

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Carshalton College

April 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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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.*

By June 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-96

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	59%	29%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	14%	50%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	12%	54%	30%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 48/97

CARSHALTON COLLEGE
GREATER LONDON REGION
Inspected April 1996-January 1997

Summary

Carshalton College is a general education college which has made impressive progress in tailoring its provision to the needs of its students and the local community. Its local links are strong. There is an extensive range of courses for students with learning difficulties. Governance is skilful and effective, and the college and its courses are well managed. Strategic planning is based on wide consultation, and communication systems work well. The quality of much of the teaching is good. The college has rigorous quality assurance systems which enable it to make accurate self-assessments. Helpful advice and support services are provided to students. Most teachers are well qualified, and equipment is generally of a high standard. The general accommodation is mainly pleasant and bright, and most specialist teaching accommodation has been refurbished to a high standard. Some further improvements to the accommodation are planned. The college has still to address: inconsistencies in the tutorial system; students' poor levels of achievement in some areas of work; poor attendance and timekeeping by students; and low retention rates. The harmonisation of some elements of the quality assurance procedures is not yet complete. A few staff do not have appropriate qualifications. The bookstock in the library is unsatisfactory.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, mathematics and computing	3	Health and social care	2
Engineering	2	Art, design and media studies	3
Business	2	Humanities	2
Leisure and tourism and catering	2	ESOL/adult basic education	3
		Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3

INTRODUCTION

1 Carshalton College was inspected between April 1996 and January 1997. Seventeen inspectors spent 59 days in the college. Engineering and business studies were inspected in April 1996. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected in September 1996. The remaining curriculum areas were inspected during November 1996, and cross-college provision was inspected during January 1997. Inspectors observed 123 classes, examined students' work and attended a meeting of the governing body. They held discussions with governors, parents, staff, students, local employers, and representatives from schools, higher education, voluntary organisations and the local community.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Carshalton College was established in the 1950s as a technical college offering mainly secretarial, engineering and construction courses. It occupies a single site near the centre of the London Borough of Sutton. Extensive refurbishment has taken place over recent years. Further building work is planned when the college completes the sale of the Elmwood annexe, which it vacated last summer. The college's catchment area is wide and complex. Many students have to travel long distances to college. A mainline station is close to the college and the area is well served by bus routes. There is ample on-site parking for staff and students.

3 The London Borough of Sutton has a population of some 170,000, of whom about 12 per cent are aged 16 to 24. Over three-quarters of Sutton's employees work in the service sector. Many of them are women who work part time. There are high levels of social deprivation and unemployment, and low levels of educational attainment in some parts of the borough. Overall, unemployment stands at about 13 per cent, but rises to 28 per cent in some parts of Sutton. About 30 per cent of the working population of the borough are self-employed.

4 The college operates in a competitive environment. All but two local secondary schools have grant-maintained status. Sixty-one per cent of 16 year olds stay on in education and training, 42 per cent of them at school. During 1993-94, the college decided to increase its provision for employed and unemployed adults. By revising the range of courses on offer, and transforming its marketing, the college has increased the number of adult students from 42 per cent in 1992-93 to 67 per cent in 1995-96. In 1995-96, 2,684 students were enrolled, of whom 1,235 were full time. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 The college has been regenerated in the past four years. It has reaffirmed its commitment to become more responsive to clients' needs. Senior managers have used a series of briefing sessions for staff to set out the college's strategic aims within the national targets for education and

training for further education. A new strategic plan was drawn up in 1996 to replace an earlier plan which had become outdated. The college's mission is to be the pre-eminent local provider of high-quality post-16 education and training, and to create the opportunity for people to achieve their personal, educational and employment goals.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 The college offers vocational courses, in nine of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) 10 programme areas. Courses leading to intermediate and advanced level general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) are available in business, information technology, hospitality and catering, leisure and tourism, and art and design. There is an intermediate level GNVQ course in engineering. Foundation, intermediate and advanced GNVQ courses are offered in health and social care. Courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) are available at levels 1, 2 and 3 in food preparation and food service, at levels 2, 3 and 4 in accounts, at levels 2 and 3 in motor vehicle engineering, and at level 2 in travel services, sports and recreation, and electrical installation. The college has developed several modern apprenticeship schemes in electrical installations, motor vehicle engineering, electromechanical engineering, business administration, information technology and accounting and in 1996, the college became a managing agent for these programmes. Additional vocational courses are offered at intermediate levels 2 and 3 through City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G), Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and other awarding bodies.

7 As so many local schools provide courses leading to the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE), and the general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), the college has decided to offer only a small number of GCSE and GCE subjects. They are mainly offered to adults returning to education, and younger students who want to retake particular subjects. Students can choose from eight GCSE and 10 GCE A level subjects.

8 Teachers from the college attend open days and careers advice events within several schools in Sutton and surrounding boroughs. Although not formally invited into some of the schools in Sutton, the college, through its marketing activities, maintains contact with staff from many of the schools. The increasing number of applications from school-leavers in the borough shows the effectiveness of these contacts. As a member of the Sutton Education Business Partnership, the college has provided a series of introductory vocational courses for pupils in many of the local schools. At the request of some secondary schools, college staff provide these schools with a range of consultancy services in areas such as the development of GNVQ courses.

9 The promotion of equal opportunities for students and staff is central to the college's work. Targets, such as that for increasing the number of

staff from minority ethnic backgrounds, are set and monitored. The college runs courses which are specially designed for women in information technology, multi-media, and enterprise training. These courses have proved particularly helpful to women who have been made redundant or are retraining after bringing up their children.

10 A particular strength of the college's provision is the range of courses for students with learning difficulties. Courses are designed to meet the needs of those with a range of learning difficulties, and to enable them to progress to NVQ level 1 and GNVQ foundation level courses. The college has strong links with several special schools and provides link courses for their pupils. An unusual part-time course has been developed to support people who have been placed in employment by the Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults' Pathway employment service. A nearby further education centre where provision is made for students with profound learning difficulties has close links with the college, and uses its facilities each week.

11 The college offers a range of programmes designed to provide access to higher education. Links have been developed with Kingston University and with Roehampton Institute of Higher Education which have resulted in guaranteed interviews or guaranteed places for students who successfully complete these programmes. A close link with Saint George's Medical School of Nursing has facilitated the progression of students to nursing courses. It has also led to the development of programmes which meet the requirements of the medical school. The college runs a programme of teacher training in collaboration with Greenwich University.

