

The College of North East London

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

© FEFC 1998

You may photocopy this report. A college may use its report in promotional material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings of the inspection are not misrepresented.

Contents

Paragraph

Summary	
---------	--

Context	
The college and its mission	1
The inspection	9

Curriculum areas	
Science and mathematics	11
Computing	17
Construction	22
Engineering	29
Business	36
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	43
English and social sciences	48
ESOL and basic education	54

Cross-college provision	
Support for students	60
General resources	66
Quality assurance	72
Governance	80
Management	86
Conclusions	93

College statistics	
--------------------	--

Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

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

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

Retention and Pass Rates

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

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

Summary

The College of North East London

Greater London Region

Inspected January 1998

The College of North East London is a general further education college in the London borough of Haringey. The college produced a self-assessment report which identified most of the strengths and weaknesses of its provision. The self-assessment report did not acknowledge some of the college's strengths, and did not always emphasise sufficiently weaknesses in teaching and learning, examination pass rates and retention.

The college offers a wide range of courses in all of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Provision in seven of these was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. A good range of courses is offered at all levels from foundation to higher education. Courses are well managed and most teaching is good. The proportion of lessons graded good or outstanding by inspectors has risen by 14 percentage points since the last inspection. Support for students is good. There have been initiatives to improve students' achievements through better tutorial support, the development of key skills, the improvement of learning support and the development of a modularised curriculum.

Examination pass rates amongst students who complete their studies are good on some courses. Poor attendance and low retention rates on many courses depress students' achievements overall. The college is well governed by a committed corporation, whose members have strong links with the local community. Management is open, decisive and effective. Difficult changes have been successfully carried through by managers. Improvements made to the quality assurance system are not yet fully effective. There is a good range of high-quality staff development activities. Accommodation is suitable and well maintained. The college should: improve attendance, retention rates and pass rates on many courses; rectify weaknesses in teaching and tutorials; improve the quality of course records and evaluation reports; strengthen quality control; and improve the monitoring of students' pass rates against targets.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science and mathematics	3	Support for students	2
Computing	3	General resources	3
Construction	3	Quality assurance	3
Engineering	3	Governance	2
Business	3	Management	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2		
English and social sciences	3		
ESOL and basic education	3		

The College and its Mission

1 The College of North East London is the only further education college in the London borough of Haringey. At the end of the 1995-96 session, the college reduced its accommodation from the seven sites it occupied at incorporation to four. The largest campus, which includes the main administrative centre, is in Tottenham. The other centres are at Tottenham Green, Muswell Hill and Bounds Green. The college also operates jointly with Middlesex University a centre for environmental health and housing at the university's Bounds Green Campus. Haringey is within the area covered by the North London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

2 In 1996-97, the college enrolled approximately 11,100 students of whom 3,149 were full-time students. Eighty-six per cent of the students were aged 19 or over and 59 per cent were from minority ethnic groups. Students from black African, black Caribbean and other black minority ethnic groups form 39 per cent of the student population. Nine per cent of the college's students are refugees and almost 10 per cent of students do not have English as their first language. Approximately 40 per cent of the 1996-97 intake of students were identified by the college as needing support with basic skills. The proportion of pupils in Haringey's secondary schools achieving five grades C or above in the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) is 27 per cent, compared with a national figure of 45 per cent.

3 The college's employees represent 392 full-time equivalent posts, of which 232 are teaching posts. The college is organised into two divisions and three directorships. The learning programmes division includes the seven teaching departments: business and computing; construction and engineering; creative studies; continuing education; environmental health and housing; health and social care; and service industries. Provision in

six of the seven departments was inspected. The other division covers marketing and client services, while the three directorships cover personnel, finance and performance management.

4 With 14 sector colleges in the college's immediate recruitment area, and 10 more within travelling distance, there is strong competition for students. There are 16 schools, including special and independent schools, with post-16 provision in the borough. A substantial number of pupils over 16 travel outside the borough for their sixth form education.

5 The borough of Haringey is one of the most ethnically diverse in London; 40 per cent of the population are from minority ethnic groups, and 10 per cent are refugees. Forty per cent of Haringey's population are aged 20 to 39, which is higher than the proportion of 35 per cent in Greater London as a whole. Unemployment is a serious problem in the borough, although unemployment rates vary in different localities. The Tottenham constituency has the highest rate of unemployment, at about 23 per cent, of any constituency in the United Kingdom. In terms of prosperity, there is a clear east-west divide in the borough: the west is relatively affluent, whilst the east suffers considerable deprivation. This divide is exacerbated by poor transport links. Two-thirds of Haringey residents who work are employed outside the borough, and half of the jobs within the borough are filled by non-Haringey residents.

6 Haringey, in common with the rest of the North London TEC area, has suffered a decline in manufacturing industry over the last 10 years. Nevertheless, manufacturing still accounts for 13 per cent of employment in the borough. Forty per cent of employed people work in the retail, business services, hotel and catering, personal services and wholesale distribution sectors. Employment is increasingly dependent upon small businesses. In 1995, small and medium-sized enterprises accounted for 34 per cent of all employment within the

Context

area. The percentage of Haringey residents aged 18 or over with qualifications at level 3 or above is above the average for London, but there is considerable variation between the parliamentary wards. For example, fewer than 5 per cent of Tottenham's residents have qualifications at level 3 or above.

7 The college's mission statement commits it to:

- 'excellence in teaching and learning
- the expansion of its services to meet the needs of business and the community
- the economic regeneration of north and east London and
- equality of opportunity for all its students and staff'.

8 The mission statement is supported by eight strategic commitments. The college has committed itself to: 'address the needs of the clients and communities served by the college; introduce new vocational specialisms, and enable industry and commerce to exploit advanced technology; secure key skills for all; grow by at least one-third by the year 2000; make access to all its learning programmes easy and convenient; remodel and re-equip all its facilities within three years; continuously enhance the professional development of its staff; and to deliver high-quality and cost-effective learning'.

Context

The Inspection

9 The college was inspected during the week beginning 12 January 1998. The inspection team had access to the college's self-assessment report and to information about the college held by other directorates of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college provided data on students' achievements for three years, 1995 to 1997, prior to the inspection. This was checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by awarding bodies. College data were not always readily available for 1995. The college was notified about two months before the inspection of those aspects of provision that were to be inspected. The inspection was carried out by 14 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 59 days. The inspection team observed 110 lessons, examined students' work and college documents, and held meetings with governors, managers, students and staff.

