

College of Care and Early Education

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98**

**THE
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FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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

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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

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

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

Retention and Pass Rates

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

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

Summary

College of Care and Early Education

South West Region

Inspected April 1998

The College of Care and Early Education is a small general further education college in Bristol. It specialises in childcare, early education, general health and social care. Self-assessment is the basis of all the college's quality assurance and review procedures. The self-assessment report was frank and drew on appropriate evidence. The action plan has been used to bring about improvements. Inspectors agreed with many of the individual judgements in the report, although they found additional strengths and weaknesses which had not been identified and they did not agree with the college's grades in just over half of the areas inspected.

The college offers courses in six of the FEFC's programme areas. Provision in two of these was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. The college has grown considerably outside its core area of health and social care. Links with external organisations are extensive and market information is well used in strategic planning. Governors are fully involved in establishing the college's mission and developing its strategic plan. Management communications are effective. Staff work well in teams. They support the college's developing mission. Good financial management has

resulted in a sound financial position. The college has a strong equal opportunities ethos. It provides a welcoming and well-maintained environment for learning. Procedures for recruiting and admitting students are effective. Work placements are a well-managed part of the curriculum. There is some good teaching and learning. Learning support is effective, and valued by students, but there is insufficient development of students' key skills in vocational lessons. Some pass rates are high, but others are well below national rates, chiefly because many students do not complete their studies during the agreed timescale for the course. On some courses students have failed to complete their coursework on time. Some courses have poor retention rates. The college is aware of these issues and is acting upon them. Staff are fully committed to the quality assurance system. The college should: improve the teaching of key skills; develop more systematic analysis of students' achievements; ensure that collaborative providers are fully integrated with the quality assurance system; improve the consistency of operational target-setting; address some minor issues on governance; make clear what support and guidance part-time students are entitled to and ensure that they receive them; and improve the consistency of tutorial support.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Business	4	Support for students	3
Health care	3	General resources	2
Childcare	2	Quality assurance	3
		Governance	2
		Management	2

The College and its Mission

1 The Nursery Nurses College of Further Education opened in 1946 in Clifton, Bristol. It had a specific focus on childcare. The college moved to Lawrence Weston, six miles north-west of the city centre, in 1990. It broadened its range of courses into the general care field and changed its name in 1994 to the College of Care and Early Education. The college shares its site with a public library and with Lawrence Weston school, a comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 16. It also rents accommodation in schools and community organisations, and owns a very small site in Kingswood, Bristol.

2 The area covered by the City of Bristol unitary local authority has a population of approximately 400,000 people. The college draws 96 per cent of its students from the city. Unemployment in Bristol as a whole has declined from 7 per cent in 1996 to 5 per cent in June 1997. However, in April 1996, the unemployment rate in Kingsweston, the ward in which the college is situated, was nearly 12 per cent; the ward scores highly on indicators of relative poverty. The college calculates that 53 per cent of its students are from the local area and a further 11 per cent from a neighbouring ward. In the former county of Avon, which included Bristol, 74 per cent of pupils aged 16 chose to remain in full-time education in 1996. In addition to the College of Care and Early Education, there are three general further education colleges and a Roman Catholic sixth form college, all offering courses in health and community care in or near the city. Many of the schools in the city have sixth forms.

3 The college recently broadened its curriculum, largely by means of outward collaborative provision in information technology (IT). It also increased its enrolments in basic education. The number of enrolments on to health and community care courses has remained fairly constant in recent years and declined slightly in 1997-98. However, total

college enrolments have grown rapidly, especially for collaborative provision. In 1993-94, there were 304 full-time and 390 part-time students. In 1996-97, 694 full-time and 2,946 part-time students enrolled on college programmes, of whom 77 per cent were aged 19 or over. The college exceeded its funding targets by 38 per cent in 1995-96 and by 41 per cent in 1996-97. The college employs 33 full-time equivalent staff who teach or directly support learning and 31 full-time equivalent administrative support staff. The senior management team comprises the principal and three assistant principals with responsibility for the curriculum, college services and resources. The college management team comprises the senior managers plus eight cross-college managers. Three of these manage the curriculum delivery departments (specialist childcare, childcare and learning skills) and the others manage student support, college services and resources.

4 The college mission is 'to increase participation in lifelong learning through the provision of quality further education and training'. The strategic plan identifies six major objectives. These are to:

- establish the college as the major regional supplier of education and training in child and general care and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- involve the college in national developments in further education
- provide education and training in administration, management and IT to support care businesses
- provide programmes which meet the needs of the local community
- have international links
- widen participation in further education through collaboration.