12 During 1994, the college appointed marketing, advertising and graphic design staff to form a public relations and communications team. An extensive marketing strategy has been developed. The team's work has concentrated on promoting the college throughout the local community. It has been successful in bringing the college rapidly to the point where it has a key role in providing education, training and consultancy services to the community. The college's prospectus and promotional literature are produced to a high standard. A vigorous and creative advertising and public relations campaign, linked with many local events, has enhanced the reputation of the college with local schools, businesses, employers and community groups. The public relations and communications team uses extensive market research and labour market information to inform its marketing and to provide a basis for changes in the range of courses which the college offers. 'Marketing focus groups' have been developed in each of the college's curriculum sectors and in the enterprise and training service, which is responsible for developing self-financing work. Part of the team's advertising budget is devolved to each sector and, through the focus groups, all staff are involved in marketing the college's provision. The college regards the work of the team as fundamental to its strategic aims. The team's budget has been increased from around £100,000 in 1995-96 to £120,000 in 1996-97.

13 Through its enterprise and training service, established in 1993-94, the college has successfully developed self-financing courses for a wide range of employers and business clients. It has established effective partnerships with the South London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and with the Sutton Regeneration Partnership. The partnership also includes Sutton College of Liberal Arts and several local businesses and community groups. One major project has been the redevelopment of a large housing estate in Sutton, where the college has played a major role in developing an education and training programme. The close co-operation between the college and the TEC has led to several joint projects. The college has made successful bids to a range of funding sources, including the European Social Fund and the funding resulting from these bids has enabled the college to provide a range of courses for large national companies in subjects such as customer service training and accountancy. Some of these courses are delivered and assessed on the employers' premises. The funds which the college derives from sources other than the FEFC have risen from about £700,000 in 1994-95 to £1,200,000, 20 per cent of its income in 1996-97.

14 In 1992, the college collaborated with five other colleges in a successful bid for TEC funding to develop the teaching of French to business studies students. Since then, the college has continued to develop its links with Europe. In 1995, the college opened its Euro Centre which is partly funded by the Sutton Regeneration Partnership. The aim of the centre is to promote a European perspective in the curriculum. The college has established collaborative links with colleges in Spain, Belgium and Finland to provide opportunities for residential visits and work placements. Students from business studies, leisure and tourism, and hospitality and catering have all benefited from these links. Modules in European studies, French or Spanish have been included in some access to higher education programmes. College staff, in collaboration with staff from other colleges, have produced a useful publication detailing the steps involved in arranging exchanges with institutions in Europe. Engineering staff at the college are developing links with institutions in Norway and there has been a lecturer exchange with Sweden. These links, however, have yet to have a direct impact on the engineering courses.

15 The college has strong links with a number of local employers and managing agents. These have led to the joint development of courses in sports and recreation training, customer services, electrical engineering, and leisure and tourism. Formal employer groups have been developed for all vocational areas. In engineering, most of the contact with employers is through managing agents. In business programmes, course leaders deal directly with employers when arranging work placements for students and when seeking the participation of employers in curriculum development. The involvement of both local and national companies in the work of the college has been an increasing strength over the last three years.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

16 The college is effectively governed. There are 14 governors including nine independent members, the principal, and one member elected from the staff of the college. There are four women but no members of minority ethnic groups. At the time of the inspection, there was a vacancy for a governor nominated by the TEC and the nominations committee of the corporation was attempting to fill another vacancy for a governor with local business connections. Governors have a broad range of expertise and experience in areas such as human resource management, finance and accounting, information technology, marketing and education. One of the governors has a particular interest in educational opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Several governors have substantial involvement in local community developments such as the Sutton Regeneration Partnership. Governors are committed to the college's aims and activities and their expertise has been used by managers to good effect. For example, a governor with extensive experience of personnel management was able to provide valuable advice to college managers when employment contracts for staff were being formulated.

17 In addition to the nominations committee, there are subcommittees for corporate services, audit, and the remuneration of senior staff. The attendance rate for governors' meetings in 1995-96 was 82 per cent. Meetings attended by inspectors were well organised and skilfully chaired. There is a clearly understood and appropriate delegation of powers from the governing body to the principal. Although governors respect and trust senior managers they are not inhibited from closely scrutinising developments within the college. Managers report regularly to governors on financial and other resource matters and on matters relating to the curriculum, its quality and the achievements of students. The clerk to the governing body, who is also the head of corporate services, ensures that agendas and supporting papers are distributed on time, that meetings are clearly minuted and that governors receive the information they need to perform their roles effectively.

18 Governors have a code of conduct and have established a register of interests. They have undertaken some training, mainly to improve their knowledge of aspects of the further education sector, such as the FEFC's funding methodology, or of issues which relate to their role as governors, such as the legal liability they face. In 1995, and again in 1996, governors attempted to evaluate their own effectiveness by responding to a questionnaire. Responses to these questionnaires have not yet led, however, to any systematic identification of governors' training needs.

19 The college's strategic plan has been formulated in close consultation with staff. Governors were kept fully informed as the plan was developed. As well as playing a prominent role in the plan's development, the curriculum sectors and the support services have developed their own detailed operational plans which incorporate measurable targets and timescales. Enrolment and income targets are set for the sectors and,

generally, these have been met or exceeded. In a bid to improve completion rates for students, retention targets are now set for each course.

20 Communications within the college are good. The college has recognised the importance of good communications to its strategic planning process, to effective decision-making and to its self-assessment process. Following a detailed analysis in 1994, measures were introduced to improve the quality of internal communications across the college. There is now an attractively-produced newsletter which covers a broad range of developments at the college. Senior managers arrange regular briefings for staff on issues such as accommodation, strategic and operational planning, quality assurance and the college's financial arrangements. Regular opinion surveys are carried out amongst staff and there is a scheme whereby staff can suggest improvements. In addition to these initiatives, senior managers are making themselves more accessible to staff and students.

21 The college and its courses are effectively managed. Following the recent departure of the head of the manufacturing and technology sector, the college has examined how it might reorganise responsibilities amongst senior managers. There are job descriptions for all managerial posts and terms of reference for all college committees. The senior managers of the college combine strong leadership with a consultative approach. The college's management team comprises the principal, the heads of the two curriculum sectors, and the heads of corporate services, quality and client services, and enterprise and training services. The team meets weekly to develop policies and to monitor the achievement of strategic planning objectives. Curriculum sectors are grouped into programme areas, each under the control of a sector manager. Sector heads meet weekly with their sector managers who, in turn, have regular meeting with course managers. All these meetings have agendas and are minuted.

22 There are policies and formal procedures covering the way staff are managed, the college's commitments to its students, and the development of the curriculum. A nominated manager is responsible for implementing each policy and for monitoring its impact. Procedures are updated in the light of changing circumstances. Some policies are relatively new and are not yet firmly established. The college's equal opportunities policy, developed by the equal opportunities committee, was approved by governors in March 1996. Since then, progress in implementing the policy has been relatively slow. An equal opportunities training programme for staff is scheduled to take place in May 1997.

23 The academic board makes an important contribution to debate on key issues relating to the curriculum and the quality of provision. The board, which meets once each term, is chaired by the principal and includes the other members of the college's management team, elected representatives of the academic and support services staff, the learning support manager and a representative of the students. The board is

supported in its work by subcommittees which cover sector boards of study, learning resources, equal opportunities, quality assurance and staff development. The minutes of academic board meetings are considered by governors at corporation meetings.

