

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

---

# **Halesowen College**

**March 1996**

---

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

---

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

*College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.*

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

---

# CONTENTS

	<b>Paragraph</b>
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	8
Governance and management	21
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	31
Teaching and the promotion of learning	43
Students' achievements	57
Quality assurance	67
Resources	79
Conclusions and issues	93
Figures	

---

---

## **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

*The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.*

*The descriptors for the grades are:*

- *grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- *grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- *grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- *grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- *grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

*By June 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.*

### **College grade profiles 1993-95**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Inspection grades</b>				
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

---

---

# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 35/96

**HALESOWEN COLLEGE**  
**WEST MIDLANDS REGION**  
**Inspected April-December 1995**

## Summary

Halesowen College has a good range of full-time courses. The governing body is enthusiastic and dedicated to its task. However, the role of the corporation in relation to strategic planning should be more sharply focused. Strong management systems are evolving under the leadership of a new principal. Growth has been achieved against strong local competition although it is spread unevenly across programme areas. Access has been improved through the introduction of work in outreach centres. High priority is given to supporting and guiding students. A supportive environment is provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Systematic arrangements have been introduced to monitor student retention. Some examination results were good, particularly at GCE, but achievements in vocational examinations declined significantly between 1993-94 and 1994-95. A high proportion of students progress to higher education or to employment. Staff development is well organised. Effective use is made of targets and standards and the college charter is carefully monitored. Quality assurance arrangements are based on commitment to customer care and constant improvement. The college has invested heavily in information technology to support managerial and administrative functions. Equipment is adequate for most courses. The college should: develop its marketing initiatives; continue to develop its links with industry; pursue its strategy of allowing different modes of attendance; co-ordinate its equal opportunities activities and strengthen its course review arrangements.

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

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science	2	Art and design	2
Business	2	English and humanities	2
Catering and leisure and tourism	3	Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Health and social care	3		

---

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

1 Halesowen College was inspected in four stages. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the start of the autumn term 1995. Specialist subjects were inspected in April and October. Aspects of cross-college provision were inspected in December. Eighteen inspectors took part in the inspection for a total of 60 days. Inspectors visited 146 classes and examined students' work. Meetings were held with members of the corporation, members of the college executive, curriculum managers, teaching staff, support staff, students, parents, local employers and head teachers from local schools. Discussions took place with a representative of the local training and enterprise council (TEC). Inspectors examined college policy statements and reports, minutes of committee meetings and data generated by the college's management information system.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 Halesowen College is situated on the south-west edge of the West Midlands Conurbation. It was established as a tertiary college in 1982 on the site of a former small further education college, following the reorganisation of post-16 education in the south of Dudley Metropolitan Borough.

3 Throughout the 1980s, the number of enrolments at the college increased and the Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council responded by increasing the amount of accommodation on the original site at Whittingham Road and allowing the college to take over a girls' school situated one kilometre away. In addition to its two sites in Halesowen, the college organises and manages education and training activities in 13 outreach centres in Dudley and the neighbouring borough of Sandwell.

4 There were 5,283 students in the college on 1 November 1995: 2,083 studying full time and 3,200 part time. Fifty-three per cent of students were over the age of 19, though the overwhelming majority of full-time students are under 19. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Enrolments in 1994-95 increased by 12 per cent over the previous year. During 1994-95, the college had 281 full-time equivalent staff: nearly 170 full-time equivalent teachers and just over 111 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 The college has sought to widen access through the establishment of outreach centres and by broadening its curriculum. Teaching and learning are organised within nine curriculum areas. Each area has its own manager and all nine report to a director of studies who is an assistant principal. Student support is provided through a students' services team reporting to a director of students' services who is also an assistant principal. The majority of the students come from the Dudley Metropolitan Borough but an increasing number come from Sandwell, Birmingham and

---

further afield. A growing number of the students belong to minority ethnic groups. Few of the schools in the locality have a sixth form but the college faces competition from three neighbouring general further education colleges and two sixth form colleges, all within a six-mile radius of the college.

6 The local economy was, in the past, strongly dependent upon manufacturing industry. In recent years, the range of employers has become more varied. Most of the companies in the area are small and few of them have a strong commitment to the training of their employees.

7 Historically, the boroughs of Dudley and Sandwell have had a low rate of participation in full-time post-16 education. The staying-on rate in each of the two boroughs has increased, but in both it continues to lag behind the national average. Over the next few years, the local population, and particularly the number of young people in the 16-19 age range, is expected to increase. The college's mission statement is: to strive for excellence in the educational, training and associated activities that it seeks to carry out with individuals, groups and companies from Halesowen and the surrounding area.

#### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

8 The number of full-time students enrolled at the college has increased in recent years despite strong competition from neighbouring colleges. Further growth is expected over the next few years, based primarily on population projections. There are plans to expand the recruitment of mature students to part-time and short courses. Provision which allows more varied modes of attendance will be needed to achieve this.

