

Hackney Community College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) 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 inspects other further education provision funded by the FEFC. In fulfilling its work programme, the inspectorate 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 024 7686 3000
Fax 024 7686 3100
Website www.fefc.ac.uk*

© FEFC 2000 You may photocopy this report and use extracts in promotional or other material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings are not misrepresented.

Contents

Paragraph

Summary

Context

The college and its mission	1
The inspection	9

Curriculum areas

Mathematics and science	12
Computing and information technology	18
Engineering	23
Health and social care	28
Art, design and media	34
ESOL	41
Adult basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	46

Cross-college provision

Support for students	54
General resources	62
Quality assurance	70
Governance	78
Management	86
Conclusions	95

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.

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

Hackney Community College

Greater London Region

Inspected November 1999

Hackney Community College is a general further education college in the London Borough of Hackney. Of the college's students, 96% are recruited from disadvantaged areas as defined in the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions. The college produced a self-assessment report which recognised many of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision identified by inspectors. In arriving at judgements about some curriculum areas the report did not place sufficient emphasis on weaknesses in students' achievements.

The college offers a wide range of courses in nine of the 10 programme areas funded by the FEFC. Provision in five of these areas was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. Support for students is good. There is an exceptional amount of nursery provision for the care of students' children. The college is skilful in widening participation amongst people who would not normally attend a college, and in enabling these people to progress to further study and employment. College managers have successfully steered the college through a difficult period of falling income and staffing

reductions. They have rationalised the college's accommodation and overseen a large building project. The college has good accommodation and specialist resources. The new campus at Shoreditch has won awards for its design. Governors have a good range of expertise and have given strong support to managers in improving the college's financial position and accommodation. In previous years, there was an under-recording of students' achievements which meant that published data were unreliable. The college has worked hard to improve its systems for recording and analysing data on achievements. Managers have initiated strategies to improve student retention and achievement. As a result, there are signs that retention and achievement rates have improved, although they still fall short of national figures for similar colleges. The college should improve: students' retention and achievement; the quality of teaching; students' attendance and punctuality; course management in engineering; quality assurance; and the use of performance indicators of students' achievements to inform governors, managers and staff.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Mathematics and science	3	Support for students	2
Computing and information technology	3	General resources	2
Engineering	4	Quality assurance	4
Health and social care	3	Governance	3
Art, design and media	2	Management	3
ESOL	3		
Adult basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2		

The College and its Mission

1 Hackney Community College was formed in September 1992 through the merger of the London Borough of Hackney's sixth form centre, further education college and adult education service. The college has two main sites comprising new and refurbished accommodation, and uses over 80 community centres within Hackney. There are three voluntary-aided schools and one special school in Hackney, as well as a designated college specialising in footwear, leather goods and saddlery, which all offer provision for students aged 16 to 18. In addition, there are four general further education and three sixth form colleges in the adjacent London boroughs.

2 The borough of Hackney is characterised by acute economic and social disadvantage. Many families in Hackney experience poverty, very poor housing and unemployment. Total unemployment was 14.9% in July 1999, the highest of any London borough. This compares with figures of 5.7% for Greater London and 4.3% for Great Britain. The unemployment rates amongst some groups in Hackney are more than twice the local average rate. The proportions of children, lone parents, and people with a disability or long-term illness affecting their ability to work are also well above the regional averages. All the wards in Hackney are amongst the 10% of most deprived wards nationally.

3 Educational attainment in schools in Hackney is well below the national average, though improving in recent years. At key stage 2 in English and mathematics, achievement was more than 12% below the average for England in 1999. In the same year, 28% of pupils in the borough obtained five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) at grade C or above, compared with a national average of over 48%. The staying-on rate at age 16 in Hackney has risen steadily over the last five years. In 1998-99 it was 65%, which is below the national average of 69%, and the London average of 73%.

4 Hackney is a place of great ethnic, cultural and social diversity. The proportion of residents who are from minority ethnic groups is approximately 35%, which is 14% higher than the London average. The percentage is significantly higher amongst young people. There are many migrants, with an estimated 15,000 refugees and asylum seekers in the borough and a significant proportion of people who speak languages other than English as their first language. Such groups are well represented in the college.

5 Financial and business services are significantly the largest employment sector in the borough and account for just over 30% of jobs. The borough lies next to the city with its concentration of wealth and service jobs in the city of London and there is a growing arts and leisure industries sector within Hackney. Employment in manufacturing in Hackney has declined continuously for the last 25 years, although the manufacturing sector remains larger than in other inner London boroughs. Hackney residents are under-represented in growing employment areas, such as professional, managerial and service jobs. Most residents work in occupations and sectors that are declining, in semi-skilled or unskilled work and manufacturing jobs.

6 Hackney Community College provides most of the education for adults in Hackney and for the majority of students aged 16 to 19 educated within the borough. The college offers provision in all of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) 10 programme areas except agriculture. Over 12,000 students enrolled at the college in 1998-99. Over three-quarters of day and evening students came from Hackney, with most of the remainder from neighbouring boroughs. Some specialist courses drew people from further afield. Almost 70% of all students were over 24 years of age. Over half the students were of minority ethnic origin, the largest group being of Black African and Caribbean origin, at almost 36% of the total. Other significant groups in the college include students of Asian, Chinese, Turkish and Kurdish

Context

background. Of the college's students, 96% live in disadvantaged areas as defined by the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

7 The college is the fourth largest employer in the borough. In 1998-99, it had 228 full-time and fractional teachers, 192 full-time and part-time support staff and approximately 680 part-time teachers, of whom about 300 are in employment at any one time. The college is organised into three directorates: curriculum management; finance and resources; and strategic services. The curriculum directorate has four teaching departments: building, engineering and motor vehicle studies; access to higher education, business, computing, humanities, mathematics and science; adult basic education, British Sign Languages, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), provision for students with learning difficulties; and arts, leisure, and care. This curriculum directorate also includes admissions, learning support and other aspects of support for students.

8 The college has identified its mission as: 'working in partnership to increase participation and achievement, to meet the needs of the communities we serve'.

The Inspection

9 The college was inspected during the week beginning 8 November 1999. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and considered information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Initially, inspectors used data on students' achievements drawn from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1997 and 1998. However, the college did not regard these data as reliable because there was under-reporting of students' achievements in the years concerned. Inspectors were provided with revised data on students' achievements for 1997 and 1998.

Inspectors used these data to form their judgements. They checked the data, where possible, during the inspection, but the data cannot be published in this report. The college's data for achievements for 1999 were checked by inspectors in advance of the inspection, using primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. Fifteen inspectors and one auditor, working for a total of 62 days, carried out the inspection.

10 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the lessons inspected, 55% were rated good or outstanding. This is lower than the average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. The figure of 11% for lessons rated less than satisfactory is higher than the average.

Curriculum Areas

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	1	4	3	0	0	8
GCSE	0	4	0	0	0	4
GNVQ	2	4	5	0	0	11
NVQ	1	0	1	1	0	3
Other vocational	1	10	12	5	0	28
Other*	6	18	11	4	0	39
Total (No.)	11	40	32	10	0	93
Total (%)	12	43	34	11	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*

*includes basic education, National Open College Network modules and access courses

11 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 (%)
Hackney Community College	11.6	71
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

Mathematics and Science

Grade 3

12 Inspectors observed 13 lessons, covering GCSE, general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) and national diploma courses. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the college's self-assessment report. Some of the strengths were overstated, particularly in relation to student retention and achievement.

