

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

College of Care and Early Education

**September
1995**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

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

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

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 106/95

**COLLEGE OF CARE AND EARLY EDUCATION, BRISTOL
SOUTH WEST REGION
Inspected March - May 1995**

Summary

The college specialises in the provision of childcare courses and, increasingly, in more general care courses. It is the only one of its kind in the further education sector. It is a small college with less than 1,000 students of which 89 per cent are female. It has achieved its enrolment targets but is facing increased competition from other colleges and schools. It shares its site with a school, a public library and community organisations. Because of circumstances outside its control, it has yet to develop a long-term accommodation strategy. The college offers high-quality tutorial support for all its students. It has effective links with employers and a good work experience programme. Staff are well qualified and generally provide effective teaching. Governors bring valuable expertise in the field of care and take a strong interest in the college and its work. At present, all the key posts in the governing body are held by men. The college does not have its own nursery and this is a serious weakness. Other areas requiring attention include the low number of students progressing to higher education, the limited provision of professional counselling services, and the narrow range of opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college should also address the weaknesses in its quality assurance system, monitor its equal opportunities policy and improve access for students with restricted mobility.

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	2
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	1
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade
Health and community care	2

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INTRODUCTION

1 The College of Care and Early Education was inspected during March and May 1995. Recruitment and induction procedures were inspected during September 1994. Seven inspectors spent a total of 35 days in the college. They visited 63 classes and met students and their supervisors in the workplace. A representative sample of students' work was inspected. Meetings took place with governors, college managers, teaching staff, support staff, students, parents, members of local community groups, employers, and representatives from local schools, Avon community education, the Western Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the University of the West of England. The inspectors had access to documentation relating to the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 The college (formerly known as the Nursery Nurses College of Further Education) opened in 1946 as a small specialist college for nursery nurses serving the city of Bristol. It is unique in the further education sector as the only college which focuses almost exclusively on work in the care field. It continued in the same premises in the Clifton area of Bristol until 1990 when it was moved to a new site in Lawrence Weston on the north-west side of the city. This site is shared with Lawrence Weston school, which has approximately 300 pupils aged 11-16 years. The school still occupies the major part of the site. The college accommodation is largely self-contained, but the site also houses a public library, with which the college shares an entrance, and a further set of rooms occupied by Lawrence Weston community organisation.

3 Soon after the move to Lawrence Weston, the college broadened its range of courses from childcare into the more general area of care, increased its part-time provision and, in April 1994, changed its name to the College of Care and Early Education. A number of developments in the field of care, for example, the increased attention being paid to the educational needs of children of pre-school age and the increased provision of care for the elderly have enabled the college to increase its work. The college also accepts a small number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

4 There has been a considerable increase in the number of students enrolling on care courses in colleges throughout the further education sector. College strategic plans in the south-west predict increases of 32 per cent in the numbers of full-time students and 34 per cent in the number of part-time students studying for care-related qualifications during the period 1993-94 and 1996-97. This compares with the predicted overall growth in the region of 24 per cent in full-time students and 21 per cent in part-time students. Part-time enrolments in health and social care are predicted to have the largest growth of all of the Council's 10 programme areas. The school sector has also introduced General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses in health and social care. All these factors have increased the level of competition for the college.

5 The population of Bristol is 376,146. This represents just over 40 per cent of the total population of Avon. Two per cent of the population of Bristol are aged 16-18 years of age while 19 per cent are of pensionable age. Five per cent of the population are from minority ethnic groups. Between 1990 and 1993 Bristol suffered the second highest increase in unemployment of all Britain's large cities. Reductions in the number of employees in defence-related industries have been significant and this has not been balanced by expansion in the service sector. Unemployment within Bristol was 11.7 per cent in March 1995, a slight decrease on the 12 per cent figure recorded for February 1995.

6 At the time of inspection there were 519 full-time students, mainly 16-18 years old, and 414 part-time students. Students studying for nationally-recognised qualifications accounted for 656 of the total student population and of these only 37 were male. Recruitment of male students and students from minority ethnic groups is declining. Enrolments by age, level of study, mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. In 1993-94 the college exceeded its target for growth by 3 per cent.

7 The college has a senior management team of five comprising the principal, the vice-principal and three assistant principals with responsibilities for resources, curriculum and student services respectively. In addition, the college employs 15 full-time, eight permanent part-time and a number of hourly-paid teachers. There are 30 support staff, including five placement officers whose role is to identify and monitor work experience for students. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

8 The college is committed to provide high-quality education and training in the fields of care and early education, to help individuals achieve their educational potential, to promote access to education and training for local people and to use the college buildings as a focus for community activity.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 Ninety per cent of the college's work is concerned with providing courses and qualifications in the area of childcare including the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education National Nursery Examinations Board (NNEB) diploma, the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma in caring services (nursery nursing) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in childcare and education. In September 1994, the college introduced the GNVQ in health and social care at intermediate and foundation level and plans to introduce advanced level in September 1995. The college offers NVQs as a two-year full-time programme, but it is likely that some students may have to return for a seventh term to complete their assessments. Other NVQs at levels 2 and 3 are offered through the Greater Bristol Assessment Centre, a consortium of employers, administered by the college, and established to

provide guidance and assessment services. A short-course development programme for professionals in the care field operates from September to July each year and includes sessions on drama, Makaton, developing thinking skills and conflict resolution in the workplace. Some of the programmes have been offered in city locations in Bristol and Bath, in response to demand. The advanced diploma in childcare and education offers adults the opportunity to extend their theoretical knowledge of childcare. There are no other advanced courses which offer additional progression routes for mature students.