9 The college has a good range of full-time courses but the range of courses for other modes of study is more limited. Thirty-two subjects are offered at General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and a smaller range of subjects are available as part of a programme of study for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications. Vocational course provision is good. It includes business and management studies, creative arts, engineering technologies, hotel and catering, information and office technology, leisure and tourism, science, social care and health studies. Students can sample a range of vocational areas within a foundation programme for the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ). Full-time courses are systematically reviewed and adapted to meet changing needs. There is a willingness to change GCE A level syllabuses in order to raise levels of achievement and improve students' prospects for progress. The number of intermediate level GNVQ courses is increasing and the range of GCSE subjects is being reduced. More varied modes of study and methods of accreditation are being introduced. The college's strategic plan proposes the development of distance learning; a good start has been made delivering the diploma in consumer affairs through distance learning on a national basis.

---

10 The range of provision for students with learning difficulties is narrow, and targets for improving it have been included in the college's strategic plan. A bridging course which such students can join at any time of the year allows them to negotiate some aspects of their study. Following completion of this course, many students are integrated effectively within mainstream courses. Efforts have been made to provide a supportive learning environment for students with restricted mobility, for example, through the provision of toilets and access ramps for students using wheelchairs. However, the college fails to provide its prospectus or other literature in audio tape, Braille or large print versions which would be advantageous to those with visual or hearing impairments. Students from the Queen Alexandra College for the visually impaired can become associate students of Halesowen College and, as such, receive effective learning support. Links with other external agencies and voluntary groups are less productive and links with local special schools have been discontinued.

11 Full-time programmes of study provide a compulsory common core of enrichment activities and a range of additional optional activities. These include support for basic skills, as well as personal development in music and sport. Attendance is poor for some activities and the attitude of some students to the programme undermines its strengths. There are also field studies, residential courses and visits in this country and abroad including student exchanges with the United States of America, Italy and France. All vocational courses have a work experience element but there is increasing difficulty in maintaining it. Some students now find their own placements and tutors subsequently follow up with liaison and visits.

12 The range of provision specially designed for adult students includes a higher national certificate course in business studies and a modular, access to higher education programme. Many of the part-time evening classes recruit mainly mature students. The college has successfully obtained European Social Fund finance to promote 'return to learn' programmes for adult students. The Department for Education and Employment has selected the college as a centre to operate a pilot scheme for training specialist teacher assistants.

13 There are clear marketing strategies and associated activities to promote recruitment from schools. A marketing manager has undertaken detailed research of the schools market. This has resulted in improvements in customer care and enrolment procedures for full-time school leavers. The market research and marketing strategies aimed at other sources of potential students are less well developed. Nevertheless, attention is now being paid to research, advertising and improved customer care for part-time and community students. The demand for new courses within the local community has been investigated using questionnaires. Publicity has been sought through cinema advertising and through an outlet in a major local shopping centre. Publicity materials are good. An attractive and informative prospectus is produced for full-time courses; it is



---

complemented by three, more detailed, course booklets for foundation, intermediate and advanced level courses, which give helpful information on each course. Good, informative course leaflets are also available. The part-time course prospectus is a comprehensive publication which incorporates an enrolment form and learner agreement. It gives details of all part-time courses at the Whittingham Road and Walton campuses. A series of helpful leaflets give information about outreach courses. There is a guide for adult students, entitled 'return to learn', which contains some statements in ethnic community languages.

14 The college is expanding its provision in the community. It offers a range of part-time courses through outreach centres in eight local schools and at the Halesowen library. There have been collaborative associations with a number of touring theatre and arts companies, notably the Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the Birmingham Royal Ballet. Courses have been developed for travellers in conjunction with the Showmans Guild and European Social Fund support. A lunchtime club is provided for the over 50s which, it is hoped, will lead to the development of more courses for this age group. The college maintains links with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council and has a contract for the provision of non-vocational adult education courses at the college and at two outreach centres in schools. Saturday courses were offered this year but recruitment was low.

15 Links with local schools are good; they include an extensive, well co-ordinated programme of liaison visits, attendance at careers conventions, and open evenings for prospective students. Head teachers and parents see the college as responsive to the needs of school leavers. Students are recruited from 65 different schools, although 67 per cent come from 10 local schools. The college offers sampling programmes for school pupils or the experience of shadowing college students. Teachers and careers staff are invited to the college for familiarisation visits. Franchise arrangements which offered Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and GNVQ qualifications in two local schools are coming to an end. One local school sends pupils to the college to study GCSE subjects such as drama, media studies, keyboarding and information technology; another has a link with the catering section which provides work experience in the college. A compact exists with five local schools which guarantees pupils a place on an appropriate course at the college providing certain criteria are satisfied. This year, the college has significantly improved its system for providing schools with feedback on the achievements and subsequent destinations of former pupils.

