

# Chesterfield College

REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
**1999-00**

THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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## Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	10	53	30	7	–
Cross-college provision	14	54	23	7	2

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*  
Sample size: 104 college inspections

## Student Achievements

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

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not included.

# Summary

## Chesterfield College

### *East Midlands Region*

#### **Inspected April 2000**

Chesterfield College is a large general further education college located on two sites in Chesterfield. The college has a well-established and thorough self-assessment process. Governors and all staff contributed to the self-assessment report through their membership of course teams and support teams. The self-assessment report was moderated by a validation panel which included governors, senior managers and an external consultant. The report was clearly structured and supported by extensive evidence. By the time of inspection the college had implemented a number of aspects of its action plan. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses. They agreed with all the curriculum grades awarded by the college and three out of five of the grades for aspects of cross-college provision.

The college offers a broad range of courses in nine of the 10 FEFC programme areas. Provision in six of these was inspected. A concurrent inspection was undertaken by the TSC. The college is well managed. Financial planning and monitoring is effective. There are strong and productive links with a wide range of

local organisations. Governors make an effective contribution to the strategic direction of the college and have a high level of involvement in educational issues. The college has a well-established and effective quality assurance process that leads to continuous quality improvement. The achievement rates for full-time students on level 2 courses have increased by 25% since 1997. There are good arrangements to assure the quality of franchised provision. Courses are well managed and most of the teaching is good. In art and design the quality of teaching is outstanding. Pass rates on many courses are high and improving. Support for students includes comprehensive and well-structured tutorial support and extensive careers advice and guidance. Accommodation has substantially improved since the last inspection. There is a wide range of resources to support students with disabilities. The college should address: retention rates on a number of courses; some less effective teaching; the need for a coherent information and learning technology strategy; variations in the use of centrally produced student data by course teams; and the lack of detail in the reporting of franchised partners' students' achievements.

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cross-college provision</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Construction	2	Support for students	1
Electrical, electronic and mechanical engineering	2	General resources	2
Health and childcare	3	Quality assurance	1
Art and design	1	Governance	2
English, communication studies and access to higher education	2	Management	2
Basic skills	3		

## The College and its Mission

1 Chesterfield College is a large general further education college serving a population of around 300,000 in Chesterfield and north Derbyshire. The college was formed in 1984 as a result of the merger of Chesterfield College of Technology and the Chesterfield College of Art and Design. The main college campus is a short distance from Chesterfield town centre. A second site, a mile away at Tapton, is used to deliver access to higher education courses and much of the college's higher education provision. Chesterfield has good bus links with the outlying areas. The main college campus is within walking distance of the bus and railway stations. The college provides free transport for full-time students.

2 About 40% of employees in north Derbyshire work in financial, business and other services and 21% in distribution, hotels and catering. There has been a steady decline in employment in the manufacturing, construction, public administration, education and health sectors but growth in the servicing and financial sectors. Unemployment in Chesterfield borough in February 2000 was 6.5% compared with the national average of 4.5%. The college has a commitment to meeting the education and training needs of people in those areas hardest hit by the decline of the deep coal mining, manufacturing and construction industries.

3 Approximately 64% of young people leaving school in Derbyshire continue with some form of further education. Over the last seven years, there has been an increase in the number of school-leavers gaining employment and a decrease in the number entering training. The proportion of unemployed school-leavers has declined from 8% to 5.3%. In 1999, approximately 49% of Derbyshire school-leavers achieved five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) passes at grade C or above compared with 48% nationally. There are three other further education colleges and

eight schools with sixth forms within 10 miles of Chesterfield College.

4 The college provides courses in nine of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) 10 programme areas. It is an associate college of Sheffield Hallam University and has steadily increased its provision of full-time and part-time higher education courses. A wide range of courses for the community is provided on the college's main campus in Chesterfield and at outreach centres in Glossop and Matlock. In 1998-99, the college's 'Saturday College' provision attracted approximately 1,900 enrolments. The Chesterfield Arts Centre is also situated on the main campus and is run by the college with financial support from Derbyshire County Council. The centre provides a venue for an extensive range of cultural events for the benefit of the local community. The college offers a substantial number of courses through franchised provision. In 1998-99, 16% of the college's funding units from the FEFC were allocated for franchised work. The majority of the franchised courses are in health and social care, information technology (IT) and engineering.

5 In 1998-99, the college enrolled 14,164 students on FEFC-funded courses of whom 2,082 were full time. Of the college's students, 67% are aged 19 or over. In 1998-99, 444 students studied on higher education programmes at the college. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups in college is approximately 2% compared with about 1% in the local area.

6 The senior management team comprises the principal, vice-principal, the director of personnel and estates, the director of marketing and student services, two curriculum directors and the chief administrative officer. Teaching is managed by eight heads of school. In March 2000, the college employed 500 full-time equivalent staff of whom 169 were full-time equivalent support staff.

# Context

7 The college mission states: ‘Chesterfield College will encourage all individuals to develop their full potential both through its own efforts and in partnership with others. It will seek to widen participation in its educational and training activities thereby contributing to the economic prosperity of the community. The college will be a customer-centred institution, committed to delivering quality learning programmes and pathways to higher levels of achievement to all its students’.

## The Inspection

8 The college was inspected in two periods. During the week beginning 3 April 2000 franchised provision in health and social care was inspected. The direct provision of the college was inspected in the week beginning 10 April 2000. In planning and carrying out the inspection, the team used the college’s self-assessment reports and information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Data on students’ achievements for 1997 and 1998 were derived from the individualised student record (ISR) and supplemented by data provided by the college on students’ achievements for 1999. These were checked against primary sources such as registers and pass lists issued by awarding bodies. The data were found to be largely accurate. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately two months before the inspection. The FEFC inspection was carried out by 13 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 53 days. They observed 76 lessons, examined students’ work and evaluated a variety of college documents. Meetings were held with college governors, managers, other college staff and students. There was a Training Standards Council (TSC) team of seven inspectors, two of whom worked jointly with FEFC inspectors on the inspection of construction and engineering. Where it was appropriate to the FEFC inspection framework,

evidence gathered by TSC inspectors was taken into account when grading college provision.

9 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the 76 lessons inspected, 63% were judged to be good or outstanding and 3% less than satisfactory compared with national averages of 65% and 6%, respectively.

# Context

## Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	2	8	3	0	0	13
GCSE	0	2	2	0	0	4
GNVQ	5	2	1	1	0	9
NVQ	3	9	11	0	0	23
Other vocational	4	11	8	1	0	24
Other	0	2	1	0	0	3
Total (No)	14	34	26	2	0	76
Total (%)	18	45	34	3	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

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

10 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99.

### Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Chesterfield College	10.3	78
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Construction

### Grade 2

**11 The inspection covered construction crafts, electrical installation and technician courses. Thirteen lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- generally good teaching
- good achievements on most courses
- effective curriculum management
- strong industry links

#### Weaknesses

- low retention on some courses
- some ineffective lessons

12 Students are offered a broad range of craft and technician courses in construction covering carpentry and joinery, brickwork, painting and decorating, sign work and plumbing. The college has been successful in increasing the participation of adult students through the introduction of new courses and expanding 'Saturday College' provision. Staff work effectively as a team. Lines of management and accountability are clear. Regular team meetings follow a standard format and have agendas and minuted action points. Comprehensive course files are systematically maintained. The lack of access to the college's management information system below middle management level prevents effective monitoring of course performance indicators by course teams.

13 The college has strong links with local construction employers and with the community. An effective employers' liaison committee meets twice yearly and is chaired by a member of the corporation. The committee is used to inform curriculum development. All full-time construction teachers are paired with local companies with whom they maintain regular

contact. Local schools are working with college staff in developing and delivering a National Open College Network (NOCN) level 1 qualification in construction. These schools report that the attendance and motivation of participating students has improved.

14 Most of the teaching observed by inspectors was good. Teachers planned their lessons well, using comprehensive lesson plans and schemes of work. In the better lessons, teachers set high standards and took into account the different learning needs of students, who were well motivated and hard working. Teachers made effective use of questioning and encouraged students to discuss their own professional experiences. In one lesson, part-time students made effective use of computer-aided design facilities to present the outcomes of fieldwork following a three-day surveying camp. In the minority of less satisfactory lessons, teachers failed to provide for the different learning needs and abilities of the students; they set inappropriate tasks and made insufficient checks on students' learning. Inspectors agreed with the college that close attention is paid to health and safety procedures. High standards of safety were observed in most practical lessons. However, the self-assessment report did not identify that risk assessments are not readily available to students. Assignments on national certificate courses contain extensive briefs, core skills requirements and comprehensive marking schemes. Internal verification procedures operate well. Portfolios of students' work are generally satisfactory, although they contain little work-based evidence. Teachers' comments, within portfolios, are sometimes not detailed enough to enable students to address weaknesses. Not enough attention is paid to correcting spelling and punctuation errors.

15 As noted in the self-assessment report, teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Several teachers have developed IT skills and use these to extend their teaching methods. Effective arrangements are in place

# Curriculum Areas

for staff to update their industrial knowledge. Over the last 18 months all full-time teachers have undertaken at least three days' industrial updating. Classrooms and workshops provide an effective learning environment. Many have posters and examples of students' work on display. Inspectors agreed with the college that the recently upgraded computer-aided design/computer-aided manufacture facility is a strength. The library provides a sufficient range of textbooks and computer-based materials to support the courses offered. This is supplemented by an appropriate range of CD-ROMs and periodicals.

16 Achievement rates on most courses have shown steady improvement. In 1999, the pass rates on construction crafts level 2, and on national certificates and diplomas were all significantly above the national average. As the self-assessment report recognised, retention on some courses is below national averages. For example, national certificates and diplomas at 67% and construction crafts level 2 at 62% are below the national averages of 73% and 69%, respectively. Strategies have been introduced in

September 1999 to address retention issues. There is some evidence that the actions taken are bringing about improvements. The college has been successful in recent years in the national 'Skill Build' competitions.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in construction, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Intermediate vocational (crafts)	2	Number of starters	85	116	125
		Retention (%)	88	81	62
		Achievement (%)	45	44	95
Advanced vocational (crafts)	3	Number of starters	17	25	23
		Retention (%)	88	96	87
		Achievement (%)	32	88	83
Advanced vocational (technician)	3	Number of starters	28	7	31
		Retention (%)	96	86	67
		Achievement (%)	40	70	75
Short courses for industry	3	Number of starters	26	21	30
		Retention (%)	96	100	97
		Achievement (%)	4	86	86

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

# Curriculum Areas

## Electrical, Electronic and Mechanical Engineering

### Grade 2

**17 The inspection covered mechanical, electrical and electronic courses. Inspectors observed 13 lessons. They agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- good teaching in the majority of lessons
- high and improving achievement rates on a number of courses
- strong and productive links with industry
- regular updating of teachers' industrial experience

#### Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some courses
- some ineffective lessons

18 Courses in electrical, electronic and mechanical engineering are shared between the school of automobile and electrical engineering and the school of construction and mechanical engineering. There is close collaboration between the two schools to ensure that effective curriculum development takes place. The college is committed to maintaining a broad range of engineering courses. It offers full-time and part-time programmes with excellent progression routes through to higher education. Effective responses to the needs of local industry are made through the provision of short courses, particularly for the electrical contracting industry. An engineering summer school has been run for school-leavers. Training in forklift truck operations including basic maintenance is offered through franchised arrangements. Courses are well managed. School management and programme co-

ordinator meetings are held weekly. Student representatives are encouraged to attend meetings and minutes are displayed on noticeboards.

19 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that good contacts are maintained with industry. The industrial liaison committee for engineering provides a useful forum for discussing curriculum developments and identifying opportunities for staff to update their industrial experience. All full-time staff have 'adopted' an employer and make visits to them at least once each year. Both schools have been involved in a number of initiatives designed to improve recruitment and stimulate an interest in engineering. These include a science and technology challenge for local schools and 'women into technology' open days.

20 As indicated in the self-assessment report, courses are well planned and supported by comprehensive schemes of work. Appropriate attention is paid to the development and recording of key skills. Teachers' enthusiasm and knowledge provide effective stimuli for students to learn. The majority of lessons observed were well managed. Teachers made effective use of question and answer techniques to draw students into discussion and to check their understanding. They carefully explained theoretical concepts and then related them to practical applications. An introductory lesson on compressors and relief valves was followed by a visit to the engineering workshops to allow students to view practical installations. The teacher used a carefully constructed worksheet to structure the workshop session. In a minority of lessons, teachers made poor use of visual aids and failed to ensure that students were learning effectively. For example, in a lesson covering the application of diodes, the teacher failed to correct students' misunderstandings regarding the difference between current and voltage.

21 Inspectors agreed with the college that up-to-date specialist facilities support teaching across the engineering disciplines. There has

# Curriculum Areas

been significant investment in a number of areas including the computer-based open access technological centre, the electrical installation workshops and the computer-aided design suite. The wide range of traditional equipment in the general engineering workshops is complemented by an upgraded computer-aided manufacture/computer numerical control facility. The engineering resource centre provides good access to IT equipment, CD-ROMs and video cassettes. The general teaching areas provide a pleasant learning environment in which good use is made of vocationally relevant artwork.