10 Of the lessons inspected, 65 per cent were rated good or outstanding and 7 per cent were less than satisfactory. According to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*, 61 per cent of all lessons inspected in 1996-97 had

strengths which outweighed weaknesses. According to the same report, 8 per cent of lessons inspected in all colleges had weaknesses which outweighed strengths. The average level of attendance in lessons inspected in the college was 56 per cent, which is lower than the figure of 77 per cent in the sector as a whole during 1996-97 according to the chief inspector's annual report. The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected. This table includes three lessons observed as part of the inspection of support for students.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	2	7	3	1	0	13
GCSE	0	6	3	0	0	9
GNVQ	4	9	7	1	0	21
NVQ	2	10	5	2	0	19
Other vocational	1	7	5	2	0	15
Basic education	3	8	3	0	0	14
Other	6	6	5	2	0	19
Total	18	53	31	8	0	110

Curriculum Areas

Science and Mathematics

Grade 3

11 The inspection covered GCSE, general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) and access to higher education courses. Fourteen lessons were observed in biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics. Inspectors agreed with the major strengths and weaknesses noted by the college in its self-assessment report. However, the report omitted some weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-placed teaching with sound exposition
- good, well-maintained science equipment

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped schemes of work and a small range of teaching methods
- little use of information technology (IT) in courses
- poor retention and pass rates on a number of courses

12 The college offers GCSE and GCE A level courses in biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics; GCSE courses in human physiology and health; and GNVQ intermediate and advanced levels in science. GCSE mathematics is available at the foundation tier, where the highest grade students can achieve is grade D, as well as at the intermediate and higher tiers where students can achieve grades C or above. There are access to higher education courses in science and mathematics.

13 Teachers plan their lessons in detail but use a small range of teaching methods; typical lessons feature exposition by the teacher,

followed by problem-solving by the students, although science lessons also include practical work. Teachers do not encourage students to develop skills for independent studies, or to work collaboratively, a weakness not identified by the college. Significant numbers of students were late for the lessons observed, which resulted in delays and distractions at the start of lessons. Teachers set work of an appropriate standard, and marking is accurate, a strength noted by the college. However, teachers do not generally give written feedback to students on their work.

14 The self-assessment report acknowledges that little use is made of IT. IT was not used in any of the lessons observed and there was minimal evidence of its use in the students' work inspected. External verifiers' reports over the last two years have noted the need for more opportunities for students to develop IT skills. The curriculum is not enriched by links with local industry.

15 The college recognises that student retention is poor. For example, in 1997 only 31 per cent of the students enrolled on a two-year GCE A level course in chemistry entered the examination. There were good and improving pass rates, of those students completing their courses, on the access to higher education course in science, GNVQ advanced science and GCSE physics in 1997. Some GCE and GCSE examination pass rates are below national figures for students aged 19 or over in further education colleges. Overall pass rates for GCSE mathematics (intermediate level) were poor at 16 per cent in 1996-97. Results vary between groups following different main programmes of study. Where students are taking GCSE mathematics as additional to a GNVQ or other programme, retention is poor.

16 The college's self-assessment report acknowledges that in science there are good levels of well-maintained specialist equipment, a view shared by inspectors. There is an adequate number of well-qualified support staff.

Curriculum Areas

Since the last inspection, mathematics courses and some science courses have been relocated to improved accommodation at the Muswell Hill centre. Overall, accommodation is clean and in good decorative order but there are few displays of students' work to improve the learning environment.

Examples of students' achievements in science and mathematics, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Access to higher education in science	Retention (%)	89	95	75
	Pass rate (%)	54	75	83
GNVQ advanced science (two-year course)	Retention (%)	+	64	64
	Pass rate (%)	+	43	86
GCE A level chemistry (two-year course)	Retention (%)	+	79	63
	Pass rate (%)	+	24	100
GCSE chemistry	Retention (%)	41	45	79
	Pass rate (%)	6	55	20
GCSE Mathematics	Retention (%)	93	69	66
	Pass rate (%)	14	46	16

Source: college data

+comparable data unavailable

Curriculum Areas

Computing

Grade 3

17 The inspection covered courses in computer literacy, short courses on a range of software packages and languages programming, and full-time GNVQ and access to higher education courses. Inspectors observed 14 lessons. The findings of the college's self-assessment report were broadly the same as those of inspectors, although the report did not fully analyse the quality of teaching and learning, and gave less weight to the weaknesses in students' achievements.

Key strengths

- the breadth of provision
- much good teaching
- teaching of industrial software techniques
- good pass rates for students completing courses

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on many courses
- low attendance at many lessons
- the poor study skills of many full-time students
- shortcomings in IT equipment
- some weaknesses in specialist accommodation

18 The extensive range of IT and computing courses meets the needs of a wide range of clients. There are numerous introductory level and short courses as well as work in community venues and some weekend provision. Most students who complete the GNVQ advanced and access to higher education courses progress into higher education. New internet and teleworking courses are being launched. Courses are well managed; timetabling, record-keeping and the scheduling of students' assignments are

efficient. Some course reviews do not make enough use of the data collected on students' perceptions of their courses. In some cases, there is insufficient co-ordination between staff teaching similar courses. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and most of the weaknesses identified by the college in its self-assessment report on the curriculum and its organisation in this area.

19 Most teaching was good and in some lessons it was outstanding. Teachers follow clear schemes of work and plan lessons effectively. There are few opportunities for staff to share the good practice shown in the more imaginative sessions. Practical work in IT rooms was assisted by good-quality learning materials. There was effective support for individual students when they were working on their own. Teachers have high expectations of their students and provide challenging work. For example, students studying software design and programming were introduced to the design methods used in industry. There was little use of visual aids, of IT to assist in presentations, and of multimedia resources. Inspectors agreed with the college's overall self-assessment report of the quality of teaching and learning, but considered that it lacked detailed analysis of particular strengths and weaknesses.

20 On most courses, those students who complete their studies and enter examinations achieve pass rates above national averages. Many courses, however, have low retention rates. Figures for students currently in college on two-year courses suggest that retention is improving. Although in some of the lessons inspected there was high attendance, in many others only half of the students were present. On full-time courses, some students had difficulty managing their work and submitting assignments on time. The college's self-assessment report recognises some, but not all, of the weaknesses in students' achievements noted by inspectors.