24 The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The average level of funding in 1996-97 is £21.34 compared with £21.88 in 1995-96. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97. The college's budget is formulated following consultations amongst managers about operational priorities. There is extensive delegation of funds to sectors and services to cover staffing costs, equipment and materials. This is supported by detailed financial reports which enable managers to scrutinise income and expenditure closely. The college has a breakdown of the costs of courses which sector heads use in deciding how resources are to be allocated.

25 The capacity of the college's computerised management information system to help staff to monitor developments and take decisions is improving steadily. The system can provide a good range of data and reports relating to students, staff and the college's resources. In most respects, the information is accurate. Although some managers do not have direct access to the computerised data, reports can usually be obtained quickly from the management information section. There is scope for a review of the likely information needs of managers so that reports can be tailored to their particular requirements, and issued to them regularly.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

26 The college provides good advice and support for its students. Specialists work in teams to meet clients' needs, under the overall leadership of a member of the college management team.

27 The information and guidance centre is the first point of contact for prospective students. It is accessible, welcoming and well stocked with attractively-produced information on the college's provision. The centre also provides information on careers and higher education opportunities. Staff in the centre organise the admissions and enrolment procedures. Most interviews are carried out by course tutors using checklists to ensure that all interviews meet college standards. Staff understand the importance of guiding students to the most appropriate courses and considerable care is taken to provide impartial advice. The enrolment process operated smoothly. There was little queuing. Students with learning difficulties were enrolled appropriately, alongside other students.

28 The college diary provided to all students gives clear information on the range of social, welfare and learning support facilities available. It also contains the college's disability statement and the charter. The disability statement is exemplary in its clarity. Alternative versions of the diary can be obtained in other languages, in Braille or on audio tape. A version suitable for students with learning difficulties is being prepared.

29 The induction programmes for most students are informative and well balanced. In some cases, students are able to take part in interesting activities. In one induction session, for example, students on a GNVQ advanced business studies course took part enthusiastically in a team-building exercise, which involved taking photographs of each other in major London tourist locations. A few of the induction sessions observed were less successful. The extensive use of the college diary during the induction of full-time students helps to ensure that all students receive the same information. The diary is also effective in providing information to part-time students. The college is aware that some part-time students have more limited access to induction and tutorial support.

30 The college is committed to identifying students' needs for additional learning support as early as possible in their courses. A review has been carried out to find ways of speeding up the assessment process, and the referral of students for support. A new additional learning support team has been set up to co-ordinate support arrangements across the college. Delays in assessment and referral have been reduced and there has been a considerable increase in the number of students benefiting from support. The college has devised its own set of tests to establish which students need additional support. These are based on the Basic Skills Agency's tests for numeracy and communication skills. Tests were taken by all students during their induction in September 1996. In future, students will be tested when they are interviewed. Any additional support they need will then be available from the first day of their course. The additional learning support team is able to provide specialist support for students with hearing impairments and support in information technology skills, numeracy and language, including English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). The current lack of access to specialist dyslexia support has been recognised. On some courses, tutors make few referrals of students who need some additional support.

31 In addition to organised learning support, all students are entitled to use the study centre when they need help with numeracy, English and study skills. Well-designed packages of support material, have been developed, and a support tutor is available on four days and three evenings a week.

32 There is a clear, well-planned tutorial system. The student support and guidance group, comprising key managers from all sectors and relevant services of the college, has developed a range of relevant tutorial and pastoral support materials to support course teams in developing their own tutorial curriculum. Sector managers are responsible for ensuring that tutorial programmes are implemented effectively. There are some good tutorial practices and pastoral support; for example, course teams regularly review students' progress, sponsoring employers are sent written reports on students' performance, and regular contact is maintained with the parents of younger students. Such examples of good practice, however, are not established in all areas of the college's provision.

33 Students are encouraged to maintain and update their national records of achievement. These records are given a high profile at the college and are externally validated by South East Records of Achievement. In those sectors and courses where they are widely used, records of achievement are rigorous and carefully written. There were, for example, excellent records of achievement for students with learning difficulties which incorporated photographs, students' own comments and a clear indication of what the students had achieved in their courses.

34 Students' attendance and punctuality are monitored. The college has recently adopted an innovative approach to attendance and has appointed a register audit project officer who carries out register checks and follows up absences promptly. It is also her remit to liaise with students and their tutors in order to encourage students to attend regularly and complete their courses.

35 Tutors are responsible for advising students on careers and assisting them in making applications for employment or in progressing to other courses. They are supported by careers officers and by the student services team in providing students with accessible guidance. In a few cases, tutors have lacked the experience and knowledge to advise students appropriately.

36 Students benefit from a range of social and welfare facilities, which they use extensively and value. A student support worker performs a key role in organising social, sports and cultural activities. He also helps students to develop an awareness of equal opportunities issues, including issues concerning students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students have access to a confidential counselling service and to advice on a range of financial and other welfare issues. The college augments the access fund from its own resources. A creche owned by the local authority operates on the college site. It offers some reserved places for the children of students. Few students use the creche for their children, however. Most support for childcare is financed through payments to students from the access fund to enable them to employ childminders.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

37 The strengths outweighed weaknesses in 65 per cent of the lessons observed. The weakness outweighed strengths in 6 per cent of the sessions. The following table shows the grades awarded to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programmes of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	1	4	4	0	0	9
GCSE	2	1	4	2	0	9
GNVQ	3	15	15	4	0	37
NVQ	2	9	4	0	0	15
Other*	13	30	9	1	0	53
Total	21	59	36	7	0	123

**includes access to higher education, training for learning support, basic literacy and numeracy, ESOL and provision for students with learning difficulties.*

38 Open and friendly relationships between teachers and students contributed to much successful learning. Courses and individual lessons were usually well managed, although some schemes of work contained no information on teaching methods. Many students benefited from being given detailed information about their courses. On some courses, for example, teachers shared information about course content and structure and assessment procedures, with their students. For most courses, there were helpful introductory handbooks which provided guidance on the range and depth of work required. In many lessons, teachers used a range of appropriate activities and resources. They usually responded well to the varying needs and abilities of their students. In several lessons, teachers handled topics imaginatively, and used resources in an original way. Other lessons lacked variety or a sense of purpose. In some instances, the pace of the work was too slow and the lesson lacked momentum.

39 Most assignments were of an appropriate level, although some students were set work which lacked variety or which was insufficiently challenging. Assignments were usually effectively supported by written material. Students were generally well prepared for the tasks involved. Most work was carefully marked and returned to students punctually. Assessment included helpful and encouraging comments on how students might improve their performance. Most teachers kept effective records of students' progress.