22 Many courses have high and improving achievement rates. In 1998 and 1999, all students completing the national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2 engineering manufacture (foundation) course achieved the

award. Pass rates for the national diploma and certificate programmes in electrical and electronic engineering improved significantly in 1999 to substantially above national averages. Notable recent individual students' achievements include the qualification of a pattern-maker to compete in the International Skills Olympics and a female fabrication and welding student winning the Yorkshire region Adult Learners Award. The self-assessment report acknowledged the declining retention rates on a number of programmes. A number of changes have been made in response to this decline. At the time of inspection there was evidence to suggest a substantial improvement in the retention rates for the cohort of students due to complete in 2000.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in electrical, electronic and mechanical engineering, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
C&G 2360 electrical installation competences	1	Number of starters	77	73	55
		Retention (%)	88	*	73
		Achievement (%)	*	*	85
C&G 2240 electronics servicing part 2	2	Number of starters	18	26	13
		Retention (%)	83	*	54
		Achievement (%)	0	39	40
NVQ engineering manufacture (foundation)	2	Number of starters	54	73	77
		Retention (%)	80	88	82
		Achievement (%)	82	100	100
National certificate electrical/electronic engineering	3	Number of starters	34	27	30
		Retention (%)	*	74	57
		Achievement (%)	28	43	88
National diploma electrical/electronic engineering	3	Number of starters	21	25	19
		Retention (%)	71	*	53
		Achievement (%)	50	*	100
National certificate mechanical engineering	3	Number of starters	32	32	25
		Retention (%)	97	91	72
		Achievement (%)	62	87	72

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

\*data unreliable

# Curriculum Areas

## Health and Childcare

### Grade 3

**23 The inspection covered health, care and early years courses including franchised provision. Inspectors observed 18 lessons. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- effective teaching on the access to health and nursing course
- high pass rates on some courses
- well-organised work placements
- extensive and productive external liaison

#### Weaknesses

- poor classroom management in some lessons
- slow achievement on NVQ care programmes
- low and declining retention rates on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate
- inconsistencies in some students' learning as a result of high staff turnover

24 The college offers a wide range of courses in health, care and early years. In the last few years the college has expanded its part-time provision in response to demand. A large number of courses are offered through franchise arrangements. These include first-aid qualifications, NVQs in care and the recently introduced national certificate for childminding. Courses are generally well managed. However, a high turnover of staff in the last year led to some inconsistencies in the quality of students' learning, particularly on childcare courses. As a result, some students have repeated work they carried out previously. The quality of franchised courses is monitored well. A full-time member of the health and social care staff visits each

partner regularly to ensure that there is consistency between franchised courses and those delivered at college sites.

25 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college has extensive and productive links with external agencies. In addition to two active sector advisory groups, the college has good links with local health providers and with the school of nursing at the University of Sheffield. Through these links the nurse cadet scheme has recently been introduced for GNVQ advanced students. The college is the further education representative on the Derbyshire Early Years and Childcare Partnership. As identified in the self-assessment report, work experience is well organised. The college has a full-time placement officer who has qualifications and experience in early years. Students on GNVQ programmes achieve additional key skills units through their work experience.

26 Teaching on the access to health and nursing course is good. Teachers on this course plan their lessons well and use a wide range of appropriate teaching methods. Each new learning activity builds on the learning that has taken place previously, and students' skills and knowledge are effectively extended. In one lesson, the teacher facilitated a lively debate on sexual inequality. The teacher expertly drew out the learning points from the debate and introduced the relevant sociological theory. One student was delighted to find that her views were those cited from a radical feminist perspective. The less effective lessons were characterised by poor classroom management. In a lesson on disability awareness the teacher handed out several long and complex handouts and moved quickly to the next activity without using them to reinforce learning. The teacher went on to set up a group work activity and attempted to give instructions to the group as they moved around the room. No time limits were given for the activity and some students did not participate.

# Curriculum Areas

27 Staff are well qualified, and have recent relevant experience. Classrooms have displays of students' work that are visually stimulating and vocationally relevant. Some classrooms are suitable for both theory teaching and practical activities. The noise level from a nearby road disturbs learning in two of the childcare rooms.

28 Students' work is generally of a high standard. Pass rates on the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) certificate in childcare and education have been well above national averages for the last three years. In 1999, all students who completed the access to health and nursing course achieved the award. Progression to nurse education from this course is also very good. Completion of

NVQs in care through the franchise arrangements is slow. In 1997, of 250 candidates who started at level 2 only five achieved the full award; 177 were continuing with their assessments but had failed to complete within the normal two-year timescale. The college has recognised this weakness and has put measures in place to address it. In 1999, there was a significant improvement in the number of students completing the award within the normal timescale. The retention rate on GNVQ intermediate has shown a steady decline in the last three years and in 1999 was 25% below the national average. The college has since replaced this qualification with the BTEC first diploma in care.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in health and childcare, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
St John Ambulance Brigade first-aid certificate	1	Number of starters	1,977	2,026	1,469
		Retention (%)	100	100	100
		Achievement (%)	100	98	99
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	Number of starters	17	31	18
		Retention (%)	76	65	50
		Achievement (%)	69	55	86
CACHE certificate in childcare and education	2	Number of starters	19	31	25
		Retention (%)	79	94	76
		Achievement (%)	100	83	89
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	Number of starters	43	48	27
		Retention (%)	*	*	78
		Achievement (%)	71	67	69
CACHE diploma in nursery nursing	3	Number of starters	47	50	58
		Retention (%)	87	78	74
		Achievement (%)	91	75	95
Access to health and nursing	3	Number of starters	80	78	84
		Retention (%)	71	84	67
		Achievement (%)	88	83	100

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

\*data unreliable

# Curriculum Areas

## Art and Design

### Grade 1

**29** Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering a range of art and design courses. They agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report.

#### Key strengths

- high standards of teaching
- well-managed courses
- clear and comprehensive course documentation
- outstanding examples of students' work
- high achievement rates on the majority of courses
- good progression into higher education
- effective industrial liaison

#### Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on a few courses

**30** The college offers an extensive range of full-time and part-time courses in art and design, including GNVQ intermediate and advanced programmes, GCSE and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) in art studies and fine art, a national diploma in graphic design and the diploma in foundation studies. The school of art and design also contributes to the college's 'Saturday College' provision and is involved in a number of community projects. Inspectors agreed with the college that courses are well managed and carefully planned. Schemes of work are constructive and informative. The initial diagnostic stages of programmes are effective in enabling students to choose from a diverse range of activities. Students are represented on course teams and have opportunities to influence the management of courses.

**31** An effective industrial liaison committee helps to inform the art and design team about

professional practice and to build links with the local community. It meets twice each year and is chaired by a college governor. Extensive external projects have been undertaken by students including work for the Chesterfield Borough Council scheme, 'Percent for Art', and the resulting work has been exhibited in public places around the town. The projects include a 6-foot circular panel on the tower block of the Wheatbridge retail park, a large ceramic mural incorporated into the refurbished market hall, a sculpture installed at the entrance to the Storforth Lane Park and a painted mural in the playground of the Clay Cross Junior School.