10 A programme of community education, provided in conjunction with the local education authority (LEA), has been in existence for just over two years. It is managed by a part-time co-ordinator employed by the college. There is a wide range of classes including courses on antiques, counselling skills, stand-up comedy, health-related topics and practical information technology. Classes take place during the daytime and evenings and the college offers an increasing number of Saturday workshops. Over 300 people enrolled on these programmes over the first two terms of the year.

11 The majority of students from the college progress into employment but few go on to higher education. The college views its role as being a provider of vocational education and training and does not give preparation for entry to higher education a sufficiently high profile. There are no plans to develop access to higher education courses. The nursery nursing diploma and the NVQ programme are offered full time for school leavers, but are also offered between 09.30 and 14.30 to attract adults wishing to return to study. While some aspects of NVQ courses are delivered in the evenings, the range of evening vocational courses is limited.

12 The college provides a pre-vocational course for a small number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are no formal arrangements for these students to progress to other care courses. Opportunities to transfer to other vocational areas at other colleges are hampered by the lack of any basic provision for these students outside the specialist field of care.

13 Marketing is the responsibility of the vice-principal supported by a small group of staff. There is a marketing plan which identifies potential new target groups and areas and has a timescale for action. Courses are advertised widely in the press and many students reported that they had heard of the college through local radio. When the name of the college was changed, consultants developed a new logo and corporate style. Publicity materials are attractive and informative but are available only in text and in English.

14 Links with local schools are strong. The college is represented at careers evenings in many schools in the area. Teachers from the college visit schools to give presentations on vocational courses to pupils in year 11. The publication of the examination results for the college is sent to all schools in Avon. School representatives spoken to during the inspection

would welcome more details regarding the destinations of their former pupils.

15 Relationships with the local community are generally good. The college recognises the need to increase its provision for the minority ethnic population. A recent project for Asian women in Bristol has successfully raised awareness of the difficulties they face in training for a career in care. The college hopes that this will result in a six-year programme working with the Black Voluntary Sector Development Unit in Bristol. It is planned that the courses will be delivered in five different community languages.

16 Parents are generally supportive of the college. The course information is clear and informative. Most parents are aware of the range of tutoring and support provided, and all felt that the college responded quickly when problems arose.

17 Work experience is well managed and of high quality. The extensive placement network of 250 employers includes private and state nurseries, day centres, hospital placements and nursing and retirement homes. Work experience is an integral and well-planned part of most courses. Usually students spend either two or three days a week in a work experience placement. Students and work experience providers receive detailed information about the tasks and skills they must perform and the assessment criteria. Monitoring of placements is carried out by teachers and by placement officers. Three placement visits were observed by inspectors and were found to be very thorough, with students and workplace providers having ample opportunity to explore areas of concern and progress achieved. Students, parents and employers reported a high degree of satisfaction with the planning and monitoring of work experience.

18 Employers are kept informed about the college and its work through termly meetings and by 'Coursetalk', a termly newsletter for employers. They are invited to the college to participate in selection interviews for students, to contribute to the teaching of specialist aspects of programmes, to assist in the assessment and grading of assignments, and as members of course advisory committees. However, employers do not make any direct contribution to the college's quality assurance system. Plans for a charter for placement providers and a supporting questionnaire are well advanced.

19 Relationships between the college and Western TEC are strong. The college provides quick and positive responses to requests for information and is keen to be involved in new projects. The development of the Greater Bristol Assessment Centre and the women into technology course were cited by the TEC as being particularly successful ventures.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

20 The governing body has a membership of 20, many with expertise or experience in the specialist field of care. There are members with

professional backgrounds in banking, accountancy, business consultancy, architecture, personnel, law and national health service training. In addition, there are members from the local TEC, the local community, higher education and two staff and one student member. Governors are clear about their role and fulfil their duties effectively. Governors are well informed. They request and receive appropriate information from the college. Minutes of the meetings are clear and concise. Governors work well as a group but also contribute individually and take a strong interest in the college's activities.

21 There are well-attended full board meetings at least termly. An appropriate range of subcommittees has been established: finance and general purposes, audit, staff discipline and appeals, and remuneration. The subcommittees have a monthly cycle so that each one meets three times a year. Specialist advisory groups, such as the nursery/agency group and the advisory group for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, have been set up and include both governor and staff members.

22 The college is a predominantly female environment: 88 per cent of the staff and 89 per cent of the students are women. The chair and vice-chair of governors, the clerk to the governors, the principal, the chairs of all the subcommittees and both staff members of the corporation are men. Several women have recently been recruited to the corporation board and now constitute 50 per cent of the membership.

23 The senior management team works well together. It meets weekly to discuss both strategic and operational issues. Meetings are well co-ordinated, relevant and include participation from specialist staff members as required. Individual responsibilities are clearly delineated and well understood. The principal has been in place less than a year and is introducing a new management structure to reflect the college's changing profile. The new structure is intended to clarify the roles of middle managers in particular, and to enable senior managers to concentrate on strategic matters. The management of the curriculum is the responsibility of an assistant principal. She manages the programme co-ordinators who are responsible for day-to-day delivery of courses but who have no management responsibility for staff, budgets or the curriculum. This sometimes results in a lack of systematic control and management of tasks associated with course operation.

24 Communication in the college is good. Programme co-ordinators meet fortnightly and with the assistant principal weekly. Open forums, which allow all members of staff to debate broad issues which affect the college, are held from time to time to stimulate interest and gather staff views and suggestions. There are also termly staff briefings.