Context

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected during the week beginning 27 April 1998. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and reviewed information about the college held by other divisions of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college submitted data on students' achievements for the three years 1995 to 1997 which were checked against primary sources, such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The inspection was carried out by seven inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 31 days in the college. They observed 35 lessons, examined students' work and inspected college documents. They met college governors, managers, staff and students.

6 Of the lessons inspected, 77 per cent were judged to be good or outstanding and none were judged to be less than satisfactory. These figures compare favourably with the averages of 61 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, for all lessons observed during 1996-97, according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. The average level of attendance in the lessons observed was 85 per cent compared with the average of 77 per cent for the further education sector as a whole, according to the same report.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GNVQ	0	4	2	0	0	6
NVQ	0	5	1	0	0	6
Other vocational*	5	13	5	0	0	23
Total	5	22	8	0	0	35

**includes access to further education, specialist childcare, general care, business studies and text processing full-time and part-time courses*

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 4

7 The inspection included secretarial and integrated business technology awards and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in management, administration and assessment. Inspectors observed 10 full-time and part-time evening and daytime classes including workshops where students worked on their own using prepared learning materials. The strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report matched many of those found during the inspection. Some weaknesses in teaching and learning and students' achievements were understated or not included in the self-assessment report and some data on students' achievements were unavailable.

Key strengths

- well-planned lessons
- high retention rates on some courses
- good learning environments in collaborative provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to key skills
- students' achievements inadequately monitored in collaborative provision
- low attendance on some courses
- some poor pass rates
- few links between direct and collaborative provision

8 Many lessons are well planned and reflect the vocational requirements of the courses. Secretarial students work effectively using handout materials relevant to their course of study. Management students, studying in the workplace, are able to relate their work directly to their employment needs. They engage in lively discussion of management issues and are

well supported by their employers. Teachers provide individual attention and advice on further study. This is particularly helpful to those part-time students who have no easy access to the college's support facilities. Some students in outward collaborative provision are given advice on prospects for business employment by specialists employed by the same organisations. However, insufficient attention is given to the development of the key skills of part-time students, whether at the college or off-site. There is insufficient co-ordination of similar programmes delivered on different sites. These weaknesses in key skills development and cross-site co-ordination are not reflected in the self-assessment report.

9 Students' work is carefully presented and they acquire appropriate vocational skills. Management students' portfolios are well organised and provide clear evidence of their vocational competence. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that some courses have a good record for retaining students on courses. For example, retention is high on some secretarial courses provided by collaborative partners. However, neither the college nor inspectors could reach an accurate view of students' achievements across this programme area because the largest collaborative partner had been unable to supply full achievement data for most of its candidates. Several secretarial and integrated business technology courses at the main site have poor attendance rates. On a significant number of courses, students do not gain the full award, either because they do not complete, or they do not pass all the assessments. There was no comment on pass rates in the self-assessment report.

10 Some business courses have exceeded their targets while others have not enrolled or recruited viable numbers. Staff team meetings are held regularly. The minuting of meetings has recently been improved. However, there are few contacts between teachers at the college and those working in the collaborative organisations.

Curriculum Areas

Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that college and collaborative staff are well qualified. They hold, or are working towards, assessor and verifier awards and have relevant vocational experience. Suitable part-time staff have been recruited to deliver the college's new programmes in management.

11 Some collaborative partners have well-laid-out business workshops, comfortable, well-equipped teaching areas, computer workstations of commercial standard and areas for relaxation. The college has recently improved its computer facilities on the main site, but the self-assessment report recognises that some teaching areas and computers need further improvement. Course guidance materials are fit for their purpose. Information about business courses is seldom collated into course handbooks or consistently presented in a style which reflects professional business standards.