16 Parents are kept well informed of students' attendance and progress. Tutors provide informative written reports and other helpful documents for parents. Meetings at the end of the first term and first year are valued by parents and many take the opportunity to attend an information evening before students begin their courses.

---

17 The college does not offer any higher education courses in collaboration with universities or other higher education institutions. It has a history of co-operation with Wolverhampton University, an established link which allows college students to progress easily to courses offered by the university. A link with the University of Central England has been made recently for teacher education placements. A need has been identified for more systematic development of these higher education links, particularly to promote progression for GNVQ students. The college has recently collaborated with the TEC in a post-16 compact agreement involving three other local colleges and 13 higher education institutions. Vocational and GCE A level students can obtain a compact certificate which will enhance their chance of entry to one of the participating higher education institutions.

18 There are some examples of good links with local industry. Responsive, flexible training is provided for an employment agency by a college company, trading under the name of the Halesowen Micro Centre. A partnership agreement with the Rover Group is to be signed in January 1996 to extend the college's links with this company. An education-industry partnership already exists with the Rover Group to provide GCE A level students with a work-based design project. Good links have been established with the local leisure and tourism industry, particularly with hotels which provide work experience and work-based assessment in catering. There is some sponsorship of work placements in the catering area. The Second Tuesday Club is a popular, well-attended, monthly luncheon club providing guest speakers for local business members. Despite these examples of good practice, there is scope for a more responsive approach to the needs of employers. Some local employers see the college as inflexible and some contracts have been lost to competitors. Responsibility within the college for liaison with industry is undergoing change and less staff resource was devoted to the activity this year than last.

19 Constructive working relationships have been developed with the TEC. Requests for information by the TEC are handled efficiently and there is good collaboration between the organisations. The principal represents the further education sector in a TEC strategic forum. The college is participating in a joint venture with the TEC, a local high school and two local employers, to develop an awareness of GNVQ core skills amongst employers and to increase the transferability and accreditation of core skills between school, college and employment. The college offers skill development credits and modern apprenticeship schemes, with funding assistance from the TEC. It withdrew from the training for work scheme in March 1995. The TEC and the college are looking at ways in which they can share information on employers' needs.

20 Less than 4 per cent of the population of Halesowen are from minority ethnic groups but many students from such groups travel to the college

---

from surrounding areas. Twenty per cent of full-time students are from minority ethnic groups, compared with less than 10 per cent in 1992. Seven per cent of the college's teaching staff are from minority ethnic groups. The college has an equal opportunities policy and a subcommittee of the academic board is responsible for its implementation and review. Some monitoring of staff appointments and student enrolments has taken place but the committee has been inactive until recently and little information has been provided to the academic board, college governors or management. The exception has been the production of a comprehensive annual report on students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities which is produced annually. Staff are given clear guidelines and help in dealing with racist and sexist behaviour. However, there has been a lack of systematic staff development on equal opportunities issues. Course teams are encouraged to implement equal opportunities policies in their action planning and conscious attempts have been made to influence the gender balance on certain courses through positive marketing. The amount of analysis and action in this area is extremely variable and it lacks college-wide co-ordination.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

21 The college governors are enthusiastically committed to the development of the college for the benefit of the local community. Five of the 16 members were governors before incorporation and the college benefits from their experience. There has been a stable membership since incorporation and attendance at meetings of the full corporation and its committees is good. Corporation members are aware of government policies for further education. There are nine members from local business, one of whom is a nominee of the TEC. The other members include three who are co-opted from local organisations, two college staff, one student and the principal. There is no one from a minority ethnic group. There are three women members including the student member and one of the independent members.

22 Working relationships between the governors and the principal are good. The independent members have a range of valuable expertise which is deployed on appropriate committees. One of the co-opted members is an accountant. The corporation has eight subcommittees and every member, other than the two college staff and the student, sits on a committee. The audit committee members have had no specific training for their role. Individual members of the corporation have attended college functions such as the open day and the opening of the information technology centres and new restaurant. They generally take an active interest in the college's work.

23 Many procedural matters were not well established at incorporation and deficiencies in regulatory controls continued until recently. The training provided for the new clerk to the corporation in January 1995 has

---

been a catalyst for change. Guidance has now been provided to corporation members on the regulatory and legal framework and on effective governance. A better understanding of the distinction between the roles of the corporation and the chief executive is emerging. The remits of the committees of the corporation are now clearly described but some still do not have full terms of reference. A code of conduct has been accepted and a register of members' interests has been compiled. Declaration of interest is now a standing item on committee agendas. Agendas are well prepared by the clerk and the chairman. The style of reports has improved, making them easier to understand. Minutes are clear. Budget proposals have been presented to the finance and general purposes committee in a new and simplified format. The corporation has also resolved that all non-confidential draft minutes should be published on staff noticeboards.