25 The strategic plan drives developments in the college and resources are deployed effectively to implement it. The plan is approved by the board of governors. Objectives are monitored through standing agenda items on senior management team and governing body meetings. Staff contribute towards the development of the strategic plan through their course teams.

26 The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to 31 July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's unit of funding in 1994-95 is £17.39 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £18.17.

27 The financial systems are controlled by the assistant principal for resources who presents appropriate information to governors, senior managers and budget holders. Budgets are devolved to members of the senior management team and three of the middle managers. Course costs are calculated and this information is used to monitor and plan for the next year's provision.

28 The newly-established central information system provides a good range of information on student numbers, retention rates, student achievements, course transfers, reasons for students leaving their courses early, and the destinations of students who have completed their courses. Although data collected during the admissions process are recorded manually, the information is accurate and useful. Data on retention rates and destinations are presented to senior managers and the members of the board and used by them as performance indicators to judge the college's performance.

29 Equal opportunities matters are overseen by the equal opportunities subcommittee of the academic board. The committee has developed comprehensive policies to cover disability, gender, sexual orientation, harassment and racism. The policies are supported by action plans, but do not have targets. Review and monitoring of the implementation and effectiveness of the policies has yet to take place.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

30 The role of the assistant principal (student services) was created in September 1994. She has a team consisting of the learning support co-ordinator, admissions and guidance officer and student counsellor. Many of the policies and practices relating to student services have been introduced since this date and rapid progress has been made. New policies and their implementation are supported by detailed action plans which include targets and allocation of responsibilities. Progress towards achievement of these targets has been good.

31 There are good arrangements in place to provide guidance and support for students applying to the college. Applicants from schools visit the college, and college staff attend school careers evenings. Applicants and their parents are invited to attend information sessions prior to interview. This is a new practice and results from an analysis of how interview time was spent. Interviews are carried out by teachers, placement providers or supervisors and sometimes involve a current student. All students described this process as supportive and informative. The college has very good arrangements for helping students understand and benefit from NVQs. Opportunities are provided for employees to gain

credit for their current and previous experience and this provision is recognised by employers, employees and the TEC as providing a valuable route to qualifications for groups who would not otherwise have access to them. Adult students are invited to guidance sessions in a variety of venues. These are well attended.

32 All courses have an induction period. Much of the time is spent in groups developing skills and getting to know the college. The groupwork helps to prepare students to work in teams in the workplace. Most of the students have a work placement already arranged before they arrive at the college and this forms a useful focus for many induction sessions. Course induction programmes are generally

well structured and regarded by students as a helpful introduction to the college. They are delivered and designed by tutors within clear college-wide guidelines. The induction programmes for students studying for the NNEB diploma in nursery nursing and the BTEC national diploma in social care were particularly effective. One induction programme which included a residential period in which the group concentrated on team-building skills was especially beneficial. Adult students in particular appreciated the information they received about their course during induction. An evaluation of the induction programme shows that there is a need to introduce more thoroughly some elements such as the use of the library and learning-resource centres. Students spoke highly of their first week in the college, although some students found the induction materials difficult to understand because of the language used. In the induction for GNVQ courses it was apparent that some students had been unaware that they would be required to study the care of elderly people as well as the care of children.

33 Transfer between courses is possible during the first term of study. In some courses the level of study is not confirmed until this stage. Students who discover that they are not suited to a career in care are referred to the careers service. The college's comprehensive interviewing procedures have ensured that the numbers facing this problem are small.

34 The college has developed a good learning support service. This work is managed by the co-ordinator of learning support along with six other staff who are specialists in communications, numeracy and information technology. The Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit screening tests are used to identify learning needs and there is thorough analysis of the results. Provision of support is well structured in communications and information technology, but is less effective for students who require help with numeracy. Although the number of students receiving learning support is small, all students with an identified need have been helped.

35 Students are given high-quality support to help them with their studies outside formal classes. Teachers are available at set times to offer vocationally specific support. A suite of rooms is dedicated to this work: this includes a specialist library, communications workshop and two

information technology rooms. The organisation of the workshops allows students to use it in three main ways: as a drop-in centre; to make a request for additional help on a particular aspect of work, for example, assignment organisation; or as part of a formal timetabled programme of support throughout their course. The documentation informing students of the facilities available and for requesting additional help is clearly presented and welcoming. Use of the centre, and help given to individuals, is carefully monitored by staff.

36 Much of the college's success depends on the strength of the tutor/student relationship. Supportive and close relationships were evident in classrooms and social areas. There is a strong vocational focus to tutors' work. Individual tutorial programmes are devised but not all students have the same opportunities. For example, some students are offered a residential experience, while others are not. The college has recently introduced an action planning process and this is currently being evaluated. Students generally feel positive about the tutorial arrangements. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have adequate levels of tutorial support. However, as the college receives few applications from students with physical disabilities it has only limited experience of working with such students.

37 The college provides only a limited counselling service. The student counsellor is allocated six hours a week. She is not fully qualified and is not receiving any professional counselling supervision. The student counsellor's role also includes providing welfare advice to students, processing applications to the college's access fund, setting up the multi-faith network and co-ordinating tutorial care across the college.

38 The links with the local careers service are strong. A careers officer is available half a day each week to work either with individual students or with groups on general matters such as curriculum vitae preparation. Most career advice regarding work in the care field is provided by tutors. Responsibility for careers liaison resides with the admissions and guidance officer. There is a basic careers library which is in need of development. There are plans to introduce records of achievement for full-time students in September 1995.