Key strengths

- well-planned teaching
- good individual support for students
- high-quality laboratories and strong technical support
- good promotion of equal opportunities within the curriculum

Weaknesses

- some retention rates below national averages
- some low pass rates
- lack of co-ordination in planning science and mathematics courses
- little use of information technology (IT) in teaching

13 All lessons observed by inspectors were satisfactory or good. Teachers often begin lessons with a question and answer session, reviewing previous work and placing new work in context. Much mathematics teaching concentrates on giving students individual help with problem-solving. During a physics lesson, formulae on motion were made clearer to students by the teacher carrying out a demonstration involving ball bearings and a simple projectile machine. Individual support for students is effective, both in and out of

lessons. Additional sessions help science and mathematics students to improve their mathematical skills. Tutorials include individual action-planning, and students evaluate their own progress. Staff monitor students' attendance and punctuality rigorously. Students with a poor record of time-keeping are sometimes telephoned at their homes if they are late for a class. Where appropriate, parents are informed when such issues arise. There is a well-established commitment to promote equal opportunities within the curriculum. The gender balance and the progress of women on science and mathematics courses are monitored carefully. The GCE A level physics syllabus has been changed as a result of survey work carried out in the college which indicated that women have a better chance of succeeding with the new syllabus.

14 Student retention and achievement in science was judged to be a strength in the college self-assessment report. Inspectors found a more mixed picture. On GCSE courses, retention is above or in line with national averages. In 1999, student retention was below the national average in all GCE A level science and mathematics subjects offered by the college and in the national diploma in science. Achievement rates on science GCSE courses and the GNVQ intermediate are above the national average. In GCSE mathematics, the overall pass rate at grade C or above is in line with the national average, although the pass rate for full-time students is above this at 45%. The pass rates in 1999 for GCE A level mathematics and chemistry were both significantly lower than the national average. However, a number of students enrolled initially on GCE A level courses in science subsequently enter and achieve the GCE advanced supplementary (AS) award.

15 Many teachers regularly set homework for students. This work is usually returned promptly and accurately marked. However, teachers sometimes do not give enough written

Curriculum Areas

feedback to help students to improve their performance. The GNVQ intermediate and national diploma science courses include work experience for all students, which adds to the vocational relevance of these courses. Apart from this, there is little other involvement with employers, a weakness noted in the college's self-assessment report. A residential field trip is much appreciated by GCE A level biology students, providing the opportunity for personal development as well as academic work. The college has close links with local universities and students receive a thorough preparation for applying to higher education.

16 There is a lack of formal arrangements for planning and developing science and mathematics courses as a whole. The self-assessment report notes the poor links between science and mathematics and lack of foundation level courses. There are few learning materials available to enable students to study on their own. Recently appointed curriculum managers are aware of these issues and plan to adopt a more co-ordinated approach to curriculum planning. Individual courses are well managed. GCSE mathematics provision is co-ordinated throughout the college and all applicants are given an initial assessment to determine their chance of success. A common scheme of work is in use for all GCSE mathematics groups, although there is insufficient sharing of learning materials amongst staff.

17 Teachers are well qualified and experienced. There are nine well-equipped science laboratories, in which both theory and practical work takes place. Science technicians, based in three large preparation rooms, give a high level of technical support. They maintain a small but useful video library, which is well used by some teachers. Laboratories and mathematics classrooms have comfortable furniture, and displays of students' work provide a stimulating learning environment. Teachers rarely use IT to extend the learning of students,

particularly in mathematics, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Students are supplied with textbooks on most courses. The learning centre has a satisfactory stock of science and mathematics books and journals.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in mathematics and science, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE sciences (biology, chemistry and physics)	2	Number of starters	*	*	61
		Retention (%)	*	*	72
		Achievement (%)	*	*	57
GCSE mathematics	2	Number of starters	*	*	278
		Retention (%)	*	*	77
		Achievement (%)	*	*	33
GNVQ intermediate in science	2	Number of starters	*	*	19
		Retention (%)	*	*	79
		Achievement (%)	*	*	67
National diploma in science	3	Number of starters	*	*	32
		Retention (%)	*	*	50
		Achievement (%)	*	*	81
GCE A level biology	3	Number of starters	*	*	39
		Retention (%)	*	*	62
		Achievement (%)	*	*	67
GCE A level chemistry	3	Number of starters	*	*	53
		Retention (%)	*	*	68
		Achievement (%)	*	*	58
GCE A level physics	3	Number of starters	*	*	46
		Retention (%)	*	*	63
		Achievement (%)	*	*	69
GCE A level mathematics	3	Number of starters	*	*	35
		Retention (%)	*	*	69
		Achievement (%)	*	*	54

Source: college (1999)

**data unreliable*

Curriculum Areas

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 3

18 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in computing and IT at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college in its self-assessment report. The self-assessment report gave insufficient emphasis to student retention and achievement.

Key strengths

- much good teaching
- above average achievement levels for the national diploma and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) 726 level 1 courses
- wide range of full-time and part-time vocational courses

Weaknesses

- poor attendance and punctuality of some students
- below average achievement levels on some courses
- below average retention levels on most courses

19 Most lessons are well planned and well taught, a strength identified in the college's self-assessment report. Lessons consist of an appropriate balance of theory and practical work. Students are well motivated, particularly whilst undertaking practical work. Teachers make good use of detailed handouts for many aspects of the work. Some good work was seen where students worked collaboratively in small groups. For example, a national diploma first-year class discussed in groups the advantages and disadvantages of shopping using the Internet compared with mail order. Representatives of each of the groups were

required to present their findings to the rest of the class. Students on the main full-time courses are set regular assignments. A few lessons observed were unsatisfactory. Insufficient attention was given to the individual needs of students within the group. Attendance of students in some classes is low and some students are unpunctual.

20 There have been above average achievement levels for the last three cohorts of the national diploma computer studies and the full-time C&G 726 level 1 courses. However, achievement levels for the last cohort of the first award in IT applications and for the full-time C&G 726 levels 2 and 3 courses have been below the sector averages. Achievements on most part-time courses are poor. Very few students successfully complete the Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) computer literacy and information technology course. Almost all courses have retention levels below national averages, although the first award shows improving retention.

21 There is a wide range of full-time and part-time vocational courses in computing and IT at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. The courses provide significant progression opportunities for the students. The college has recently introduced certificates in telematics at introductory and intermediate levels. Innovative centre-devised units in multimedia have also been developed for the first award and the national diploma. Work experience is a significant component of several programmes. The self-assessment report recognised that an appropriate range of courses is offered, which meets the needs of students, employers and other customers.

Curriculum Areas

22 The curriculum area is effectively managed. Staff meet on a regular basis and work well as a team. Although schemes of work have been developed for courses, they are insufficiently detailed. Teachers are well qualified. Students have access during timetabled lessons to good-quality computer hardware and software. However, at peak times, students have difficulty in gaining access to appropriate computing resources on a 'drop-in' basis.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in computing and information technology, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
C&G 726	1, 2 and 3	Number of starters	*	*	67
		Retention (%)	*	*	79
		Achievement (%)	*	*	39
GNVQ intermediate IT/first award IT applications	2	Number of starters	*	*	33
		Retention (%)	*	*	78
		Achievement (%)	*	*	64
National diploma computer studies	3	Number of starters	*	*	64
		Retention (%)	*	*	50
		Achievement (%)	*	*	84

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 4

23 Inspectors observed 13 lessons covering general, electronic and motor vehicle engineering. They agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report, but considered that the college had given insufficient weight to weaknesses in teaching and learning and students' achievements.