Curriculum Areas

21 There has been a valuable programme of 'work shadowing', where staff observe the work of computer specialists in industry, and staff updating to help them keep pace with developments in IT. The college uses its good links with a nearby business technology centre to enable staff and students to experience up-to-date developments in IT. The college IT equipment is dated in some respects; for example, it does not facilitate specialist work involving IT networks and communications technology. Some difficulties have been caused by incompatible software between computer rooms. Some whole class teaching of theoretical topics takes place in large open-plan IT suites where the layout is unsuitable and where there is distraction from other users.

Examples of students' achievements in computing, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced IT (two-year course)	Retention (%)	+	44	36
	Pass rate (%)	+	65	77
GNVQ Intermediate IT	Retention (%)	64	50	64
	Pass rate (%)	88	41	44
GCSE IT	Retention (%)	86	63	57
	Pass rate (%)	29	67	67
C&G 7261 modular IT	Retention (%)	+	64	59
	Pass rate (%)	+	67	69

Source: college data

+comparable data unavailable

Curriculum Areas

Construction

Grade 3

22 The inspection of construction covered construction crafts, building service crafts, GNVQ and higher national certificate programmes, and included the observation of 15 lessons. Collaborative provision at a training centre in Hackney, run by a large building company, was also inspected. Inspectors agreed with most of the findings of the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- the broad range of courses
- well-planned schemes of work
- good or outstanding teaching in most lessons
- good materials to help students study on their own

Weaknesses

- some unsatisfactory teaching
- poor attendance in the lessons observed
- poor retention and pass rates on some courses
- lack of appropriate assessor and verifier qualifications amongst staff

23 The construction provision includes a good range of full-time, part-time and flexible entry arrangements for students who wish to obtain technician and craft qualifications. The college offers GNVQ and higher national certificate courses, and courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in construction crafts, electrical installation, gas services and heating and ventilation. Progression routes are clearly documented and made known to students. A significant number of craft and technician students use their qualifications to obtain work or continue with their studies. Most programmes are operated on a modular

basis which allows students to build up credits towards whole qualifications. Inspectors agreed with the college's identification of this as a strength in its self-assessment report.

24 Course teams have developed detailed schemes of work and have produced some good materials to help students to learn on their own. Course teams are developing ways of improving students' key skills in communication, application of number and IT to help them succeed in their studies. On some courses, tutorials are a recent development and have yet to become a well-established and valued part of courses.

25 Teaching and learning was good or better in about two-thirds of the lessons observed. The college's self-assessment report draws attention to the broad range of teaching and learning methods used. In the few unsatisfactory lessons, teachers failed to present the work in ways which aroused or sustained students' interest in the long lessons. The poor attendance and punctuality noted by inspectors were identified in the college's self-assessment report.

26 There are examples of good assignment and project work produced by students, although the standard of work produced by a few students is barely adequate. Most teachers provide helpful written comments to students on their assessed work, although some of the work is marked superficially. Practical work is of an appropriate standard. Retention rates vary, although many are lower than the target set by the college. There are some good pass rates of students completing their courses, such as in painting and decorating at NVQ level 2, and in higher national certificate building studies. Pass rates on some other courses, such as those on the GNVQ in built environment, are below the national average. The college's self-assessment report identified the strengths and weaknesses in achievements noted by inspectors.

Curriculum Areas

27 Overall, the accommodation for construction courses has improved since the college was last inspected. Most general purpose classrooms provide a good teaching and learning environment. A new learning centre has been developed, together with a suite of IT rooms, and some workshops have been upgraded. Students have access to a good range of specialist equipment, but some is old and in need of replacement, a weakness acknowledged in the college's self-assessment report.

28 Teaching staff are appropriately qualified for the subjects they teach, but too few have obtained appropriate assessor and verifier awards. This shortcoming has been identified by two external verifiers and is mentioned in the college's self-assessment report. Staff development activities have been organised to address this issue.

Examples of students' achievements in construction, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Higher national certificate building studies	Retention (%)	+	48	50
	Pass rate (%)	+	80	80
GNVQ advanced built environment (two-year courses)	Retention (%)	+	95	40
	Pass rate (%)	+	22	36
NVQ level 3 carpentry and joinery	Retention (%)	+	96	100
	Pass rate (%)	+	33	35
NVQ level 2 painting and decorating	Retention (%)	+	47	55
	Pass rate (%)	+	85	88

Source: college data

+comparable data unavailable

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 3

29 The inspection covered all aspects of the engineering provision including general engineering, electronic engineering, software engineering and sound engineering. Thirteen lessons were observed, including some at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. The engineering section of the college's self-assessment report was generally comprehensive, although inspectors identified some strengths and weaknesses that were not acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-managed curriculum
- pleasant classroom accommodation and well-equipped workshops
- well-organised practical sessions enabling students to work at their own pace
- valuable training agreement with a major employer

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on many courses
- poor attendance and punctuality
- some uninspiring teaching
- poor monitoring of attendance registers

30 The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses in engineering at craft and technician levels. The department has identified a demand for skills in computer maintenance, software engineering, and sound engineering and, as a result, has introduced courses to meet the demand.

31 The curriculum is well managed. Retention and achievement targets are set at department and course level. Course teams meet regularly. They keep good records of their activities, and devise action plans with deadlines for their

implementation. However, in some course teams there is ineffective liaison with part-time staff. As the college's self-assessment report recognises, some schemes of work are well planned and linked to syllabuses and assessment, but others lack detail. On courses where key skills are not mandatory, students are encouraged to study for additional qualifications in IT, numeracy and communication.

32 Most teaching is good or satisfactory, although some lessons are uninspiring. The long duration of some lessons results in some students becoming inattentive. The practical content of many courses is well organised and students are given the opportunity to work on their own with appropriate support from teachers. In many lessons, inspectors observed students arriving late and leaving early without this being questioned by staff. Procedures for the withdrawal from courses of students who do not attend are not always followed.

33 The college's self-assessment report acknowledges that there has been little involvement of employers in curriculum design and delivery. The department recently entered into a training agreement with a major company whereby a number of GNVQ students are sponsored on a 30-week training programme. The company provides opportunities for site visits and access to the company's specialist resources. Successful students are guaranteed a formal interview for a modern apprenticeship scheme run by the company.

