

Cardinal Newman College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
2000-01

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) 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 inspects other further education provision funded by the FEFC. In fulfilling its work programme, the inspectorate 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.

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1999-2000, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	6	44	44	7	0
Cross-college provision	9	45	38	8	0

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

Sample size: 112 college inspections

Note: percentages subject to rounding

Student Achievements

Where data on student achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in three ways:

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1996, would appear in the results for 1997-98 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not included.

Summary

Cardinal Newman College

North West Region

Inspected December 2000

Cardinal Newman College is a designated Catholic sixth form college in Preston. The college produced a detailed self-assessment report. It was prepared through the college's existing quality assurance system and was validated by a grading panel, which included external representatives. The self-assessment process involved all teachers and staff providing cross-college services. Inspectors found the self-assessment report helpful when preparing for the inspection. In general, the inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They considered, however, that the significance of some strengths and weaknesses had been overestimated and that some weaknesses had been overlooked.

Inspectors agreed with the college's grades for two out of four of the curriculum areas, and for three out of five of the areas of cross-college provision.

The college offers courses in seven of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Provision in three of these was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. The college provides a wide range of programmes, including those leading to vocational certificates for 16 to 19 year olds, and courses for adult students. It is the college's mission to meet the educational needs of all members of society. Most courses are well managed. There is much good teaching. The proportion of lessons graded 1 and 2 was above the national average and more

lessons were awarded these grades than at the last inspection. On several courses, examination results have been consistently good and they improved further in 2000. On some level 2 and 3 courses, however, student achievement rates are low. Student achievement and retention rates on short courses are good. Staff provide excellent support for students at all levels. The college's core values are promoted through the student support services and through exemplary teaching in religious education. There are good links with Catholic and non-Catholic high schools. The accommodation strategy has proved effective and the accommodation has been improved since the last inspection. The college took quick and effective action to repair and rebuild sections of the college damaged by fire. Quality assurance arrangements have been improved since the last inspection. Governors demonstrate a clear commitment to helping the college to succeed and monitor students' achievements effectively. The college is managed in an open and consultative way. The college's distinctive Catholic identity is maintained and nurtured. The college should address: some declining retention and achievement, particularly on some level 3 programmes; students' poor attendance at key skills sessions; the inaccessibility of much of its accommodation to students with restricted mobility; lack of consistency in the application of quality assurance; underdeveloped use of performance indicators in governance; some weaknesses in the management processes.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Mathematics, computing and information technology	2	Support for students	2
Business	2	General resources	2
Languages	3	Quality assurance	3
English	2	Governance	2
		Management	3

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Cardinal Newman College is situated close to the centre of Preston. It is a Roman Catholic sixth form college, which was formed in 1978 from the amalgamation of three Roman Catholic grammar schools. The college serves the Dioceses of Lancaster, Salford and Liverpool in providing post-16 Catholic education within central Lancashire. Some of the buildings on the college's main site date from the 1880s. The chapel, formerly part of the convent school, is still used regularly for worship and contemplation and as a venue for large gatherings of students and parents. A sports hall is situated near the main site, and the playing fields are located 4 miles away across the town.

2 The college recruits 20% of its students from disadvantaged areas. The immediate vicinity of the college includes some of the most deprived wards in England. They have been identified as areas where there are skills shortages and low rates of educational attainment at all levels. Across the west Lancashire area as a whole, the participation rate in further education has remained at 65% for the past five years. The percentage of pupils who gained five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects at grade C or above in Lancashire was 49.6%, and this proportion is close to the national average of 48%. The college has nine partner Catholic high schools in Preston and surrounding areas. In recent years, the college has also recruited students from over 40 schools, including special schools. In 2000, 17% of new enrolments are students from minority ethnic groups; 54% of students are Roman Catholic.

3 The range of courses offered by the college has increased substantially in recent years. There has been an increase in the range of advanced level courses and opportunities to study at general certificate of education advanced subsidiary (GCE AS). At advanced

level, the college offers 44 GCE A level subjects, and courses leading to seven general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) or advanced vocational certificates of education (AVCE), the national diploma in childhood studies and the diploma in nursery nursing of the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE). At intermediate level, the college offers 16 GCSE subjects, five GNVQ courses, a first diploma course in care, and the opportunity for students to work towards obtaining sports coaching awards. At foundation level, the college offers three GNVQ programmes. At entry level, the college offers courses accredited by the Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) and these include a course that covers basic skills, has vocational units and provides the students with extensive work experience. Provision for adults ranges from courses in key and basic skills to opportunities to take higher degree courses. Courses for adults that reflect the mission of the college have been developed since 1998 with partner organisations.

4 The senior management team comprises the principal, the deputy principal, the director of studies, the director of human resources, and the director of finance. Responsibility for the curriculum is shared by nine groups managed by the director of studies. Each group covers, respectively, the following areas: key skills, science and mathematics, humanities, performing arts, social sciences, technology, basic skills, vocational programmes and learning resources. Six curriculum leaders, a co-ordinator for basic skills and a centre manager for learning resources manage the nine areas.

5 The mission of the college is 'to provide high-quality further education primarily for Catholic students in Preston and surrounding areas but also for students from other Christian denominations and world faiths who support its ethos. Based on Gospel values, the living traditions and teachings of the Catholic Church and the ideals of Cardinal Newman, the college aims to develop in all its students, the fullness of

Context

humanity as revealed in Jesus Christ'. The college aims to widen participation for all young people of all abilities. The aims are to 'give expression to the college's core values which are based on the spiritual journey of the individual as a whole person, on freedom, justice and equality of opportunity; to contribute to the educational mission of the church to society; to pursue a distinctive quality of education for its students. The college has high aspirations for its students not only in terms of academic excellence but also within the whole field of human endeavour'.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected during the week beginning 4 December 2000. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and reviewed information about the college held by other directorates of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Inspectors studied data on students' achievements derived from the individualised

student record (ISR) for 1998 and 1999. The college provided data for 2000, which were verified by inspectors before the inspection. Ten inspectors and an auditor spent a total of 42 days in the college. Inspectors observed 55 lessons and examined students' work. The inspection team examined documents provided by the college in support of its self-assessment report, and held meetings with college governors, managers, staff and students. In addition, inspectors held meetings with representatives of other interested parties. These included: local Catholic and non-Catholic schools; parents; the Lancaster Diocesan Education Centre; and the local community regeneration trust.