40 Engineering and electrical installation students benefited from carefully-planned, well-resourced teaching. In one GNVQ intermediate engineering lesson, students were applying knowledge gained in a theory class by partially stripping down a gearbox. Their learning was consolidated by completing a task sheet. In most lessons, students worked confidently and purposefully, and were assessed to exacting standards. Assessment procedures were usually clearly identified in lesson plans. Most of the teaching aids and briefing papers for assignments were well produced by staff who had high levels of skill in using information technology.

41 Students on business studies courses received full and clear information about their courses. Learning programmes catered for students of differing needs and abilities, and most teachers provided a range of suitable activities and levels of work. In a few lessons, teachers failed to address the needs of all students, particularly those of the more able. Business students were taught to analyse and solve problems methodically and thoroughly and the importance of technical accuracy was stressed in all accounting lessons. Assignments were set at an appropriate level. Most were carefully marked. Teachers provided students with helpful and detailed comments on their work and kept full records of their progress.

42 Health and social care lessons were usually well planned and, in general, students and staff worked together productively. Most teachers ensured that lessons followed on from previous learning and involved students in discussion and a range of appropriate learning activities. In the better lessons, students' understanding of concepts was fully tested, and the experience of staff and students was used to illuminate points under discussion. A few lessons lacked vitality or failed to sustain the students' full interest. Most small group work was managed well. Marking was thorough, helpful and prompt.

43 There were effective schemes of work for catering courses. Teachers prepared lessons thoroughly and helped students to learn to work productively on their own. They maintained good records of students' progress. Theory lessons were enlivened by teachers' stimulating delivery and by references to relevant topical issues. For example, in one lesson, the teacher skilfully referred to a serious food poisoning episode in Scotland which was in the national news at the time. Most practical lessons were efficiently managed. In a particularly successful lesson for students with learning difficulties, the catering teacher ensured that their work was of the standard required by the industry. Students benefited from the commercial learning environment of the training restaurant and of a new kitchen. Some lessons lacked a sense of purpose and direction. In a few lessons, some students were not correctly dressed for the activities they were undertaking. Practical assignments were carefully set, and thoroughly assessed. Students received helpful comments on their work in class, but their homework was not always marked.

44 Teachers on leisure and tourism courses prepared thoroughly for their lessons. They provided effective support for individual students, and kept systematic records of the progress students were making. Work was competently marked, and students received helpful comments on their performance. Teachers used a variety of successful teaching methods and activities. However, a few teachers showed a lack of commercial knowledge. In some instances, recent developments in the subject were not covered; for example, in a lesson which included learning about employment legislation, the teacher failed to make reference to the new

disabilities statements required by employers. There were a few occasions when more able students were given too little work or were set insufficiently demanding tasks.

45 Humanities courses were carefully planned. Students received useful information leaflets and handbooks to help them with their work. Psychology was well taught and students' contributions to lessons were well informed, balanced and enthusiastic. Teaching was also effective on courses to train teachers and learning support workers. In other subjects, the standard of teaching was less consistent. In some lessons, the learning activities stimulated students' interest and developed their self-confidence. For example, in a GCSE English lesson the teacher's enthusiasm for *Romeo and Juliet*, coupled with selective use of video tape, sparked off a discussion in which most students made informed and enthusiastic contributions. In a few lessons, however, the same activity went on for too long, teachers' expectations of their students were too low, and there was insufficient focus on what students were expected to learn. In several areas of the humanities, there was scope for some teachers to learn from their more confident or experienced colleagues.

46 Media studies lessons were generally lively and effective. In art and design, standards of teaching were more varied. Most courses were well planned. Schemes of work had been extensively rewritten. In media and photography, lessons were conducted at an appropriate pace and they succeeded in stimulating the students' interest. In one lesson, the teacher used video extracts from television programmes, including 'Dixon of Dock Green', to provoke a lively discussion on the changing styles of film making. Assignments were challenging and related to the needs of industry. They often involved carefully planned use of relevant equipment. Art students were sometimes set confusing assignments on a limited range of topics. Overall, their work was not developed imaginatively and some students did not demonstrate an appropriate level of technique. These students were not encouraged to work quickly enough to be able to complete their assignments within the time allocated.

47 On basic education courses, and courses for students learning English as a second language, teachers had devised detailed schemes of work which were given to the students. Most tutors related well to their students and had a clear understanding of their individual needs and interests. Some lessons, such as a well-managed discussion on graffiti which involved local issues and students' views on racist graffiti, were lively and enjoyable. Others lacked variety and gave students limited opportunities for practising oral communication skills. Students' work was not always marked regularly. Some comments on assignments failed to include advice on how students might improve their work. Some tutors kept inadequate records of students' progress.

48 The teaching of students with learning difficulties was well planned. Staff gave students a variety of appropriate learning experiences. In one

lesson, students with severe learning difficulties, working on their own, used still and video cameras competently and confidently to take pictures throughout the college. However, in some lessons, staff revealed a lack of expertise in teaching students with learning difficulties. For example, in many practical lessons, staff carried out too much of the activity themselves or they gave the students too many instructions and too much continuous prompting. As a result, the students were denied an opportunity to work out how to do things for themselves.

49 GCE A level mathematics and science teachers planned their work carefully. They produced good-quality fact sheets to ensure that students had adequate information. Students' work was regularly set and marked. Students on the science access to higher education course, benefited from stimulating lessons and made good progress in their work. In one advanced GNVQ lesson, a teacher strengthened the students' learning of information technology concepts by giving a high-quality presentation on an overhead projector, and by an effective demonstration of how a computer works. Activities in some lessons, particularly in mathematics and computing, lacked variety. Lecturing was often the only teaching method used. Some GCSE lessons in mathematics failed to motivate students. The students attended these lessons irregularly, showed little interest in them and failed to make any significant progress.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

50 Most students work with interest, enjoy their studies, and make good progress at the levels appropriate to their respective courses. Some students are less well motivated, and progress less purposefully towards their learning goals. Most respond well to opportunities to participate in classroom activities. Much of the practical work undertaken by students is completed thoroughly and methodically. Most students approach their assignment work positively and they carry it out effectively. In many lessons, students work well together, co-operating successfully in small groups. They usually speak well of their courses and of the opportunities provided by the college for them to study productively. Some students, however, have a less positive view of the GCSE courses they are taking.

51 The attendance rate for lessons observed during the inspection was 74 per cent. On several courses, and particularly GCSE courses, the students' poor attendance seriously affected their ability to meet all their course requirements in the time available. Attendance was low in mathematics, science, and art and design, and averaged 68 per cent. A lack of punctuality also affected students' progress on many courses. During the inspection, significant numbers of students arrived late for their lessons. In one GCE A level lesson, only two out of nine students arrived on time.