39 Students and tutors are aware of their rights and responsibilities. The student charter is widely distributed and used as a basis for elements of the induction programme and the student satisfaction questionnaire. The college handbook describes the services available to students and how they may make use of them.

40 Social facilities are adequate to accommodate the numbers of students and there is a students' union which works hard to arrange functions. However, opportunities for students to involve themselves in sport, music or drama are limited. Timetable and course arrangements make it difficult for students to mix socially with other students outside their own tutor group.

41 Tutors are responsible for collating attendance records for their tutor group. Individual tutors and course teams monitor the attendance of their students and sometimes discuss reasons for variations in attendance patterns. Registers are collected termly by the management information officer to record student withdrawals. There is no central monitoring of attendance data which could be used to analyse trends, inform course design or monitor and review the wide range of attendance patterns between courses.

42 The college recruits students from a wide geographical area around Bristol and provides a transport service for students. Currently, transport arrives late too frequently to be acceptable.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

43 Sixty-three sessions were inspected involving a total of 1,557 students. Of these sessions, 57 per cent had strengths which outweighed the weaknesses, 37 per cent had a balance of strengths and weaknesses and 6 per cent had weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. The following table shows the grades awarded for the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
NVQ		1	2	3	0	0	6
GNVQ		1	6	2	1	0	10
Other advanced		2	10	8	2	0	22
Other		4	7	2	1	0	14
Student with learning difficulties and/or disabilities		0	3	8	0	0	11
Total		8	28	23	4	0	63

44 Most courses are adequately planned and have schemes of work in place. In some cases these were sketchy, merely duplicated the course requirements and did not identify the activities planned or the assessment strategies to be used. Lesson plans were present in most cases but contained little detail.

45 Teachers were knowledgeable and confident in their subject and generally used effective questioning to confirm students' understanding. They responded well to students' questions and were able to manage discussions effectively. There were good staff/student relationships in almost all sessions observed. Students reported that in some units there had been complaints about the teaching. They had spoken to their personal tutor and the situation had been improved.

46 In most sessions students participated in discussions. Particularly good examples of class discussions were seen in groups where most of the students were adults. In one session the teacher tackled the difficult topic

of non-accidental injury and how care workers might respond to discovering that a child in their care was being abused. She skilfully used materials from the local social services department to ensure that students were aware when to act, how to act and of the danger of jumping to conclusions.

47 Assignments were usually of an appropriate standard. Work was marked and returned promptly. In most cases constructive comments from staff were included to help students improve their performance. An example of good practice included part of a lesson being set aside for the teacher to go over assignments individually with students and give detailed feedback. However, in some classes students were not being sufficiently challenged by the tasks set and were capable of achieving much more. In a number of classes the pace of the work was too slow and the interest of students was not sustained.

48 Where groupwork was used it was not always successful. In some classes the students found it difficult to keep to the task because they needed more detailed information or instructions. Some class activities were ineffective because the group size was too small for the task set. This was particularly so in some GNVQ and NVQ sessions.

49 Teachers did not always take account of the differing needs of the students. For example, there were differing levels of success in incorporating a student with hearing impairment into a class. In the better sessions the teacher wore a microphone and the student a receiver. This resulted in the class being able to proceed at a normal pace. In another session, the teacher repeated contributions from all other students so that the one student with a hearing impairment did not miss any points. This slowed down the pace of the session.

50 On courses for students with learning difficulties, well-prepared course documents provide a sound framework for teaching and learning. Most sessions were appropriate in content and pitched at the correct level to enable students to take an active part. In weaker sessions students were too dependent on their teachers and the range of teaching strategies was narrow, with too much reliance on the written word. Simplified versions of college documents are not available for use by students with learning difficulties.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

51 Students are generally enjoying their studies, particularly adult students who show a high level of enthusiasm for their work. For example, the women returners studying office technology were often engaged in problem-solving activities which they enjoyed and which helped them understand the computer packages they were using.

52 Most of the assignment work inspected was of an appropriate standard. Students on the GNVQ foundation programme were producing work of an appropriate quality for a foundation course. There were

examples of first-year students on the BTEC nursery nursing diploma making good presentations of their assignment work. Working in small groups they had researched a wide range of factors involved in setting up a nursery. At the end of the assignment the groups made a presentation, supported by extensive displays of work, to an assessment panel comprising two teachers, two work experience providers and a second-year student. The assignment, which had taken a term to complete, had enabled students to develop their research and presentation skills as well as their ability to work in groups.

53 Examination results in care and childcare are generally good. The college is the fourth largest provider of Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education accredited NVQs in England. Comparisons across the sector are difficult due to the limited amount of data available from Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education. Results are similar to those in other colleges in the further education sector. By March 1995, 183 students had been enrolled for NVQs in childcare and 180 NVQ units had been achieved. Ninety-six of the entrants were part-time students in employment. Ninety-eight students have enrolled for part 1 of the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) practical caring skills certificate during the last three years and all have been successful. Results for part 2 are also good, with 10 of the 12 students entered achieving the qualification. The GNVQ foundation programme is in its first year and so there are no examination results available. The course for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (known as the outset course) was not accredited at the time of the inspection.

54 The examination results of adult students in NNEB qualifications are higher than those of the 16-18 year olds. In 1993-94, 68 students aged 16-18 entered for the examination and 76 per cent passed. In the same year, the figure was 92 per cent for the 52 adult students entered. There has been a 100 per cent pass rate achieved in the diploma in post qualifying studies in the past three years.