Key strengths

- good range of courses from entry to advanced level
- consistently good retention on the GNVQ foundation course
- good specialist resources

Weaknesses

- poor course management in some areas
- some unsatisfactory teaching
- low student achievement and retention rates on some courses
- low student attendance in many lessons

24 The college offers full-time and part-time engineering courses in general engineering, motor vehicle and mechanical engineering. Motor vehicle engineering is located at the Brooke House site, and all other engineering courses are based at the Shoreditch site. The provision at each site provides progression opportunities from entry level to advanced level, reflecting the college's commitment to widen the participation of local people in further education. The motor vehicle curriculum has been carefully planned and progression pathways are clearly documented. There is poor course management in some other areas. For example, there has been a significant delay in notifying the relevant awarding body of students' achievements for a national diploma course completed in 1998. Some course files

are poorly maintained. Many course teams do not carry out thorough annual course reviews, and many action plans do not address weaknesses in teaching and learning, students' achievements and retention rates. Some course teams are unaware of the methods used by the college to calculate retention and achievement rates, resulting in a poor understanding of their students' performance. Many schemes of work consist of no more than a brief reference to the topics to be covered. Some lesson plans lack clear objectives. The college has taken steps to address the weaknesses in management. There is little linkage between the engineering curriculum offered on each of the two sites, restricting the progression opportunities for students. The motor vehicle section has good links with employers, and students have benefited from new vehicles and other resources which have been donated by employers. There are effective links with some local schools, whose final-year pupils are able to participate in 'taster' courses in motor vehicle engineering.

25 Most teaching is satisfactory and some is good. In a few lessons, the teaching and learning were less than satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers ensured that the different learning needs of students were taken into account. For example, in a lesson on engine lubrication, the effective demonstrations by the teacher and a manufacturer's video greatly motivated and involved the students. Questions were carefully directed by the teacher and the students were encouraged to discuss the different types and principles of lubricating oil pumps. The teacher thoroughly explained complex technical terms, and took into account the different language abilities of students. In the less than satisfactory lessons, teachers failed to provide for the different learning needs and abilities of students. Expositions were too long and overcomplicated in their use of language. Students were often set inappropriate tasks such as note-copying, and teachers failed to check whether students were learning. Most practical lessons are well managed, and most students

Curriculum Areas

understand the objectives of the tasks being undertaken. However, the progress being made by students in practical lessons is rarely recorded. The self-assessment report acknowledged some of these weaknesses in teaching and learning. Students' attendance in many of the lessons observed by inspectors was low.

26 The college recognises weaknesses in the pass rates and retention rates on some courses. Some students gain passes in some of the units of their course, but do not achieve the full qualification. Recently produced college data show that on the GNVQ foundation course, pass rates have declined and were poor in 1998-99, although the retention rate has been consistently above the national average. Some GNVQ foundation students have yet to complete their coursework to gain the full qualification. Students' achievements on the GNVQ intermediate and C&G 3830 motor vehicle service and repair courses have been consistently below national averages. However, in 1998-99 students' achievements on the national diploma course were good. Retention rates on some courses have declined, and are now significantly below the national average on the GNVQ intermediate, national diploma and C&G electronics servicing courses. Some practical work produced by GNVQ foundation level students is of a good standard, and many of the tasks are designed to motivate students by providing them with opportunities to make products soon after the start of their course. GNVQ students develop IT, communication and numeracy key skills within the context of their vocational subjects. Students studying for foundation level motor vehicle courses are also encouraged to take additional qualifications in numeracy, IT and communications. Internal verification procedures are generally good, and the college is addressing some recent lapses in internal verification on GNVQ courses due to changes in staffing.

27 Accommodation and engineering resources are good, as noted in the self-assessment report. The motor vehicle workshop is modern, well equipped and provides a high-quality learning environment. There is a range of computer-assisted learning systems on the Shoreditch site, although these are not available to motor vehicle students. There is an adequate stock of text books and journals in the college's resource centres. Teachers are generally well qualified in their subjects and many have assessor qualifications; a few have verifier qualifications. Many motor vehicle teachers participate in correspondence courses designed to keep them up to date with current industrial practice.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ foundation in engineering	1	Number of starters	*	*	17
		Retention (%)	*	*	88
		Achievement (%)	*	*	7
C&G 3830 motor vehicle service and repair	1	Number of starters	*	*	64
		Retention (%)	*	*	75
		Achievement (%)	*	*	29
GNVQ intermediate in engineering	2	Number of starters	*	*	23
		Retention (%)	*	*	57
		Achievement (%)	*	*	31
C&G electronics servicing	2	Number of starters	*	*	30
		Retention (%)	*	*	60
		Achievement (%)	*	*	67
National diploma in engineering	3	Number of starters	*	*	17
		Retention (%)	*	*	56
		Achievement (%)	*	*	90
C&G motor vehicle maintenance	3	Number of starters	*	*	23
		Retention (%)	*	*	57
		Achievement (%)	*	*	46

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care

Grade 3

28 Inspectors observed 10 lessons on courses in care and childcare. The self-assessment report identified most of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, but overestimated the quality of teaching.

Key strengths

- comprehensive initial assessment and entry arrangements
- effective curriculum management
- good use of work experience and work-based learning
- good achievement on some courses

Weaknesses

- lack of differentiated teaching and poor use of resources
- poor attendance and punctuality in many lessons
- poor retention on some courses
- insufficient level 1 provision in care and childcare

29 The college offers a wide range of courses in care and childcare. There is also a growing counselling provision which includes certificate and diploma courses. Reflecting the extensive contacts between college staff and employers, national vocational qualification (NVQ) provision is an important part of the offer. At foundation level, there is no full-time provision in childcare, and only one GNVQ foundation course in care. This is inadequate to facilitate entry by new students in the college's catchment area, and to provide progression opportunities from a general entry level care course which includes speakers of other languages. The importance of extending the foundation level provision to meet the needs of the local community is recognised in the college's self-assessment report. The

comprehensive entry and initial assessment arrangements help students to find the course most suited to their needs. Applicants for full-time and most part-time courses are interviewed, assessed and advised by the relevant course team. Students praised the high standard of guidance they had received from course teams.

30 Most of the teaching is satisfactory. In the more effective lessons, teachers used a range of appropriate teaching and learning methods and made good use of students' knowledge. They were skilful in their use of learning resources. The well-furnished classrooms and laboratories are maintained to a high standard and contain displays of students' work and other relevant materials. Some lessons observed were monotonous and uninspiring. In these lessons teachers relied too much on students copying notes, reading a lot of text or listening to a lecture. Some teachers did not make sufficient use of questioning to check learning and encourage critical thinking. In contrast, in a childcare lesson, the teacher's skilful and enthusiastic questioning stimulated the students to use their knowledge from work experience to identify the key aspects of an effective play environment for children. In another, a good choice of handouts plus appropriate questioning enabled students with a limited command of English to use and explore words and concepts related to healthy living.

31 Teachers support the students and are committed to making the students' learning experience successful. Most teachers prepare detailed and relevant schemes of work but a few are sketchy and poorly presented. The lessons observed were frequently interrupted by students who were as much as 40 minutes late. Teachers do not fully apply or monitor the use of the college's attendance and punctuality policy. In general, the curriculum is well managed. Course teams meet to discuss students' progress and how it could be improved. Assessment arrangements, internal verification and course

Curriculum Areas

review are thorough and extensively documented. Curriculum managers collaborate to review the provision and to co-ordinate staffing and other resources. Students' portfolios reveal clear assignment briefs and a high standard of work. Childcare students carry out a particularly wide range of stimulating and creative work.