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000. Of the lessons inspected, 64% were judged to be good or outstanding and 7% were less than satisfactory. This compares favourably with the national averages of 62% and 6%, respectively, for all colleges inspected during 1999-2000.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	6	14	7	3	0	30
GCSE	0	2	2	0	0	4
GNVQ	2	2	3	0	0	7
Other vocational	0	5	1	0	0	6
Other*	3	1	3	1	0	8
Total (No.)	11	24	16	4	0	55
Total (%)	20	44	29	7	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000 (%)	17	45	31	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Note: percentages subject to rounding

*includes tutorials and religious education lessons

Context

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Cardinal Newman College	11.1	71
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000	10.3	76

Source for national average: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report

Curriculum Areas

Mathematics, Computing and Information Technology

Grade 2

9 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in mathematics, computing and information technology (IT). They agreed with some of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report but considered that many were overstated. They found additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- close monitoring of students' attendance and progress
- good teaching in most lessons
- high levels of curriculum support for students
- effective curriculum management
- good pass rates on GCE A level mathematics and further mathematics courses

Weaknesses

- poor retention on some courses
- inadequate arrangements for the teaching of IT key skills
- insufficient relevance of IT projects to current industrial practice

10 The college offers a good range of courses in mathematics and IT. Students can progress from a foundation course in mathematics to a GCE A level course. There are 'drop-in' classes for adults in numeracy, GCSE mathematics and basic IT. Students receive learning support outside lessons and this strength was recognised in the self-assessment report and inspectors agreed. In mathematics there is a well-equipped learning centre staffed throughout the week. In IT there are 'drop-in' sessions each day. Students' progress in lessons is monitored carefully. Students who are thought to be falling

behind in their work have to attend learning support sessions. If they fail to attend these, their absence is reported to their tutor. Students are set achievement targets. These are determined by taking into account their educational attainment and GCSE grades when they joined the college. Students' progress towards reaching these targets is monitored through reviews of the students' work and performance. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that curriculum management is good. Each course is reviewed carefully. An overall area development plan specifies course targets and action for improvement. The plan is reviewed twice yearly and progress in implementing it is monitored. Students' views are sought and used effectively. There is an informative handbook for each course. Students sign up to a contract for each subject that specifies their responsibilities and entitlements. Course team meetings are held regularly but some are minuted more thoroughly than others.

11 Inspectors agreed with the college's overall assessment that much of the teaching is good. All lessons are planned thoroughly. There is a standard plan for practical lessons in IT and students are required to set targets for each session and maintain a log of their progress. In a vocational lesson, the students worked together effectively in groups investigating the Catholic ethos of the college and comparing the tenets of their faith with those of other religions. Most lessons are well organised. In some, however, students did not respond well to general questioning, and in mathematics lessons, in particular, the range of learning activities was narrow. The rigidity of the college's timetable makes it difficult for students to have extended lessons in order that they may complete practical projects or extensive mathematical exercises. Apart from mathematical calculators, students make little use of IT equipment in lessons. Handouts for computing courses are well designed with gaps for students to complete and spaces for additional notes.

Curriculum Areas

12 Students' work is of a good standard. Teachers assess students' practical and written work fairly and accurately, but all too often they do not give the students enough detailed feedback on ways of improving their performance. They set students projects and assignments at an appropriate level but in some instances, the briefs for these do not include the criteria against which the students will be assessed. Students' achievements are good on both GCE A level mathematics and further mathematics courses. For the last two years, students' GCE A level achievement rates have been above the national average for sixth form colleges and all students have passed in further mathematics. The student achievement rate in IT was above the national average in 1998 and 1999 but fell below it last year. On GCSE mathematics courses, the retention rates are below the national average but student achievement rates are significantly above it. Student achievement rates on computer literacy and information technology courses are below the national average. The retention rate on the GCE AS course in IT has improved and is now in line with the national average, as is the student achievement rate. Retention rates on

the GCE A level course in IT are well below the national average. Inspectors did not agree with the self-assessment report that some of these retention and achievement rates, and particularly those no higher than the national average, constituted strengths.

13 All classrooms have colourful displays. Computing rooms are well equipped and the hardware and software are suitable for the courses. Staff have developed sets of basic IT workbooks to help students work at their own pace. Most rooms are well laid out but some have insufficient space for books while students are working at the computer. Chairs are not adjustable in height. Library resources are adequate. The use of the college intranet as a learning resource is underdeveloped. Teachers have not developed strong links with industry and few have recent industrial experience. IT assignments and projects are not sufficiently relevant to current industrial practice. Many staff go on training courses but there is no plan to enable staff to update their industrial experience and familiarise themselves with current industrial developments. Staff, however, are well qualified and some have experience as examiners.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in mathematics, computing and information technology, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
Computer literacy and information technology (one-year course)	1	Number of starters	777	823	587
		Retention (%)	91	88	86
		Achievement (%)	37	74	44
GCSE mathematics	2	Number of starters	124	97	136
		Retention (%)	79	72	73
		Achievement (%)	50	58	55
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	Number of starters	*	*	20
		Retention (%)	*	*	70
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100
GCE A level mathematics (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	150	145	107
		Retention (%)	74	63	85
		Achievement (%)	94	99	93
GCE A level IT (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	25	38	23
		Retention (%)	55	63	35
		Achievement (%)	100	100	86
GCE A level further mathematics	3	Number of starters	9	15	15
		Retention (%)	89	60	92
		Achievement (%)	88	100	100

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

*data unavailable

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 2

14 Inspectors observed 11 lessons across the range of business studies courses. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but found additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good pass rates
- much good teaching
- close supervision of students' progress
- well-planned arrangements for providing students with additional learning support
- good specialist resources area
- careful marking of students' work

Weaknesses

- inadequate teaching methods for classes with students of widely varying abilities
- failure of many students to achieve high grades on GCE A/AS level courses
- insufficient use of IT in lessons

15 There is a broad range of business courses for full-time students. This includes GNVQ courses at foundation and intermediate levels and AVCE and GCE A/AS level courses in business and accounting. This year, the college is running a GCE AS accounting course in the evening. Several students combine vocational and academic studies. The small curriculum teams have good opportunities to meet to share the detailed planning and development of learning materials. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the college's self-assessment report that the business open learning centre plays an important role in meeting the needs of individual students by providing them with support in their studies.