55 Results for GCSE mathematics are poor. Since 1991-92, of the 16 who have entered, only two students have gained passes at grades A-C. C&G wordpower and numberpower results have been much better: the 87 students enrolled since 1991-92 have all achieved success. Practical work includes courses in first aid. Since 1991-92, 412 students have entered for the examination and all have successfully completed the St Johns' public first aid certificate.

56 The delivery of core skills in the college has had a high priority and there has been a heavy investment in resources. Standards of students' written work range from mediocre to very good. The resources to support the delivery of communication are generally well used by students and the support they receive is appreciated. There has been less attention paid to the provision of numeracy support. A recent project highlights the need to increase this support and to design specific learning programmes. Students' work often included only basic calculations and their

explanations of how they achieved them were meagre. While there is adequate access to information technology, the level of use in students' work is not high. Some very well-presented work was seen which had a high standard of wordprocessing. The use of spreadsheets was less common.

57 In 1993-94, only 8 per cent of students left their course prior to completion. In 1994-95, at the time of the inspection, 83 (9.2 per cent) students had withdrawn since November. The college identifies the reason for this increase as the wider range of students recruited. The college records students' first destination. Over the past two years, 85 per cent of full-time students have gained employment and most of these have been in care or childcare-related posts. The numbers of students progressing to higher education is small. For example, in 1993-94 of the 114 students who achieved level 3 qualifications only three went on to higher education.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

58 In its statement of values and purpose, the college makes a commitment to providing courses of proven high quality. The responsibility for quality rests with the vice-principal, supported by a subcommittee of the academic board. The roles and responsibilities of others in the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms are unclear. Quality is a standing item at each governors' meeting where a progress report is presented together with evidence of outcomes including student achievement. Quality issues are featured in the strategic plan.

59 The quality assurance system is in its pilot year. There is a quality statement, a set of agreed procedures and a general consensus across the college on their implementation. The strategy devised by the subcommittee looking at quality draws together elements of previous good practice and is aiming to ensure a standardised, comprehensive cross-college system.

60 There are currently three strands to the quality assurance process: student satisfaction questionnaires linked to the student charter; monitoring of performance indicators; and termly programme reviews. Of these three elements, only the student satisfaction questionnaire has been implemented more than once and, at this stage, it dominates the process. The senior management team have acted in response to the first tranche of student questionnaires and targets have been set for the following year. The termly programme review has been completed once and there is considerable variation in the format and in the way targets are set and action plans written. Staff have identified a need for further training in target setting. It is unclear how proposed actions arising from termly programme reviews are to be communicated to senior management and the academic board as this process is yet to take place. The size of the college has been an advantage in raising awareness and commitment to quality improvement and all staff have been involved in the setting of the quality statement. They are provided with quality assurance documents

which set out the quality assurance cycle, but the elements within the cycle are not clearly understood by all staff. For example, there is some confusion about how the individual elements link together to form a meaningful report to the academic board and governors.

61 Programme team co-ordinators undertake planning and review. Meetings are well structured and have agendas and minutes. Staff attendance is good. To date most teams' annual reports have been descriptive and have had limited evaluation of teaching and learning. The review process lacks rigour and tends to focus on reviewing students' progress at the expense of critically evaluating the overall provision. Some important issues are raised, for example, the under representation on the programme of students from minority ethnic groups. However, these are perceived as being wholly the responsibility of the senior management team not the programme team.

62 Information regarding enrolments, retention rates, student achievements and students' destinations is available to inform target setting and action planning. The quality assurance cycle indicates continual use of this data but to date the information has only been used during the autumn term. The systematic use of performance indicators is at an early stage and, consequently, there is little identification and analysis of trends. Staff do not fully understand the role of performance indicators in the quality assurance process. For example, poor attendance was identified as a problem by one team but no attempts were made to set an improvement target to be achieved within a specified time.

63 A procedure for determining internal service standards has been developed and there are some good examples of standards being created within student services. There has been limited progress in developing standards in other cross-college and academic services.

64 Staff development is managed by the principal. There is a policy, a plan and supporting procedures. The plan is clearly linked to the strategic plan. Staff training needs are clarified through the appraisal process and related to strategic priorities. For example, the need to improve information technology skills for all staff has recently been clarified. All staff have been engaged in a variety of staff-development activities in recent years. There is strong support for the enhancement of professional and vocational qualifications and professional updating. Procedures are well documented and adequate resources are made available to support the plan. The staff-development budget is approximately 1 per cent of the total college budget. There is effective evaluation of training and development activities.

65 An induction programme operates for all new full-time teaching and support staff and includes a mentor system for new teaching staff. However, the mentoring system is not systematically used.

66 The college has committed itself to achieving the Investors in People award within 18 months. A framework for the appraisal of teaching staff

has been in place since September 1993 and all staff receive training in the appraisal process. Some senior staff and programme co-ordinators have been appraised but progress in the appraisal of other staff has been slow. There is no appraisal scheme in place for support staff.

RESOURCES

Staffing

67 The teaching staff are sufficient in number and well qualified. Nineteen of the 23 permanent teaching staff are qualified teachers and a further three are completing their training. Twenty-five per cent are qualified in more than one academic or professional area. Fifty-two per cent of the permanent staff are NVQ assessors and 35 per cent are verifiers. Their average teaching experience is 11 years and 20 per cent have worked at the college for 10 years or longer. Part-time lecturers are employed from a number of relevant and appropriate disciplines and professional areas; 16 are employed on a regular basis, 14 of whom are qualified teachers or trainers and the remaining two are currently completing a qualification. These complement and strengthen the practice and employment experience of the full-time staff. The work experience placement officers are also well qualified.