34 Retention rates are unsatisfactory or poor on many courses. Students on some courses leave after obtaining sufficient skills to gain employment, but before achieving certification. Pass rates on craft courses are variable; on GNVQ courses, pass rates of completing students have improved and are now above the national average, but retention is poor. Inspectors' findings on the weaknesses in students' achievements match those identified in the college's self-assessment report.

Curriculum Areas

35 Full-time teachers hold relevant assessor qualifications. The classroom accommodation is generally well furnished and decorated and is conducive to learning. A good range of electronic test equipment and computer hardware enables students to perform the practical tasks required of them. Recent changes in accommodation have led to some electronics provision being situated in an unsuitably furnished room with inadequate services. The practical aspects of the sound engineering courses are being taught in a well-resourced multimedia facility.

Examples of students' achievements in engineering, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced engineering (two-year course)	Retention (%)	+	42	21
	Pass rate (%)	+	33	63
C&G 4351 autocad, NVQ level 2	Retention (%)	+	53	63
	Pass rate (%)	+	72	59
C&G 224 electronic servicing part 2	Retention (%)	+	51	56
	Pass rate (%)	+	58	44
C&G 224 electronic servicing part 1	Retention (%)	+	39	64
	Pass rate (%)	+	40	79

Source: college data

+comparable data unavailable

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 3

36 The inspection included 13 lesson observations and covered GNVQ courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels; GCE A level business studies; access to higher education in business; accountancy courses; NVQs and courses for speakers of other languages. The college's assessment of its business provision is self-critical. The inspection team agreed with the college's overall assessment of its business provision and with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college.

Key strengths

- effective teaching in the majority of lessons
- careful monitoring of students' progress and welfare
- well-planned courses and lessons

Weaknesses

- poor retention on many courses
- poor pass rates on some courses
- lack of employer involvement in course design and delivery

37 The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time business courses, from foundation level through to higher education. Staff demonstrate concern about students' progress and welfare. Several staff have taken part in 'work shadowing' in industry to update their commercial experience and skills.

38 In more than half the lessons observed the teaching was good or very good. Lessons have clear aims and objectives. In some lessons, teachers fail to provide an appropriate variety of activities to extend students' learning. There is no contact between teachers working on vocational programmes and those who teach on

GCE A level courses and, consequently, no opportunity to share good practice or resources.

39 On some courses the marking and written feedback by teachers is constructive and detailed. On other courses, teachers do not provide students with enough critical comments to enable them to improve their work. The quality of students' written work is satisfactory and on the higher national certificate course it is of a high standard.

40 There are few links with employers. This weakness, which was acknowledged in the college's self-assessment report, was identified by inspectors in the previous inspection. However, students on courses leading to NVQs in administration undertake work placements with employers. There are no work placements for students on GNVQ courses, and therefore opportunities to relate teaching and learning to practical business activities are few. Visits to organisations are arranged for students but there is no involvement by employers in curriculum design, delivery or evaluation.

41 As highlighted in the self-assessment report, retention figures on some courses are poor. Retention has been particularly poor on the GNVQ advanced course. A course for owner-managers of businesses, for example, is being replaced by a business start-up course, which is more appropriate for students' needs. Similarly, a new programme has been introduced at foundation level, entitled Passport to Business, which focuses on skills development. The punctuality of students is identified in the self-assessment report as a problem. The implementation of a new initiative, whereby students are not allowed into classes if they are more than 10 minutes late, appears to be having a positive effect.

42 On the GNVQ foundation course, pass rates for those who complete the course are above the national average. At intermediate level, those on GNVQ programmes in business designed for speakers of languages other than English are considerably more successful than those on

Curriculum Areas

other GNVQ intermediate business courses. Results are good on the higher national certificate course in business. However, pass rates are poor for students on the access to higher education in business course and on some of the accounting programmes, as identified in the self-assessment report.

Examples of students' achievements in business, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Access to higher education	Retention (%)	+	82	55
	Pass rate (%)	+	50	50
GNVQ advanced (two-year course)	Retention (%)	+	49	25
	Pass rate (%)	+	78	63
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	75	79	64
	Pass rate (%)	61	37	56
GNVQ foundation	Retention (%)	78	80	70
	Pass rate (%)	66	84	89

Source: college data

+comparable data unavailable

Curriculum Areas

Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy

Grade 2

43 The inspection team agreed with the college's self-assessment report, although a few additional weaknesses were identified. The inspection covered all aspects of hairdressing and beauty therapy provision, and included the observation of 13 lessons.

Key strengths

- a good standard of accommodation in the practical areas
- much good teaching
- well-planned, coherent schemes of work and lesson plans
- good practical skills and professional practice amongst students
- some good achievements, particularly in beauty therapy

Weaknesses

- lack of work placements for hairdressing students
- insufficient attention to key skills, particularly IT
- some low retention and pass rates

44 The college offers a range of full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy which clearly addresses the needs of the students, who are mainly adults. Progression routes are clearly defined and many beauty therapy students return each year to extend their skills. Foundation level programmes have been introduced to widen participation amongst people who do not usually enter further education.

45 Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers have appropriate up-to-date commercial experience; they demonstrate appropriate knowledge and the necessary practical skills to help and assess students. This

strength is identified in the self-assessment report. The teaching and learning is enhanced by the good commercial standard of the newly-refurbished accommodation. Teachers make effective use of an appropriate range of teaching methods. There are good schemes of work and lessons are well planned. Students' written work and projects are carefully marked and returned quickly by teachers. Students in both hairdressing and beauty therapy participate in extra-curricular activities, such as taking courses in telephone skills and customer care, visiting an international salon exhibition and organising a fund-raising day for charity. Beauty therapy students have the opportunity to participate in appropriate, and in some cases prestigious, work placements. This is not the case for all hairdressing students.

46 In practical lessons, most students demonstrate good practical skills. Professional standards are promoted and encouraged. Retention rates vary between years on many courses. In beauty therapy, pass rates amongst those completing their courses are generally good. In 1996-97, one student gained second place in a national student of the year competition. In hairdressing, there has been some improvement in pass rates. Pass rates of 100 per cent were achieved on a number of courses in fashion and photographic make-up, cosmetic make-up, reflexology, body massage and nutrition and health.