16 As the self-assessment report acknowledges, teaching is particularly good. Lesson plans are detailed, specify clear objectives and learning activities that are appropriate and varied. In a well-planned lesson, the students developed their understanding of customer relations through a good range of imaginative activities. The teacher made effective use of students' work experience and tasks were set in a realistic business context. Teachers explain new concepts clearly, relate them to prior learning and question the students effectively to make sure they have understood the lesson. In the best lessons, teachers make the subject matter exciting. They infect the students with their own enthusiasm and make them want to discover more about the topic under discussion. They get on well with the students and expect them to work hard and achieve high standards. Teachers supervise students' progress closely. Teachers set students achievement targets and determine these on the basis of the students' GCSE grades on entering the college. They monitor carefully their students' progress towards reaching these targets. The content and quality of handouts are high. In some less satisfactory lessons, teachers did not give the students enough time to complete classroom activities. In others, all students had to work to the pace of the slowest amongst them. Some students completed tasks quickly, did not find them sufficiently demanding and became bored whilst waiting for others to finish. There are instances where teachers do not check that students adopt sound working practices, such as showing a full calculation, or the units to which a number refers. Students are not always challenged to think, ask questions and use their skills and knowledge to the full. Too few teachers make use of their own and students' experiences at work to relate theory to current business practice.

17 Students' written work is good. It is returned promptly, marked carefully in line with awarding body criteria and teachers give constructive feedback on how students can improve their work. Students are successful in progressing to

Curriculum Areas

advanced courses. In September 2000, seven of the 13 students who obtained a GNVQ at intermediate level moved up to the advanced level course. In the last three years, six students who started at foundation level progressed to advanced level. Pass rates on GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses are significantly higher than the national average for sixth form colleges. In 2000, the pass rate on all GNVQ courses was 100%. Many students achieve high grades on these courses. Pass rates on the GCE A level business studies course have matched or exceeded national averages in each of the last three years though the proportion of students achieving a high grade is small. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that the retention rate on the GCE A level business course is now below the national average.

18 Teachers have recent or updated business experience. Some work as examiners in their subjects. Classrooms are spacious and bright with course-related wall displays. Classrooms are grouped together. An adjacent circulation area is well used as an open learning area, with business related learning materials and IT facilities. Students particularly value having ready access there to teachers and to the specialist subject support tutor. Teachers list relevant television programmes on an information board and encourage students to watch them in order to extend their knowledge. Students have good access to modern IT equipment for their own work. Students on GCE A/AS level courses do not use IT sufficiently in their work. The library has a good range of up-to-date books and computer-based research materials.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in business, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GNVQ foundation	1	Number of starters	*	*	11
		Retention (%)	*	*	73
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100
GNVQ intermediate	2	Number of starters	22	26	20
		Retention (%)	91	*	75
		Achievement (%)	89	*	100
GNVQ advanced	3	Number of starters	22	36	36
		Retention (%)	73	78	72
		Achievement (%)	88	82	100
GCE AS accounting	3	Number of starters	†	†	38
		Retention (%)	†	†	84
		Achievement (%)	†	†	70
GCE AS business	3	Number of starters	†	†	90
		Retention (%)	†	†	89
		Achievement (%)	†	†	94
GCE A level business	3	Number of starters	*	*	65
		Retention (%)	*	*	74
		Achievement (%)	*	*	94

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

*data unreliable

†course not running

Curriculum Areas

Languages

Grade 3

19 The inspection covered provision in French, German and Spanish. Inspectors observed 11 lessons. They agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- much good teaching
- good technical resources in classrooms and adjoining study areas
- introduction to new languages through popular enrichment courses

Weaknesses

- several achievement rates below national averages
- ineffective leadership and management of the department
- below average rates for students' attendance

20 The college offers a range of full-time courses in GCSE, GCE A level and GCE AS French, German and Spanish. Italian and Spanish for beginners are included as options in the enrichment programme and these enable many students to enjoy the chance to learn a new language. GCSE Latin is also available. Staff scrutinise closely examination results, progress reports and students' responses to questionnaires about the quality of their courses, in order to identify aspects of provision that need to be improved. Teachers maintain detailed records on students' progress and achievements but sometimes fail to take action soon enough, or at all, when a student's performance is giving cause for concern. Rapport between staff and students in the classroom is good. In its self-assessment report, the college failed to acknowledge weaknesses in teamwork and in communication between

individual language areas and senior management. Senior managers and staff have not shared general information, and plans for the future of the subject.

21 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there is much good teaching. The college graded more lessons 1 or 2 than the inspectors did. The re-introduction of foreign language assistants and the recent appointment of a support tutor to complement classroom learning are part of the college's strategy to raise students' attainment. Teachers value students' views. They encourage students to express their ideas freely and to judge things for themselves. As the self-assessment states, the students' learning experiences reflect the college's core values, one of which is the freedom of expression and thought. Students' opinions on moral, social and ethical issues are shaped through exploration of well-chosen advanced level topics such as, immigration, multiculturalism, sexism, racism and the environment. The best lessons are well planned. Teachers use a wide variety of tasks and activities to help the students extend their knowledge and develop their skills. The atmosphere in the classroom is calm but productive and students work well together in pairs and groups and give one another strong support and encouragement. Teachers make good use of authentic materials and produce good learning materials. In one French lesson, the students enjoyed a video clip about the life and times of General de Gaulle. The video provided a wealth of information on the General and a very useful stimulus for practising language skills. In some lessons, however, too much English is spoken and students are not given sufficient opportunity to fine-tune their ears to the sound of the foreign language they are learning. They are not enabled to build up their confidence in speaking the language. In their contributions to several different subject reviews, the students have complained about their lack of opportunity in class to speak and listen to the language they are learning. In one

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lesson, for instance, students were merely given the English equivalent of foreign words. The teacher made no attempt to explain the words through mime, gesture or simple use of the foreign language itself. The students' standards of written language are good and teachers emphasise the importance of grammatical accuracy.