**32** Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there are high standards of teaching on all courses. Teachers are knowledgeable and use a variety of approaches to develop students' confidence in both technical and conceptual aspects of their studies. In one theory lesson about style and language, students were asked to evaluate information about fashion designers. The teacher cleverly amplified students' individual responses with information about art movements and cultural references. Project and assignment briefs carefully present complex concepts and ideas; they capture students' interest and help them to produce innovative work. The importance of primary research is stressed throughout assignments. Students are encouraged to be critical and produce good written evaluations. Course files are detailed and contain relevant key skills tracking documentation. Teachers carry out regular and rigorous assessments and reviews and provide informative written feedback to students. Tutorial records show specific targeted action that effectively helps students to progress.

**33** The college has a wide range of specialist resources. Facilities include: a practical workshop for jewellery product design; ceramics studios with a separate kiln room and plaster workshop; printmaking and printed textiles workshops; and a separate fashion studio. The newly refurbished sculpture studio enhances the

# Curriculum Areas

possibilities for creative exploration on a large scale. Students have good access to specialist IT equipment. The resource-based learning facility provides opportunities for students to work on their own using a range of CD-ROMs and videos.

34 Students produce work of an exceptionally high standard. A strong emphasis is placed on the importance of visual studies and observational drawing. There are many examples of stimulating creative work in portfolios and in displays around the college. Students were articulate and enthusiastic in explaining their ideas. Experimentation was evident in much of students' work. For example, as a result of a drawing day at a zoo, GNVQ intermediate students created three-dimensional, tissue-covered animal forms. Large experimental work in progress in the sculpture studios showed highly original

approaches integrating a range of mixed media. Graphic design students were observed producing designs for a double page magazine spread using innovative three-dimensional letterforms they had made as part of an assignment about typography. Inspectors agreed with the college that students do exceptionally well in examinations. For example the pass rate for GCSE art studies has been significantly above the national average for the last three years. GNVQ pass rates have been above the national average for the last two years at both intermediate and advanced levels. Retention on most courses is significantly above national averages. However, as the self-assessment report acknowledged, there is low retention on the GCE A level in art studies and on the national diploma in graphic design.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in art and design, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE art studies, fine art	2	Number of starters	67	29	18
		Retention (%)	88	76	94
		Achievement (%)	76	100	94
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	Number of starters	54	26	28
		Retention (%)	77	85	82
		Achievement (%)	69	86	91
GCE A level art studies, fine art	3	Number of starters	*	*	102
		Retention (%)	*	*	68
		Achievement (%)	*	*	88
BTEC national diploma graphics	3	Number of starters	34	24	25
		Retention (%)	85	83	68
		Achievement (%)	78	100	81
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	Number of starters	48	39	44
		Retention (%)	94	92	80
		Achievement (%)	89	97	97
Diploma in foundation studies in art and design	3	Number of starters	100	94	138
		Retention (%)	97	97	93
		Achievement (%)	93	95	95

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

\*data unreliable

# Curriculum Areas

## English, Communication Studies and Access to Higher Education

### Grade 2

**35 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering GCE A level, GCSE and access to higher education courses in English and social studies. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- high pass rates
- well-planned and imaginative teaching
- effective course management
- good support for individual students

#### Weaknesses

- retention rates well below national averages on most courses

36 Inspectors agreed with the college that courses are well managed. Teachers work well in teams, developing effective schemes of work and carefully structured learning materials. Course teams, which include student representatives, meet regularly. Minutes of these meetings are posted on classroom noticeboards. Students are able to influence developments within their courses. Full-time staff take part in regular professional development activities. However, there is insufficient collaboration or sharing of good practice between the English teachers on GCE A level and GCSE courses and those on access courses.

37 Most teaching is good. Lessons are carefully planned and well taught. They have clear objectives linked to syllabus requirements. Teachers used a variety of learning activities to successfully sustain students' interest during long lessons. In a GCE A level English literature lesson on *The Canterbury Tales*, the teacher used an animated version of the text to promote

relevant discussion of the social and textual issues. The teacher's skill in relating Chaucer's ideas to the students' own social and cultural experiences enhanced both their enjoyment and their understanding of the text. Lessons are carefully designed to develop essential skills. GCE A level communication studies students made formal presentations to their peers about communications models. The exercise showed that they understood how to use and interpret models and helped to develop their presentational skills, which are tested in the examination. In a minority of lessons, students did not work at the standard required by the course.

38 Teachers give good support to individual students on all courses. During lessons, they made time to speak to all students, either individually or in small groups, to check that they were learning effectively. For the final hour of a GCE A level English language lesson, students worked on essay plans in preparation for their examination. They all took different approaches to the work to suit their own learning styles and were well supported individually by the teacher. Teachers willingly provide extra help to students who need it. They give constructive criticism and useful advice when they mark assignments and frequently speak personally to students about their work. All students have regular formal reviews with their teachers to check their progress. However, the targets set during these reviews are not sufficiently specific.

39 Teachers provide a good range of learning materials and resources for students. Printed resources, many of them produced by teachers, are of a high standard. Subject base rooms contain well-organised, easily accessible specialist resources. Classrooms are well furnished and walls are copiously decorated with examples of students' work. In addressing a weakness identified by self-assessment, teachers have developed a range of activities which require students to use computers and videotapes as an integral part of their courses.

# Curriculum Areas

For example, teachers on the access to higher education course encourage their students to use the Internet and have produced a list of useful websites. These strengths were understated in the self-assessment report.

40 Students speak fluently and confidently in lessons. They express ideas and present arguments clearly. Examination results are good. For the three years 1997 to 1999, pass rates on the GCE A level courses in English language and English literature have exceeded the national averages. Over the last two years, the pass rate for GCE A level communication studies has risen from 88% to 95%, compared with a national average of around 70%. GCSE results are also good, and achievement on the access to higher education programme has consistently been 100% for the English studies

element. GCE A level students in 1998-99 did significantly better than predictions based on their GCSE results. The college also measures the improvements in performance of the GCSE English students who are taking the examination for the second time and this has improved in 1999. The college recognises that retention rates on most courses are poor. Retention rates on GCE A level courses have been below national averages for three years and withdrawal rates on the access course in social studies are high. The college has taken steps to address poor retention rates, through improved guidance and other measures. Retention figures taken in March 2000 show distinct improvements over those taken in March 1999.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in English, communication studies and access to higher education, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE English	2	Number of starters	161	101	117
		Retention (%)	*	*	79
		Achievement (%)	45	59	55
GCE A level English language	3	Number of starters	62	69	76
		Retention (%)	*	*	70
		Achievement (%)	79	86	98
GCE A level English literature	3	Number of starters	50	52	47
		Retention (%)	*	*	66
		Achievement (%)	83	90	100
GCE A level communication studies	3	Number of starters	21	29	35
		Retention (%)	*	*	57
		Achievement (%)	67	88	95
Access to higher education (English studies)	3	Number of starters	24	9	13
		Retention (%)	79	100	79
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100
Access to higher education (social studies)	3	Number of starters	36	31	27
		Retention (%)	67	39	67
		Achievement (%)	96	100	100