24 The college's strategic development plan sets out well-defined objectives and its key strategic aims are supported by operational targets. The college did not quite achieve its target of units funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in 1994-95 and it has revised its expansion target for 1996-97. The strategic aim of reducing payroll costs from 74 per cent of the total budget in 1992-93 to below 70 per cent has been achieved and a further reduction is planned. There is little evidence that the corporation has influenced strategic planning. Its involvement could be more sharply focused so that members can more easily determine which targets have been met and identify those that are affected by external factors. The second stage review of the strategic plan did not contain a summary operational statement which could have provided this focus. The revised national targets for education and training and the college's revised key aims were set out in a summary document issued to all staff following presentation of the strategic review to the corporation.

25 The principal was appointed in April 1994 and has been the college's director of finance and chief accounting officer since taking up his post. The senior management team is called the executive group. All its members are male. In addition to the principal, it includes the vice-principal who is director of human resources, and four other directors. The executive group's terms of reference are clearly stated. Their weekly meetings have clear agendas and good supporting papers. The group is effective and the minutes of its meetings assign responsibilities and set out action plans. Initial proposals made by the principal to restructure the executive have been agreed. The corporation has approved and made an appointment of a new vice-principal who will become the director of finance on taking up the post early in 1996.

26 A functional management structure was introduced in September 1994 and this has been effective in achieving change. It included the establishment of the students' support services team and the successful integration of the registry and finance office. The academic middle management team comprises nine curriculum managers who have clearly-defined terms of reference. Communication between this group and the

---

executive is good; formal meetings are held every fortnight with a member of the executive. Financial allocation systems are well defined. Recurrent funding is based on a clear formula related to the on-course funding units attracted by each course. An internal cost-weighting factor is used to take account of the varied needs of the courses.

27 There are clear policies and assigned responsibilities for issues such as health and safety and equal opportunities. Staff receive copies of college policies. Policy statements have been drawn up, linked to an extensive range of performance indicators, for which targets are being established. These include college and school links, enrolment, flexible learning, value-added achievement and industrial liaison. Staff are issued with effective guidance on monitoring students' attendance and punctuality. Retention targets are set at 90 per cent for one-year courses and at 85 per cent for two-year courses. There are well-defined objectives for students' achievements.

28 The college has no formally structured marketing plan. Activities in marketing are beginning to build upon the experience gained through successful work in market research and with the schools. A particularly notable outcome of some recent market research was the opening of seven new outreach centres in September 1995. This stemmed from an analysis, drawing on labour market intelligence and the college information system data, into the potential to attract more part-time students. A number of possible outreach centres were identified and the results were presented to the college executive. Further market research was undertaken at each centre and the results were disseminated to the curriculum team.

29 The college information system is on a college-wide computer network. At incorporation, the college had only a limited management information system. The installation of the first phase of the new system, two years ago, made 25 standard reports available. There are now 260, including 10 produced on a weekly basis. These include admissions information and a report on retention. Systematic arrangements for monitoring course retention levels have been established. Recent developments have shown the system to be a useful and reliable source of data, providing access to different levels of information for managers, lecturers and administrative staff. A member of the college executive has direct management and development responsibility for the system. Statistics on admissions and students' attendance are processed daily. Information from the system is available in several forms and is used regularly. Examples of the kind of report produced include those on tutor group absences and cross-college budgetary planning. The college was one of the first to submit its individual student's record data to the FEFC and have it approved. The processes followed in completing the data and submitting it to the FEFC by the required date, and also in tracking the achievement of its unit claims during the course of 1994-95, met with approval in the college's audit.

---

30 The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 was £19.19 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges was £17.97. The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 is £18.94 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges in 1995-96 is £17.84.

### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

31 A student services team was established in 1994. The college gives high priority to supporting and guiding students. Full-time students are particularly well served. The college has recognised the need to improve support and guidance for part-time students, who now have access to the full range of student services. Responsibility for the different elements of students' support and guidance is shared by a relatively large number of staff and there is some duplication of effort.

32 Applications for full-time courses from 16 to 19 year old students are processed through a central admissions system. All applications are carefully considered to ensure that students are placed on the right courses. Some students are invited to attend an interview, while others receive a written offer of a place with an invitation to visit the college. This system works well and all students, enrolling by post or in person, receive pre-entry guidance. Adults applying for the access to higher education programme are interviewed before they are offered a place. Some full-time students complained about late notification of course changes which involved significant expense or which reduced the options open to them.

33 Enrolment is carefully planned and well organised. For full-time courses it takes place in the week following the publication of GCSE results. This allows early confirmation of the numbers on courses and interviews to be given to students whose GCSE results necessitate a change of plans. Advice and enrolment are available for part-time students throughout the summer and on enrolment days in September. Students receive impartial advice and guidance, and up-to-date information on the availability of courses. They appreciate the efficiency of the enrolment procedures and the welcoming and friendly environment, which includes care for their children while they enrol.