47 There is little development of the key skills of communication or the application of number in either hairdressing or beauty therapy. This was acknowledged in the college's self-assessment report. Some students are working towards qualifications in key skills in IT. Attendance on these IT courses is poor as students generally fail to recognise the vocational relevance of these skills. There is little evidence of IT skills in students' files, portfolios and projects. Staff are working to identify ways of developing further students' key skills.

Curriculum Areas

Examples of students' achievements in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
NVQ level 3 beauty therapy	Retention (%)	68	80	67
	Pass rate (%)	47	88	83
NVQ level 3 hairdressing	Retention (%)	90	58	63
	Pass rate (%)	20	33	43
NVQ level 2 beauty therapy	Retention (%)	61	72	60
	Pass rate (%)	+	78	78
NVQ level 2 hairdressing	Retention (%)	+	71	62
	Pass rate (%)	+	32	63

Source: college data

+comparable data unavailable

Curriculum Areas

English and Social Sciences

Grade 3

48 The inspection covered English, law, politics, psychology and sociology, and included 14 lesson observations. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. However, the report underestimates some strengths in teaching and some weaknesses in students' achievements.

Key strengths

- well-managed programmes of study
- much good teaching
- good progression by access course students to higher education

Weaknesses

- poor written English of some students
- poor retention rates
- some low pass rates

49 The college offers a good range of humanities and social studies subjects, including English, economics, law, politics, psychology and sociology. All these subjects are offered at GCE A level and most are also available as GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects, at GCSE, and on access to higher education courses. Most GCE A level courses can be taken over one or two years.

50 Overall, the quality of teaching in humanities and social studies is good. Courses are well managed and designed to take account of students' learning needs. Some schemes of work are underdeveloped. Much good written material is given to students to assist their study of particular topics. Teachers are resourceful in helping students to overcome their difficulties and make progress. On occasion, the concentration by teachers on the needs of the

weaker students leads to more able students being insufficiently challenged. The self-assessment report did not identify the main strengths of the teaching noted by inspectors. Assessment is well organised and fair; there are procedures for comparing and moderating marking standards. The written guidance given to students on how to improve their work is generally satisfactory.

51 Teachers have high expectations of students' punctuality, attendance and the regular submission of coursework. Despite the application of the college's policy on students' punctuality, learning was disrupted by latecomers in some lessons observed. Students' progress is systematically reviewed in regular tutorial sessions. Some students find it difficult to establish and maintain regular study habits. A significant proportion of students' written work shows weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and expression. Teachers have made significant efforts to improve provision and help students to achieve.

52 Retention rates are often low and sometimes poor. Pass rates of those completing GCE courses have improved and on most courses are above national averages for students aged 19 or over in further education colleges. Pass rates on some GCSE courses fall below the national average for those students. The self-assessment report identifies low retention rates, but not low pass rates. Retention targets have been set for 1997-98. The college does not systematically compare students' performance at the college with their previous academic record in order to assess whether students do as well as might be expected, or better. Many access course students who successfully complete their programmes progress to higher education. The destinations of students completing GCE A level courses are not evaluated in the self-assessment report.

53 The stock of books and other materials in the library is heavily used. Specialist classrooms at the Muswell Hill centre are well

Curriculum Areas

decorated, carpeted, and appropriately furnished and equipped. Teachers establish the subject identity of classrooms effectively by appropriate displays, including material prepared by staff for use in teaching.

Examples of students' achievements in English and social sciences, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level English language and literature (two-year courses)	Retention (%)	+	45	42
	Pass rate (%)	+	60	80
GCE A level economics (two-year course)	Retention (%)	+	84	67
	Pass rate (%)	+	63	88
GCE A level psychology (two-year course)	Retention (%)	+	57	29
	Pass rate (%)	+	100	100
GCSE English	Retention (%)	60	34	60
	Pass rate (%)	60	63	57

Source: college data

+comparable data unavailable

Curriculum Areas

ESOL and Basic Education

Grade 3

54 The inspection covered a range of literacy and numeracy courses and courses in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). It included the observation of 14 lessons. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment of its strengths and weaknesses in this curriculum area.

Key strengths

- the range of courses with various entry points and progression opportunities
- well-planned courses related to students' experiences
- well-maintained, pleasant accommodation
- the wide range of learning materials

Weaknesses

- little use of IT and other media in teaching
- some low retention and pass rates
- the lack of accurate data on students' achievements
- uneven implementation of departmental guidelines

55 There is a comprehensive range of literacy and numeracy courses, and courses in ESOL, with opportunities for students to enter courses or progress to others at various points in the year. Students' knowledge, skills and self-confidence are increased through courses which make use of practical activities and real life contexts. Study programmes are based on a series of small steps which enable students to receive immediate feedback on their learning. In the lessons observed, teachers created friendly and supportive environments where students' diverse experiences were valued. Students worked with enthusiasm and obvious

enjoyment. Teachers used an appropriate variety of teaching methods which took account of students' differing needs. In the few less effective lessons, teachers did not allow weaker students time to absorb the learning and did not provide the more able students with sufficiently challenging work.

56 A considerable range of printed learning materials is available to support students' learning. Most handouts are of good quality, although a few were poorly reproduced. There is suitable equipment for practical tasks such as measuring and weighing. IT is available for students in the learning resource bases, where students have access to materials which enable them to study on their own. IT was not used in the lessons observed elsewhere.

57 Course management is not always effective, a weakness identified in the college's self-assessment report. There are examples of well-kept documentation, schemes of work, records of students' achievements and minutes of course team meetings; however, this good practice is not universal. Policies designed to ensure best practice in tasks such as marking and record-keeping are not consistently implemented by all teams.

58 Many students attend for a relatively short period in order to achieve specific learning goals. Surveys of students' perceptions show that most students who completed their programmes considered that they had achieved their objectives. Systems for monitoring students' attendance and performance are not sufficiently rigorous to ensure an informed analysis of retention and achievement. Retention and pass rates are acknowledged to be low in the college's self-assessment report. For example, of students completing their courses in 1996-97, 23 per cent achieved the level 1 award in numeracy, and 54 per cent in communication skills. At level 2, 10 per cent of completing students achieved the numeracy award, and 15 per cent the communication skills award.

