessions were used to good effect, and students were willing to challenge tutors' arguments. The wide use of computing software through wordprocessing and graphs also helped to strengthen students' understanding of applications. There were, however, variations in the pace of work by groups of a similar level, and there were also some weaknesses in class control. Staff did not always develop topics with sufficient speed. The examples used to illustrate general principles were sometimes not precise enough and this led to some confusion among students.

52 The quality of teaching in art and design was good. It rested upon projects designed to allow students to develop their skills and enable the realisation of their own creative potential. The history of art was

systematically taught and students were also well informed about contemporary art and artists. Many individual art history projects were well researched and well written, and presented in mature and distinctive ways. The quality of work in printing was high, indicating the influence of the professional artist. The department has been successful in winning the Sainsbury Award for print making. Projects in fashion textiles illustrated a lively research approach and students used sewing machines safely and skilfully. In art and design, weaker students were not always encouraged to develop independence and initiative. Greater emphasis on experimental and visual research approaches could assist this. There could have been more emphasis on sculpture and design, including computer-assisted design. The cramped accommodation was beginning to affect the quality of the work particularly in the restriction it imposed on the production of larger scale works.

53 In biology, chemistry and physics, classes were well planned. There were clear objectives for the work and most of these were achieved through appropriate activities. Students' notes were well organised. Practical work was well managed and there was due attention to safety. The high quality of the modern instrumentation in chemistry enabled students to undertake practical and project work not normally available to advanced level students. In a few cases, weak management of the resources to support practical work led to some poorly-organised activities. Relations between staff and students were good. Effective use was made of information research tasks. For example, in chemistry students were required to use a CD-ROM database to search for recent examples of the impact of chlorofluorocarbons on the environment. The response of students to teachers' questions was limited although students taking physics showed a greater willingness to ask questions and to join in discussion. Not all classes achieved their objectives in the planned time.

54 In mathematics, fully-developed schemes of work were shared by staff and students. Information technology skills were well developed in a mathematical context with the regular use of mathematics software. Coursework was used to support the development of research skills. Teachers challenged students to think for themselves and to arrive at their own solutions. Oral skills were developed well. Individual students were asked to explain their mathematics to their colleagues through presentations of solutions on whiteboards.

55 In design technology, the schemes of work were thorough. There were good records of students' progress and well-maintained portfolios of students' work. One interesting project involved the redesigning of the college campus. In another project on an adaptable toy, a student used a computer-controlled lathe to manufacture brass fittings with the computer defining the co-ordinates for the lathe to cut the holes. The suite of classrooms and workshop is well designed to support this work and facilitated the production of some high-quality projects.

56 Work experience advances the learning of students in some curriculum areas. In design technology, physics, chemistry and business administration, placements give students access to different learning environments and to different physical resources which enable them to develop their specialist knowledge and a wide range of personal skills.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

57 Many students, particularly those following GCE A level courses, are successful in achieving their course aims, and there are examples of outstanding individual achievement. In 1993-94, 390 students completed their GCE A level course and of these, approximately 75 per cent went on to higher education. About 8 per cent of those completing courses of all types entered employment. The destinations of about 21 per cent of students were unknown or not systematically collated. Of these, about 11 per cent completed their course. The remaining 10 per cent failed to complete their course. The college has now introduced arrangements to monitor reasons for students leaving early and to follow up destinations more systematically.

58 Students achieve substantial and increasing success in GCE A level examinations. The level of achievement has increased steadily over the past five years. During the same period the number of examination entries has increased from 720 to 1,155. In each of the past three years overall pass rates have exceeded the national averages for sixth form colleges, although the percentage of students obtaining A and B grades is slightly below that obtained nationally. Students aged 16-18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1993-94 scored, on average, 4.8 points (where A=10 and E=2). This places the college among the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. Twenty-five per cent of students obtained four or more GCE A levels. In 1994, there were pass rates of 100 per cent in Chinese (one student), computing (32), media studies (32), physics (37), Spanish (five), sports studies (21), and textile design (15). In 1993, 100 per cent pass rates were obtained in design and media studies.

59 GCE A level examination results are subjected to analysis by the Advanced Level Information System which predicts grades on the basis of students' GCSE achievement. On this basis, students are achieving on average one grade higher than would be expected from their GCSE scores. Achievement varies with the subject, with students in chemistry, physics, computer studies and design achieving particularly well but those in business studies less well in two consecutive years. The college carries out an analysis of GCE A level results by gender and ethnicity. This shows that in some years students of Indian and Pakistani origin achieve markedly higher grades than might be expected from their GCSE results in comparison with white students. There are also substantial, but not consistent, variations in the achievement of male and female students in successive years.