34 All students have an induction to the college. The induction programme is supported by extensive and well-prepared documentation. There is a training programme for tutors and a checklist, including detailed information about courses and college facilities, to ensure that they cover key areas. Care is taken to inform students about their rights and responsibilities. The induction for full-time students includes information about core skills and the record of achievement. Students complete an evaluation of the induction programme which shows that most of them find it useful. They particularly value the opportunity to get to know other students in the group during induction. Some students think that the programme places too much emphasis on paper-based activities; some

---

find it too protracted and would welcome an earlier start on work related to their course. Students returning to take a second course do not find it useful to be told things which they already knew. Tutors check students' initial choice of course during induction. There are procedures to help students who wish to change their course or programme. Such changes are carefully recorded. There is usually no barrier to change until the first half-term, after which students are encouraged to remain on their course, although there are now possibilities of transferring to some GNVQ courses in mid-year.

35 Students taking an advanced GNVQ programme are encouraged to study for one GCE A level subject or additional GNVQ units in conjunction with their main programme. Accreditation of students' prior achievement is at an early stage of development. There are opportunities for students to be accredited in some health and social care courses and on the access to higher education programme. During induction, full-time students complete a form detailing their prior experience and achievement of information technology skills. This is not yet followed up systematically.

36 All full-time students and some part-time students have a personal tutor. Timetabled tutorials are used for a wide range of tasks. Students value the support given by tutors, especially the individual help to prepare them for entry to higher education. They are less convinced of the value of some of the group tutorial activities. Some tutors now have responsibility for two tutor groups and undertake a growing number of tasks including: monitoring, reviewing and reporting on the progress of individual students; developing national records of achievement; helping students with their applications to higher education; and delivering a programme of tutorial activities. The amount and quality of tutorial support they provide is variable.

37 Students' attendance and punctuality are carefully monitored. A recently-introduced, fully-computerised system is used for recording attendance and tutors receive weekly attendance reports. This system is redressing some weaknesses which were apparent earlier in the inspection. Students are well aware of the policy and know that absence and lateness will be questioned. Some of the college's disciplinary procedures are too lengthy to deal with the persistent absence and poor attitude of a small number of students.

38 Learning support for full-time students is effective and has the potential to be so for part-time students. Full-time students with GCSE grade D and below in English or mathematics take the Basic Skills Agency tests to assess whether they need extra help with literacy or numeracy. There is a pre-course assessment for adults on the access to higher education programme. Students identified as potentially in need of support are referred to the learning support service where individual diagnostic testing leads to a fuller analysis of their needs. A learning programme is agreed with each student and carefully monitored. Personal tutors are notified of the arrangements made for students in their group. Not all

---

students take up the support offered but a growing number do so and have benefited from it. In December 1995, of the 141 students initially referred to the learning support service, 93 were receiving extra help. Students also refer themselves to the service and some are referred by subject tutors. Part-time students can request a diagnostic assessment and learning support but few have done so. During induction, students complete a form detailing any special health care which they may require. The college staff check these carefully and arrange appropriate assistance.

39 All students on full-time courses are expected to maintain their records of achievement. Personal tutors have been trained to support them. A recently-purchased computer program helps students to produce the necessary documents. A small number of students have already worked with their tutors to produce comprehensive and informative records. The accreditation of records of achievement is planned but not yet in place. The record of achievement should have greater currency as a result of the college's recent agreement to join the West Midlands Compact, since one of the conditions for qualification is the completion of a national record of achievement.

40 Students applying for entry to higher education receive effective guidance and support. The college has a full-time careers adviser who is assisted by careers staff from the Black Country Careers Service. All draft applications for higher education from 16 to 19 year old students are checked. A programme of talks by visiting speakers is organised and individual advice and help is given to students. Adults also have good access to careers guidance and receive help with entry to higher education. The college's information centre has an extensive, up-to-date collection of printed careers resources but it has no computerised information. The computer software for careers is located in the library; this is an inconvenient arrangement. Careers advice and guidance for students seeking employment is less well developed, although improvements are planned in this area.

41 Two qualified counsellors, one of whom is full time, provide a confidential personal counselling service in the college. Students know about this service; it is appreciated and well used. Links with external agencies add to the support available. The counsellors have a small welfare fund to help students with financial difficulties. The college has a nursery with 24 places for children between the ages of two and five. It is more than adequate to meet current needs.

42 Students are encouraged to play an active part in college life. Student liaison officers work closely with the students' union and the student council. A recent development has been the extension of membership of the union to some part-time students; this has been welcomed by adult students. There is a need to develop more involvement of students in college life outside the classroom. Students have said that they would recommend the college to others for the quality of its courses and friendly



---

atmosphere but some of them were critical of the lack of social facilities and activities.

### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

43 Of the 146 sessions inspected, 56 per cent had strengths which outweighed the weaknesses and 10 per cent had weaknesses which clearly outweighed strengths. The following table summarises the grades given for the sessions inspected.