Curriculum Areas

59 A range of effective links with the community has enabled the college to identify students' needs and to establish appropriate provision in ESOL. An example of this is the English class taught by college staff for a group of mothers in the primary school which their children attend. The school greatly values the increased parental involvement in the school that has resulted from parents' improved language skills and self-confidence.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

60 Inspection evidence confirmed the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- clear enrolment procedures
- support and guidance available throughout the year
- clear guidelines for staff on enrolments
- improvements in the tutorial system
- improvements in support for students
- good careers advice, counselling and welfare services

Weaknesses

- some poor implementation of the tutorial system
- no significant improvement in students' retention and achievements since the last inspection

61 The college recognises in its self-assessment report that it has improved the quality and efficiency of its enrolment procedures. Students can visit the college for educational advice, careers guidance and enrolment throughout the year. Staff are well briefed about the interview and enrolment procedures and are supported by clear operational guidelines. All full-time students have an individual interview before being offered a place at the college. Staff proficient in a wide variety of languages are available to act as translators, if the need arises. The college's learning agreement has been translated into 10 languages.

62 Induction has been improved since the previous inspection to ensure that students all follow common elements of a programme to help them settle in to the college. During the

course of a year, approximately 5,000 students take a test of their competence in basic skills as they start their courses. Some 40 per cent are assessed as needing learning support. Students' support needs may be assessed by their teachers or students may seek help at any time.

63 There has been no significant improvement in students' retention and achievements since the last inspection. However, the college has taken steps to address the issue of poor retention and examination pass rates. These include improving the tutorial system, increasing learning support for students and reviewing entry criteria. Learning support is provided in literacy and numeracy, for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is a second language. The support is delivered to students individually and in groups. Records of students' progress are kept and copies passed to course tutors. Students and staff spoke well of the support provided, although it is too soon to judge the effectiveness of tutorial and learning support in improving students' achievements. The college is also introducing a systematic programme of tuition leading to qualifications for all students in the key skills of communication, application of number and IT, as part of the drive to improve achievements. An ambitious college-wide programme for the modularisation of the curriculum is under way. This will enable students to build up units of credit towards whole awards at their own pace. It is already operational in some areas of the college.

64 Most of the tutorials observed by inspectors were good but a few were poor. Inspectors found that some students had not been assigned a tutor, or had not yet had an individual review of their progress. The self-assessment report identifies the variable quality of tutorial support as a weakness and the college has recently introduced a tutorial policy to address the issue. All students are now assigned a personal tutor who will meet them individually every six weeks to monitor progress and deal with any

Cross-college Provision

problems, as well as providing an agreed group tutorial programme. Most tutors have received initial training and are now taking part in a programme for all teaching staff to improve their skills as tutors. The college has introduced measures to improve students' attendance and punctuality; the attendance in classes observed during the inspection was low, at 56 per cent.

65 Help and advice is available for students from a well-qualified and experienced team of counsellors, welfare advisers and careers guidance tutors. This is a strength recognised by inspectors and in the college's self-assessment report. The services are well used and are appreciated by staff and students. Monitoring surveys show a consistently high level of satisfaction amongst users. The service offered by the two careers guidance tutors is now supplemented by one provided by the local careers company for three days a week. Students can use the two well-stocked careers advice centres at times of their own choosing or they can book an appointment to see a careers tutor. The tutors also visit classes to give students information and advice. The college offers subsidised childcare facilities for 27 children, but this is not sufficient and there is a long waiting list. During 1996-97, access funds totalling £45,000 were distributed to students, but this was insufficient to meet the demand.

General Resources

Grade 3

66 The college's self-assessment of resources identifies the main strengths and weaknesses found during the inspection.

Key strengths

- improvements to buildings since last inspection
- well-maintained and suitable accommodation

Weaknesses

- a shortage of spaces for students to use for study
- little access for students to IT

67 Since the last inspection the college has disposed of three of its sites, and now occupies four: the Tottenham centre and Tottenham Green in the east of the borough, and Bounds Green and Muswell Hill in the west. A recent space utilisation survey has confirmed that, even allowing for planned growth, the college still has surplus accommodation. It has now decided to sell the two sites in the west of the borough and concentrate all its provision in the Tottenham area. It plans to use the proceeds from the sales to make major improvements to the main Tottenham site. The proposed new Centenary Building will house a new learning resources centre, canteen, admissions and reception area.

68 In the last few years, the college has spent about £500,000 a year on maintenance and has now developed a seven-year planned maintenance budget. This has resulted in internal and external improvements, including the restoration of the facade at the Tottenham centre, carried out with the assistance of the Heritage lottery fund. The quality of accommodation is now generally satisfactory and well maintained. There are plans for extensive remodelling, and these will involve the creation of curriculum area zones, such as those already developed to house the specialist accommodation used in construction, hairdressing, beauty therapy and floristry.

69 There are learning resources centres at the Tottenham centre and at Muswell Hill. At Tottenham Green there is a small learning resource base for health care and basic skills. The last inspection report indicated that the college planned to provide such bases within all curriculum areas, but, to date, few of these exist and few resource-based learning materials are

Cross-college Provision

yet available. Given the number of students attending the college, the number of study spaces available is low, and most students have to study away from the college, a weakness not referred to in the college's self-assessment report. Although opening hours at the Tottenham centre have recently been extended, they are restricted for students on evening courses. The libraries within the centres contain 60,000 books and a range of other materials. The budget for books and periodicals for the current year exceeds £110,000. Deficiencies identified in a number of curriculum areas at the last inspection have now been addressed.

70 The college has fewer computers than many other colleges of comparable size. There are about 400 computers available for students' use, giving a ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students of 1:15. The majority of these computers are not on a network, and many are old and due to be replaced. This year's budget makes provision for the installation of a network which will serve about 70 per cent of the college. While students studying business and computing enjoy good 'drop-in' computer facilities, students in other areas do not. Technical support is inadequate, owing to difficulties in recruiting staff, and to the problems inherent in dealing with so many free-standing computers. These shortcomings are identified in the college's self-assessment report.

71 There are canteens on three sites which are of variable quality. At Bounds Green the only source of refreshment is a vending machine. With the exception of vending machines, no provision is made on any of the sites for students on evening courses. Other social facilities are limited. There are sports facilities at the Tottenham centre and at Muswell Hill, and there is a range of supervised sporting activities. Teachers have appropriate work areas. Students with learning difficulties have access to a wider range of accommodation than

they did at the time of the previous inspection. Access for those in wheelchairs is restricted to the ground floors at Tottenham Green and at Muswell Hill, and at the latter wheelchair users cannot reach the resources centre. At the Tottenham centre most areas are accessible, but this often involves the use of one or more of the many chair lifts at the site.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

72 The college's self-assessment report includes some strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors in quality assurance, but underemphasises the significance of some of them.