Examples of students' achievements in business, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Wordprocessing stage I (NVQ notional level 1)	Retention (%)	81	64	*
	Pass rate (%)	77	71	*
Wordprocessing stage II (NVQ notional level 2)	Retention (%)	85	100	*
	Pass rate (%)	27	63	*
Wordprocessing stage III (NVQ notional level 3)	Retention (%)	+	80	*
	Pass rate (%)	+	75	*
NVQ level 3 training and development assessor/ verifier awards	Retention (%)	78	100	100
	Pass rate (%)	14	13	73

Source: college data

*data incomplete

+course not running

Curriculum Areas

Health Care

Grade 3

12 The inspection covered health, social care, counselling and first aid courses from foundation through to advanced level, including general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) and NVQ courses on the main site and collaborative provision in first aid and counselling. Inspectors observed 11 lessons. They identified some strengths and weaknesses not recognised in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-structured lessons
- generally effective teaching
- a good range of effectively managed work experience placements
- widening of access through provision of off-site courses
- good pass rate on GNVQ intermediate course in 1997

Weaknesses

- poor retention on full-time courses
- poor pass rates on GNVQ advanced courses
- insufficient attention to key skills development
- lack of rigour in some marking
- inadequate specialist resources

13 Teachers and students meet regularly to plan and review their courses. Meetings are minuted, issues for action are identified and progression on the issues is monitored. Students' opinions are taken into account in course reviews and development plans.

14 There was good teaching in most of the lessons observed and some examples of outstanding practice. Lessons are well planned and structured. Students develop and

demonstrate appropriate levels of vocational knowledge and skills. Work experience forms an integral part of the curriculum on all full-time courses. The college's placement unit matches work experience opportunities to students' course requirements and choices. Students' progress on work experience is monitored effectively through the use of log books and the visits of placement officers. The self-assessment report claims that there is effective liaison between workplace supervisors, the college's placement officers and course tutors. Inspectors confirmed this judgement. For example, when it was noticed by workplace supervisors that some GNVQ students were having difficulties in initiating play activities in nursery placements, the visiting placement officer and the course tutor planned a day for the students to develop their skills and confidence in planning and initiating play. Coursework assignments are well planned and students understand the assessment process. The learning support needs of full-time students are identified by the use of screening tests during induction. Students know how to get help at any time with literacy, numeracy, IT or with their vocational studies. They speak highly of the learning support available to them. However, teachers sometimes pay insufficient attention to the development of key skills in lessons and in written assignments. Lesson plans do not identify opportunities for key skills development, practice and assessment. The self-assessment report did not identify the weakness in key skills development.

15 Students' achievement rates vary widely. Pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate course have improved and are now well above the national average. For one counselling course in 1997, the pass rate was 100 per cent. Pass rates on the GNVQ foundation level course are below the national average. On the advanced level GNVQ, no students achieved the award within the normal timescale in 1997. This was partly due to the time spent on work experience. The GNVQ advanced level course is not running

Curriculum Areas

this year. A minority of students on foundation and intermediate level GNVQ courses do not complete their studies within normal timescales, but achieve the award during the following year. Retention rates on full-time courses are below national average rates and the trend is continuing on this year's GNVQ intermediate course. Attendance at lessons is monitored and the reasons for non-attendance are determined.

16 Students show appropriate levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in lessons, written work and on work placements. Teachers supply constructive feedback on assignments, which helps students to improve their work. However, in a significant minority of the written assignments inspected, teachers' marking lacked rigour. Students' errors in spelling and grammar were not corrected. The grades allocated did not accurately reflect national criteria. The self-assessment report does not recognise these weaknesses.

17 Teachers supply students with good-quality handouts and learning materials. There are insufficient up-to-date library materials on general health and social care. The development of the students' practical skills is hampered by a lack of some specialist resources.

Examples of students' achievements in health care, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ intermediate (full time)	Retention (%)	100	57	62
	Pass rate (%)	80	25	75
GNVQ foundation (full time)	Retention (%)	77	88	69
	Pass rate (%)	0	79	44
Part-time counselling	Retention (%)	91	90	89
	Pass rate (%)	86	84	100
First aid collaborative provision	Retention (%)	*	*	100
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	81

Source: college data

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Childcare

Grade 2

18 The inspection covered the provision of childcare programmes from foundation to advanced levels and included NVQs and vocational courses for full-time and part-time students. Inspectors observed 14 lessons. Their findings confirmed the majority of the judgements made in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-structured lessons with varied learning activities
- effective promotion of students' independent learning
- good pass rates on advanced vocational courses
- well-managed work experience
- good specialist input to course design and delivery

Weaknesses

- low retention on NVQ and Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing
- low achievement rate on NVQ programmes
- insufficient range of evidence gathering methods on NVQ provision
- insufficient attention to key skills development in lessons

19 Childcare provision makes up the majority of courses within this specialist college. In addition to the awards of the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education, NVQ programmes are available to full-time and part-time students. The college also has BTEC courses in childcare and play and childhood studies, which were introduced in response to the college's strategic objective to attract under-represented adults to further education.