32 All full-time students carry out work experience. Many teachers use the knowledge students gain on work placements in theory sessions. Assignments make good use of knowledge gained in the workplace. Students express a high degree of satisfaction with the mix of theory and practical work on their courses. Inspectors visited a work experience placement to meet adult students on a GNVQ foundation course who were enthusiastic about their first opportunity to work outside the home in 15 years. They were pleased that they could

relate the health and safety information they had received in their lessons to the workplace, and confident that they would be able to tackle the assignment they had been set for their work placement period.

33 Achievement is good on some courses. In 1999, the achievement rate was 100% on the BTEC national diploma in science, and the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing. Achievements on GNVQ foundation and advanced courses have improved, bringing them above the national average. Achievements on GNVQ intermediate and BTEC national certificate courses remain low at 48% and 69%, respectively, in 1999. Retention is also poor on some courses, such as the BTEC national diploma in health studies at 56% and the national certificate in social care at 53%. The self-assessment report, however, recognises the importance of implementing an effective strategy to deal with this.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in health and social care, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	Number of starters	*	*	15
		Retention (%)	*	*	75
		Achievement (%)	*	*	80
Edexcel NVQ care	2	Number of starters	*	*	15
		Retention (%)	*	*	88
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100
BTEC national diploma in childhood studies	3	Number of starters	*	*	12
		Retention (%)	*	*	86
		Achievement (%)	*	*	92
BTEC national diploma in science (health studies)	3	Number of starters	*	*	16
		Retention (%)	*	*	56
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100
BTEC national certificate courses	3	Number of starters	*	*	34
		Retention (%)	*	*	68
		Achievement (%)	*	*	69
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	Number of starters	*	*	14
		Retention (%)	*	*	82
		Achievement (%)	*	*	86

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Art, Design and Media

Grade 2

34 Inspectors observed 14 lessons on a range of courses in art, design and media. They broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- good teaching in many lessons
- effective use of wide and varied external links
- good pass rates on many courses
- good range of courses and progression routes
- high-quality accommodation and specialist resources

Weaknesses

- poor retention on some courses
- low attendance on some courses
- lack of co-ordination of media courses

35 The college offers an extensive range of courses in art, design and media. The provision covers vocational qualifications in art and design, fashion, ceramics, media and music. There are courses leading to a number of awards including GNVQs, GCSE and GCE A level, BTEC national diploma, C&G and modular National Open College Network (NOCN) qualifications.

36 Teaching is varied and interesting and holds the students' attention. It concentrates on developing basic skills and knowledge as a foundation for future learning. In one media lesson, the teacher showed samples of past students' work to motivate the current students and encourage their critical responses. This made the lesson exciting for the students and gave them standards against which to measure their own work. In another lesson, the teacher's

handling of the sensitive topic of representation of black people and women in the media was both thoughtful and thought-provoking. The ensuing group discussion centred on a number of provocative extracts from films and advertisements. In a tutorial, the tutor asked students who had attended learning support sessions to describe the benefits gained in order to encourage other students to attend. The strategy was simple but effective, allowing a constructive dialogue to take place between students.

37 The quality of most students' work is good. High levels of competence are evident in much of the work, particularly in photography, ceramics and advanced level work in art and design. Students' work is regularly exhibited in local community venues. The work of photography students has been exhibited in a local museum and in a West End gallery. Students' work is exhibited around the college campus, and art and design and fashion students take part in local exhibition shows. All course teams are involved in the summer school programme run on local estates. The extensive off-site provision is offered in a large number of community venues throughout the borough. Good links exist with higher education providers and community arts organisations.

38 Retention is below the national average on some foundation and intermediate level courses. For example, in 1998-99 retention was 64% in GCSE media, 66% on the NOCN media portfolio course, 64% in C&G clothing technology and 56% in C&G pattern cutting. The self-assessment report did not note this weakness. Achievement rates on many courses are at or above national averages.

39 The managers responsible for the specialist areas work well together as a team. The media area is without a senior lecturer and this has impeded one of the strategic aims of the programme area which is to develop an integrated art and design offer. Managers work

Curriculum Areas

closely with the community development team in the management of the off-site provision. There is a substantial modular course offer in music, art and media. This creates a flexible curriculum which enables students to assemble a course which meets their needs. For example, in music students are able to select from a package of grouped modules to create their own learning pathways.

40 The art and design and media courses are based in new, purpose-built accommodation. The workshops are spacious, well lit and functional. Some art studios are designed as split group spaces capable of housing two groups side-by-side. There are impressive new sound facilities, incorporating two live performance studios, a high level recording studio, singing booth, rehearsal room, piano

practice room and an IT suite equipped with specialist music composition software. There are also general computing facilities. Equipment in most areas is of a high standard. There is a new multimedia computer suite with new digital cameras and editing functions.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
C&G creative skills certificates	1	Number of starters	*	*	50
		Retention (%)	*	*	82
		Achievement (%)	*	*	74
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	Number of starters	*	*	34
		Retention (%)	*	*	71
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100
GCSE courses	2	Number of starters	*	*	32
		Retention (%)	*	*	69
		Achievement (%)	*	*	86
C&G 7700 media techniques	2	Number of starters	*	*	20
		Retention (%)	*	*	70
		Achievement (%)	*	*	78
GCE A level courses	3	Number of starters	*	*	66
		Retention (%)	*	*	71
		Achievement (%)	*	*	91

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

ESOL

Grade 3

41 The inspection covered a range of full-time and part-time programmes in ESOL for adults and young people. Sixteen lessons were observed, including some in community venues. The college's self-assessment report identified some of the strengths of the provision but not all of the key weaknesses.

Key strengths

- wide range of provision with well-established progression routes
- good achievement of appropriate qualifications
- supportive relationships in all lessons
- effective language development activities

Weaknesses

- individual needs of students not fully identified and met
- little development of sustained conversation skills
- small range of learning materials
- insufficient sharing of good practice across teaching teams

42 The college offers an extensive range of full-time and part-time courses to meet the needs of students aged 16 to 19 and adults at all levels of language ability. The programme operates during the day and evening on both main sites and in 10 community venues. In many lessons teachers use interesting topic material which is well integrated with language practice and development. Young people develop listening or writing skills around topics such as reasons not to smoke and the significance of wearing poppies and Remembrance Sunday. There are many opportunities for adults to bring their skills, knowledge, experience and ideas into classroom

activities. However, in many lessons students had little opportunity to speak at length. They were mainly confined to giving brief responses to teachers' questions. Language laboratory sessions are being extended to help students to improve their pronunciation.

43 There are supportive relationships in all classes and these help to promote effective learning. Students are very positive about the learning opportunities and individual care and support they receive. This was also identified in the self-assessment report. Through regular team meetings and written guidelines teachers have developed a rigorous and consistent approach to student discipline and punctuality. Homework is a regular feature. On some courses, but not all, teachers give constructive and detailed written feedback to students on their work. There are initial assessments which place students on appropriate courses. However, insufficient attention is paid to assessing and meeting the learning needs of individual students, for example, through differentiated learning materials or tasks. In general, students do not review their own progress and set realistic targets. There are few opportunities for independent study outside class time, although there is a developing use of IT.