52 Retention rates are variable. Many students complete their courses but in most subject areas, there are courses which lose a high proportion of students before the final assessment. In 1995-96, there were low

retention rates on some business studies courses, including the intermediate GNVQ, and on some information technology courses. In the same year, only nine of the 33 students who began the NVQ level 2 information technology course completed it. There were poor retention rates on some other courses, across a range of subjects. For example, there were poor retention rates on several information technology courses, including the BTEC national diploma course which had a retention rate of 38 per cent over two years.

53 Success rates for students studying on GNVQ courses are often good. In 1996, 67 per cent of students taking GNVQ hospitality and catering gained the full award compared with a current national figure of 46 per cent. Sixty-eight per cent of students on the GNVQ intermediate information technology course in 1995-96 achieved the full award, and this proportion compares extremely well with the national figure of 37 per cent. In health and social care, examination success rates are at, or above, national figures for most courses. However, in 1996, the pass rate of 50 per cent in GNVQ art and design was substantially below the national average of 63 per cent and the results of some students on GNVQ leisure and tourism courses were poor.

54 Many of the students on NVQ programmes were also successful. For example, in 1996, 73 per cent of students on the level 2 electrical installation course gained their qualification and 90 per cent of students on the NVQ level 2 travel course found employment in the industry. However, results for level 2 courses in catering were poor with only 39 per cent of students gaining the qualification.

55 Many good results are achieved by students on a wide variety of other vocational courses. In 1996, students on Association of Accounting Technicians accounts courses achieved results above the national average. On C&G computer-aided design courses, levels of students' retention and achievement were high. Students on the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education nursery nursing diploma course achieved an 86 per cent pass rate and their retention rate was 97 per cent. Appropriate work experience was well monitored and the students' performance in work placements was carefully assessed. On the BTEC diploma course in media studies, the retention rate was high; all the students gained their award and many progressed to higher education. Results were poor on the dental assistants course where the pass rate was only 21 per cent.

56 In 1996, 61 per cent of students aged 16 to 18 on advanced vocational courses achieved their qualifications, according to data published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). This places the college in the bottom third of colleges within the sector, on this performance measure. The data published by the DfEE also show that, in 1996, only 36 per cent of students aged 16 to 18 on intermediate level vocational courses achieved their qualifications. This places the college in the bottom 10 per cent of colleges within the sector.

57 Many students on access to higher education and teacher training courses have returned to formal study after a long break from academic work. They were performing well in their coursework. Their oral contributions to sessions and their skills of discussion were of a high standard. Their retention rates ranged from 81 to 100 per cent. Candidates taking the C&G learning support certificate were all successful. In 1996, 30 per cent of students on the access course progressed to higher education.

58 About 150 students were taking GCE A level and GCSE courses. Most GCE A level students worked with interest and determination to achieve the qualification. Although written work was completed enthusiastically and students were anxious to improve their performance, many found it difficult to express themselves effectively in writing. In science, a substantial proportion of students had an inadequate grasp of basic concepts and this impeded their progress. Many students on courses in humanities and science at GCE A level and GCSE obtained poor results. Where a significant number of students took the examination, it was only in English that the results came close to national average pass rates over the period 1994-96. Results on GCSE courses were well below average. In English, the proportion of students gaining grades A to C dropped from 63 per cent in 1994, to 42 per cent in 1996. In 1996, only 14 out of 65 entrants gained a C grade or higher in GCSE mathematics.

59 Most of the work produced by basic education students is at an appropriate level. One student using an overhead projector and samples gave an impressive presentation on the history and practice of cross-stitching and subsequently answered questions confidently. Folders of work are well maintained and they show that students are developing their literacy and numeracy skills. A few of the students who are members of mainstream courses have difficulty in integrating with other students in the group and in keeping up with the required levels of work. Students with learning difficulties are developing skills in organising their work. They are able to make useful contributions to class discussions. They are confident in talking about their work, and they take pride in their achievements. However, some students receive too much support from teachers and they are not given sufficient opportunity to work things out for themselves. Some students who have been at the college for several years have not made enough progress towards being self-sufficient.

60 Although many students take up opportunities to improve their expertise with information technology, some are reluctant to use computers. In art courses, little use is made of computers. Few students on health and social care courses wordprocess their work. Students often show good communication skills in lesson discussion and group work. However, their written work sometimes lacks structure and accuracy. Students on several courses have unsatisfactory numeracy skills.

61 The college celebrates students' achievements. The annual awards evening includes opportunities for sons and daughters to applaud the successes of their parents on courses at the college. Forty-five prizes were awarded in 1996 to 'Students of the Year' in different areas of study. The college awards certificates to local school pupils who have successfully completed college 'taster' courses. Each year, a competition for original writing attracts entries of a high standard from a variety of students at the college. In 1996, a group of media studies students won a national competition in which they had to devise a radio advertisement for a chain of cinemas.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

62 The development of quality assurance systems has helped the college to improve its effectiveness and monitor the results of restructuring its provision. A quality assurance framework has been agreed by governors. Relevant reports and policies related to quality assurance are presented to the academic board for approval. Overall responsibility for quality assurance lies with a member of the senior management team, the head of quality and client services. The considerable investment of time devoted to involving all staff in drawing up quality assurance procedures has helped to ensure that there is a widespread commitment to quality assurance in the college.

63 Self-assessment forms a central part of the college's quality assurance system. It includes a series of internal inspections and audits which, during the last three years, have covered all aspects of the college's work including teaching and learning. Clear policy and procedural guidelines and consultation amongst all staff have ensured a high level of participation in the self-assessment process. Staff express positive views about the benefits of this process. The reports from the inspections inform strategic and operational plans. An inspection of the relationships between the college and its clients in 1995 led to a number of developments, including improvements in arrangements for handling student enquiries and conducting interviews. In the inspection of teaching and learning, course teams graded their own programme areas and identified areas for improvement. As a result, more opportunities are now provided for students to give feedback on the quality of their courses. However, staff development to improve the effectiveness of teaching has not yet taken place. Inspectors found the second self-assessment report, produced at the time of the inspection, exemplary in its analysis of the college's strengths and weaknesses. The findings of the report accorded very closely with those of the inspection team. In a few cases, the self-assessment report was more critical of aspects of the college's work.

64 A college-wide course review system was established in 1994. The reviews have led to some improvements in the quality of courses. They have incorporated evidence from lesson observations carried out in

internal inspections. To encourage students to comment freely, staff who do not teach on their courses act as independent facilitators and pass a record of what is said by students to the course team. As a result, many teams have made changes to course timetables or methods of teaching. The issues raised in course reviews are reported by course teams to sector boards of studies which in turn report to the college management team and quality assurance committee of the academic board. The quality of course reviews and summary reports at each stage varies; some are thorough, others are little more than a set of notes. Action plans are required indicating who will follow up each issue, but there is no requirement to record that follow-up has taken place. Although a thorough course review process has been enhanced by the programme of internal inspections and self-assessment, the relationship between the different monitoring processes is not clear to some staff.