20 The teaching observed by inspectors was good and sometimes outstanding. During a theme day on curriculum mathematics, the teacher allayed the fears of a group of anxious students with a lively approach to practical mathematics. Students were given a box to describe in terms a child would understand. They undid the box and then rebuilt it. From the descriptions of their activities they were encouraged to link their ideas with national curriculum attainment targets and appropriate learning objectives. The realisation that they were able to cope with these concepts broke the ice and their enthusiasm increased greatly.

21 Teachers use a variety of learning activities in well-planned lessons which enable students to develop practical vocational skills and demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Students are encouraged to contribute to lessons drawing on their own experiences. Teachers challenge students' opinions and ideas constructively. This promotes students' independent thinking, research and analysis. Inspection findings confirmed the college's assessment that the management of work placements and their integration with other aspects of the courses is highly effective. Students' learning on work placements is supported by effective liaison between college staff and workplace supervisors. The college induction process incorporates diagnostic assessment in numeracy for all full-time students. They welcome the additional learning support provided and use it effectively. Students' key skills are not being adequately developed during lessons, as is acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

22 The pass rate on the BTEC national diploma in childhood studies is above the national rate. The pass rate for the advanced diploma in childcare and education and hospital play has been 100 per cent for the last two years. The college self-assessment report acknowledges the low retention on the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing and the NVQ

Curriculum Areas

programmes. The pass rates on NVQ programmes have been low, but improved slightly in 1997. One reason for low pass rates is that the college offers many courses on a modular basis and allows extended time for achievement. This is welcomed by students, but does not encourage completion within normal time limits. The curriculum team is taking action to address this issue. Assignments are well planned and at an appropriate level. Some grammar and spelling errors are not corrected. Students' work is well displayed in classrooms and corridors. On placements, students demonstrate a high level of practical skill and are able to link theory to practice. In lessons, students discuss issues confidently and undertake independent research.

23 Most courses are well organised and well managed. Course reviews identify strengths and weaknesses and result in action plans. Acknowledged weaknesses, such as the difficulties which NVQ students have been experiencing in collecting evidence for their portfolios, are generally tackled sensibly. Staff are appropriately qualified and use their

specialist knowledge and experience effectively in course design and delivery. Inspectors observed effective teamwork between academic and support staff. Specialist accommodation and equipment includes art rooms, a kitchen and an appropriate mixture of early years and key stage 1 play and learning equipment. The library has a particularly wide selection of specialist journals and research reports.

Examples of students' achievements in childcare, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
BTEC national diploma	Retention (%)	67	91	89
	Pass rate (%)	93	85	94
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education courses, and higher education diploma in nursery nursing	Retention (%)	84	69	62
	Pass rate (%)	84	75	86
Advanced diploma in childcare and education and hospital play	Retention (%)	87	92	85
	Pass rate (%)	77	100	100
NVQ levels 2 and 3	Retention (%)	*	54	65
	Pass rate (%)	*	27	43

Source: college data

*course not running

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 3

24 The findings of the college's self-assessment of support for students was broadly confirmed by inspection findings, but inspectors considered that the college underestimated the extent of some weaknesses.

Key strengths

- efficient recruitment and admissions procedures
- comprehensive induction arrangements for full-time students
- responsive learning support services
- effective welfare support for students on the main college site
- good support for students provided by the work placement unit

Weaknesses

- inadequate induction arrangements for many part-time students
- some weaknesses in tutorial support
- some ineffective co-ordination of careers education and guidance
- inadequate support arrangements by some collaborative providers

25 In its self-assessment report, the college claims that there are well-established and efficient procedures for recruiting and admitting students. This judgement was confirmed by inspection findings. There are four open days each year when prospective students receive information about the college and guidance about courses. Students spoke highly to inspectors about the recruitment process. All prospective full-time and part-time students on substantial programmes have an interview. There has been recent staff development to clarify selection criteria, but there is insufficient

guidance to staff on the information that should be obtained during interviews.

26 Induction for full-time students is well organised and provides them with a good introduction to the college and to their course of study. All full-time students have an induction programme which includes specific course information and general information provided by student services. Students were very positive about the usefulness and enjoyment of their induction. Some part-time students are not given an adequate introduction to the college.