#### **Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE AS/A level		11	16	11	0	0	38
GCSE		1	9	6	0	0	16
GNVQ		3	19	13	3	1	39
NVQ		2	2	3	3	1	11
Access		2	2	3	0	0	7
Other		3	12	14	5	1	35
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>146</b>

44 On average, 84 per cent of students on registers attended their classes during the inspection. Relationships between staff and students were co-operative and provided evidence of mutual respect. Teachers regularly gave support to their students and helped them to learn to work effectively as individuals or in groups. Teaching methods were varied and generally well suited to the topics involved. Some teaching was adversely affected by inadequate resources and occasionally the use of teaching aids was poor. The use of information technology by students across different curriculum areas was uneven. The fact that the information technology centre, designed to provide students with open access to computers, was sometimes used as a teaching room restricted students' opportunities to develop their skills. An information technology workshop is available but the take-up of this service is low by students studying on GCE A level and GCSE courses.

45 Classes in mathematics were well organised and teachers provided good support to individual students. Comprehensive work plans guide teaching on the new modular courses. Textbook materials have been supplemented with helpful teaching notes, assignments and solution sheets. Some teaching was particularly energetic and enthusiastic. Students were attentive and made good progress. They used calculators confidently and their work was neatly presented. Tutors made detailed comment on students' assignments. On some occasions overhead projectors were not well used.

46 Teaching in science was generally of good quality. Most sessions contained an interesting mix of activities and provided opportunities for

---

students to learn by discovery. Teachers gave a great deal of positive encouragement and made good use of question and answer sessions in class. Most practical work was well planned and executed. Students were given opportunities to test their knowledge using computer packages, compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases and simulations. Assessments began early in the course and were carried out frequently. Students on GCE A level courses were appropriately challenged. This was less evident on the access and intermediate GNVQ courses. Access students started their course with a wide variety of previous scientific knowledge. Teaching did not provide opportunities for experienced students to move on to tasks that stretched them while the rest of the class finished their work.

47 Teaching in computing studies had a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Information technology facilities were effectively used on all courses. Practical sessions were well managed; students were provided with standardised self-instruction packages which were carefully designed and well written. Teaching was of a high quality for GCE A level; students were well prepared and guided in their work. In other areas teachers employed too limited a range of teaching and learning strategies. Not all tasks were challenging enough and, on some courses, the work was not sufficiently related to commercial problems or to industrial standards.

48 Excellent relationships between staff and students in business studies helped to create a purposeful atmosphere in lessons. Work was conducted at an appropriate pace. The delivery of core-skills was good, although there is scope for their further integration with the whole programme. Assessment criteria and methods were linked to course aims and objectives. Assessments were set at the right level and were appropriately graded. Lesson plans were often poor.

49 Teaching in leisure and tourism was organised well. In most sessions, teaching methods were suitably chosen and topics were covered effectively. However, some of the chosen teaching methods failed to sustain students' interest. Lesson plans reflected schemes of work and, where appropriate, GNVQ elements and units. Most sessions had clear introductions and links were made to forthcoming classes and assignments. A few lessons were poorly timed and were brought to hurried conclusions. In some classes there was too much use of copying from the board and from overhead transparencies. Over-large group sizes for certain subjects made it difficult for teachers to give students individual attention.

50 Catering teachers had sound knowledge of their subject and generally ran lively classes which students enjoyed. Teaching methods kept students well focused on their work. New programmes and realistic work environments are being introduced. These initiatives were not fully established at the time of the inspection. Teaching was often affected by poor accommodation; sometimes classrooms were overcrowded. On two occasions unsatisfactory health and safety procedures were seen in food

---

preparation classes. Occasionally, students were expected to possess levels of skill they had not had the opportunity to acquire.

51 Staff in health and care ensured that activities in classes effectively maintained students' interest and involvement. Group work was carefully planned and used extensively. Teaching methods were often constrained by inadequate teaching rooms. A few classes took place in rooms that were too small. Many were held in temporary accommodation where teaching aids such as video recorders and monitors were not available. In some cases, students were presented with insufficient new material.

52 Teachers in art and design placed an emphasis on the learning needs of individual students and provided supportive one-to-one instruction during practical teaching. The rapport between students and staff helped to develop successful outcomes to lessons. Regular study visits were arranged for all courses. They were valued by students and staff. Information technology skills were being systematically developed. The lack of specialist information technology was a significant weakness, particularly for those students who wished to progress to higher education. There was a lack of challenge in some of the teaching.

53 Classes in English were well prepared, managed and delivered. There were good relationships between students and staff. The best sessions were lively and included good textual analysis. Tutors and students worked effectively together and students learned from each other. In less successful classes, students struggled to respond to questions about the texts they were studying; their responses lacked depth. On some occasions, the teaching did not sufficiently extend the more able students.