22 Teachers mark students' work efficiently and effectively. They regularly provide the students with helpful feedback on their work. Students explore recommended foreign websites for personal research and to improve their language skills. Teachers, however, make inadequate use of the modern technological equipment now available. Students benefit greatly from enrichment activities. These include visits abroad and attendance at the Paris conference for young Europeans. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that student achievement rates on the courses in all three languages vary considerably, and some are poor. The proportion of students obtaining the higher GCE A level grades in all three languages is below the national average for sixth form colleges. The proportion of students gaining grade C or above in GCSE Latin has increased considerably and the retention rate on the GCSE

Latin course is in line with the national average. The proportion of students obtaining grade C or above in GCSE Spanish, however, is extremely low. The self-assessment report identifies students' good attendance as a strength. However, during inspection week, attendance fell below the national average. All too often, students who do not arrive for lessons punctually are not asked to explain why they are late.

23 Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. They are highly fluent in the languages they teach. They provide good support to students and expect high standards from them. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, students express a high degree of satisfaction with their courses. The accommodation for languages is an attractive suite of specialist, well-equipped classrooms. Adjoining, there are good study areas where Internet-linked computers with soundcards are available to students who wish to work on their own. A variety of foreign newspapers and magazines are on display for students to read. There is a generous provision of classroom dictionaries. Students have become proficient in using dictionaries.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in languages, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE Spanish language	2	Number of starters	14	10	9
		Retention (%)	43	20	11
		Achievement (%)	67	0	100*
GCSE Latin	2	Number of starters	17	10	13
		Retention (%)	76	80	38
		Achievement (%)	46	38	80
GCE A level French language	3	Number of starters	29	46	31
		Retention (%)	90	68	79
		Achievement (%)	85	59	91
GCE A level German language	3	Number of starters	3	14	32
		Retention (%)	100	83	70
		Achievement (%)	67	80	79
GCE A level Spanish language	3	Number of starters	16	15	22
		Retention (%)	94	69	57
		Achievement (%)	80	78	33

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

*one student

Curriculum Areas

English

Grade 2

24 Inspectors observed 13 lessons. The inspection covered provision in English language, English literature and communications. The self-assessment report overstated some strengths. Inspectors found additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good GCE A level examination results
- wide range of courses
- good arrangements for giving students additional learning support
- effective group work by students
- new teaching areas with dedicated learning support area for English students

Weaknesses

- below average achievement rate on GCSE English course
- some below average retention rates

25 The college offers two-year, full-time GCE A level courses in communications, English literature, English language and English language and literature. A significant number of students are on the GCSE English course or are retaking the examination. The college is responsive to the needs of its students. Separate GCSE groups are organised for adults, students needing support, and year 11 students. Adult students can study in the new adult learning centre, or at centres in the local community. The department is developing alternative courses leading to examinations other than the GCSE to meet the needs of adult students who wish to progress to more advanced courses. There are effective arrangements for helping students to achieve their potential. Teachers monitor students' progress closely. Students failing to achieve as predicted are given

additional support. Students value the newly developed English and communications support centre. Students refer themselves to it or are referred by their teachers for extra help with coursework.

26 Teaching is good. Teachers are successful in helping the students to achieve a high degree of understanding of the structure of language, the functions of communication and the principles of literary criticism. The students become fully involved in well-organised group work and together they explore key concepts of language and communication. Teachers reflect the distinctive values of the college in their focus on oral work and presentations. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, most lessons are well planned and schemes of work are satisfactory. One complex and absorbing group activity in a communications class involved students in debating what essential equipment should be retained when shipwrecked. Two students acted as observers in each group recording the key points made by various students. The exercise demonstrated the difficulties of securing agreement and provided a real-life example of how groups work together. In a lesson on *Wuthering Heights*, students achieved a high standard of group work. Students considered the book as a potential radio drama, and successfully dramatised a scene of their choice. The students used the language and the text effectively to create the performance. Inspectors did not agree with the finding in the self-assessment report that students benefit from a range of teaching and learning styles. In a minority of instances, the teacher failed to involve all the students in the classroom activity and some were clearly paying little or no attention to the lesson. On their lesson plans, teachers do not always identify the skills to be acquired by the students. The self-assessment report did not identify any weaknesses in teaching and learning.

27 Students' written work is of a good standard. Teachers mark their students' work

Curriculum Areas

thoroughly and provide constructive comments on it. Much of the students' work takes the form of posters, designed by the students in small groups, which are attractively displayed on the classroom walls as an aid to further learning. The students take great care to present information clearly and graphically, using colour, diagrams, photographs and drawings. Groups prepare revision sheets and they shared these with other groups. Teachers provide students with ample opportunity to use materials they produce in English studies as evidence for the communications component of key skills. Groups in one class used their IT skills to produce imaginative revision sheets on the poems of Grace Nicholls. Pass rates in GCE A level subjects are good. In 2000, there was a 100% pass rate in GCE A level English literature. The achievement rate on most GCE A level courses is at, or above the national average for sixth form colleges. The proportion of students achieving grades A to C is above the

national average and shows a steady increase. The self-assessment report overstated the strength of student achievement rates and omitted to identify low retention rates as a weakness. The proportion of students who achieve grades A to C in GCSE English has decreased in the last three years and in 2000, it fell below the national average. Retention rates are below the national average on GCE A level courses in English subjects. Retention rates on GCSE courses have been below the national average for two of the last three years.