27 Although improvements in student support and guidance have been made since the last inspection, there is some inconsistency in the quality of tutorial support. Most tutorials are effective and helpful. However, some students reported that they do not receive adequate tutorial support and have not received the help in action-planning and review to which they are entitled. The college has developed a tutorial handbook which provides guidelines on the content of tutorials for full-time students. Full-time students are entitled to the equivalent of one hour of tutorial time each week. The entitlement for part-time students is not yet clearly established.

28 The college gives high priority to the provision of learning support. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that this is an area of strength. Ninety-six students, the majority of whom are full time, are currently receiving help of various kinds from the learning support team. During induction, students are assessed to identify learning needs in literacy and numeracy. However, there have been delays in assessing students' IT needs due to staffing difficulties. More detailed diagnosis is undertaken for those students with more complex needs. Students' additional support needs are systematically recorded. There is close liaison between the learning support and curriculum teams to determine how the additional support can best be delivered. An agreed learning programme is prepared with

Cross-college Provision

each student and follow-up action is taken to ensure that it is received. A high proportion of students on two courses were identified as requiring additional support. Staff from the learning support team work in the classroom in conjunction with the course tutor. Students spoke positively to inspectors about the learning support they had received.

29 The personal support for students provided by the welfare officer is effective; a strength identified in the self-assessment report. There is good liaison with local agencies to ensure that an appropriate range of specialist support is available, including counselling. In response to student requests, sporting and social activities have been organised which have been greatly appreciated by students. Although students enrolled with the college's collaborative partners have the same entitlement to support as students on the main college site, many do not receive such support.

30 The delivery of general careers education and guidance is insufficiently co-ordinated. The college's self-assessment does not identify this weakness. College staff and the careers service adviser have not been fully involved in the delivery of the careers education and guidance programme which is outlined in the tutorial handbook and they are not entirely clear about their responsibilities. Full-time students are advised of their entitlement to professional careers advice at induction and in the student handbook. However, few students take up the offer of an individual interview.

31 The work placement unit is well managed and provides a high level of support to students. The college organised 961 placements between September 1997 and the time of the inspection. The placement officers work very closely with the personal tutors and workplace supervisors to ensure that students are well prepared before going on placement. Their progress is regularly reviewed. Students are visited at least once each term and a formal review is conducted at each visit. Teachers and students speak very

positively about the level of service provided by the placement unit.

General Resources

Grade 2

32 Inspectors' findings confirmed most of the major points in the college's self-assessment report. Some strengths and weakness were under represented or omitted. The college has addressed some weaknesses identified in the report since it was completed.

Key strengths

- good-quality classroom accommodation
- secure and welcoming environment
- good library/learning resource centre
- off-site accommodation strategy supporting widening participation

Weaknesses

- low room utilisation
- lack of coherent planning for IT development
- lack of storage in the nursery
- books limited in range and out of date in a few subject areas

33 The main college premises were originally part of the adjacent secondary school, which was built in the 1960s. The college buildings and grounds provide a welcoming environment for staff and students. There is adequate car parking. Internal security is effective, but unobtrusive. The premises are clean, tidy and well maintained. Corridors are carpeted and well decorated. The college has recently completed a space utilisation survey. The overall level of use of the accommodation is low at 37 per cent, a weakness not included in the self-assessment report. The college has employed consultants to assist in drawing up its accommodation strategy. Part of the strategy is

Cross-college Provision

to offer classes in other areas of Bristol to attract people who might not normally attend a college. Classrooms are located in venues such as schools and community centres which provide a convenient, familiar environment for students who live nearby and are unable to travel to the college's main site. Specialist inspectors concluded that the quality of accommodation for collaborative provision ranged from very good to adequate.

34 Teaching areas are predominately light, spacious and appropriately furnished. They are in good decorative order. Classrooms are generally well supplied with teaching equipment such as whiteboards, flipcharts, overhead projectors and audiovisual equipment. Where these are not permanent fixtures, they are readily available. Classrooms and corridors are enhanced by attractive displays of students' work. Some of the rooms used for interviewing students lack privacy and are unsuited to their function. Wheelchair users can gain access to ground floor rooms, including the library, learning resource centre, canteen and common room, but they cannot reach the first floor teaching rooms. However, classes including students who have restricted mobility and base rooms for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are timetabled in rooms on the ground floor. There are toilets and parking spaces for people with disabilities.

35 The recently-redecorated students' common room is popular with students. There is a comfortable staff common room. The canteen is adequate for the numbers on site. It provides a variety of low cost meals and snacks for students, staff and the nursery. The last inspection report commented on the absence of a nursery. Nursery provision is now available for children from the age of three months to five years. The nursery remains open during college holidays. There is insufficient storage for nursery equipment such as toys.