60 Students' achievements in GCSE examinations vary widely between subjects and across years. Over the three years 1992-94, the pass rates for grades A-C varied from 100 per cent in German in 1992 and 1994 to 9 per cent in geography in 1993. Overall grade A-C pass rates in GCSE examinations have declined over the past five years from 65 per cent in 1990 to 57 per cent in 1994. The number of entries has declined over the same period from 678 to 591. However, overall pass rates at grade A-C remain above the national average for sixth form colleges.

61 The most popular GCSE subjects are English and mathematics. In mathematics, grade A-C pass rates over the past three years have been 51 per cent (1994), 42 per cent (1993) and 46 per cent (1992). In English the corresponding pass rates were 63 per cent, 80 per cent and 80 per cent. Some subjects regularly achieve pass rates in excess of 60 per cent including accounting, art and design, English, English literature, French, geology and media studies. In others, including chemistry, craft, design and technology, geography, physical education and physics, there have been marked fluctuations from year to year with poor pass rates in some years. The college has identified the improvement of GCSE results as an area for development.

62 The college undertakes an analysis of GCSE results to show the gain in grades A-C and the cumulative achievement of each student. It puts particular emphasis on the four passes at grade A-C which is the normal entry requirement for GCE A level study at the college or for GNVQ advanced courses. In 1994, 58 per cent of students had a total of four or more grade A-C passes compared with 47 per cent in 1993. The analysis of achievement by students on GCSE courses has caused the college to increase the entry requirement for these courses.

63 There are a small number of students on vocational courses, and they are achieving good levels of success in examinations. Students following business administration courses achieved a pass rate of 95 per cent across all examinations in 1994. Of the 10 students who entered the BTEC first diploma in 1993, nine achieved the award.

64 Students show a high level of application to their studies and gain a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Coursework is of an appropriate standard and standards are notably high in English, sociology, art, and design and in the project and work experience reports in the sciences. Some written work, for example in history and politics, business administration and social care showed weaknesses in spelling and grammar. Students have varied opportunities to develop oral skills in classes. In some subjects, including business studies and physics, student participation was encouraged and students developed oral skills with confidence. In other subjects, including some chemistry, biology and modern language classes, students showed less confidence and in modern languages there was some reluctance to use the language being learned in pair work and in general class interaction. In practical subjects, students develop the ability to work safely and competently.

65 Many students are acquiring skills in information technology as part of their course of study. There is a well-managed induction programme which ensures that all students have some experience of computers. Students use a range of information technology equipment in media studies and in English there is wordprocessing of coursework on all courses. Mathematics students make good, regular use of the information technology facilities available, although there are no class sets of graphical calculators and a shortage of mathematics software. There is good use of information technology in design including the application of computer-aided design and manufacture. Business studies students make wide use of the college's computing software ranging from wordprocessing to

graphics. Science students have access to computers in the laboratory. In physics students use an extensive range of data-logging and computer-interfacing equipment and in chemistry there is modern instrumentation with integrated computers. In history and politics, students' awareness of, and ability to use, information technology are limited. The use of information technology by sociology students is very patchy. In art, more extensive use could be made of computer-related imagery.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

66 At present, there is no overall strategy for quality assurance. Procedures are not fully developed and procedures which exist are not always operated. There is a draft policy on quality which is succinct and covers the relevant areas. There is also a commitment to improve the provision through the department, faculty and senior management group meetings, where review of provision does occur. There is regular collection of examination statistics, retention rates and data on student progression but the analysis which takes place is not set against any specific criteria.

67 The National Charter for Further Education has been distributed to all members of staff. Staff are aware of the charter's content, but its purpose and significance are still to be fully appreciated. There have been delays in the preparation of the college's own charter which has only been produced recently. This has been circulated to the staff for consultation but at the time of the inspection students had not been consulted. Eventually, the charter will be presented to the corporation for consultation and approval. The student body will receive a copy of the college charter after this consultation occurs. Some information pertinent to the charter is available in the students' diary.