65 Performance targets and indicators, particularly in relation to retention, achievements and progression, are not yet firmly established in the course review process. They have been more widely used in corporate services, where there is a clear awareness of issues about the quality of their own service. Targets have been set for areas such as payroll, staff recruitment and technician services. These targets are monitored through regular reports. The corporate and the quality and client services are developing agreements with internal and external clients, which contain specified service standards.

66 The TEC programmes delivered by the college have specified quality standards and performance targets. A thorough system for monitoring performance is in place. The internal verification procedures for GNVQ and NVQ programmes have been revised as a result of an internal inspection and the changes were discussed with, and welcomed by, external verifiers and moderators.

67 The college's charter includes some statements about standards, although bench marks have not been set for all areas of provision. The charter promises to address all key clients, but at present employers are not explicitly referred to in the document. There is a clearly-designated complaints procedure. An annual survey of students' perceptions has been used, in part, to elicit views on the effectiveness of the charter. Insufficient information was made available to students on the results of the 1995-96 survey. Following requests from students, the survey process is being reviewed in order to find ways of improving the quality of information which students receive about the survey's findings.

68 The staff-appraisal scheme does not apply to all staff. The scheme has involved the appraisal of senior managers, most middle managers and some support staff, but very few lecturers are appraised. The appraisal model used has a strong element of self-review. Appraisees identify their strengths, discuss them with their appraiser and agree areas of their performance which require further development. The scheme has helped

identify the individual training and development needs of staff. However, there is no written guidance to appraisers about the evidence they should collect and draw on, or the criteria they should use, when giving feedback to appraisees. The appraisal of middle managers who teach does not include observation of their teaching.

69 The head of quality and client services is responsible for staff development. The budget allocation in 1996-97 was £48,000, which represents approximately 0.8 per cent of the college's recurrent funding budget. An overall corporate training strategy, agreed by the staff-development committee of the academic board and the college management team, is designed to address needs identified in the college planning process, in internal inspections, in course review and through appraisal. In 1995-96, 97 staff received information technology training, 24 staff achieved assessor or internal verifier awards, and 28 business support staff registered for NVQs. Almost all senior and middle managers have attended a management development programme aimed at improving their management capabilities and skills of team leadership and this has been highly valued by many participants. Procedures for the college's training programme are clearly set out, but information about the effectiveness of the provision and how well it is disseminated, is not well recorded and reviewed. The college is committed to achieving the Investors in People award and plans to apply to be assessed for it during 1997.

70 Staff induction is well planned and implemented, both on a cross-college basis and within sectors. A comprehensive staff handbook is provided and used by staff to hold key documents such as their training and development records. New staff are supported by mentors. There are scheduled reviews of the training needs of new staff. As a result of these, actions plans have been produced and sources of training have been identified. In some cases, staff have been able to undertake training which they need, even before they take up their post. Staff are appreciative of the mentor scheme and of the processes for meeting their training needs.

RESOURCES

Staffing

71 The college employs some 77 full-time equivalent teaching staff. Approximately 70 per cent are full time. Teachers are generally well qualified. Nearly 60 per cent have degrees and over 70 per cent have a teaching qualification. The proportion of graduates is lower than that usually found in colleges of further education, which reflects the college's high proportion of craft and technician work. Most staff who teach craft and technician work have appropriate vocational qualifications.

72 Provision for students with learning difficulties is adversely affected by the employment of too few full-time staff, and by the lack of staff with the qualifications and experience to teach such students. The majority

of teachers of ESOL are appropriately qualified, but some basic skills teachers have not had specialist training in the teaching of literacy and numeracy.

73 Most staff teaching on vocational courses have relevant commercial or industrial experience, but for some teachers this is not recent. In engineering, where part-time staff make a significant contribution, teachers have relevant industrial experience. Leisure and tourism staff are well qualified. Many have a good range of industrial experience, but several have had little updating of their industrial experience. Nearly all full-time staff teaching vocational subjects have achieved assessor and verifier awards. Progress in achieving such awards among part-time staff has been slower, except in business studies. The deployment of teaching staff is carefully monitored at sector and course level.

74 There are 18 full-time equivalent staff who directly support learning, and there are 68 non-teaching staff. Courses are generally well supported by technicians. Other staff such as those who work in the library or have responsibilities for finance or personnel are supportive of the college, appropriately qualified and effectively deployed. The college has developed some innovative employment policies, has promoted the Positive about Disabled People certificate and is committed to the employment and training of staff under the modern apprenticeship scheme. Almost 60 per cent of staff are female, and 90 per cent are white.

Equipment/learning resources

75 The standard of classroom and specialist equipment is generally high. The engineering laboratories and workshops are well equipped and meet the standards required by the industry lead bodies. A high standard of equipment is available for photography and video but equipment for art and design is more limited. All practical areas used by catering students are well equipped and students appreciate the facilities provided. Some of the equipment used in science lessons is not sufficiently up to date.

76 The study centre has recently been refurbished and provides an attractive and stimulating environment for learning. It contains a range of good learning materials. The Euro Centre has good equipment for language learning. The study centre has 110 study spaces, giving a ratio of one space to 16.36 full-time equivalent students. Twenty-eight computer terminals are available for students. Whilst the centre is well equipped in most respects, the library has deficiencies. The bookstock of 13,400 is small for a college of this size. The budget for the current year is £32,000, and this sum is a reduction on that allocated in previous years. It includes £15,700 for books, journals and newspapers. There is a limited range of books for art and design, insufficient books at basic and intermediate levels in ESOL, outdated mathematics texts, out-of-date science books, and a lack of some recommended texts in social science. The stock available for catering students is adequate. There is no overall college

policy on the provision of text books to students. Practice varies from course to course. When text books are not provided, students can buy them from the college shop.

77 The college is well provided with information technology equipment. The new multi-media room has outstanding equipment. In addition to the 28 terminals provided in the study centre, there are a further 196 terminals available to students, a ratio of one terminal to every eight full-time equivalent students. The total number available to students for their individual use varies from 48 to 88 according to the time of day. The only computers available to students in the evenings are those in the study centre. In addition to the terminals available to students, a further 22 workstations are available for the use of teachers.

Accommodation

78 The buildings are well maintained. The use of rooms has been rationalised, and rooms for different subject and service areas are grouped. The reception area and most classrooms are bright and airy. Good use is made of students' work as display material. The standard of specialist teaching accommodation is generally good. The science laboratories and electrical installations and electronics workshops have been refurbished to a high standard. Some of the motor vehicle practical areas are rather cramped. The new training kitchen, modelled on an exemplary design at the Helsinki Culinary Training School, enhances the learning experience of catering students. However, the changing rooms provided for catering students are barely adequate. All parts of the building are accessible to people using wheelchairs and toilets adapted to their needs are provided on every floor. A few of the rooms used for practical work by some students with more severe learning difficulties are unsuitable for them. As a result, the aims of some lessons for these students which take place in those rooms are not achieved. Students on care courses do not have an appropriate area for some practical and craft work.