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

\*data unreliable

# Curriculum Areas

## Basic Skills

### Grade 3

**41 The inspection covered a range of basic skills provision which included: courses in Wordpower and Numberpower and pre-GCSE English and mathematics; learning support for level 1 programmes; and level 1 key skills in communications and application of number. Eight lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified additional weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- effective support for a wide range of students
- regular and effective goal setting within individual learning plans
- effective planning and monitoring of students' progress
- an appropriate range of accreditation and clear progression paths

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient diagnostic work
- narrow range of teaching strategies and overemphasis on assessment requirements
- insufficiently qualified teachers

42 Basic skills provision, including pre-GCSE English and mathematics, is provided by teachers based in different parts of the college. Discrete provision is located within the school of general education and provision within learning support is organised by the college's centralised student services unit. Basic skills up to and including level 1 is also delivered as part of vocational mainstream provision. The college has identified the need for a cross-college structure for basic skills and a co-ordinating group has been established. The group aims to

share and embed good practice and develop individual learning to reflect the college's inclusive learning strategy. This is a recent development responding to national developments. Inspectors judged that management of the curriculum and of staff is effective. Good teamwork and developing links between specialist support staff and vocational staff provide a sound basis for establishing consistent practice.

43 The college works closely with a number of local organisations to support students' progression and has a collaborative partnership with Derbyshire County Council to widen participation in education. Basic skills teachers are involved in a number of initiatives including the integration of pre-16 disaffected young people within basic skills workshops and establishing progression routes from adult basic skills programmes into college courses. In 1999, a successful literacy and numeracy summer school attracted 125 new students. Basic skills for adults have also been developed within the college's 'Saturday College' initiative.

44 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that teaching is well planned. Teachers used coherent schemes of work and lesson plans. Supportive relationships with enthusiastic staff enable students to gain confidence and to learn effectively. An exceptionally wide range of basic skills needs, from pre-16 students with emotional difficulties to adults returning to study, are met within the workshop provision. Students' folders are well organised and provide a good record of their learning. Individual learning plans contain clear targets which are reviewed on a regular basis. However, the learning plans tend to reflect accreditation needs rather than the needs of individual students. In all parts of the college's provision, teachers do little diagnostic work to assess the needs of individual students and to inform their teaching. For example, more active, practical work is not used to improve number skills and handwriting. Most teaching

# Curriculum Areas

concentrates on completing worksheets to fulfil assessment criteria or completing assignments for vocational units. Opportunities for sustained basic skills teaching and group work are missed and some students are not given sufficiently challenging tasks. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

45 All full-time students working below level 2 are screened to identify their support needs and individual action plans are then produced. The college recognises the value of a vocational context for basic skills learning support; however, opportunities for more general basic skills development are not sufficiently exploited. There is inadequate attention to significant basic skills needs within provision aimed at developing key skills at level 1.

46 The self-assessment report acknowledged that few basic skills teachers have an appropriate qualification. The range of specialist resources within the discrete provision is good although there are few IT facilities. A literacy and numeracy directory has been produced to map resources for use by vocational areas.

47 The college has developed a good range of appropriate basic skills awards. An increasing number of students are achieving their learning goals. The Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) English one-term course provides a useful progression award for students intending to go on to study GCSE English. Achievements on NOCN programmes are well above the national average. The number of students successfully completing Wordpower and Numberpower courses has significantly increased since 1998. At level 1, both achievement and retention rates are above the national benchmarks. Results are less impressive at entry level. Retention rates on the pre-GCSE programmes are well below the national average. A 'progression pack' for workshop students has been developed recently and there is evidence of some good progression to other college courses.

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 1

#### 48 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.

##### Key strengths

- thorough and effective pre-entry advice, guidance and induction
- extensive and effective liaison with schools
- comprehensive, well-structured and well-integrated tutorial programme
- thorough and helpful careers and progression advice
- effective additional support for literacy and numeracy
- accessible and responsive welfare services

##### Weaknesses

- there are no significant weaknesses

49 Inspectors agreed with the college that students are provided with thorough and effective pre-entry advice, guidance and induction. There is a wide range of attractive and informative publicity material. Application procedures are well co-ordinated. The student services unit is in a central location and provides a very welcoming environment. Full-time students are interviewed using a standardised form to ensure impartiality and consistency. A well-structured induction programme ensures students settle into their studies quickly.

50 The college and local schools value the extensive and effective liaison between them, as identified in the self-assessment report. Managers across the college make good use of a comprehensive database of schools and school contacts. Considerable effort is given to an extensive range of promotional events in a large number of schools and at the college. These

events include: general talks using the college's promotional video; exhibitions focused on topics requested by schools; contributions to schools' careers programmes; advice to parents; mock pre-entry interviews and 'taster' programmes. A 'Science and Technology Challenge' for school pupils is sponsored by the college and local industry. Local industrialists make presentations at the college, and there is an annual arts festival in which some school pupils participate and gain work experience.

51 Inspectors agreed that the tutorial programme is comprehensive and well structured. The core programme, 'Preparation for Lifelong Learning', is effectively integrated with the pastoral framework and detailed in the comprehensive tutorial handbook. Students speak highly of the support given by pastoral tutors and recognise the usefulness of the programme. Pastoral tutors have a clear and effective role in providing personal support, reviewing progress, clarifying aims and ambitions, and mapping students' career plans. There are weekly group tutorials in which students undertake planned activities. The core tutorial programme, which all students must complete, covers careers education, options for progression, strategies for aiding decision-making, and the development of records of achievement. During the programme students gain formal accreditation for work experience, study skills and key skills for higher education or employment. Increasing numbers of students are seeking and achieving accreditation at level 1 or 2 for the work undertaken in tutorials. Pastoral tutors base the twice-yearly progress review with students on written information provided by subject teachers. Reports are produced and action plans for improvement drawn up. Some of the short-term goals need to be sharpened in order to set students more challenging targets. A few tutor files and some student portfolios are not well organised.

52 Students benefit from thorough and helpful careers and progression advice, as recognised in

# Cross-college Provision

the self-assessment report. The college buys additional time from Derbyshire Careers Service advisers so that a comprehensive service can be made easily accessible to all full-time and part-time students throughout the week. There is a specialist careers adviser for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Careers advisers work closely with pastoral tutors. They contribute to the wide-ranging careers programme and support the applications process to higher education. There has been an 11% increase in applications to higher education since 1996, matched by an equivalent increase in acceptances. Careers education and guidance is supported by a well-stocked, up-to-date careers library and adjoining IT facility with 10 workstations containing a comprehensive range of relevant software. The resources are well used by students. A 'jobs vacant' board is updated twice weekly by the local job centre.