54 GCE A level geography lessons were based on an excellent scheme of work developed co-operatively by all the staff. The teaching was effective; all lessons were carefully prepared and clearly delivered. Appropriate resources were used to support learning, including good use of texts, atlases, photocopied material and audio-visual aids. Teaching methods and learning activities were varied; teachers used questions, group work, videos and worksheets as well as exposition. In some classes, the work was not sufficiently challenging to extend students' knowledge and understanding. Assignments were conscientiously marked and accurately graded although there was not always sufficient guidance to students on how they could have improved their work.

55 Sociology sessions had a balance of strengths and weaknesses. Many of the lessons were well structured. Teachers used a variety of teaching styles and activities were designed to motivate and involve students. In the best classes, staff were clear about their objectives and staff-student relationships were good. A significant proportion of lessons provided too little opportunity for students to raise questions or engage in discussion. Too much time was spent copying from overhead transparencies.

56 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were encouraged to take an independent and responsible approach to their

---

work. They were able to negotiate their course content and the curriculum was structured to meet their individual needs, abilities and aspirations. They were also given the freedom to choose when to be assessed and what subjects would be assessed. Some full-time teaching staff and classroom assistants worked effectively to enable students to improve their knowledge and develop the ability to assess their own progress. Other staff failed to take sufficient account of students' differing levels of ability when setting tasks.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

57 Students enjoy their studies and speak positively about their learning experiences. Most students are highly motivated, well behaved and study in a purposeful manner. They carry out practical work competently and observe safety requirements in practical sessions. The college has set targets for students' achievements. These are that: final achievements should at least be equivalent to national averages; they should clearly demonstrate that value is added to the students' achievement on entry; and that course completion rates should improve and exceed the national average for tertiary and general further education colleges. There are examples of outstanding achievement by individual students. In 1994-95, a student was awarded the RSA Examinations Board (RSA) silver medal in recognition of achievement in office technology and three of the 10 distinctions awarded nationally in the advanced GNVQ science were awarded to students at the college.

58 The extent to which core skills in information technology are developed varies between different GNVQ courses. Students on some vocational courses showed high levels of competence in basic information technology skills but on other courses, second-year students had not gained sufficient basic skills to use information technology confidently in their subject-based studies. Many students gain valuable experience and skills through the extensive programme of optional studies. Some of these activities are certificated; they include awards of the English Speaking Board, the award for Community Sports Leaders, and the Duke of Edinburgh award. Students' achievements that are not certificated are entered on their records of achievement. All full-time students aged 16-19 are expected to complete a record of achievement. The specification includes information technology, communications, numeracy and problem solving.

59 GCE A level examination results have improved over the past two years. The number of 16-18 year old students entered for one or more GCE A levels in 1995 was less than one-third of the total entry. The average points score per entry for the 345 candidates in this age group was 3.9. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, on the basis of the data in the 1995 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. The college's total number of entries for all age groups

---

in 1995 was 1,068 in 32 GCE A level subjects. The overall pass rate was 75 per cent. This compares with a national pass rate in 1994 of 68 per cent for further education colleges other than sixth form colleges. Pass rates of 100 per cent were achieved in art and design, general studies, geology, philosophy, Spanish and statistics. The college is a participant in a Further Education Development Agency project in value added and has undertaken a detailed study of the GCE A level grades achieved by students compared with the expected grades based on their attainment in GCSE examinations. The analysis has shown that students entering with relatively good attainment at GCSE do less well than might be expected at GCE A level. The college has set targets to improve the value added through its advanced level programmes.

60 Progress towards meeting achievement targets is mixed and pass rates in some examinations declined significantly in 1994-95. In 1993-94, the college's GCSE pass rate, grades A-C was 55 per cent from 582 entries. The average for the 16-18 group was 53 per cent compared with an average for general further education colleges of 38 per cent. For students aged 19 and over, it was 66 per cent compared with an average of 60 per cent. In 1994-95, there were 637 GCSE entries in 18 subjects. Grades A-C were awarded to 276 students (43 per cent). The pass rate at grades A-C for the 16-18 group dropped significantly to 36 per cent, one percentage point below the national average. Students aged 19 and over achieved an average of two percentage points above the national average.

61 In 1994-95, the final year of advanced GNVQ, BTEC national or City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) national diploma courses had 172 students aged 16-18, of whom 71 per cent achieved the qualification. This places the college in the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on the basis of the 1995 performance tables issued by the Department for Education and Employment. Much of the college's vocational provision was changed during 1994-95 and these results were not as good as in the previous year. In 1993-94, a 90 per cent pass rate for 186 students placed the college in the top third of colleges in the sector. Overall, pass rates on some BTEC national diplomas are good, for example in performing arts (94 per cent) and information technology (88 per cent). The pass rate in the BTEC national diploma in hotel and catering declined from 78 per cent in 1993-94 to 47 per cent in 1994-95. National figures compiled by the Joint Council of National Vocational Awarding Bodies show that 47 per cent of students registering for an advanced course in September 1993 had achieved the full award by October 1995. Of those registering for an intermediate course in September 1994, 36 per cent achieved the full award by October 1995. The pass rates for students enrolled at the college are significantly above these figures.