44 Retention is satisfactory and improving. The part-time programme has been restructured to address drop out from roll-on and roll-off provision. There is careful use of a range of qualifications to meet differing course objectives and the preferences of students. Achievement levels are good and generally improving, as identified in the college's self-assessment report. There is good student progression to mainstream college programmes where language support is continued. The full-time ESOL courses provide an effective period of induction into college study for young asylum seekers with disrupted education and behavioural or emotional difficulties. Of these students, 60% progressed in 1998-99 to vocational programmes at foundation level and

Curriculum Areas

above. A Croatian student on the second year of a BTEC national diploma course in business and finance spoke warmly of the teaching he had received four years previously when he had arrived at the college aged 17 speaking little English. He is now fluent in English and applying to study management at university. The full-time adult ESOL courses regularly recruit 20% of students through the part-time and community classes. In 1998-99, 47% of ESOL students went on to higher education, other further education, or employment.

45 Inspectors observed several examples of good practice in initial assessment and course documentation. These have not yet been effectively shared across the three teaching teams. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Lesson observation and appraisal has recently been extended to part-time staff. The range of learning materials is small, particularly that available for use in the part-time and community-based lessons. Some photocopied worksheets are of poor quality. Video and tape materials are used effectively but few resources such as dictionaries, maps, and sets of course books or numeracy equipment are available for students to use in classrooms.

Curriculum Areas

Adult Basic Education and Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Grade 2

46 The inspection covered adult basic education provision and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Fifteen lessons were observed. Inspectors identified different strengths and weaknesses from those in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- mainly effective teaching and learning
- good student achievement and retention
- good progression by students
- extensive and productive partnerships with local community organisations
- good professional development programme in adult basic education
- comprehensive support for part-time teachers

Weaknesses

- inappropriate course structure for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- failure to implement assessment procedures fully
- poor quality of some learning materials

47 The provision for adult basic education and that for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is managed separately. Most of the 400 adult basic education students study part time, although 17 attend a full-time access to further education course. The 130 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities comprise 70 younger full-time students and 60 part-time adult students who select from a broad-based 'options' programme.

48 There is a good range of programmes which meets the needs of part-time students. The structure of the separate specialist full-time provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities does not allow students' individual needs to be met. Following initial assessment, students are divided into groups according to their level of proficiency in key skills. The whole group at each level then follows the same timetable for the rest of the year, including the same limited vocational skill training. No allowance is made for individuals' preferences, vocational aptitudes or differing capabilities between the key skills. This weakness was not identified in the college's self-assessment report.

49 The overall quality of teaching is high, as noted in the self-assessment report. Detailed schemes of work specify teaching and learning methods. The courses are taught by enthusiastic, well-qualified and experienced staff. Teachers allow students to work at their own pace. There is a good balance of individual and whole group activities in most lessons. Students understand the aims of lessons. Teachers are particularly effective in using question and answer techniques in adult basic education lessons. Relationships between staff and students are supportive and create a purposeful, learning environment. Staff cope well with the challenging behaviour of some of the full-time students who have moderate or severe emotional and behavioural difficulties. However, some learning materials are of poor quality. Not all resources being used were appropriate. Some did not reflect and build on the everyday experience of the students, who are ethnically diverse and socially disadvantaged.

50 Students' achievements are good. Two-thirds of the courses have achievement rates higher than the national average. The pass rates in C&G numeracy are particularly strong. Teaching teams have developed retention and attendance strategies which have

Curriculum Areas

resulted in retention being above the national average on the majority of courses. Progression rates are high. Of the full-time students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who completed their courses in June 1999, 60% progressed to higher level basic education courses, 12% to other college courses and 12% to work or other training. Of part-time adult basic education students, 35% re-enrolled for further basic education in September 1999, while 26% enrolled on other college courses and 11% obtained jobs.

51 In a minority of subjects, teachers do not use the assessment procedures effectively to consolidate students' learning. Students do not always get positive, written feedback on their work. In some cases, students' work is marked inaccurately. The great majority of tutors do not keep comprehensive records of assessment and students' progress for the whole class. It is therefore not possible to take an overview of the progress of the class as a whole or readily detect if a number of students are all facing similar difficulties with a topic. However, on the higher level numeracy courses, there is a simple but effective group monitoring system which identifies such issues at an early stage. Internal verification systems are not applied consistently by all teachers. These issues were not addressed in the self-assessment report.

52 As indicated in the self-assessment report, the basic education teams have forged many beneficial partnerships with community groups and other organisations, as well as the local authority. A strong partnership has been formed with the Worshipful Company of Cooks. This organisation has financed the appointment of a member of staff to help part-time adult students with severe learning difficulties to progress to further training or employment. It has also funded the refurbishment of a domestic training kitchen.

53 There is a well-planned, professional development programme in adult basic education which provides opportunities for all staff to update their skills and tackle issues collaboratively. A current priority is to disseminate best practice in the teaching of reading. Newly appointed part-time tutors in both adult basic education and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with a comprehensive tutor pack and are paired with an experienced programme leader who acts as their mentor.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

54 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but gave a different emphasis to some of the strengths and weaknesses. The college has addressed some of the weaknesses identified in the report.

Key strengths

- effective pre-course information and guidance
- the range and effectiveness of student advisory services
- the high level of learning support for individual students
- extensive childcare provision

Weaknesses

- ineffective induction for some students
- variable quality of tutorial provision

55 Support for students is good. This is contributing to improvements in students' retention. Prospective students receive impartial, relevant pre-course information and guidance, a strength recognised in the college's self-assessment report. The college has a wide range of publicity materials, including a clear prospectus, a young persons' guide to courses, a guide to part-time courses, and leaflets promoting specific courses. The college has developed productive links with local schools, and conducts an extensive programme of visits, open days and 'taster' courses. A number of students who have attended 'taster' courses have progressed to full-time courses at the college. There are strong links with special schools, and over 80 students from special schools take college link courses. The college works closely with local agencies, to encourage the participation of adults and disaffected young

people. An initiative funded by the local education authority (LEA) enables year 11 students who have experienced difficulties within the school system, some with behavioural problems, to attend the college.

56 Admission and enrolment procedures are clear and effective. Central admissions unit staff provide initial guidance for prospective students, and arrange interviews with course tutors. Applications are handled promptly and efficiently, and care is taken to ensure that students are enrolled onto appropriate courses. Students commented on the friendly advice provided by the college's staff. All full-time and many part-time students receive an induction to the college and its support services. Support staff are involved in induction activities. Students receive a handbook which outlines the full range of services available. The college recognises the need to address weaknesses in course-based induction, and in induction for part-time students and students who enrol late in the year.

57 High levels of learning support are given to individual students, as noted in the college's self-assessment report. All full-time and some part-time students complete a diagnostic assessment in literacy and numeracy as part of their induction. There is a well-defined process for the referral of students by course tutors to the learning support team, and support is available to students on an individual basis or in small groups. Support staff work alongside subject teachers in lessons. Trained staff assess the needs of students with specific learning needs, for example, those with dyslexia or language difficulties, and a significant number of students receive ESOL language support. Appropriate support is given to students with physical disabilities. The overall standard of learning support is good, but response times are sometimes slow. For example, 16% of the students referred for additional learning support this year were not receiving support at the time of the inspection. Attendance at some support

Cross-college Provision

classes is poor, and there is insufficient monitoring of the overall impact of learning support on students' performance. A co-ordinator has recently been appointed to improve the provision and monitoring of learning support. A college-wide strategy for initial diagnostic assessment and monitoring of provision for numeracy support is being developed and piloted.