79 The canteen seats approximately 250. The training restaurant is also available to staff. Smoking and non-smoking common rooms are shared by staff and students. An activities room, with pool and table tennis tables, is also provided for students. Sports facilities on site are limited, but there is a sports centre conveniently close to the college.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

80 Carshalton College has made marked progress in redefining its purpose and restructuring its provision. The main strengths of the college are:

- the impressive progress in developing a range of courses, tailored to meet the needs of its students and the local community
- its range of courses for students with learning difficulties

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- well-developed links with the local community, employers, the TEC and other educational providers
 - effective governance
 - strong management of the college and its courses
 - the consultative process of strategic planning
 - good communication at all levels
 - the quality of much of the teaching
 - its well-developed quality assurance systems which include rigorous and accurate self-assessment
 - the wide range of advice and support services available to students
 - generally well-qualified staff
 - the high standard of most general and specialist equipment, including information technology
 - excellent equipment in the new multi-media room
 - well-maintained buildings and pleasant general accommodation
 - specialist accommodation refurbished to a high standard.
- 81 In order to raise the quality of its provision, the college should:
- improve students' poor levels of achievement on some courses
 - address students' lack of punctuality and poor attendance on some courses
 - improve some poor retention rates
 - ensure that the tutorial system operates more consistently
 - bring together some disparate elements of the quality assurance process
 - address some teachers' lack of relevant qualifications or their lack of up-to-date commercial and industrial experience
 - improve the bookstock in the library.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at December 1996)

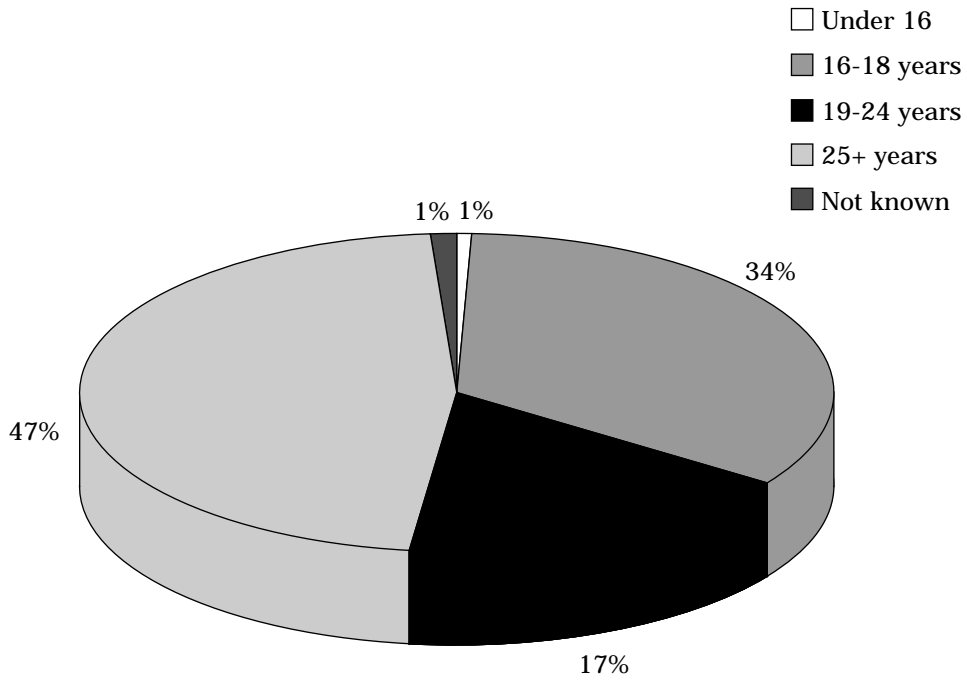
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

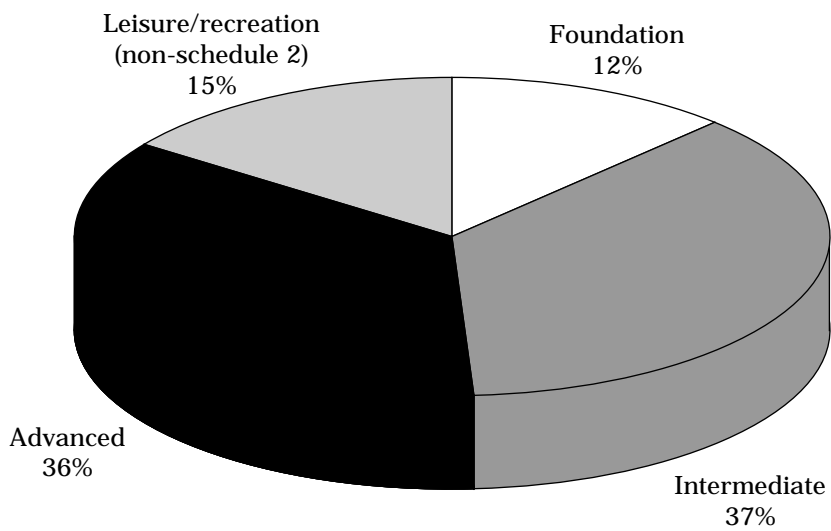
Carshalton College: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 2,684

Figure 2

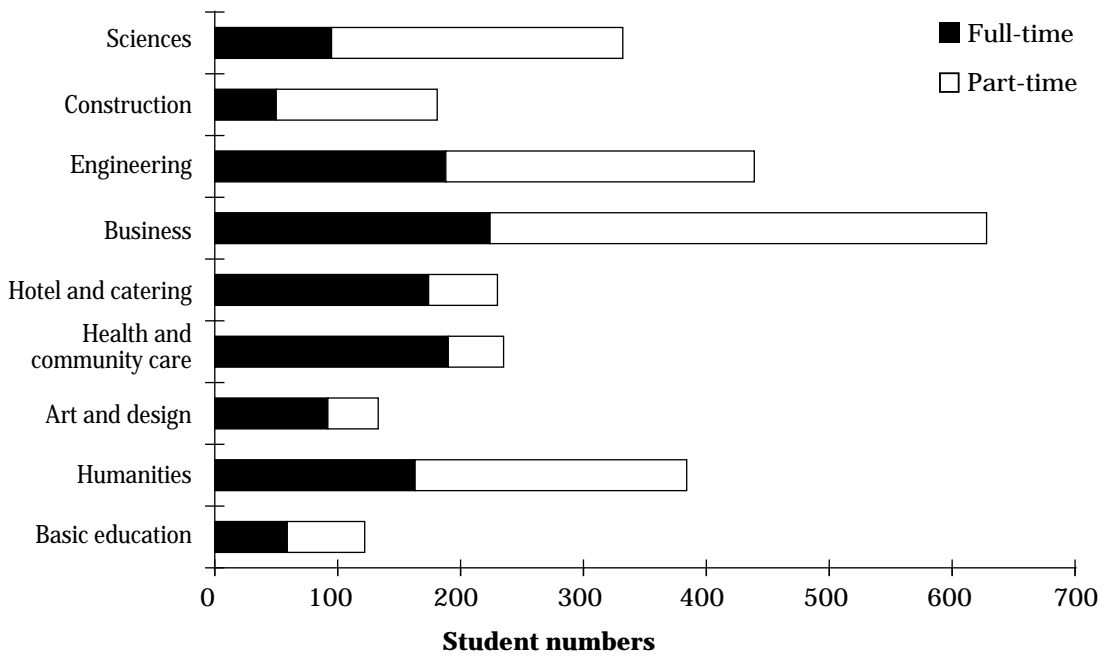
Carshalton College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 2,684