28 In February 2000, the English department's facilities were destroyed by fire. Since then, teachers have ensured that students continue to receive good teaching and do well on their courses, particularly at GCE A level. Both teachers and students have had to contend with considerable upheaval while their suite of rooms was refurbished. Many of their resources were lost in the fire.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in English, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE English language (one-year course)	2	Number of starters	66	60	98
		Retention (%)	65	70	81
		Achievement (%)	95	68	46
GCE AS English language	3	Number of starters	8	10	12
		Retention (%)	63	80	91
		Achievement (%)	100	75	100
GCE A level communication	3	Number of starters	*	*	13
		Retention (%)	*	*	67
		Achievement (%)	*	*	86
GCE A level English literature	3	Number of starters	47	55	34
		Retention (%)	74	78	78
		Achievement (%)	89	98	100
GCE A level English language and literature	3	Number of starters	104	92	75
		Retention (%)	70	79	80
		Achievement (%)	93	96	97
GCE A level English language	3	Number of starters	33	39	34
		Retention (%)	61	90	76
		Achievement (%)	100	91	96

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

*course not running

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Support for Students

Grade 2

29 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the report. They found that many of the weaknesses had been rectified but identified a few additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good activities to help school-leavers make the transition to college
- excellent systems for providing learning support
- imaginative teaching of religious education
- extensive range of personal support for students
- good careers guidance

Weaknesses

- poor attendance at the wider key skills sessions
- insufficient help for students seeking employment

30 Students at the college are well supported both academically and personally and they speak about their college with great affection. The college's core values come to life in the friendly and respectful relationships that exist between staff and students, and in the experiences the college offers students, which help them to develop as individuals and fulfil their potential.

31 The college offers a variety of activities tailored to the needs of partner schools to help school pupils make the transition from school to college. In an unusual project, year 7 pupils are able to get an early glimpse of life at a sixth form college during the retreat days offered by the college chaplaincy. The opportunity to sample courses at college is also available for year 10 pupils. The college has taken a number of steps to fulfil its mission to provide a

comprehensive education. It has broadened its curriculum. It has revised its prospectus and has taken pains to ensure it is relevant to people of all abilities. Seventy students act as mentors to school pupils. A group of disaffected pupils in year 11 follow courses at the college.

Recruitment to courses below level 3, however, remains low, at only 10% of the student population. Productive links have been forged with local community groups and the college is successfully attracting a growing number of adult students.

32 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college has developed excellent systems for providing learning support for students at every level. The initial identification of students' needs is careful and thorough. At the beginning of this academic year, staff in the different subject areas replaced the college's standard diagnostic test with their own induction assignments for new students. From the students' performance in these assignments, staff are able to identify students' needs for subject-specific support or more general learning support. The needs of students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also carefully identified and effectively met by the learning support department. The study support centre provides help to individual students or small groups of students. The centre is promoted as a facility that can help students on all levels of courses to work to the best of their ability and succeed. Students value the centre's services. Students also make good use of the adult learning centre.

33 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that each student's overall progress is monitored effectively. All students are allocated a personal tutor who regularly reviews their progress. Students review the extent of the progress they are making and the likelihood of their attaining their target grade in the examination. They agree action points with their tutor for improving their work. A careful record is kept of students' progress reviews and

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the action points in this are clear and specific. During the review process, however, the teacher usually makes most of the decisions and does not allow the student enough scope to carry out his or her own self-assessment. Students whose work or attendance is causing concern are required to enter into a learning contract. This arrangement works well and it aims to help students identified as being at risk of dropping out, to stay on their course. Tutorial sessions were very good. Seven specially appointed guidance tutors carry out the tutorial programme successfully. Excellent materials have been produced. The tutorial team evaluates the programme weekly and makes changes where necessary. Key skills are taught at some tutorial sessions. Staff have not promoted the value of key skills to the students effectively. Since the introduction of tutorial sessions on key skills, and following accommodation difficulties caused by the fire, attendance at tutorials has fallen and is now low. The timetabling of some tutorials is unhelpful to the students. For example, in some instances, tutorials take place during sessions of the day when the students have no other lessons and they have to come in specifically for them, or the tutorials clash with other activities.

34 Students benefit from the wide range of personal support available, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. High schools and the parents or guardians of students aged 16 to 19 are invited to provide information before enrolment in order that the college may help individual students as effectively as possible. After enrolment, their personal tutor acts as first contact when students need support. Students who need specific pastoral support can contact a student service manager or the chaplain or one of the 15 college staff qualified to provide a counselling service. All students have good access to welfare and financial advice and childcare facilities.

35 All staff make every effort to fulfil the college's commitment to provide education that

not only enables the students to succeed academically, but also helps them to develop as individuals and become responsible members of society. The college provides extensive opportunities for spiritual and moral education. All 16 to 19 year-old students follow a programme of religious education. There is excellent teaching on this, which helps students to value quietude and be reflective. Students in year 12, for example, took part in a reconstruction of a case in a magistrate's court. They discussed effectively the connections between the law and justice and explored issues of retribution, reconciliation and forgiveness. The chaplaincy team, which includes students, leads the preparation of liturgies which include daily morning prayer, weekly Mass and services that mark major events in the life of the college and the major feasts of the Church. Students attend a weekly assembly, usually led by the principal. A number of groups in the college are working to promote issues related to justice and peace. These include the college youth group which works with homeless people in the community.

36 Students have good access to specialist careers guidance. The careers education programme is carried out effectively by key skill tutors and by personal tutors. Students and, where appropriate, their parents, receive up-to-date information and advice on higher education and the college provides a well-planned series of activities to help students who aim to progress to university. The self-assessment report, however, failed to acknowledge as a weakness, the college's failure to pay sufficient attention to the needs of students who wish to apply for jobs. In a session on preparing a personal statement, the handouts for students applying for higher education were excellent, but the tutor did not give out the sheet designed for job applicants. Some sessions are not relevant to students seeking employment.