36 The self-assessment report identified weaknesses, confirmed by the inspection, in the

strategic development of IT. There has not been a consistent purchasing policy. An IT advisory group has been formed to resolve these problems. It has produced a draft policy and completed an audit of the college's equipment. The college has enough computers to meet current demand, although some students reported difficulty finding an available machine at peak times. Most of the computers are kept in the library and learning resource centre where they are available on an open access basis. Specialist computer resources are available for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

37 Inspectors considered the strengths of the library are under-represented in the self-assessment report. It is well used by both students and staff. Expenditure per full-time student in 1997-98 was above library association guidelines. The library contains a suitable range of books, compact disks for computers, video and audio cassettes, newspapers and periodicals related to health and social care. Library staff produce brief summaries of recent articles in journals and helpful project packs on popular topics. The stock of books, newspapers and periodicals is large enough for the number of students using it. There is some outdated material, some of which is kept to provide a historical context in this specialist subject. Staff provide students with helpful advice and guide them in their research on particular topics. The library is popular with students, who speak favourably of the quality of service they receive. Basic key texts are available at the college's teaching areas away from the main site.

38 Three learning resource workshops are available for private study as well as timetabled classes. They include the careers guidance area, a stationery shop, study skills support facilities and study areas for numeracy, communications and IT. Computers, audiovisual equipment and a range of open and flexible learning materials are available on demand. The space provided

Cross-college Provision

for students to study privately is sometimes insufficient at peak times. Learning support workers do not have ready access to rooms in which they can meet students individually and privately. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report which acknowledged that the layout of the four rooms in the library/learning resource centre makes supervision of students difficult at times.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

39 Inspectors agreed with the strengths recorded for quality assurance in the self-assessment report. However, some key weaknesses were omitted and an assessment of arrangements for off-site collaborative provision was not included.

Key strengths

- staff involvement in the development of quality standards
- thorough self-assessment process involving all staff
- ample opportunities for students to express their views
- effective staff appraisal and development

Weaknesses

- insufficient evaluation of students' achievements
- lack of evaluative comments in team self-assessment reports
- absence of collaborative provision from self-assessment report
- inadequate arrangements to assure the quality of off-site collaborative provision

40 The college's quality assurance system is based on self-assessment of performance judged against agreed quality standards. All staff were

involved in drawing up standards for each curriculum and support area. These are widely supported by staff. The self-assessment process was thorough. It required each course team and support team to make judgements about performance against each standard. Teams then identified strengths and weaknesses and drafted an action plan to address the weaknesses. These actions were included in the college's annual operating plan. Progress towards them was reviewed before the inspection. The quality review group checked the evidence in each area's self-assessment report and used it to compile the college self-assessment report. The work undertaken by staff to develop the new system supports the claim in the self-assessment report that staff are committed to continuous improvement.

41 Teaching and support teams regard self-assessment as very productive. For teaching teams it replaces the previous system of course review. It has led to improvements in both support systems and teaching. For example, invoicing systems have been improved and teachers have made changes to induction programmes. These improvements largely resulted from the discussions generated by the process of self-assessment rather than judgements in the reports from each area, which contain few evaluative judgements. For example, although there are quality standards for student induction programmes, course reports lack judgements about their effectiveness. There is little evaluation of the standard of teaching and no quantitative information about pass rates, retention rates, attendance and destinations. Consequently action plans do not address these issues and targets for improvement are not set. The self-assessment report acknowledges the lack of performance information available to course teams, but it does not recognise the failure of course teams to make judgements about students' achievements.

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42 Information for self-assessment reports was drawn from a variety of sources, including questionnaires completed by students, staff and providers of work placements for students. Students are given several opportunities to express their views. They complete an evaluation of each module studied in addition to college questionnaires at the beginning, middle and end of their programme. The aggregated college questionnaires include comparative figures for three years which show a consistent level of satisfaction with the standard of teaching, course organisation and college facilities.

43 Until recently the college has relied on its collaborative partners' own quality assurance systems to assess the quality of their provision. Some of these are robust and include observation of teaching, student questionnaires and course reviews. Others are less comprehensive. At the time of the inspection, collaborative partners had just completed the same self-assessment report as each college teaching team. This represents progress towards integrating partners with the college system. Previously, the self-assessment process did not include collaborative partners, and the college did not seek to make its own judgements about the quality of their programmes or their students' achievements for the self-assessment report. College staff visit partners to observe teaching and audit student numbers.