58 A wide range of personal support services is provided by a qualified and experienced team of student advisers and counsellors. Advice and assistance is given on financial matters, as well as accommodation, childcare, benefits, health and legal problems. A number of the staff speak several languages. Effective help is given to the large number of students of minority ethnic origin, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants who attend the college. Students with mental health needs are supported through a mental health education project run jointly with the local authority. This provides education in hostels and secure accommodation as well as in the college. Staff provide effective welfare advice to students. The college's access and hardship funds assisted over 700 students with childcare, travel, educational and general hardship expenses during 1998-99. Student liaison officers provide additional support to students, supervising the social area and acting as a channel of communication to staff.

59 Most students receive effective careers education, information and guidance. The college works in a multi-agency partnership with a careers company, the local authority, the youth service and the employment service, to offer careers guidance to students. Careers advisers attend the college four days a week. The college has a well-established higher education links programme, which involves regular visits to universities. A higher education convention hosted by the college each year is attended by over 40 universities. Not all students receive the same amount of careers advice within the tutorial programme.

60 All full-time and some part-time students have a weekly tutorial. Tutorial programmes include study skills and the completion of records of achievement. Tutorial practices and procedures vary, so that not all students receive the same benefits from the system. This weakness was noted by the college. The college has recently completed a review of tutorial entitlement, and a new tutorial policy and revised tutorial handbook have been introduced to ensure more coherent provision and effective monitoring of tutorial work.

61 The college provides an exceptional level of childcare support to students with young children. This is a significant strength, which is recognised in the self-assessment report. Almost 400 children of college's students currently make use of 200 full-time equivalent places in the registered nurseries and crèches at the two main college sites and at 17 community-based sites. The nursery on the Shoreditch site is open from 08.30 hours to 21.15 hours, enabling students with children to attend twilight and evening sessions. Children up to the age of 14 can be cared for in a secure environment. Childcare provision is highly valued by students, and has played a key role in widening participation amongst people who would otherwise be unable to attend the college. The college uses access funds to subsidise the cost of childcare. Access funds and an external grant for mature students are also used to buy additional childcare places locally. The demand for childcare places exceeds supply, and there is a waiting list of 300. The college plans to extend its childcare provision further through the development of a centre of excellence for early years, adjacent to the main site. This will involve further collaboration with the local authority, which will locate its early years services within the centre. A range of extra-curricular activities is offered in the college, including a programme of sports and leisure activities, trips and social events. An activities panel meets to allocate funds to staff and students for these activities. The students' association helps to promote these activities.

Cross-college Provision

General Resources

Grade 2

62 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college in its self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- effective planning and management of improvements to accommodation
- good specialist and general teaching rooms
- well-equipped learning centres
- well-planned IT development
- good range of community venues
- ease of access to main sites for people with restricted mobility

Weaknesses

- insufficient open access to IT for students
- few facilities at some community venues

63 Hackney Community College is based at two main sites, one at Shoreditch, and a smaller site at Brooke House in Clapton. At the time of the last inspection, the college occupied 10 sites across the borough of Hackney. Many were in a very poor condition and unsuitable for use as teaching accommodation. The college produced a detailed estates strategy in 1994, which has been modified during the last five years to take account of curriculum and administrative needs. Approval was granted in 1995 for a major building project to provide an extensive, new building on the Shoreditch site, and significant extensions to the Brooke House site.

64 The work at Brooke House is now complete, and the site accommodates specialist construction and engineering workshops, a conference venue and good-quality teaching rooms. The Shoreditch site, which covers 7.5 acres, is imaginatively designed to provide good-quality general teaching and specialist accommodation around a pleasantly landscaped

campus with a sunken courtyard and amphitheatre. Part of the teaching accommodation is housed in a refurbished Edwardian building, but most is new. This site has received a number of prestigious awards. The final stage of development at Shoreditch is due to be completed in summer 2000, and will provide specialist dance studios and a large sports centre which will be shared with the local community. The college has disposed of its surplus, dilapidated buildings. Developments in accommodation since the last inspection are a significant strength, as noted in the self-assessment report.

65 Courses are offered in over 80 community venues. These include courses in ESOL, community theatre and IT. The range of venues includes: church halls and schools; community locations such as Hackney Muslim Women's Centre and the Dalston Methodist mission; the secure unit of a local hospital; and specialist centres such as Hoxton Hall, an Edwardian music hall close to the Shoreditch campus, which provides professional theatre training for students. The standard of accommodation and equipment available in off-site locations is of variable quality, and in some, staff and students do not currently have access to teaching aids and modern IT equipment.

66 The college has a comprehensive IT strategy which covers the selection, purchase and use of equipment. Almost all computers in the college are part of a college network, and 98% provide access to the Internet. The number of computers is adequate, although the college has recognised that there is insufficient open access to computers for students at peak times. There are over 20 dedicated computer rooms across the sites, each housing over 20 up-to-date computers, and students have open access to IT facilities in the learning centres at both sites. The college has a prioritised plan for developing learning technologies across the college. Some large open areas in the Shoreditch buildings have been set aside for use

Cross-college Provision

as open access IT areas, but financial constraints have limited their development, and they are currently rather desolate spaces. The college has produced a website for publicity purposes, and has recently launched an intranet which provides staff with information on many aspects of education.

67 The learning centres on each main site have been substantially improved since the last inspection. This strength is recognised in the self-assessment report. Each learning centre has a collection of general and specialist books, a wide range of periodicals, video and sound recordings, and bookable open access to computers for students. The centres are open until 20.00 hours each day except Friday when they close at 16.30 hours. They are staffed by qualified librarians who give valuable assistance to students and teaching staff. The staff have devised comprehensive guidance notes to enable teachers and students to make the most effective use of this resource. The seminar room in the Shoreditch learning centre is used for library inductions for groups of students, and for staff training exercises. College and library staff work co-operatively to ensure that appropriate resources are available. Nevertheless, the bookstock in many curriculum areas is insufficient for current needs.

68 Comprehensive but discreet security arrangements help to ensure a welcoming and safe atmosphere at both main sites. The maintenance of the college's facilities is organised centrally. Minor works are scheduled on a computer system, and are completed swiftly. Central control of subcontracted services such as security, cleaning, and catering has resulted in reduced costs and an improved service to the college.

69 Both main sites have been designed to allow sufficient communal space for staff and students. At Shoreditch, the grounds have many open areas which can be used in good weather. The college has recently opened an indoor

recreational area for students which has table-tennis facilities, pool tables, a coffee-bar and comfortable seating areas. Both sites have pleasant, well-kept cafeterias. Staff workrooms and offices are of a good standard, and are comfortably furnished. All parts of both main sites are fully accessible to people with restricted mobility. Each main site and approximately one-third of the community venues provide crèche or nursery provision for the children of students. Both main sites have a quiet room available for prayer.

Quality Assurance

Grade 4

70 Inspectors agreed with some of the key strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report, and broadly agreed with the college's judgement about the effectiveness of the arrangements. In some instances, the college identified recent actions as strengths, before any impact has been made on the quality of provision.