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General Resources

Grade 2

37 Inspectors agreed with the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. Some weaknesses had been rectified by the time of inspection. Inspectors identified additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good teaching areas
- well-designed, subject-based learning support areas
- effective accommodation strategy
- excellent information and learning technology resources
- well-equipped library and learning centre

Weaknesses

- inaccessibility of much of the accommodation to students with restricted mobility
- inadequate student communal and social accommodation

38 The college is located on a compact site set within pleasant grounds, close to the centre of Preston. The main buildings are centred on a Georgian mansion house, which has some interesting architectural features. The St Mary building was built in 1986 for the teaching of science and technology. The college offers a safe and secure environment for its users. The carpeted main reception area is inviting to visitors. The college boasts a distinctive nineteenth-century chapel which is well used as a place of worship, for musical practice and as a meeting place.

39 The college has a clear accommodation strategy. It has made substantial improvements to its accommodation. The age and configuration of the buildings make them difficult to adapt. There has been a substantial

programme of building and refurbishment of teaching and access areas. Teaching accommodation is good. Classrooms are mostly clean and tidy and in good condition. Action to make more efficient use of underused areas has proved successful. Good use has been made of available resources to create a bright and cheerful atmosphere. In particular, there has been innovative conversion of wide corridor areas into well-designed, subject-based learning support areas. Dramatic colour schemes and use of display materials make these areas attractive, whilst maintaining the character of the building. Students value these resource areas and use them a great deal. In February 2000, a fire caused extensive damage to the English teaching and resource areas. Teaching continued in temporary accommodation, and disruption to the students' work and progress was kept to a minimum. The newly rebuilt accommodation is of good quality.

40 The inaccessibility of most of the college to people with restricted mobility was not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. The college's accommodation strategy acknowledges that the inaccessibility of the accommodation to people with restricted mobility, makes it difficult for the college to recruit more students who are physically disabled. The location of all library stocks on the first floor prohibits access for students with disabilities but staff will fetch materials as requested. Building work is currently in progress to provide lift access to upper floors in the main building but this will increase access to people with restricted mobility to only 40% of the college.

41 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that there has been a considerable increase in the number of computers linked to the college's academic network. Computers giving access to the Internet are readily available to students. There is a good ratio of computers to students. Computers are well used by students. In some

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subject areas, little has been done to make the use of IT integral to teaching and learning. Feedback from students shows that on an average day, 60% of students use computers. Development and upgrading of the management information system network is behind schedule. The college intranet is in early stages of development.

42 The library and learning centre are well equipped and well managed. There is seating for 164 students and 39 computers are available to students. The library and learning centre are open from Monday to Friday. Evening opening has been introduced twice a week to meet the needs of adults in evening classes.

Arrangements are made for the library and learning centre to open at key times during college vacations. There are clear guides available to students on the resources in place. There is a computerised database of stock in the library and learning centre but this has not always proved reliable. At the time of the last inspection, the learning resources held in the subject learning support areas elsewhere in the college were not included in the library and learning centre database and are still not included in it.

43 There are inadequate student social facilities, a weakness not identified by the college in its self-assessment report. Social facilities are very limited. The student common room is inadequate and is heavily congested at peak times. The college dining area is too small for the current number of students and is congested at break times. A staggered lunch break has been introduced and goes some way to reduce the congestion. Teachers have adequate work areas which are close to their classrooms. There is a computer in each staff work area.

44 A good range of activities is offered in the sports hall which is located some distance from the college. It is used for both teaching and for recreational activities. A minibus is available to

transport groups of students to it. There is a large sports field with a pavilion some distance from the college. Two football pitches are currently having drainage work carried out on them. Changing facilities for female students have recently been made available in the pavilion.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

45 Inspectors broadly agreed with the self-assessment report but identified a few additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good quality assurance process
- useful self-assessment in curriculum areas
- good management of staff development
- effective co-ordination of vocational programmes

Weaknesses

- inadequate arrangements for moderating quality assurance judgements
- inadequate quality assurance arrangements for support functions
- lack of consistency in the application of quality assurance
- no complaints procedure

46 There has been a significant improvement in quality assurance arrangements since the last inspection. There is a clear management commitment and good support from staff to establish effective quality assurance procedures. The college has identified the improvement of quality assurance arrangements and the overall improvement in the quality of provision as key strategic objectives. Self-assessment is central to the quality assurance system. The quality assurance system has been successfully developed over the last three years and is now

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well established in curriculum areas. A quality audit system has been introduced in curriculum areas, which includes lesson observations. Course teams complete an end-of-year review, which includes an analysis of students' achievements. Since the last inspection, course reviews have become more rigorous and course teams now analyse student retention and achievement rates more closely. The findings from these reviews are taken into account during the self-assessment of the relevant curriculum area. Evidence for determining strengths and weaknesses is also drawn from students' responses to questionnaires. Targets for student retention and achievement rates are set by each course team and compared with national averages.

47 The quality assurance system is implemented with greater thoroughness, and has more impact in some areas of the college than others. There is little systematic monitoring of the effectiveness of cross-college policies. Each curriculum area has a high degree of autonomy and there are few common criteria across the college for judging the quality of provision, and few specified standards for the college's services. There is no detailed specification on the way course reviews should be carried out. Decisions at some course team meetings are recorded more thoroughly than at others. Some course teams follow up action points more rigorously than others. Some vocational programmes are co-ordinated well and have common arrangements for documentation, internal verification and implementation of the recommendations made in the external verifiers' reports.

48 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the college's self-assessment report that the system of internal inspection of curriculum areas is useful and effective. This inspection mainly involves observation of lessons, but includes a review of students' achievements, the self-assessment process and progress in implementing action plans. All teachers are

observed over a two-year cycle. Lessons are graded and teachers receive verbal feedback and a written report. Teachers support the arrangements and find the observations useful and helpful. Inspectors graded more lessons 1 and 2 than the inspectors did at the last inspection. Pass rates on many courses have improved in recent years. There is insufficient external review, a weakness not identified by the college. There are no formal arrangements for moderating the grades of lesson observations or for spreading good practice. Links with other colleges are underdeveloped. Through their observation of lessons, college staff graded more lessons 1 or 2 than the inspectors did.