44 Since September 1997, teachers have been required to have at least two lessons observed and graded by another member of staff each year. Before September 1997, some observations were carried out, but they were not included in the current self-assessment report.

45 The appraisal system applies to all full-time and part-time teaching and support staff. It is clearly documented and includes a pre-appraisal interview, and lesson observation for teachers. Some academic managers have too many staff to appraise. One manager appraises over 25

staff. The self-assessment report acknowledges that all staff have not been appraised in the last year. The college has a staff development policy and an annual staff development plan. Development activities are linked to strategic objectives and individual needs identified through appraisal. Some activities have focused on improving teaching, for example training sessions on teaching styles, others on updating visits, for example, to a hospital and a social services department.

46 The college charter deals mainly with full-time students and does not make specific commitments to employers, part-time students or students based with collaborative partners. Commitments are monitored through student questionnaires and by establishing quality standards based on charter commitments. The college has a complaints procedure. The few complaints that have been received have been resolved promptly.

Governance

Grade 2

47 Inspection findings confirmed the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and identified others. The college is making good progress in addressing the weaknesses they have identified.

Key strengths

- effective use of governors' experience and skills
- productive working relationships between governors and senior managers
- governors active in developing the college mission
- close involvement in strategic planning and financial forecasting
- governors' contribution to college advisory committees

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- good-quality agendas, papers and minutes

Weaknesses

- low level of attendance at some corporation meetings
- lack of standing orders for the conduct of meetings
- insufficient analysis of students' achievements

48 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC. The self-assessment report generally accorded with the inspection findings.

49 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that the governors use their skills and experience to conduct the college's business effectively. Many have substantial industrial and commercial experience and close links with the care industry and local communities. They clearly distinguish between their role and that of senior management. Considerable effort has been put into evaluating and identifying the college's unique character and mission. There is a balance of male and female members. Many members sit on college advisory committees. Attendance at corporation meetings, despite being closely monitored by the clerk and the chair, has sometimes been low.

50 A committee structure has been established which includes statutory and advisory committees. All committees have an approved membership and terms of reference which have recently been reviewed by the corporation. The employment policy function is not included within any committee's terms of reference, although these issues have been considered by

both the corporation and the finance and general purposes committee. The search committee has only recently been established, but is contributing effectively to the process of identifying new governors with the required skills and expertise.

51 There is a well-planned calendar of committee meetings which ensures that committees provide regular reports to the corporation. Members receive timely agendas accompanied by clear briefing papers. There is a list of standard agenda items for all corporation and subcommittee meetings to ensure effective progress of business. Committees receive appropriate reports, regular statistical updates and detailed financial information. Recommendations from the committees are carefully considered by the corporation and there is a good level of debate.

52 The self-assessment report comments that governors are closely involved in the development and monitoring of the strategic plan. This was confirmed by the inspection. The 1997 to 2000 strategic plan has been integrated with the financial forecasting. Links with staff and students inform governors' understanding of how strategic decisions impact on the life and work of the college. The self-assessment report was influenced by the use of a governor questionnaire. Governors have not yet established formal arrangements for their own self-assessment. They receive data on students' achievements, but little analysis of that data. The corporation recently decided to develop quality indicators and review dates for college policies.

53 The college's annual budget is considered in detail by the finance and general purposes committee before being further discussed and approved by the corporation. Throughout the year, the corporation is made aware of the college's financial position through discussion of key issues at corporation meetings and by detailed review and evaluation by the finance

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and general purposes committee. Monthly financial reporting is clear and effective.

54 The corporation has adopted a code of conduct, a register of interests and procedures to confirm members' eligibility to serve on the board. The job description for the clerk to the corporation has not been approved by the corporation nor have formal standing orders been established for the conduct of corporation and committee meetings.

Management

Grade 2

55 The college identified strengths and weaknesses for some aspects of management which were confirmed by the inspection but failed to assess all aspects of management. Action has been taken to address many of the weaknesses included in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- effective management structure and good communications
- staff support for the college's strategic direction
- consultative strategic planning process
- sound financial controls
- energetic and generally effective pursuit of equal opportunities
- good external links

Weaknesses

- inadequate setting and monitoring of performance targets in collaborative provision
- insufficiently detailed recording of some strategic decisions
- lack of cashflow summaries

56 Inspection findings confirmed the self-assessment claim that the management

structure is effective and generally understood by staff. The senior management team, comprising the principal and three assistant principals, meets formally on a weekly basis. The college management group, comprising the senior management team and middle managers, meets monthly. All teams have terms of reference and meetings have formal agenda and standard action minutes. Some minuting of strategic decisions is not in sufficient detail to enable progress to be monitored effectively.