53 Individual students are provided with good access to responsive and effective counselling, welfare and personal advice services. Advisers and professional counsellors are easily accessible in the central student services unit. There are appropriate links between advice, guidance and professional counselling to ensure a comprehensive service. Counsellors work closely with pastoral tutors to cover topics such as coping with stress and examination preparation. They also provide staff development for teachers in subjects that include dealing with challenging behaviour. The services are well used and customer satisfaction is high.

54 Inspectors agreed with the college that additional learning support for literacy and numeracy is effective. Over the last three years there has been a 23% increase in students taking up additional support and an accompanying decline in students failing to achieve their qualification aim. In 1998-99, only 13 students who attended additional learning support sessions failed to achieve their primary learning goal. All full-time students studying on

courses at levels 1 and 2 are screened during induction. Those identified as requiring support are interviewed and individual learning plans are constructed. In some learning plans, short-term goals need to be more explicit. In the 1999 academic year, 91% of students identified as requiring support were receiving it. The majority of the support is provided on a one-to-one basis or through small group work and there is also some work in lessons as appropriate. Other students self-refer or are referred by teachers. Progress is reviewed regularly. Students value the help they receive. Support is effective in helping most students to achieve the qualifications for which they are studying.

## General Resources

### *Grade 2*

**55 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements contained in the self-assessment report but found additional strengths and weaknesses.**

#### **Key strengths**

- good-quality accommodation, much improved since the last inspection
- well-maintained sites
- good access to facilities for students with disabilities
- well-organised learning centres
- wide range of recreational opportunities for students

#### **Weaknesses**

- inadequate co-ordination of information and learning technology developments
- unsatisfactory accommodation in some teaching areas

56 The college operates from two sites. The main site at Infirmary Road is the base for 90% of the students and consists of buildings from a

# Cross-college Provision

variety of periods. The oldest building was constructed in 1846 as a grammar school and is a grade II listed building. Most of the accommodation was purpose built between 1960 and 1980. The second site, Tapton House, is a mile from Chesterfield town centre and is the former home of George Stephenson. It retains many fine original features including decorative stucco walls and ceilings and a mosaic tiled floor. It is used predominantly for higher education and access to health and nursing courses and for some students studying business studies and computing.

57 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college has made substantial improvements to its accommodation since the last inspection. An attractive reception area has been created at the front of the main site and the student services area has been relocated to well-designed accommodation adjacent to it. Facilities for hairdressing and beauty therapy have been substantially upgraded and there is a new sculpture studio. Classrooms are well equipped. Most have an overhead projector, screen and whiteboard. Many contain good displays of students' work. In some classrooms on the main site the noise from a major road affects students' learning. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. There is central allocation of teaching rooms. Room utilisation is effectively monitored.

58 Staff and students benefit from well-maintained accommodation. The buildings are clean and generally well decorated. Maintenance costs are below the average for the sector. Effective planning and monitoring of maintenance is achieved through daily visual inspections and prioritising of work requirements. Maintenance requests are dealt with promptly. Health and safety issues are given the highest priority. There is a regular feature in the staff newsletter that informs staff of developments to the college's estate.

59 The college has made significant progress in improving the accessibility of its facilities to

staff and students with disabilities. The views of students with restricted mobility have been carefully considered. A new lift has been installed in the main building and ramps and self-opening doors make the sites more convenient for wheelchair users. These measures have improved accessibility to buildings since the last inspection from 67% to 91%. There is a wide range of resources to support students with disabilities. These are clearly explained in the disabilities statement.

60 There is adequate provision of computers for students. There are 575 computers available for students' use of which 490 are of modern specification. However, access to the Internet is inadequate, as recognised in the self-assessment report. The college has yet to complete its internal college network. The use of the internal network for delivering learning materials is underdeveloped. Few computers in the learning centres on the main site are connected to the network and these run older software packages. The recent developments in information and learning technology provision have not been co-ordinated effectively. The college does not have a current information and learning technology strategy, operational plan or policies in place to support future developments. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

61 As noted in the self-assessment report, the college has well-organised learning centres with well-qualified and helpful staff. The main learning resource centre provides a satisfactory range of text-based materials. There are four additional learning centres, including one at Tapton House. Use of the centres has increased to a high level and students value the service that is provided. There are over 32,000 books and 300 journals. Electronic information is available from over 200 CD-ROMs, 250 compact discs and nearly 700 audiocassettes. Opening hours are appropriate and regularly reviewed. The induction programme prepares students to obtain maximum benefit from the facilities.

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Effective liaison between staff in the learning centres and those in curriculum areas ensures that appropriate resources are available to support learning.

62 A wide range of recreational opportunities is available to students on most days and evenings. The well-equipped fitness suite is used extensively by students and the local community. There is a well-appointed sports hall. The Langer Lane Sports Ground is used for field games. The college also makes use of a nearby leisure centre at reduced rates. There is satisfactory provision of communal facilities for students. The college has recently introduced common rooms on each floor of its main site. These are equipped with vending machines and provide areas in which students can relax. Both sites have refectories that provide hot meals at appropriate times of the day and a vending machine service during the evenings. Childcare facilities are excellent. This strength was not identified by the college.

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 1

63 **Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- well-established and effective process of continuous quality improvement
- comprehensive and thorough self-assessment and action-planning
- rigorous self-assessment validation procedures
- good arrangements to assure the quality of franchised provision
- effective arrangements for staff appraisal and development

#### Weaknesses

- variations in the effectiveness with which data are used to support self-assessment

64 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that it has a strong commitment to continuous quality improvement. There has been a large investment in quality assurance systems and these continue to improve the effectiveness of the work of the college. The operation and review of the quality assurance systems are a standard agenda item at the academic board. The comprehensive quality manual was revised in 1998-99. Updates are produced termly by the college's quality unit. Staff work areas have noticeboards dedicated to information about quality assurance.

65 The self-assessment report noted the systematic and comprehensive self-assessment and action-planning process. An annual cycle of self-assessment has operated for three years. Senior and middle managers ensure that quality assurance procedures are carried out effectively. All staff belong to a quality team that meets at least once a term. Quality assurance meetings have set agenda items which change throughout the year. Quality standards are used by curriculum and support teams. The thorough self-assessments written by programme area and business support teams are used with relevant franchise partner reports to inform school and cross-college self-assessments. Detailed action plans are developed relating to each self-assessment. Target dates and staff responsible for dealing with the actions are clearly identified. Progress against actions is closely monitored. A substantial lesson observation system underpins the self-assessment process. All key college and franchise partner staff are observed annually. Over 200 lesson observations have been made in each of the last two years. The self-assessment report acknowledges that there are variations in the effectiveness with which data are used to support self-assessment. More use could be made of centrally produced data about students in the self-assessment reports.