68 The college has a designated assistant principal for quality assurance who is providing a valuable lead. A quality group based on membership from the faculties has been established to examine, advise and develop college-wide criteria on quality issues. The college has attempted to raise awareness through a training day on quality and to maintain this impetus through the quality group. There are no minutes available from the three meetings of this group. They have produced a report which is the basis for the college's charter, as well as a thorough, and competent analysis of students' evaluation of enrolment and induction procedures. The strategic plan indicates that the quality group will also monitor performance in relation to the college charter.

69 College staff are committed to providing students with an educational experience of a high quality. The concern to raise standards of students' experience and achievement is demonstrated in the continuing improvement in GCE A level results. Some targets have been set, for example, for enrolments and entry requirements, and the college management and staff share a common interest in achieving them. Departmental, faculty and senior management group meetings discuss and monitor progress. Their findings and analysis are recorded in minutes, but there is no common format for their presentation, the content is variable and there is no indication if action is taken. At this stage the achievement and monitoring of standards follows no distinct policy or procedures and is dependent upon the emphasis a department decides to place upon it.

70 Reports from examining bodies are circulated to the staff, but action stemming from these reports relies upon the initiative of departments. There is no college monitoring to see if action is taken. Effective use is made of the Advanced Level Information System to provide comparisons on performance between departments and other institutions in the Advanced Level Information System sample. As a result of a survey, modular courses in science have been introduced, leading to improvements in examination performance and an increase in student numbers. The college proposes to implement a more cohesive approach to the use of Advanced Level Information System data.

71 A major focus for quality monitoring could be the college's policy of department annual reviews. These took place up to 1992. They did not take place in 1993 and only a small number of reviews were conducted in 1994. The college aims to reinstate this process in 1995. Without these reviews, the college has no overall system to evaluate and appraise course and department performance, equal opportunities and other developments and issues. The library conducts an effective review of students' use of the library and their levels of satisfaction with the provision. This forms a useful base for the development of policy.

72 There has been no staff appraisal and no appraisal training of staff since incorporation. The college intends to remedy this situation by using the Birmingham teachers' appraisal scheme and there has been wide consultation with the staff. A policy for staff appraisal is to be put before the college corporation. The target for the start of appraisal is September 1995.

73 At present, there are no formal procedures for the induction of new staff. At an informal level useful help and assistance is offered, but not in any systematic way. In the operating plan, there is a commitment to formalise and develop staff induction procedures with particular reference to newly-qualified teachers by June 1995.

74 A strong link exists between the college's strategic plan and staff development. There are well-established and clear procedures for assessing development needs based on the requirements of departments, faculties and the college. The programme for meeting needs is well structured and effective. The college is keen to support the professional development of individual teachers. Monitoring and systematic evaluation of staff development is undertaken through the faculty and the professional development group.

75 The college has completed a self-assessment report on its own quality using the seven headings from Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. There has been a decision by the college not to provide grades for the report. Strengths are indicated, but weaknesses have been replaced by the term, 'areas for development'. In the main, the points of the report accord with the findings of the inspection although the interpretation of some strengths is generous and the areas for development are not as clearly defined as they might be.

RESOURCES

Staffing

76 Staff are well qualified and experienced for the courses they teach. The development of vocational courses in social care, has created a need for vocationally-trained staff. In business studies, there will be a need to broaden the range of available expertise if it is to match the planned expansion of courses. In its appointment and deployment of teaching and support staff, the college has responded appropriately to changing requirements. Further teaching staff have been appointed in expanding curriculum areas; extra counselling staff have been appointed following a pilot year which identified the need for additional staff; and further technicians have been appointed for information technology and in the library. More technician hours have been allocated to science in response to increased laboratory provision and student numbers. New job descriptions have been developed for clerical staff and, following a recent review, extra staff have been appointed. There has been a small increase in the proportion of part-time staff to give greater flexibility in responding to change. Staff development is used to meet new course needs where new staff cannot be appointed.

77 An internal audit report on staff planning was produced in April 1994. It identified the need to establish a rolling, costed plan linked to the college's strategic plan. The target date for completion of this plan is Easter 1995. The report also recommended that support staff should be included within the plan. The college accepted the audit report.

78 There are 64 full-time teaching staff and 11 part-time teachers (5.8 full-time equivalent). There are approximately equal numbers of male and female staff although women are not well represented in the senior posts. Only one of the six senior managers and one of the six heads of faculty is female.