57 Communication structures are generally effective. Staff are well informed about, and support, the college's aims and objectives. Line management responsibilities are clear. There is good teamwork at all levels and the college is characterised by an open management style. The college has recently reviewed its mission statement and diversified its curriculum base. The mission statement commits the college to widening access by collaboration and partnership where appropriate. Staff at all levels have a good understanding of the mission and support it.

58 The college has an effective strategic planning process leading to a comprehensive plan. Staff at all levels have the opportunity to contribute to the planning process. College teams produce action plans related to the overall strategic direction. Action plans are costed and the college management group develops the strategic plan and operating statements for approval by the corporation. Operating statements are available to all staff and are regularly reviewed at all levels within the college. Some target-setting is imprecise, which makes it more difficult to assess progress accurately.

59 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. There are an appropriate number of suitably qualified and experienced staff. There is a sound budget-setting process. Management accounts are produced each month and are closely monitored

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by the senior management team at its weekly meetings and reported to the finance and general purposes committee. The financial procedures have recently been updated. Monthly cashflow summaries and a rolling 12 month forecast are produced, but are not routinely presented to governors. Budget holders receive detailed monthly financial information which shows both actual and committed expenditure. Prudent financial control has resulted in strong college finances.

60 The college has adopted a strategy for collaboration and expansion which has led to strong external links with a wide range of organisations, as noted in the self-assessment report. The college has much detailed information about the market it serves. For example, detailed information on local population statistics and employment trends in the specialist curriculum areas are extrapolated over the life of the strategic plan and inform target-setting. The college has close links with schools in the Bristol area. There is a broad spread of industrial representation on advisory committees and there are many links through work placements. The college has not provided any programmes funded by the training and enterprise council (TEC) recently, but is actively seeking to establish links through the New Deal initiative. There are clear agreements with collaborative partners and these are regularly monitored by senior managers. Inspectors identified weaknesses in the setting and monitoring of critical performance targets in collaborative provision.

61 The college has recently installed a new student management information system. The final specifications for data input and reports were being drawn up at the time of the inspection. Student data reports are produced monthly. These are monitored by managers and appropriate action is taken. A summary sheet of monthly statistics is made available to all staff. The previous student data system failed to identify a significant lack of data

relating to students' achievements from one collaborative partner.

62 The college has an extensive range of policies and procedures. The pursuit of equal opportunities is a key part of the mission and is actively promoted. The equal opportunities plan is regularly monitored by the equal opportunities committee.

Conclusions

63 The self-assessment report is a frank and self-critical document, and the college has used the action plan to bring about improvements. Self-assessment has been made the foundation of all quality assurance in the college. Inspectors agreed with many of the individual judgements in the self-assessment report but found strengths as well as weaknesses which were understated. They did not agree with the college's grades in just over half of the areas inspected. The work of collaborative partners has only recently been self-assessed, and their work was not included in the self-assessment report used for the inspection. The work to establish quality standards against which self-assessment is carried out has yet to result in sufficient evaluative statements and statistical analysis, particularly in the area of students' achievements.

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

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 1997)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	0
16-18 years	21
19-24 years	17
25+ years	60
Not known	2
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1997)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	72
Intermediate	8
Advanced	19
Higher education	1
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	0
Total	100

Source: college data

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	0	1,427	40
Business	153	360	14
Hotel and catering	0	17	0
Health and community care	527	1,007	42
Humanities	14	90	3
Basic education	0	45	1
Total	694	2,946	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1997)

	<i>Permanant</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	20	0	7	27
Supporting direct learning contact	2	0	4	6
Other support	20	0	11	31
Total	42	0	22	64

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£1,698,000	£1,780,000	£1,786,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£17.50	£14.39	£17.54
Payroll as a proportion of income	79%	69%	66%
Achievement of funding target	102%	138%	142%
Diversity of income	25%	11%	11%
Operating surplus	-£91,000	-£60,000	£17,000

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

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

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

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), college (1996-97)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	3	13	7
	Percentage achieving qualification	100%	100%	71%
	Position in tables	top 10%	top 10%	middle third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	12	5
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	0%	60%
	Position in tables	*	bottom 10%	middle third

Source: DfEE

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

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

**1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available*

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