Key strengths

- measurable improvements in aspects of students' achievements
- effective quality assurance procedures for cross-college services
- well-organised and evaluated staff development programme

Weaknesses

- inaccurate data for judgements on students' achievements
- insufficient impact of quality procedures on the curriculum
- ineffective course reviews
- inadequate monitoring of quality assurance procedures

Cross-college Provision

71 The college has a strong commitment to improving the quality of its work, but has not yet been able to fully realise this commitment. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The college has also identified that over the period 1996 to 1998, the quality assurance arrangements were not fully implemented. Since then, adjustments have resulted in some well-considered, but as yet unproven, new arrangements. Although information about the new arrangements has been made available to all staff through the college news bulletin, not all staff fully understand them yet.

72 The curriculum quality assurance systems include course review and evaluation; comparisons of retention and achievement with national benchmarking data produced by the FEFC; lesson observation; reference to the views of external agencies; and self-assessment. The quality of courses benefits from well-established procedures for validating courses and a good internal verification handbook. The governors now have a key role in setting and monitoring standards for the quality of the college's work. The board initiated and approved the college's quality improvement strategy. The improved leadership now provided by governors in relation to quality assurance arrangements is recognised as a strength, and evidenced in the self-assessment report.

73 The college was late in introducing self-assessment when compared with many other colleges. This delay is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report prepared for the inspection was the second produced by the college and reflects considerable effort by all teams in the college. An internal inspection, carried out by a team of 30 specially trained staff, contributed to the self-assessment process and provided useful information to the college. The short period of time available between the internal inspection and the final submission of the self-assessment report did not allow for action to be taken to address any of the weaknesses identified.

However, strategies for addressing some of them had been put in place by the time of inspection. Inspectors broadly agreed with the self-assessment report's judgements made about the quality of the college's provision. Some strengths had, however, been overstated. The report did not identify the weaknesses in teaching identified by inspectors. The proportion of lessons graded good by inspectors was in line with the national average. However, there was a low proportion of outstanding lessons and a higher proportion of lessons which were satisfactory or less than satisfactory. The strategic plans drawn up by departments are informed by the outcomes of the self-assessment process.

74 The college's quality improvement strategy is making some impact on students' achievements. An increasing number of students are completing their courses and achieving the qualifications for which they are studying, although pass rates remain low when compared with those for similar colleges. Targets for student retention and achievement are set and are made clear to all staff. Poor attendance and lack of punctuality by students are acknowledged as issues for the college and most teachers are attempting to address them. A programme of lesson observations has helped to raise teachers' awareness of the college's drive to improve teaching and learning. The outcomes of observations contribute to staff appraisals and to the self-assessment process. However, the quality assurance procedures still have too little impact on curriculum planning, teaching and monitoring. The college is aware that major improvements remain to be made in these areas. In particular, difficulties in producing data on students' achievements have prevented the accurate assessment of students' achievements. However, the quality of data is improving. Both the weakness and the improvement are acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

Cross-college Provision

75 The quality of cross-college services is high. This strength is stated in the self-assessment report. Standards are maintained and improved through the application of rigorous quality improvement systems. All service areas have service level agreements and performance indicators which are reviewed and updated annually. Students rate highly the quality of their environment and the services and support they receive in the college. Improvements in areas such as the provision of crèche places and access to sports facilities have been undertaken in response to the views expressed by students.

76 Following the resolution of longstanding resistance to appraisal from some teachers, all full-time and substantial part-time staff were appraised for the first time in 1998-99. The appraisal programme is on schedule this year. Training needs are identified as part of the appraisal process and are addressed through a well-organised programme of staff development, which is carefully evaluated. Some 90% of staff development activities are run within the college.

77 Arrangements for monitoring the quality assurance procedures are inadequate. Few course reviews are sufficiently rigorous and analytical. Progress on actions designed to improve the quality of courses is not systematically monitored. A few course teams have not carried out reviews. Course reviews are not sampled as a check on the quality of the analysis undertaken. Teams are sometimes using different methods of calculating students' achievements so that it is difficult for them to compare figures with national benchmarking data.

Governance

Grade 3

78 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- close monitoring by governors of the college's financial performance and estate strategy
- annual review by governors of the college's mission and strategic objectives
- the range of experience and commitment of governors

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to students' achievements and to setting improvement targets
- incomplete register of interests

79 The corporation has a determined membership of 20, comprising seven business members, three co-opted members, two staff, two students, two local authority members, three members representing the local community, and the principal. There are six women governors and four from minority ethnic groups. The college recognised in its self-assessment report that the gender and race balance is not reflective of the local community or the student body and the governors intend to address these issues when new appointments are made. At the time of the inspection there were four vacancies, which the corporation anticipated would be filled shortly. Two students are to be nominated by the student council. There are to be two further nominations, one each, respectively, from the local authority and a community organisation. Governors have a range of experience. A skills audit has been carried out amongst governors, and skills gaps have been identified. These have been

Cross-college Provision

highlighted in the requests made to local bodies for nominations to the corporation. Governors are committed to the college and there is a high level of attendance at corporation and committee meetings.

80 The corporation committee structure has been revised recently. The committees include: the finance, policy and resources committee; the curriculum, quality and standards committee; and committees dealing with search, remuneration and audit respectively. The finance, policy and resources committee gives careful consideration to the college's finances. Each committee carries out an annual self-assessment of its effectiveness.

81 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, 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. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there are effective arrangements for the annual appraisal of the principal and senior postholders. This annual process takes into account the views of governors, senior managers and other staff. Appraisal includes the setting and monitoring of performance targets.

82 The governors' involvement in reviewing the college's mission and setting strategic objectives is a strength noted in the college's self-assessment report. The mission is reviewed annually by governors, and strategic objectives are set at an annual two-day governors' conference held in October. This marks the start of the college's annual planning cycle and culminates in the new strategic plan being approved by governors in the following July. Performance against strategic objectives is monitored by the board. There has been close monitoring of the college's financial performance as it strove to reduce significantly its average

level of funding, whilst maintaining small surpluses. Governors have successfully overseen the implementation of the college's accommodation strategy which has resulted in the achievement of a large multi-million pound building project.

83 The corporation has not effectively reviewed the quality of the college's provision, a weakness recognised in the self-assessment report. Governors have paid insufficient attention to the monitoring of students' achievements and setting improvement targets. Governors are not presented with clear, aggregated data illustrating trends in retention and achievement rates. Consequently, governors have not been able to compare the college's performance with national benchmarking data published by the FEFC. The governors have recognised the need to improve retention. The college's working party on retention is chaired by a governor and reports to the corporation. The new curriculum, quality and standards committee of the corporation has recently been established to enable the board to oversee the quality of provision more effectively.

84 Governors make a significant contribution to the life of the college. There are established links between some governors and aspects of the curriculum. For example, the chair of the corporation sets aside one day a month to visit different areas of the college to meet students and teachers. This includes evening visits to community centres used by the college. Another governor, with relevant business experience, provides practical support for the motor vehicle section of the college. Some governors chair college working groups or have participated in staff training. Governors have helped in providing work experience placements and prizes. However, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report, a few governors have little contact with staff.

Cross-college Provision

85 The corporation has established standing orders and a code of conduct. Two governors have not completed the register of interests for the past three years. An annual timetable of corporation business establishes the key areas to be covered. The corporation meets four times a year, once to set the college's budget. There are special meetings to discuss urgent items: two special meetings were called in the year prior to inspection. The volume of papers supplied to governors is large and in some instances, papers are sent out only shortly before meetings of the corporation. Governors evaluate their own performance annually, but do not set themselves specific targets against which their success can be measured. Governors complete a self-critical questionnaire which serves as a basis for discussion by the board. Actions for improvement are agreed. New governors are inducted effectively through a series of briefings with the principal and the chairmen of committees, and through a standard information pack. Governor training is undertaken through attendance at external events. Conferences for governors are organised annually by the college with visiting speakers.