Key strengths

- the involvement of the academic board in quality assurance and self-assessment
- the development of service standards and reporting procedures for cross-college services
- the introduction of lesson observations to inform staff appraisal and self-assessment
- extensive, high-quality staff development

Weaknesses

- ineffective monitoring of students' pass rates against targets
- some aspects of quality assurance system not yet fully effective or understood by all staff
- some course records and reports of poor quality
- lack of understanding of target-setting by some course managers

Cross-college Provision

73 The college produced its second self-assessment report for the inspection, drawing upon reports devised through its normal quality assurance cycle. The self-assessment process was generally comprehensive.

74 Course managers prepare termly and annual reports on the quality of their provision, together with action plans to address weaknesses. These reports are monitored and reviewed by course review boards which produce summaries for the vice-principal in charge of the learning programmes division who, in turn, provides an overall report for the academic board. There are significant variations in the quality of course team reports, a weakness identified in the college's self-assessment report. Targets set for students' enrolment, achievement and retention are agreed with heads of department and discussed and recorded at course team meetings. The process of determining targets is not fully understood by course managers.

75 Surveys of students' views are carried out each year. Information from questionnaires shows that students are generally satisfied with their courses and support services, but less happy with library resources and computing facilities. Although opportunities are made available for students to take part in the course review process, for instance through attending course team meetings, few take up the offer. Students are aware of the college's charter which is given out at induction. Responses from students' surveys are used to monitor targets set in the college charter. Procedures for students to make complaints are outlined in a student diary. Informal and formal procedures provide opportunities for students to raise issues with their personal tutor, course manager or head of department.

76 A new post of director of performance management was established in September 1997. The director is responsible for the production of the college's self-assessment

report and its integration with the college's strategic and operational planning. The director has an overview of the quality assurance system, audits reports from external verifiers and checks whether procedures are carried out effectively. He co-ordinates the setting of standards and targets for departments and services. However, staff in the teaching departments do not have faith in the centralised management information on students' pass rates, and are not effectively monitoring pass rates against targets. The functions of the new role of director of performance management are not clear to some staff and managers and as yet have not been fully implemented.

77 The quality assurance standing committee is responsible for the management and monitoring of the quality assurance system and the co-ordination of self-assessment. This is a committee of the academic board, which reports termly. The committee agreed the criteria for college classroom observations that started in May 1997. Members of the quality assurance committee are unclear about some aspects of their remit. The system for the approval of new courses is thorough; heads of department ensure that proposals submitted to the vice-principal in charge of learning programmes are consistent with college and departmental strategic plans, are fully costed and have a realistic timescale for development. The system of internal verification is generally effective with an internal verification forum that allows good practice to be shared.

78 Classroom observations have been introduced since the first inspection. The use of classroom observation to inform the self-assessment process was first introduced in May 1997, using a system of peer observation by teacher colleagues from different programme areas. At the time of the inspection, the college had not produced a summative report of classroom observations, and had therefore not identified quality assurance issues arising from the exercise. Classroom observations are also used as part of the staff appraisal system.

Cross-college Provision

79 The college provides well-organised and good-quality opportunities for staff development which are related to corporate commitments. This is a strength which was not sufficiently emphasised in the college's self-assessment report. The college achieved the Investor in People award in 1997. Under the college's appraisal scheme, full-time staff are appraised within a two-year cycle. The scheme has developed from the college's annual staff development interview. It is well organised and appreciated by staff. The system leads to effective staff training. The self-assessment report notes that some staff have not yet been appraised.

Governance

Grade 2

80 The key strengths and weaknesses identified by governors were, in the main, similar to those identified by inspectors.

Key strengths

- sound procedures and effective committees for conducting corporation business
- effective clerking arrangements
- firm support from governors for college managers
- recent attention to corporation membership
- close monitoring of the college's financial situation
- effective contribution by governors to strategic planning
- active promotion by governors of equal opportunities and of the college's involvement in the community

Weaknesses

- governors with an appropriate range of expertise and backgrounds not yet in place

- some weakness in internal control systems for some financial functions

81 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the governance of the college is adequate. 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. Under the financial memorandum with the FEFC, the corporation is responsible for ensuring that the college has a sound system of internal control. In their annual report for the year ending 31 July 1997, the college's internal auditors identified weaknesses in the internal control system for payroll, service contract monitoring, cash sales and collections and non-FEFC income. The issues raised are being addressed.

82 The college is well governed by board members who have established effective procedures for conducting their business. There is appropriate delegation to the following committees: finance and general purposes; human resources; audit; remuneration; and governance. These committees work effectively. Meetings of the governing body are businesslike and productive, a strength recognised in the college's self-assessment report. Attendance by governors at corporation, committee and other meetings is satisfactory. There are effective arrangements for the clerking of meetings. Papers and minutes are well prepared, and circulated at an appropriate time before meetings. The clerk has no other post in the college.

83 Governors make an effective contribution to strategic planning and monitor the college's performance against its corporate plan and annual operating priorities. Governors receive, through the finance and general purposes committee, adequate financial information for them to monitor financial performance. The

Cross-college Provision

chairman of governors conducts the biannual appraisal of the principal. Governors operate within an agreed code of conduct, and a register of their interests is maintained. Since the previous inspection, the governing body has resolutely supported college managers in its achievement of a major reorganisation.

84 A majority of governors have been in office since incorporation. Governors recognise in their self-assessment that the current membership does not have the complete range of desirable expertise, and that more women members and members from local minority ethnic groups would better represent the make-up of the student body. Although a number of ways of recruiting suitable governors have been tried, including advertising in the local press, there were still three vacancies at the time of inspection. Governors have received training about relevant issues, and attend outside events to increase their knowledge and effectiveness. The chairman of governors took part in a useful study tour organised by the Further Education Development Agency. Governors have strong links with the local community. Those who attend the community forum, which aims to increase local links, are well informed about the college's community-based activities.