68 The personnel officer has only recently been appointed and has introduced a comprehensive system of personnel procedures which provide professional personnel management practice.

69 Administrative and financial support staff are appropriately qualified. A small number are currently completing vocational training through day-release courses at other colleges. These staff are efficiently managed and supervised. Technical staff keep up to date in their respective professional areas.

Equipment/learning resources

70 In 1993-94, the college used approximately 4 per cent of its total income for the replacement and purchase of equipment. Equipment holdings are well documented. However, there is no programme of replacement and updating to ensure that equipment needs are met in the long term. Existing specialist equipment is satisfactory and is complemented by the extensive range of equipment available to students through their work experience programmes.

71 All classrooms are well equipped with general teaching aids such as whiteboards. There is easy access to video recorders and most rooms have an overhead projector. There is appropriate equipment in specialist teaching rooms, for example in the art room, and in rooms where students are learning to help children with their play activities. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have little access to any specially-designed equipment and resources. For example, while the kitchen is well

equipped for cookery, there are no picture recipe cards available which would help such students during their cookery classes.

72 Students have access to computers outside their formal classes. There are 40 machines with modern specifications based in three designated workshop areas which provide a good range of programmes suitable for students' use.

73 The specialist library within the learning resources centre has, with the exception of mathematics, a wide range of specialist texts, video recordings and work packs. College staff are currently writing their own specialist materials to support students' independent study. Over 100 papers of original research projects undertaken by students are available for loan in the specialist library. These are generally of a very high quality. The library is open on weekdays from 09.00 to 17.00 and once a month on Saturdays and these times are supplemented by additional specially-arranged sessions. The public library, within the main building of the college, is a valuable additional resource.

Accommodation

74 The college occupies accommodation which was once part of the comprehensive school with which it shares the site. Other teaching rooms and the students' recreation building are located separately on the site. The recreation building comprises a new canteen, two student common rooms, two students' union offices and a small student information room. There are two small annexes which are each approximately eight miles away from the main site on the south-east side of the city. The college rents a classroom from a school in the St George district of Bristol. Another classroom is held on a long lease at a site in the Kingswood district.

75 Due to the number of occupants of the main site, there have been discussions with the Education Assets Board regarding ownership of the various parts. This protracted process has made it difficult for the college to create firm plans for the future use of its accommodation. It has yet to produce a clear accommodation strategy.

76 The teaching accommodation on the Lawrence Weston site consists mainly of large, adequately furnished, classrooms. Refurbishment of this site has continued over the past two years and it provides a reasonable standard of accommodation. Some staff workrooms are crowded but accommodation for staff is generally adequate. There is sufficient private study space for students. The college has a policy for its environment which includes quantifiable indicators for improvement.

77 There is a flexible-learning centre, computer workrooms, a craft room and one kitchen on the main site. Students at the annexes have to travel to the main site for these facilities. In addition, the college hires laboratory space from the adjoining school. There is no gymnasium or large hall within the college. Possible further use of the school provision is being explored. There are no sports facilities on site.

78 Not all parts of the main site and neither of the annexes provide easy access for students with restricted mobility. There are a few examples of adaptations to the college buildings but generally access is difficult.

79 The college has not had a nursery since May 1992 when the previous facility was closed due to cost. The college feels that any provision must be of the highest quality in order to demonstrate good practice and be a model for other providers of care training. As yet, it has been unable to allocate the necessary funds required to resource such a facility or to identify a suitable location. In the meantime, the college provides high-quality practical experience through the work experience placements. What it is not able to do is to allow students the opportunity to integrate theory sessions with a real working environment and have the continued support of their teachers to reinforce good practice.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

80 The college is making good progress towards achieving its overall aims. The strengths of the college are:

- a well-informed and effective governing body
- an effective senior management team
- high-quality tutorial support
- well-planned recruitment and induction programmes
- learning support systems which are developing well
- well-qualified teachers who generally ensure effective learning
- strong employer links providing well-structured and integrated work experience for students
- a good record of students progressing into relevant employment.

81 In order to continue to raise the standards, the college should address the following:

- the lack of nursery facilities on the college site
- the increasing number of early withdrawals from courses
- the low level of student progression to higher education
- the lack of a clear long-term accommodation strategy
- inadequate monitoring of policies concerned with equal opportunities
- ineffective numeracy support
- the inadequate professional counselling service
- the need to ensure more consistent implementation of quality assurance procedures
- the narrow range of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

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- some poor examination results
 - inadequate access for students with restricted mobility.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

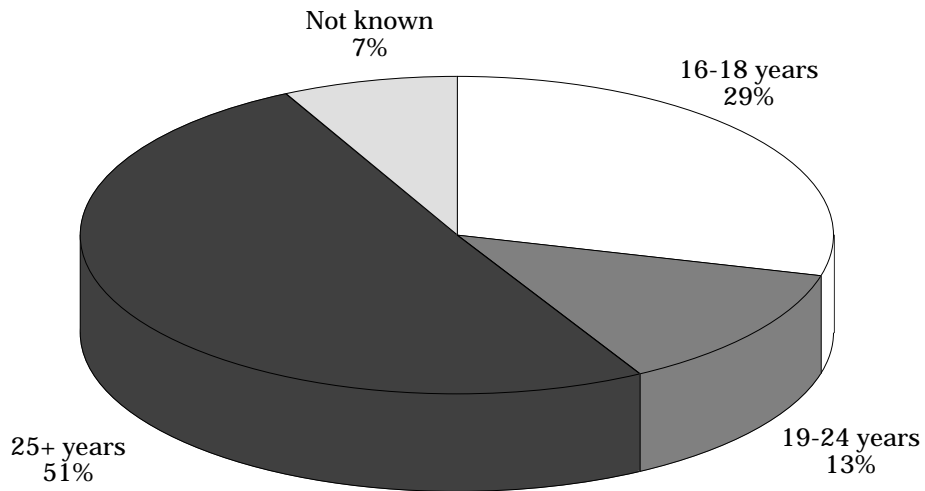
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