Figure 3

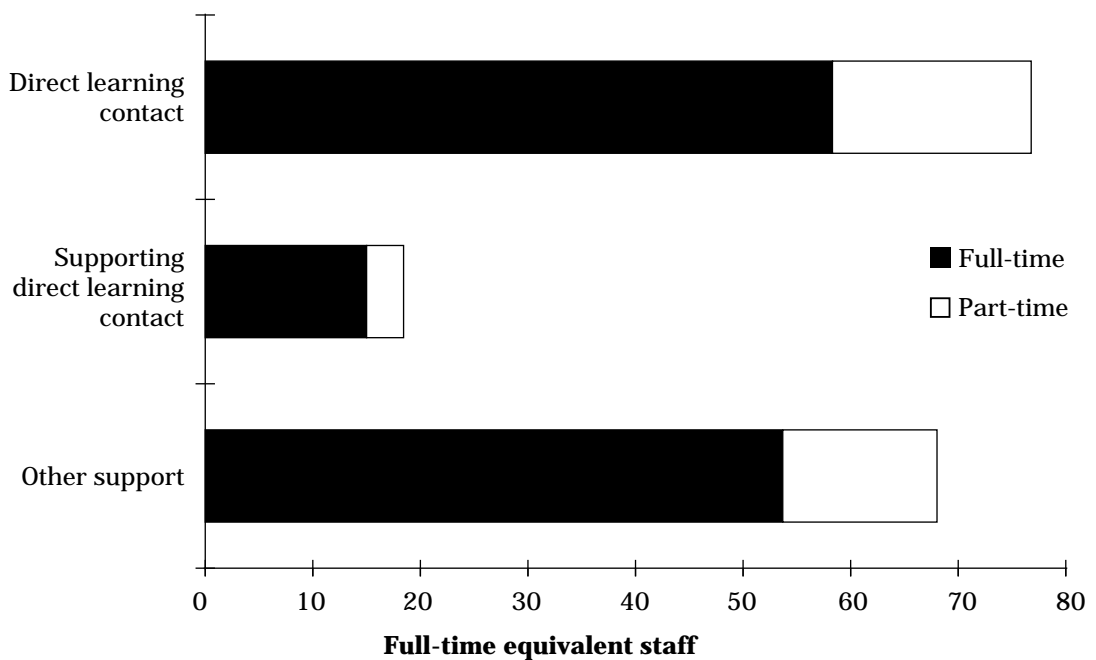
Carshalton College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 2,684

Figure 4

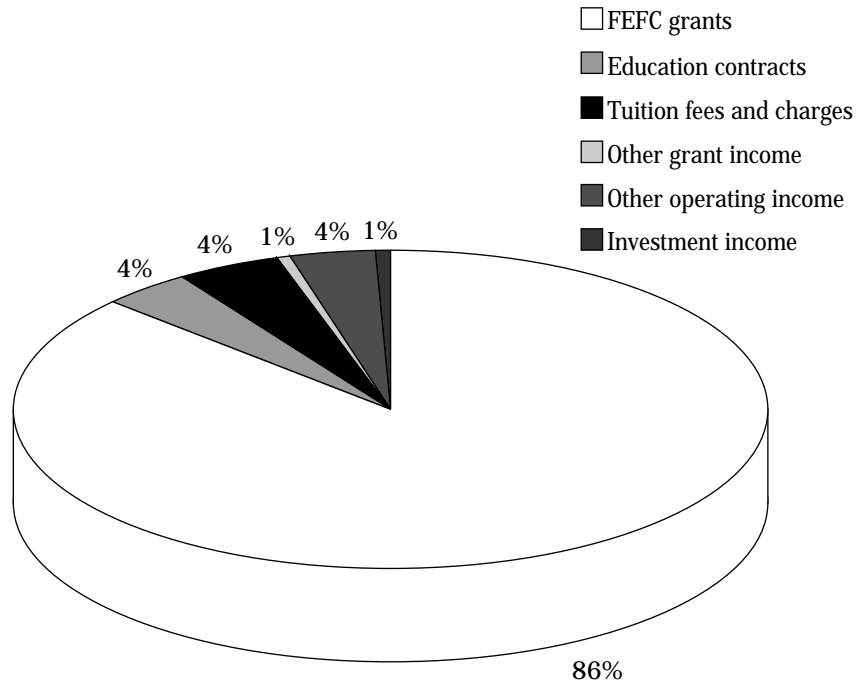
Carshalton College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at December 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 163

Figure 5

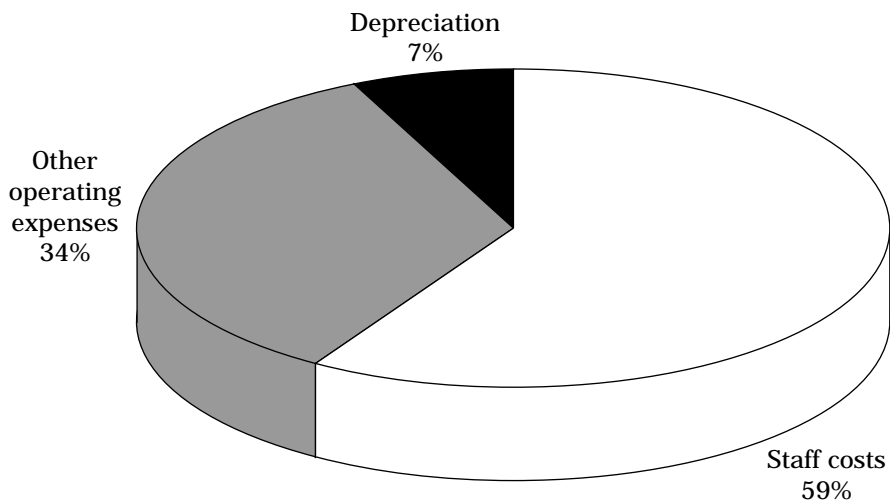
Carshalton College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £6,646,000

Figure 6

Carshalton College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £6,553,000



Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
April 1997