66 Validation processes are thorough and comprehensive. As a result of these processes, improvements have been made in the quality of

# Cross-college Provision

self-assessment reports. A cross-college validation team of senior and middle managers closely checks programme, support and franchise partner self-assessments. An annual schedule of validations is approved by the principal. A good practice report is produced annually, based on the work of the validation team. A validation panel scrutinises school and cross-college self-assessments and monitors cross-college action plans. The panel includes the principal, a member of the corporation and an external consultant.

67 Overall retention rates have been significantly above the average rates for general further education colleges for the last three years. Over the same period of time, achievement rates have increased significantly and have generally been equal to or above the averages for general further education colleges. For example, student enrolments for level 2 and level 3 programmes for 16 to 19 year olds have increased by a third over the last three years to 4,500. Achievement rates on these programmes have improved by 25% and 10%, respectively, while retention rates have remained high at about 80%. The action-planning and review process enabled the college to identify areas where performance slipped and to institute plans to rectify the situation.

68 The views of students and employers are sought and acted upon, as noted in the self-assessment report. Student representatives attend course quality meetings. A college-wide student focus group meets monthly. A number of surveys evaluate levels of satisfaction among the college customers. Survey results are reported widely within the college. Students' perceptions of their courses are surveyed three times a year. Survey results are displayed on student noticeboards sited prominently around the college. The quality of business support areas is surveyed annually. External organisations are surveyed annually to obtain their views on the quality of the college provision and its responsiveness. Immediate

action is taken on the few negative responses received.

69 The college's franchise partners are fully involved in the self-assessment process. The partner's quality procedures are required to be the same as those of the college. Teachers are observed by the college franchise manager and a relevant curriculum representative. In 1999, the validation team visited more than 50% of the 24 franchise partners. Improvements have been made as a result of the quality assurance procedures. Operational problems with the delivery of courses have been identified and action plans implemented.

70 The college charter contains measurable standards which relate to the quality standards used by teaching and non-teaching teams. There are separate sections for employers and the local community. An annual charter monitoring report is sent to the academic board.

71 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college has effective arrangements to appraise and to develop staff. The staff review, appraisal and development scheme involves all staff who have completed their probationary year. Staff are assigned an appraiser, usually their line manager, who reviews their performance and agrees an action plan. Staff development is linked to the college's strategic objectives, the outcomes of self-assessment and appraisal action plans. Target outcomes are set for all the development activities. There is an increasing emphasis on in-house events which are seen as providing value for money. Reports of staff development activity are produced monthly and discussed at senior management meetings. Franchise partner staff have attended development activities including inclusive learning training. Most staff have undertaken a professional attachment to a company for at least three days. The college was re-accredited under the Investors in People scheme in March 1999.

# Cross-college Provision

## Governance

### Grade 2

**72 Inspectors agreed with the majority of strengths identified in the self-assessment report. They identified some additional weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- high level of involvement in educational issues
- close attention to students' achievements
- appropriate determination of the strategic direction of the college
- effective oversight of the college's finances
- positive approach to openness and accountability
- thorough process for the self-assessment of governance

#### Weaknesses

- underdeveloped reporting of some strategic objectives
- insufficient attention to some aspects of audit committee operations

73 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, 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 corporation considers the three-year financial forecast in conjunction with the strategic plan each year. Although the annual budget for 1999-2000 was approved by the full corporation, it was not subject to detailed scrutiny by the finance and general purposes committee. As noted in the self-assessment report, governors give careful consideration to the college's financial position at each meeting

of the finance and general purposes committee and the corporation.

74 The corporation has approved a new membership that complies with the statutory modifications to the instrument and articles of government. Changes to the current composition will be made as soon as vacancies occur. Governors' skills and expertise from the business, public and voluntary sectors contribute effectively to the work of the college. The search committee has assisted with the recruitment of new governors and has used advertising effectively. The corporation has agreed to appoint a student governor when the next vacancy occurs. There are appropriate arrangements for the induction of new governors. All governors participate in updating events, such as breakfast seminars. There is a governors' training programme but it is not based on a formal training needs analysis.

75 The corporation has an appropriate committee structure. With the exception of the audit committee there are clearly defined terms of reference for all committees. The clerk to the corporation is a senior college postholder, but does not have responsibilities that might conflict with his clerking role. Comprehensive papers are provided to the corporation and its committees. Minutes provide a good record of the decisions made and the debates on key issues. There are some minor omissions from the corporation's standing orders. Appraisal of the principal, clerk and senior postholders takes place annually.

76 The audit committee has not given sufficient attention to some aspects of its responsibilities. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. The audit committee has not developed an effective mechanism for monitoring the implementation of all audit recommendations. The audit committee considered the annual financial statements, which is more appropriately the responsibility of the finance and general purposes committee.

# Cross-college Provision

77 The activities of the corporation are open and accountable, as identified in the self-assessment report. The corporation has a well-established code of conduct, which incorporates the Nolan committee's seven principles of public life. There is a comprehensive register of interests, covering both governors and senior management, which is updated at least annually. Information on corporation matters and individual governors is given in the college's termly newsletter.

78 Governors have a strong involvement in the determination of the strategic direction of the college. The corporation annually reviews the mission and strategic direction in detail. Performance against strategic objectives is monitored but this does not adequately identify incremental progress towards the achievement of annual operating targets. Few quantitative measures against targets are used. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

79 In the last year, governors have paid particular attention to franchised provision. They recognised the contribution which this makes to college finances, the potential risks involved and the guidance issued by the FEFC about franchise contracts. The corporation has resolved to maintain the same level of franchised provision as in 1998-99 and to retain some national contracts. Regular reports on the quality of franchised provision have been made to governors. However, the level of detail and style varies between reports, making monitoring more difficult.

80 Governors have made visits to lessons in order to familiarise themselves with aspects of the curriculum. The principal gives a detailed termly report to the corporation on curriculum matters. Staff make presentations on national and local curriculum developments. Governors chair five of the college industrial liaison committees.

81 The corporation closely monitors students' achievements and strategies for their

improvement. This strength was recognised in the self-assessment report. The standards committee of the corporation analyses in detail proposed targets for retention and achievement, monitors outcomes against previous targets and makes recommendations to the board.

82 Inspectors and auditors agreed that there is a thorough process of self-assessment for governance. The corporation formed a working group and devised a detailed questionnaire to assess themselves and their contribution to the governance of the college. The resultant draft report was validated by a panel of senior managers and an external consultant. The final self-assessment was then compiled by the clerk, scrutinised by the standards committee and recommended to the full corporation for approval.