49 The quality assurance system for support functions is underdeveloped. This weakness is recognised in the self-assessment report and senior managers have plans to rectify it. Standards of service have been specified recently for some student support functions but not for all college services. There is, however, no audit system for checking that requisite standards of service are attained. Some support areas issue questionnaires to gather users' views on the services provided. Questionnaires, however, are not used systematically across the college. Self-assessment is at an early stage of development in some support areas.

50 All students have the college charter explained to them when they join the college. Little further reference is made to the charter during their course and students are vague about their entitlements. There is no formal complaints system and complaints are not recorded and analysed. Students, however, are asked to reply to questionnaires about the extent to which the college honours the commitments it makes in its charter. Students are also asked to respond to questionnaires about the quality of their courses. In some instances, their responses lead to changes and improvements in the courses. The student council and student assemblies also receive students' views on the college's provision. Students are given little

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formal feedback on action taken on their responses to questionnaires, and on their complaints.

51 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the college promotes staff development. The college has been recognised as an Investor in People. There is a clear annual plan for staff development and its objectives are linked to the college's strategic objectives. The staff development policy applies to all college staff, including part-time employees. New teachers receive an appropriate induction to the college and are allocated a mentor. All staff have an annual professional development review meeting with their line manager to identify their individual training needs. Staff say they find this process useful and helpful and action points decided at their review meetings are followed through, where appropriate. All reasonable requests for training are met. Examples of recent training programmes include those on the use of computers, counselling, curriculum 2000 developments and dealing with disaffected students. Staff who receive training evaluate it. Line managers, however, carry out little formal evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of staff training.

Governance

Grade 2

52 Inspectors and auditors mainly agreed with the college's assessment of governance. They found some weaknesses, however, the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- governors' effective support for the college's catholic mission and distinctiveness
- governors' broad range of skills
- the corporation's strong links with the community

- full involvement by governors in determining the strategic direction of the college
- close monitoring of the students' academic performance
- governors' effective self-assessment of the corporation's performance

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of performance indicators
- failure to review the effectiveness of the college charter
- insufficient rigour in the arrangements for the principal's appraisal

53 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. The board of governors 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.

54 The governors strongly support the catholic mission and distinctiveness of the college, which is managed in accordance with the practices and doctrines of the Catholic Church as required by the instrument and articles of government. The board of governors has a determined membership of 20 which consists of the principal, 12 foundation governors, one local authority governor, two elected staff, two parent governors and a recently appointed student governor. There is one vacancy for a co-opted governor. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report, that collectively, the governors have a broad range of skills and experience. The experience of individual governors in accountancy, education, business and public service is put to good use in helping the college with various aspects of its work. Governors have significant links with, and knowledge of, the local community.

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55 A comprehensive induction and training programme has been introduced recently. Governors' record of attendance at board and committee meetings is good. The board meets at least termly. There are 10 committees and of these, the following meet most frequently: finance and premises, chair's forum, curriculum quality and standards, staffing and remuneration, and audit. The board of governors has established a search committee and an appeals committee should they be required in the future. Each has approved terms of reference. The audit committee has operated largely in accordance with its terms of reference and the requirements of Council Circular 98/15, *Audit Code of Practice*. The finance and premises committee and the board of governors monitor the financial position of the college each term. Governors have expressed concerns that they do not receive monitoring information frequently enough and when they want it.

56 The chair's forum brings together the chair of the committees and the strategic management team. This has now been formalised with its own terms of reference and acts as a strategy group. There is a well-qualified, experienced and independent clerk. As his job description states, he is directly accountable to the chair of the board of governors, who has recently appraised him. Corporation and committee meetings are appropriately scheduled. Minutes are kept and distributed promptly. Corporation agendas are sent out in good time but governors and the clerk have expressed concern at the lateness of some papers that are provided for meetings.

57 There is a clear distinction between governance and management. The board of governors is involved effectively in giving strategic direction to the college and has played a full part in determining the distinctiveness of the institution. Together with the strategic management team, the governors decide what the college's strategic objectives shall be.

Through its committees, the corporation monitors progress in fulfilling these objectives.

58 The board of governors conducts its business openly. Minutes of board and committee meetings are available at the college's reception desk and in the college library. Their availability is advertised. The board of governors has adopted a code of conduct and formal standing orders to guide the conduct of board and committee meetings. It has approved a 'whistleblowing' policy but has not yet developed a policy for dealing with alleged irregularities. Governors, together with staff who have significant financial responsibility have completed the register of interests.

59 Governors monitor their own performance effectively, a strength identified by the college. Two additional meetings of the board of governors are specifically convened for this purpose. Self-assessment of governance now forms part of the college's overall self-assessment and quality assurance system. Governors have yet to determine performance indicators that relate specifically to the corporation. The recently reformed curriculum, quality and standards committee closely monitors the students' academic performance. Governors approve targets and discuss areas of concern related to student retention and achievement rates. Governors do not carry out any formal review of the effectiveness of the college charter. They do not receive reports or monitor issues relating to complaints or equal opportunities. Communication between governors and staff is good, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Governors show their support for the college by attending a range of college events. In addition to meeting with the student governor, the chair meets with the students' council. Recently, a governor was nominated to be a link governor and ensure close liaison between the corporation and the student body. Issues students raise in discussion at meetings of the college's chaplaincy group are fed back to the governors.

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60 The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge as a weakness, the unsatisfactory arrangements for appraising the principal's performance. The appraisal of the principal has not been carried out adequately, or with sufficient rigour. The principal's performance is not judged against progress towards the achievement of specific targets.