College of Care and Early Education: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

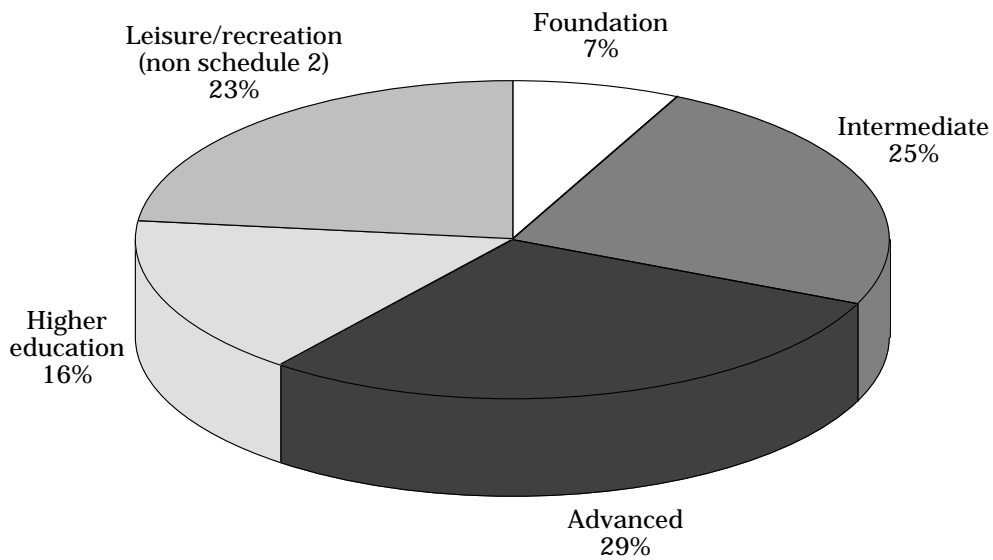


Enrolments: 933

Note: this chart excludes two enrolments aged under the age of 16 years.

Figure 2

College of Care and Early Education: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 933

Figure 3

College of Care and Early Education: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

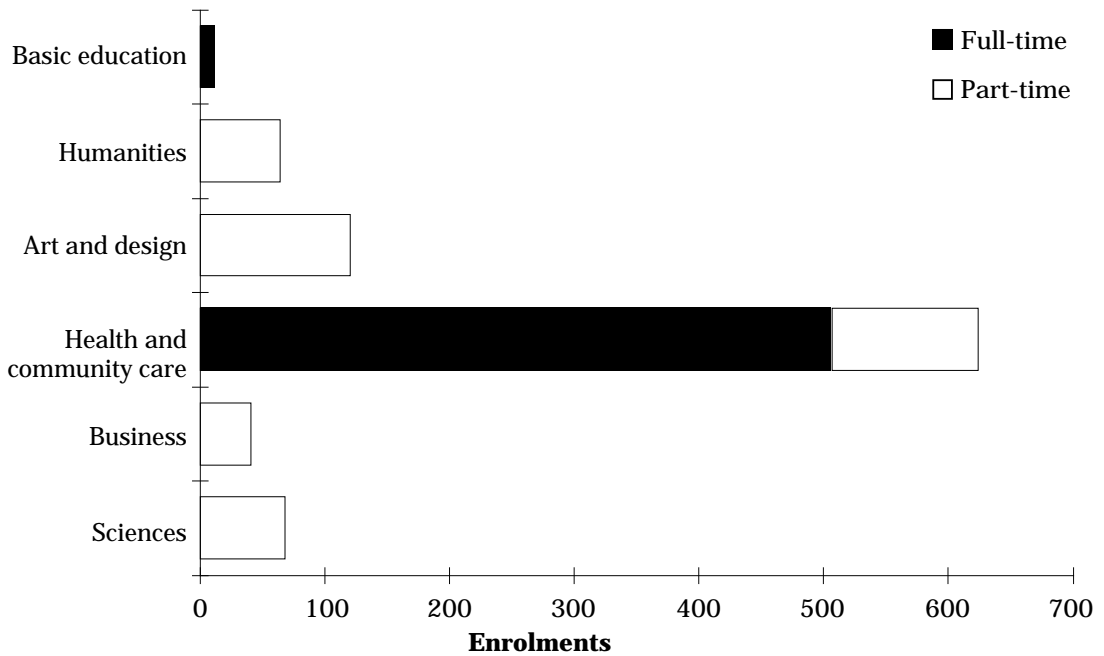


Figure 4

College of Care and Early Education: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