## Management

### *Grade 2*

**83 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Some weaknesses had largely been addressed by the time of the inspection.**

#### **Key strengths**

- clear line management arrangements
- strong management with high standards of accountability
- good communications
- effective financial planning and monitoring
- extensive and productive external links
- effective implementation of equal opportunities

#### **Weaknesses**

- inaccurate retention rate data for some courses
- insufficient detail in the reporting of franchise partners' students' achievements

# Cross-college Provision

84 The management of the college is characterised by strong central control and high standards of personal accountability. The clear line management arrangements for both teaching and support staff are easily understood and appreciated by staff. An extensive range of policies, an informative staff handbook and well-maintained curriculum management files help to ensure a consistent approach to curriculum management. Course teams meet regularly. The minutes of key committees and groups are widely circulated.

85 An appropriate range of committees and working groups deal with cross-college issues such as equal opportunities. A working party has contributed to the formulation of a policy on retention and to the sharing of good practice to improve retention. Communications in the college are effective and there are many opportunities for teaching and support staff to meet and contribute to decision-making.

86 Staff are appropriately involved in planning, as identified in the self-assessment report. The strategic plan contains strategic objectives under appropriate headings. The eight schools each produce annual operating plans. Most of these plans are detailed documents that reflect the strategic objectives but a few lack detail and do not make sufficiently explicit links with strategic objectives. Senior managers effectively monitor the schools' progress towards objectives.

87 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The college enjoys very high levels of solvency and is forecasting surpluses for the next three years. There are comprehensive budget planning arrangements. The college monitors its financial performance using detailed monthly management accounts that include an income and expenditure account with forecast out-turn, a cashflow forecast with commentary, staffing analysis data and a balance sheet. The college

maintains a comprehensive set of financial regulations. Although comprehensive financial objectives have been established, management reports are produced on a limited range of these objectives. The college recognises that the financial accounting system does not fully meet its financial reporting needs.

88 In the current year, the college forecasts that approximately 16% of college funds will be derived from franchise arrangements, some of which operate outside the college's local area. The college is aware of the need for a more developed strategy for franchising, and a contingency plan should funding for this type of provision be withdrawn in the future. Franchise arrangements are efficiently administered. There are checks on the suitability of partners and appropriately qualified teaching staff are involved in the internal verification of programmes. The academic board receives regular reports on the quality of franchised provision. However, they do not contain sufficient detail on students' achievements. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

89 In the past 12 months the college has made good progress in addressing weaknesses in its management information system. Improved procedures have ensured that more reliable data are available in an appropriate range of reports. In the current year, consultation between managers and staff resulted in agreed, realistic targets for each course informed by data from the management information system. In the past, inaccurate management information inhibited the development and use of targets and performance indicators. There has been some progress since the self-assessment report was issued but, in a few areas, the use of performance indicators remains underdeveloped. Until recently some returns to the FEFC had been late and some retention rate data generated from the ISR have been inaccurate. Recent ISR returns have been submitted on time.

# Cross-college Provision

90 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment judgement that the college has productive external links. It has collaborated with local colleges, education authorities and a wide range of external organisations on funding bids and curriculum initiatives. Liaison with local employers is also effective. Members of the corporation chair industrial liaison committee meetings in most of the eight schools. Meetings are well attended and good use is made of employers' expertise. All full-time teachers are required to link with an employer and to maintain regular contact with them. The college's marketing department effectively co-ordinates liaison with employers and with local schools.

91 The college effectively promotes and implements equal opportunities. This strength was not identified in the self-assessment report. Objectives are set out in the strategic plan and the annual operating statement. The college policy is supported by appropriate codes of practice. The equal opportunities board, chaired by the principal, has active subcommittees for curriculum, student services and staffing. Awareness monitoring surveys of teaching and support staff are carried out each year. Various initiatives have raised awareness of equal opportunities, for example staff training on how to challenge unacceptable language. Action has also been taken to widen participation. The college's 'Saturday College' has been a particular success, with over 600 people attending a wide range of courses each Saturday morning.

## Conclusions

92 The self-assessment report prepared by the college is the third to be produced under the current inspection framework and provided a useful basis for planning and conducting the inspection. The document was thorough and evaluative. There was good use of supporting evidence for each judgement including extensive

use of lesson observations, students' achievements compared with FEFC benchmarking data, and evidence from external consultants' reports. An update produced shortly before the inspection provided helpful information on the progress made in addressing weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, and in implementing the action plans which accompanied it. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment. However, they identified some additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with all the grades awarded by the college for curriculum areas and with three of the five cross-college grades. They found that the college had been overgenerous in grading one cross-college area and had underestimated the strengths in another area.

93 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 1999)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	10
16-18 years	15
19-24 years	12
25+ years	55
Not known	8
Total	100

*Source: college data*

## Student numbers by level of study (July 1999)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	21
Level 2 (intermediate)	31
Level 3 (advanced)	27
Level 4/5 (higher)	3
Non-schedule 2	18
Total	100

*Source: college data*

## Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 1999)

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	251	1,261	11
Construction	125	284	3
Engineering	201	989	9
Business	292	1,568	13
Hotel and catering	91	1,939	14
Health and community care	293	4,000	30
Art and design	418	426	6
Humanities	313	1,263	11
Basic education	98	352	3
Total	2,082	12,082	100

*Source: college data*

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 13% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (March 2000)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	180	3	97	280
Supporting direct learning contact	51	0	0	51
Other support	138	0	31	169
Total	369	3	128	500

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

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£13,413,000	£13,069,000	£13,807,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£18.12	£17.59	£17.12
Payroll as a proportion of income	66%	63%	56%
Achievement of funding target	106%	100%	100%
Diversity of income	12%	11%	16%
Operating surplus	£323,000	£917,000	£474,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

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

Payroll – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

### Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
1	Number of starters	944	807	1,177	892	934	631
	Retention (%)	91	86	79	88	85	80
	Achievement (%)	42	53	73	67	65	82
2	Number of starters	1,453	1,343	2,301	1,091	1,380	1,344
	Retention (%)	79	76	78	85	88	76
	Achievement (%)	65	71	80	59	61	75
3	Number of starters	1,289	1,584	2,159	1,169	1,492	1,624
	Retention (%)	84	84	84	82	87	83
	Achievement (%)	68	76	78	59	71	75
4 or 5	Number of starters	32	9	18	330	320	274
	Retention (%)	94	89	100	93	88	90
	Achievement (%)	56	67	100	56	64	88
Short courses	Number of starters	1,542	1,544	1,575	18,274	17,646	9,726
	Retention (%)	99	96	96	100	100	97
	Achievement (%)	85	85	88	96	97	92
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	846	965	1,271	1,565	1,214	980
	Retention (%)	87	82	85	85	88	84
	Achievement (%)	42	94	82	53	96	83

Source: college

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