79 The college uses students to teacher ratios to measure how efficiently it is using its staff. It has achieved efficiency gains in staffing by limiting the number of new staff posts as student numbers have increased. The average size of classes has increased so far without loss of quality or achievement. There are substantial variations in average teaching group size between faculties from 17.7:1 in science to 12.2:1 in design. It is intended to reduce the variations by increasing student recruitment in areas where the ratio is low. Although some teaching groups have reached the capacity of the rooms they occupy, there remain a number of teaching groups of less than 10 students in several subjects including music, home economics, geology, textiles/fashion, design, dance and engineering. The college wishes to retain the breadth of its curriculum and has recognised that action will be needed to compensate for these low numbers.

80 All members of the senior management team have teaching commitments. In two cases they are in excess of 10 hours per week. An internal audit report has recommended that these commitments should be reduced but the college remains committed to the principle that all managers should undertake some teaching.

81 There are 10 full-time and eight part-time support staff. All of the part-time staff and 70 per cent of the full-time staff are female. The support staff provide an effective and much appreciated contribution to the college's work. However, the provision of technician staff is inadequate in science. The absence of technician staff in art places additional burdens on teachers and has an adverse effect in some subjects, notably ceramics.

Equipment/learning resources

82 Equipment to support teaching and learning is good in quality and in quantity. The engineering technology department is well resourced with a wide range of equipment and materials including a modern car and a recently-purchased computer-controlled lathe. The equipment available in the chemistry, physics and biology departments is adequate for the courses taught but expansion will put increasing pressure on the use of some items. The chemistry department has acquired some impressive modern instrumentation which enables students to gain an understanding of certain techniques currently used in higher education and industry. It has proved particularly useful in the extended study modules of the GCE A level course. Satellite facilities in the modern languages department are limited. They are not accessible to students and offer no facility for recording off air.

83 There is no college-wide policy for the maintenance or replacement of equipment. The college has a complete inventory of equipment at incorporation and is taking steps to implement a register of assets purchased since incorporation with a value in excess of £500.

84 The library is well managed but facilities for private study are insufficient to meet the demand at peak times. There are insufficient library-based computer network stations to meet the growing demand. CD-ROMs are limited in number but their range is impressive. A manual system operates for recording usage and loans. This will be replaced by a new computerised system in the near future. Student librarians support the library staff during break times. The library has a budget of £15,900 which is being spent on increasing the number of library books. Currently the library has 12,000 volumes. Students receive a good induction to the library and its services, including careers and information technology. The library also contributes to induction for media, GNVQ and Spanish. Staffing and library opening times are adequate. Contact between faculties and the library are developing well through the library committee.

85 The college has invested £25,000 per year over the past five years on good-quality information technology equipment and software. The number of computers available for students to use in their own time is inadequate in a college of over 1,000 full-time students, of whom one-sixth have private study periods at any one time. Many machines are housed within teaching areas: some staff permit these to be used while tuition continues, but this is not ideal. A computer workshop is available on open access to students at limited times during the week, when tuition is available on specific topics. At other times, the room can be booked for class teaching and this limits student access further. A fuller use of audit software would assist in the calculation of computer availability and the possible relocation of

infrequently-used workstations. The information technology committee has set itself a number of tasks which include increasing the accessibility of existing computers to students. The college is working towards providing one computer for every 10 students. A recent survey of staff identified a need for training and development that reflects the increasing demands for information technology throughout the college.

Accommodation

86 The college buildings are well maintained and form one complex on a single site. The entrance hall offers a welcoming atmosphere and the internal decor is to a high standard. Many rooms and corridors are carpeted and there are a number of areas for seating throughout the college. The standard of cleanliness within the premises is high. Examples of students' work and information on courses are displayed imaginatively throughout the college. A continuous working day with staggered breaks has resulted in more efficient use of classrooms and eased peak demands on the refectory and communal areas.

87 The college manages the resources of the buildings and estate efficiently, and reviews requirements regularly. The college has contracted out most of its estate maintenance. Building maintenance is at present driven by need, although advice is being sought on future arrangements for a scheduled upkeep of buildings. An independent caterer has been engaged to manage the refectory which, together with the kitchen, has recently been extensively refurbished.

88 The general accommodation is satisfactory for its purpose and provides an attractive and supportive learning environment. The management make good use of the data available on room use and occupancy. Class sizes have put pressure on the use of some rooms.