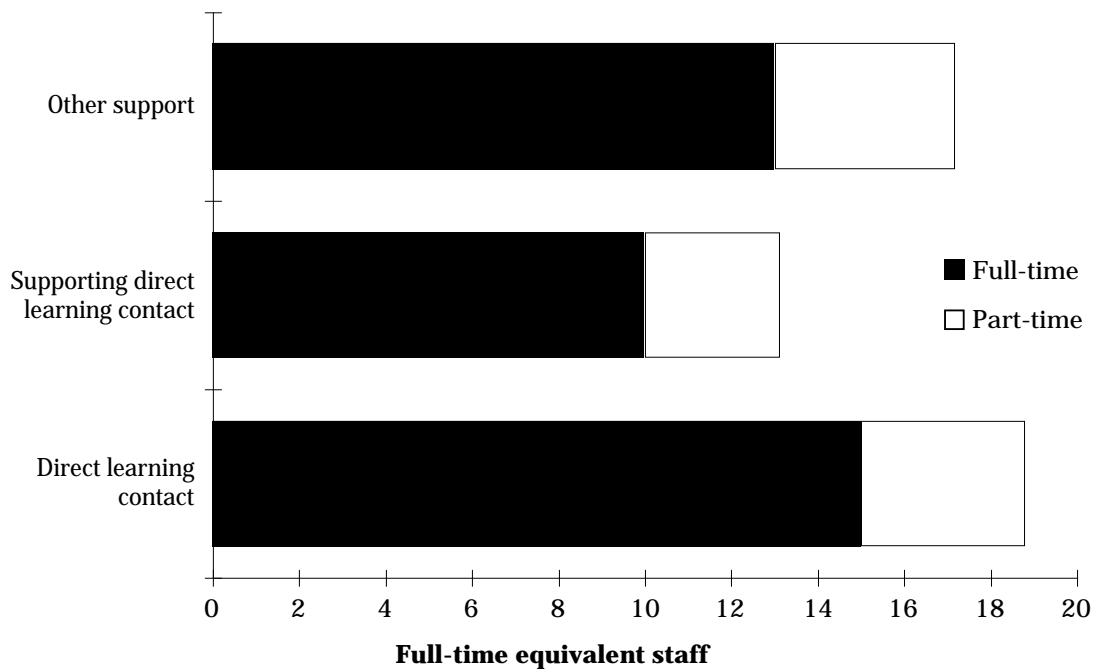
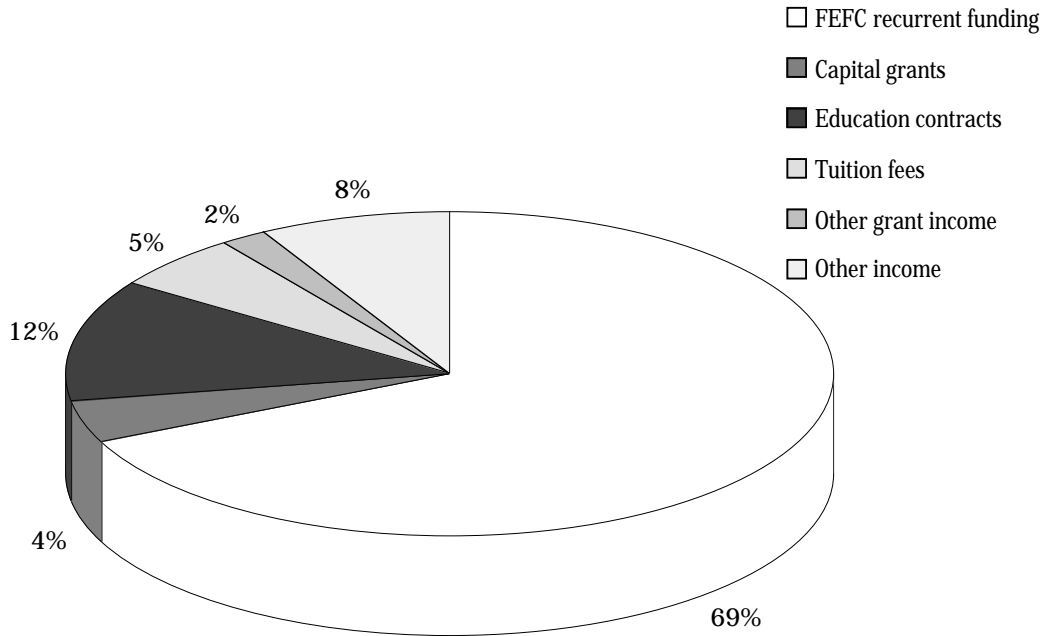


Figure 5

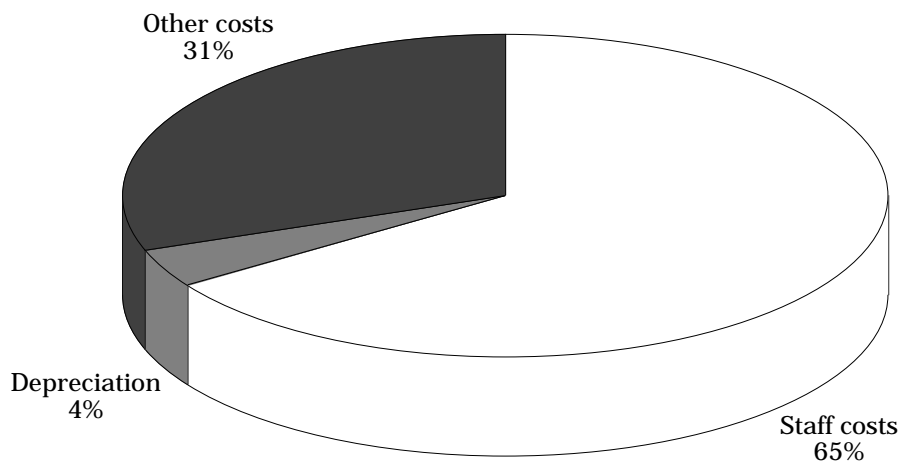
College of Care and Early Education: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated income: £1,677,000

Figure 6

College of Care and Early Education: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated expenditure: £1,805,000

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