Management

Grade 3

86 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report, and particularly its recognition of the significance of the college's poor achievement rates. The college placed undue emphasis on the impact of improvements to the management information system before this had been proven.

Key strengths

- successful promotion of widening participation and equality of opportunity
- well-integrated strategic planning process
- effective financial management
- extensive working with external organisations
- robust, consultative management style

Weaknesses

- student achievement below average
- lack of reliable data relating to student achievement to inform management decisions
- inconsistent common management practices between curriculum areas

87 Senior managers have successfully led the college through a challenging period of rationalisation and change. They have been determined to maintain staff morale throughout a period of extensive staff reductions and a significant reduction in funding levels. They have also successfully managed an extensive programme of site rationalisation and a large new building project. Managers and staff work enthusiastically together to ensure that the college's commitment to Hackney's multicultural community is maintained. There is some evidence that students' achievements have begun to improve. However, achievements are

Cross-college Provision

still well below those of similar colleges. Senior managers have a robust, consultative management style. Staff who met inspectors appreciated this, and expressed confidence in their managers.

88 Management skills are developed through a programme of regular meetings between managers and their line managers. A 'toolkit' for managers, now in its final draft, gives useful advice on management skills, and templates for agendas, minutes, reports and action-planning. Staff are well informed about local and national issues. A fortnightly newsletter provides college information and printed team briefing notes are used to inform team meetings. The college has devised a meeting cycle, which is comprehensive, ranging from college-wide conferences to local course team meetings. The college's intranet is used increasingly as an effective communication tool for staff: for example, information about the inspection was posted daily on the intranet during the inspection week. There is a computer network link between Brooke House and the Shoreditch site, although some staff do not yet have full access to electronic mail.

89 It has been a longstanding priority of the college to widen participation amongst people who would not normally enter further education. This aim is reflected in the college's mission and strategic objectives, and is implemented through the whole range of its activities, including support for students, curriculum design, approaches to teaching and learning and the community education programme. Using information gained from conducting surveys among the local population, the college has embarked on many imaginative and innovative programmes for groups of people currently under-represented in further education, such as provision for local Jewish groups and people with mental health problems. At the time of the inspection, the college was involved in a week-long event for the large, local refugee population. Staff from the college have

worked with partners locally on widening participation projects and have produced a directory of progression opportunities from its non-accredited part-time courses to mainstream provision. About 18% of students annually progress from these courses to accredited provision. In addition, the college has been successful in recruiting staff members of minority ethnic origin. Some 22% of teachers, 25% of managers and 45% of support staff identify themselves as black.

90 The college works hard to develop and maintain its extensive network of external partnerships. It is involved in all the major strategic economic and education partnerships in the locality. Many partner organisations speak highly of their relations with the college, and commend its enthusiastic participation in joint projects. The college collaborates heavily with neighbouring colleges, for example on a project to provide non-accredited courses. Arrangements exist with three local universities, one of which has based its media centre on the Shoreditch campus. These arrangements facilitate students' progression into higher education. As a result of a collaborative project with the local authority, an IT base for schools is to open at Shoreditch. Senior managers have identified a need to prioritise their contacts because of the time spent in maintaining them.

91 Strategic planning is carried out systematically, using a clear planning framework which integrates all aspects into a cycle. The mission and objectives established by governors and managers at their annual conference are used to set the framework for contributions from all sections of the college. Progress reports are presented to the governors twice a year. These strengths are recognised in the self-assessment report. Although the use of targets was not fully developed until recently, senior managers had a clear view of the need to improve retention and achievement and initiated steps to bring this about.

Cross-college Provision

92 Data to inform management judgements relating to students' achievements have been unreliable in the past. Inspectors agreed with the college that there was under-reporting of students' achievements before 1998-99. Considerable efforts have been made to secure accurate data on achievements for 1998-99. Middle managers do not currently have direct access to data on student enrolment, retention and achievement. New systems are currently being installed to overcome this. Staff may call a helpline, and request paper copies of relevant reports. Some staff are unaware of the significance of management information. All course teams now set targets for retention and achievement, which will be monitored in 1999-2000. There is variation in the way targets and students' achievements are calculated at course team level and this causes difficulties for senior managers in interpreting performance. Curriculum areas do not apply the same management procedures and some do not implement some college policies fully or review self-assessment as effectively as others.

93 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. Since the last inspection, the college has effectively managed the substantial downward convergence of its average level of funding, from £27.27 for 1995-96 to £20.85 for 1998-99. The latest three-year financial forecast indicates that the college will achieve the convergence target of £17.20 by 2001. The college's financial health has improved significantly in recent years, through a combination of cost reduction measures.

94 The college has comprehensive budget planning arrangements, which are well defined and clearly understood by staff. The director of finance and resources issues timely and detailed guidance to budget holders on budget-setting for the following year. The finance team provides briefing sessions for all budget holders and offers additional guidance and support for new

budget holders on budget planning and monitoring. Financial reports are provided promptly each month to budget holders, senior management and governors. There is effective monitoring of the college's financial performance by senior management. The financial reports for governors and senior management are comprehensive, and include a rolling cashflow forecast for 12 months ahead, and a good analytical commentary on the college's financial performance. Frequent reports are also provided to governors and senior managers on the progress made with the college's £43.7 million capital programme. The college maintains a comprehensive set of financial regulations and procedures, which include detailed contract standing orders and procedures for cost control of capital works progress. ISR data and funding unit claim returns are not routinely submitted on time to the FEFC.

Conclusions

95 The college's self-assessment report reflected conscientious efforts by staff at all levels to review the quality of the provision. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college. Other weaknesses, and a few strengths, identified by inspectors were not recognised by the college. In particular, some curriculum areas gave insufficient weighting to weaknesses in students' retention and achievements when arriving at their judgements. This was exacerbated by poor data on students' achievements for the years prior to 1998-99, and confusion amongst some curriculum teams about how achievements should be calculated. Inspectors agreed with self-assessment grades for six of the curriculum areas inspected, but awarded a lower grade for the seventh area. Of the five grades awarded for aspects of cross-college provision, inspectors agreed with three of the college's grades, but raised one grade and lowered another.

Cross-college Provision

96 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 (November 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	2
16-18 years	21
19-24 years	16
25+ years	61
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1999)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation)	33
Level 2 (intermediate)	24
Level 3 (advanced)	19
Level 4/5 (higher)	3
Non-schedule 2	21
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	335	253	7
Construction	561	99	8
Engineering	266	158	5
Business	656	410	13
Hotel and catering	215	39	3
Health and community care	328	321	8
Art and design	434	1,227	20
Humanities	352	879	15
Basic education	468	1,321	21
Total	3,615	4,707	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

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

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1999)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	192	8	72	272
Supporting direct learning contact	42	1	0	43
Other support	157	3	3	163
Total	391	12	75	478

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£19,116,000	£19,011,000	£18,951,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£25.53	£24.25	£20.85
Payroll as a proportion of income	70%	62%	58%
Achievement of funding target	101%	108%	100%
Diversity of income	17%	20%	22%
Operating surplus	£304,000	£1,708,000*	£990,000*

Sources: Income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

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

Payroll - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

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

Diversity of income - Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Operating surplus - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

*includes surplus on property disposals

FEFC Inspection Report 25/00

**Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
Website www.fefc.ac.uk
© FEFC February 2000**