89 An accommodation strategy is under consideration by the college. This acknowledges the extra pressure which increased student numbers have placed on existing classroom space, specialist teaching/learning facilities and social/recreational areas. It involves the minor re-modelling of existing accommodation and includes plans for the conversion of the hall into a suite of classrooms, study areas and extra toilet facilities. This will keep pace with the college's planned increase in numbers of 8 per cent next September, but will not solve the problem of overcrowding in communal areas.

90 The well-developed design suite consists of a drawing/drafting room that is adequately equipped and has good illumination. The main studio is untidy, and would benefit from some reorganisation to improve its potential and increase the amount of storage for students' work. The growth in student numbers has created exceptional demand for science laboratory accommodation which is just being met. The laboratories themselves are generally satisfactory. There are limited facilities for scientific technicians. The accommodation for GNVQ care is inadequate; the area lacks a large room to support learning. The language laboratory is too small for nine of the 15 teaching groups, forcing teachers to split groups if they wish to give students access to this facility. There is a good size lecture theatre.

91 Wheelchair users do not have access to all areas of the site. The college has no lifts and this restricts access to the upper floors of one block. The college is developing policies through a working party to improve access within acceptable financial constraints.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

92 The strengths of the college are:

- the quality of teaching and learning
- students' substantial and increasing success in GCE A level examinations
- the close relations with local schools
- the well thought-out strategic plan
- the governors' active involvement and support for the college
- the good working relationship which exists between governors and the senior management of the college
- the high-quality recruitment, guidance and support for students
- the involvement of all staff in the process of recruitment, guidance and support
- effective schemes of work
- well-qualified and experienced teaching staff
- the quality of equipment
- the quality of the accommodation.

93 If the college is to raise standards further, it should:

- develop a college strategy for quality assurance
- advance the college charter
- review the amount of teaching undertaken by senior managers and those with cross-college functions
- improve some aspects of the quality of liaison between employers and the college
- extend the collection of data on student destinations
- reduce overcrowding in some accommodation
- improve students' access to information technology.

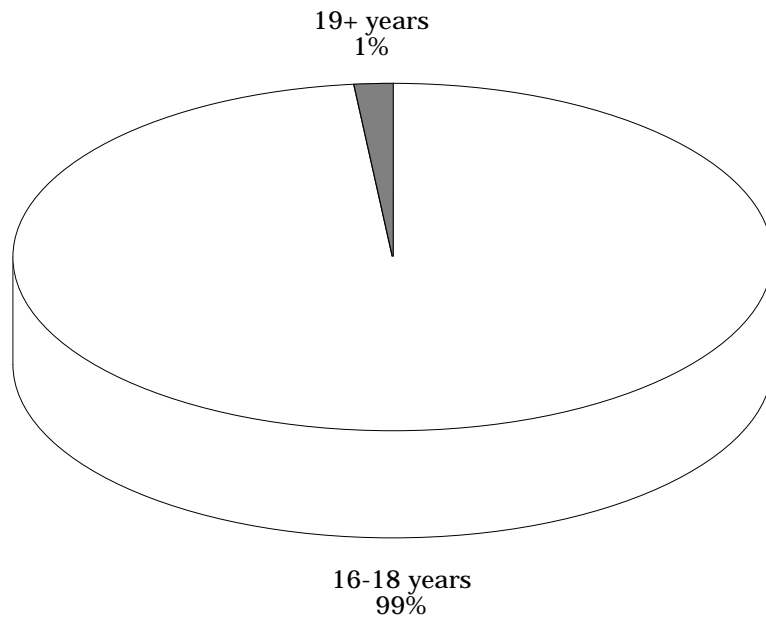
FIGURES

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| 1 | Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95) |
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| 3 | Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95) |
| 4 | Staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95) |
| 5 | Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995) |
| 6 | Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995) |
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Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