Management

Grade 3

61 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They found other strengths and weaknesses, however, the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- effective development of the college's distinctive Catholic identity
- good communications throughout the college
- thorough implementation of good personnel policies and procedures
- purposeful and effective links with the community

Weaknesses

- gaps in management processes
- inadequate management information services
- some poor retention and achievement rates
- insufficient promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities

62 The college's strategic aims, objectives and operating statements all reflect the college's mission and distinctive Catholic ethos. The clear management structure is well understood by staff at all levels. Appropriate committees and working groups have been established to manage cross-college issues such as the

developing range of adult and community education courses. Communications are effective; briefing notes and newsletters summarise information and discussions from staff briefings. There is an appropriate meetings' schedule. Most staff are well informed about key developments in the college.

63 Senior managers consult widely within the college on strategic aims and objectives. Current marketing information is taken into account in strategic planning. Operational plans are clearly linked to strategic objectives. Some aspects of management, however, are unsatisfactory and some management processes are not carried out in full. For example, detailed business planning is not an integral part of the planning of new initiatives, such as the college's recently introduced adult and community education programme. There are weaknesses in some aspects of curriculum management, and some staff are uncertain of the relationship between quality assurance and planning. Although student achievement and retention rates have improved in some curriculum areas, management strategies have not been successful in preventing an overall decline in student retention rates on intermediate and advanced level courses. On intermediate level courses, student achievement rates have also declined and are now below the national average for sixth form colleges. The college did not identify these weaknesses in its self-assessment report.

64 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The college has achieved operating surpluses in two of the last three years, and surpluses are planned over the next two years. There are general reserves of £1 million. Management accounts are produced each quarter and presented to governors and managers. They include an appropriate commentary on current spending but do not include forecasts of income and expenditure or the cash position of the college.

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The strategic management team does not receive these reports often enough. Budget holders do not always receive reports on actual or committed expenditure when they need them. Management has not responded promptly to requests from governors for more financial information. The key assumptions underlying the current financial forecasts have been clearly defined. Clear targets have been set against which the financial performance of the college is measured. Progress towards reaching these targets is monitored each term. The college has recently revised its financial regulations but has yet to approve and implement them. The internal and external auditors have identified weaknesses in the college's internal control systems. Resources for financial management have been recently increased with the aim of improving financial control and monitoring systems. A new financial accounting system is being introduced.

65 As noted in the college's self-assessment report, managers do not have regular access to accurate and timely management information to help them in their decision-making. For example curriculum managers do not receive regular reports on student retention or attendance rates. Managers have not identified their management information needs fully. For example, they are unable to check that enrolment targets have been met or take appropriate action to ensure they are. Managers have purchased relevant FEFC software with the aim of rectifying these weaknesses in relation to the availability and use of management information. They have also purchased software packages to facilitate the monitoring of students' attendance.

66 Personnel policies and practices are good and they are implemented effectively. The college has made a reduction in its staffing costs from 90% to 70% of the college's income. This has been achieved through careful management of staff recruitment, an increase in numbers of part-time staff and the retraining of staff from

declining curriculum areas. Staff workloads are monitored effectively. Staff with particularly heavy timetables and onerous commitments are given extra support. In the larger curriculum areas, support tutors have been employed to help teaching staff to meet the needs of students. Recruitment practices are thorough. As part of their selection process, applicants for teaching posts are required to demonstrate their teaching skills by taking a short lesson and support staff have to carry out relevant work-based tasks. The college did not identify any of these significant strengths in its self-assessment report.

67 The college has good links with the community. The college meets the needs of pupils excluded from schools and students serve as mentors to disaffected pupils. The college is a member of a local community trust that has successfully bid for funding to convert an old church into a community recreation and sports facility.

68 The college has an equal opportunities policy that is implemented well in specific areas such as human resource management. There are, however, no formal systems for monitoring the implementation of this policy across the college or for evaluating its effectiveness. This weakness was identified during the last inspection.

Conclusions

69 The college produced a comprehensive self-assessment report as part of its quality assurance process. This provided a useful basis for planning the inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. They concluded, however, that some strengths had been overstated, whilst the significance of others had been underestimated. Some important weaknesses had been overlooked. Inspectors agreed with two out of four of the college's grades for curriculum areas, and with three out

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of five of the college's grades for areas of cross-college provision. The grades inspectors awarded for other areas of provision were lower than those given by the college.

70 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 2000)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	76
19-24 years	6
25+ years	18
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 2000)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation) and entry level	16
Level 2 (intermediate)	11
Level 3 (advanced)	73
Level 4/5 (higher)	0
Level not specified	0
Non-schedule 2	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 2000)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	272	227	32
Business	92	57	9
Hotel and catering	26	0	2
Health and community care	48	11	4
Art and design	61	4	4
Humanities	608	44	42
Basic education	23	94	7
Total	1,130	437	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1998-99 ISR data, the college recruited 23% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 2000)

	Perman-ent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	74	3	3	80
Supporting direct learning contact	11	3	10	24
Other support	48	2	2	52
Total	133	8	15	156

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1998	1999	2000
Income	£3,413,000	£3,743,000	£4,021,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£16.99*	£16.72	£16.85
Payroll as a proportion of income	76%	71%	72%
Achievement of funding target	110%	103%	103%
Diversity of income	6%	8%	15%
Operating surplus	£132,000	£211,000	-£96,000

Sources: Income – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

ALF – Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999), college (2000)

Payroll – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1998-99 (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Diversity of income – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Operating surplus – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

*provisional data

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
1	Number of starters	874	849	684	7	27	110
	Retention (%)	89	87	85	86	93	87
	Achievement (%)	38	73	46	25	69	37
2	Number of starters	630	717	777	7	22	52
	Retention (%)	78	73	72	43	91	71
	Achievement (%)	71	71	74	100	56	56
3	Number of starters	2,209	2,971	4,391	11	17	33
	Retention (%)	82	70	75	45	47	42
	Achievement (%)	71	66	60	80	29	67
4 or 5	Number of starters	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Retention (%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Achievement (%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Short courses	Number of starters	423	396	414	134	196	141
	Retention (%)	93	94	94	100	98	99
	Achievement (%)	72	84	81	92	34	79
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Retention (%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Achievement (%)	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: ISR

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