85 Governors have recently introduced a number new of initiatives to address identified weaknesses. A governors' newsletter is distributed to all staff, and forums have been organised at which governors will be able to meet staff and students. A report from the academic board is now presented at board meetings, an initiative prompted by the governors' concern, identified in the college's self-assessment report, that they were not receiving enough information about the curriculum and students' achievements. About a year ago, the composition of the governing body was changed to include a staff member. Staff welcome these initiatives, but because they are recent, many still perceive the governing

body as having little connection with their work. The corporation does not include a student member. At present, because students have not yet met governors through the newly-established forum, governors have little direct access to students' ideas and perceptions.

Management

Grade 2

86 The college's self-assessment report was comprehensive. It identified many of the same strengths and weaknesses as inspectors, but some of the strengths and weaknesses were understated.

Key strengths

- open, decisive management and effective management of change
- coherent management structure with clear reporting lines
- effective liaison with many external agencies
- good arrangements for financial management
- equality of opportunity successfully promoted

Weaknesses

- insufficient access to computerised management information
- ineffective communications in a few areas in the college

87 The college is decisively managed, with an emphasis on openness and honesty. Since the previous inspection, an innovative corporate plan has been drawn up containing a new mission statement and strategic objectives. It commits the college to continuing a fully comprehensive range of provision using new, cost-effective, teaching methods. The plan incorporates a clear set of priorities for the

Cross-college Provision

development of the college. Curriculum priorities are devised annually to meet the objectives of the corporate plan. Managers have led the college through reorganisations, involving restructuring, rationalisation of sites and the courses offered, and a major programme of staff redundancies. Staff understand why difficult decisions had to be made, and appreciate the fair and open ways in which they were carried out. Although some aspects of the college's work, such as quality assurance, have yet to become fully effective, students have often benefited from the re-evaluation of teaching and learning which has resulted from the new corporate plan. The college's self-assessment report does not acknowledge either the successful management of major change or the benefits which have resulted from it.

88 The corporate management committee comprising the principal, the two vice-principals and the three service directors is effective in making major decisions, setting corporate targets and reviewing progress. The college executive committee ensures that operational issues are co-ordinated and that information is disseminated. Staff understand their own roles and responsibilities, and those of others within the structure. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the new management structure is coherent, with clear line management responsibilities. The creation of the learning programmes division, which is made up of all seven teaching departments, has strengthened the co-ordination of the curriculum and of important initiatives designed to improve retention and achievement. Equality of opportunity is effectively promoted and managed.

89 Communications in the college are generally good. Relevant information and decisions are circulated to all staff through a system of cascade briefings, in a range of meetings, and through a newsletter which is clear and easy to read. However, there are a few areas in the college where information is

not disseminated effectively. The college is aware of this. Staff would appreciate having more opportunities to contribute information and advice to the decision-making processes. The clerk to the governing body services the corporate management committee which ensures good communications between managers and governors.

90 The accuracy of the computerised management information system has improved, particularly with regard to data concerning finance, personnel and accommodation. Some managers do not have full access to data held electronically. Improvements to the computer network are planned to overcome this problem. Meanwhile, paper-based data are held by managers and staff at all levels which duplicate information held within the computerised system. The flow of data within the college is impeded by the incompatibility of the different systems within which they are held. This results in repeated requests for the same information, and in some failures to use information effectively.

91 The college has formed partnerships with a number of local and regional organisations concerned with education, training and economic regeneration. These partnerships have benefited the college by securing significant grant income and increasing opportunities for students. Effective liaison is maintained with neighbouring colleges of further education and with the TEC. Relationships with the local community are particularly strong. The college's work in the community is valued by local people. The college is an associate college of Middlesex University and has a department based on the university's premises. This is a well-established partnership which has resulted in several joint degree and higher national certificate courses. Links with schools are underdeveloped and the competitive environment in which the college operates restricts the extent to which it can establish co-operative work with particular schools.

Cross-college Provision

92 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. Budget holders receive timely reports on expenditure. Additional information is available as required. Comprehensive monthly financial management reports are produced which include clear information on the likely out-turn of income and expenditure to the year end. Although the college has substantial liquid funds, financial reporting would be improved by the inclusion of a rolling 12 months cashflow forecast. The college's average level of funding for 1997-98 is £19.20 per unit, compared with £22.53 per unit in 1996-97. The median for general further education colleges is £16.72 per unit. The proportion of students who achieved their qualification aim in 1995-96 was 64 per cent, which is just below the national median of 65 per cent for further education colleges and higher than the median for Greater London of 62 per cent.

Conclusions

93 Overall the college's self-assessment report contained much useful commentary and evidence, although some sections were more descriptive than evaluative. There was a detailed action plan. The report was supported by supplementary reports produced by teaching departments and service teams across the college. Inspectors found these supplementary reports useful in clarifying the messages in the main self-assessment report. Overall, most of the college's judgements about its provision were in agreement with those of the inspection team. The self-assessment report overlooked some of the college's strengths, and there was insufficient emphasis on weaknesses in teaching and learning, students' pass rates and retention in some curriculum areas. The grades awarded by the college for its provision matched most of those awarded by inspectors.

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

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 1997)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	1
16-18 years	13
19-24 years	18
25+ years	66
Not known	2
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1997)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	29
Intermediate	37
Advanced	19
Higher education	8
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	7
Total	100

Source: college data

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	342	948	12
Agriculture	37	144	2
Construction	664	938	14
Engineering	252	154	4
Business	408	812	11
Hotel and catering	23	14	0
Health and community care	568	1,018	14
Art and design	179	277	4
Humanities	455	2,072	23
Basic education	221	1,572	16
Total	3,149	7,949	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1997)

	<i>Permanant</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	192	0	40	232
Supporting direct learning contact	39	10	0	49
Other support	78	21	12	111
Total	309	31	52	392

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£16,729,000	£15,954,000	£12,614,251
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£24.01	£24.09	£22.53
Payroll as a proportion of income	69%	72%	67%
Achievement of funding target	93%	81%	123%
Diversity of income	22%	19%	18%
Operating surplus	£7,000	-£1,934,000	-£332,000

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

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

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

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

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

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

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	55	72	77
	Average point score per entry	3.9	2.6	3.5
	Position in tables	middle third	bottom third	middle third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	35	31	21
	Percentage achieving qualification	69%	52%	48%
	Position in tables	bottom third	bottom 10%	bottom 10%
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	118	35
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	29%	51%
	Position in tables	*	bottom 10%	bottom third

Source: DfEE

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

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

*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

FEFC Inspection Report 38/98

**Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
May 1998**