Figure 1

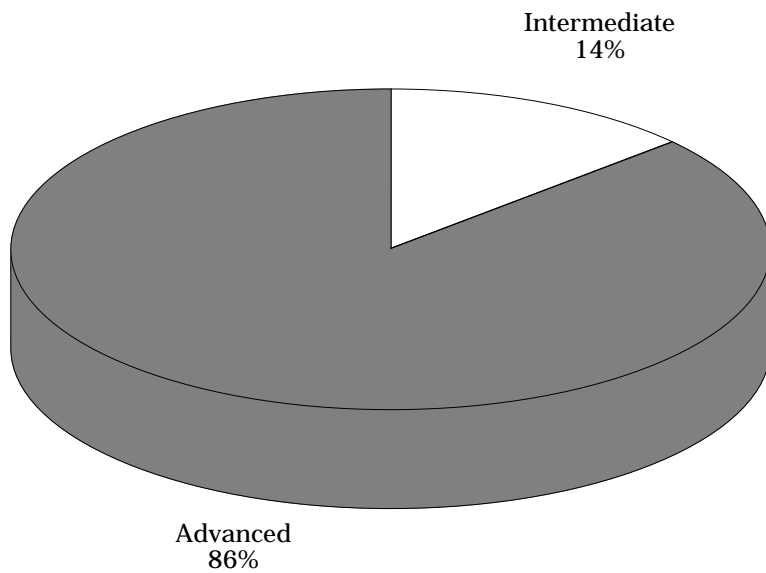
Cadbury Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)



Enrolments: 1,149

Figure 2

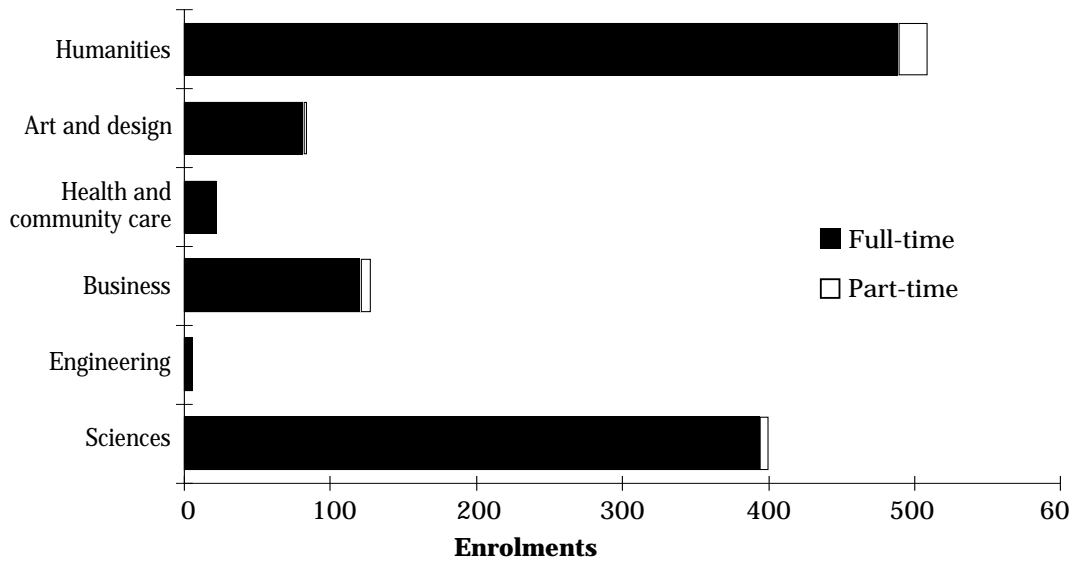
Cadbury Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 1,149

Figure 3

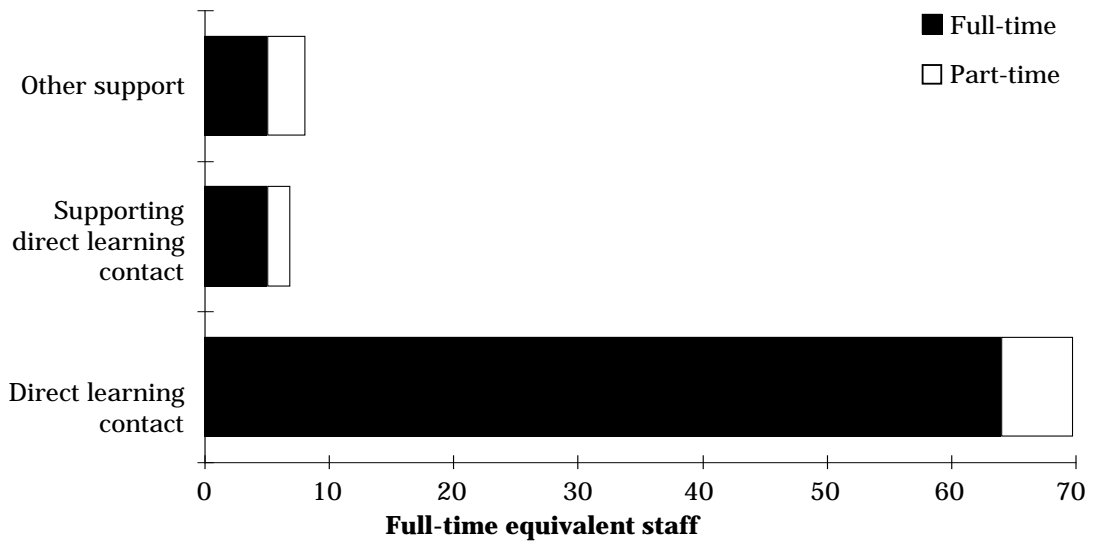
Cadbury Sixth Form College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 1,149

Figure 4

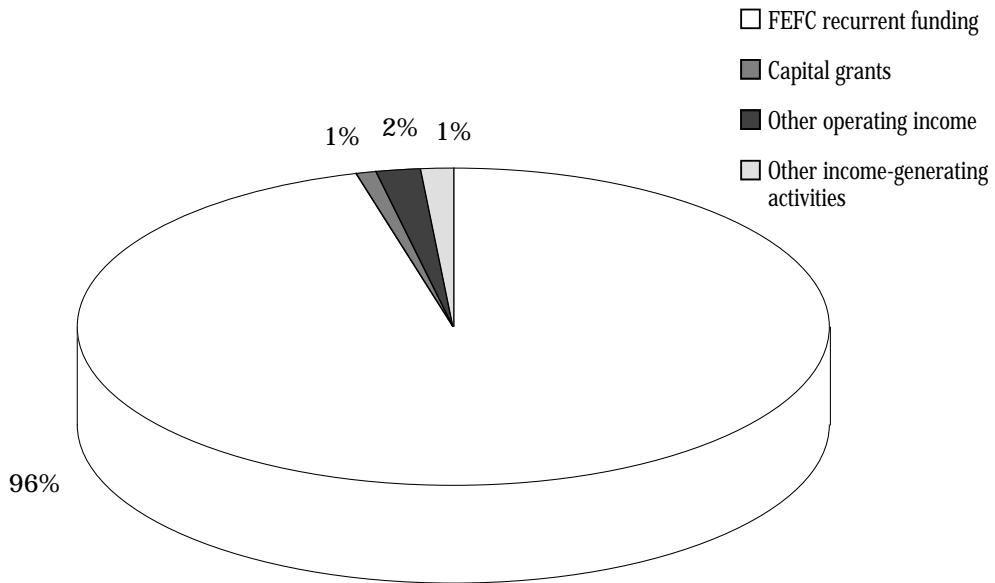
Cadbury Sixth Form College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 85

Figure 5

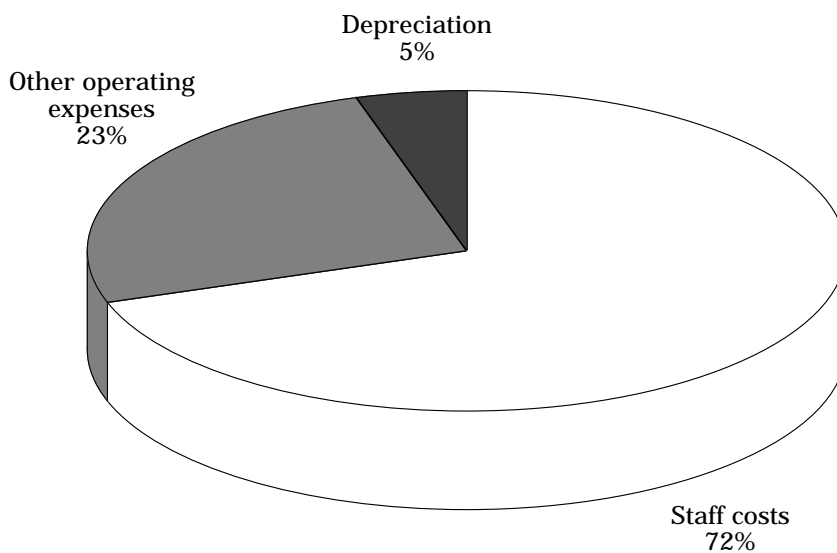
Cadbury Sixth Form College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated income: £2,878,000

Figure 6

Cadbury Sixth Form College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated expenditure: £2,861,000

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