62 In art and design, results at GCE A level are well above the national average for the subject. The work is consistently of high quality, in drawing, painting and printmaking. GNVQ students produce some lively and

---

informative design sheets. Performance in English for both GCSE and GCE A levels is at the national average and sometimes significantly above it. In geography, pass rates show a consistent improvement over the past three years, the most recent being better than the national averages for similar colleges. The proportion of candidates achieving the higher grades has yet to reach national levels. Students generally showed a good command of geographical knowledge and principles but they did not always handle geographical terminology comfortably. Students' written work was good, but graphical and presentational standards were variable, and sometimes poor. Students' work in sociology was appropriate to the level expected for GCSE and GCE A level and was, occasionally, outstanding. Retention and successful completion in this subject were below the college targets. In most years, business studies students reach or exceed national average pass rates in public examinations with GCE A level accounts having a particularly successful record over several years.

63 Science students' enjoyment of the subject was clear from the enthusiasm with which they went about their practical work, their high attendance levels, punctuality for lessons and their responses to questions. The examination pass rate of students on the GCE A level science courses is at or above the national average. All of those GCE A level science students who applied to higher education obtained a place. In computing, examination results are good on vocational courses but poor at GCE A level and GCSE. In mathematics, the examination performance was in line with the national average for students in general further education colleges. Students made confident use of calculators and their assignments and notebooks were neatly presented. Good pass rates were achieved for the national diplomas in leisure, and travel and tourism. In catering, pass rates are variable; some results are good, some are poor. Students are able to speak with understanding about their work and enjoy their courses. Assignments are attractively presented and indicate a satisfactory standard. Students receive good practical experience in hotel reception through a work placement partnership which gives them access to modern technology. Most catering students obtain employment or progress to higher education. In health and social care, there are good pass rates for some courses and poor ones for others. In courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, students were attentive, focused on the task and eager to participate. Students acquired appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding. They worked effectively as individuals and in groups and were supportive of each other.

64 More rigorous and systematic arrangements for monitoring student retention and achievement have recently been established. In 1994-95, 83 per cent of full-time students completed their course. More than a third of students who did not complete their course went into employment, leaving a retention rate at the national average for tertiary colleges. The number of early leavers from one-year, full-time courses is relatively high. In 1994-95, 30 per cent left early, a significant increase on the figure for

---

the previous year. Retention varied widely. Six courses recorded full retention. Retention was 90 per cent on GCE A level courses; 85 per cent on advanced GNVQ courses and 87 per cent on BTEC national courses. There were lower retention rates on intermediate GNVQ (70 per cent), BTEC first/foundation level courses (68 per cent), catering NVQ (59 per cent) and access courses (46 per cent). By the end of November 1995, 4 per cent of students who had enrolled in September had dropped out.

65 In 1994-95, 78 per cent of students enrolled on part-time courses completed their course. About one in four men left compared with one in five women. Early leaver rates were higher than average for students in the 16-21 age range (35 per cent) who form 16 per cent of college enrolments.

66 In 1994, 92 per cent of students who obtained two or more GCE A levels progressed to higher education. Of those students obtaining less than two GCE A levels, 89 per cent progressed either to higher or to further education. BTEC national awards were gained by 182 students. Sixty-five per cent progressed to higher or further education and 31 per cent to employment.

#### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

67 The college's policy on quality was agreed in 1993 and has become more widely accepted and better understood by staff since then. Those aspects of the college's work deemed to be most important have been given the greatest attention. The main features and characteristics of these areas of work have been defined and standards of performance have been set. Arrangements for monitoring performance have been agreed and reports on quality are produced regularly. The latest revision of the college's strategic plan shows that the executive group now aims to complete the establishment of the quality assurance system in all areas of the college's work.

68 An appreciation of the importance of establishing standards and targets for quality assurance is developing across the college. The college charter has contributed to this. Course teams have standards and targets to meet and there is a handbook containing quality standards for tutoring. The college's policy on quality includes the use of performance indicators. Targets have been set for student retention and successful course completion. Comprehensive reports on performance for these and other quality issues are prepared for the executive group.

69 The two areas of the college's work where the development of the quality assurance system has been given greatest attention are the curriculum and student support. The college's strategic quality management framework has been adopted in both areas and has prompted the successful documentation of well-defined quality standards, actions, responsibilities and monitoring arrangements.

---

70 The college's course review procedures are well established. All courses are reviewed annually. Each course review is required to focus on performance indicators and should include analysis of retention and achievement in relation to the appropriate targets. New targets should be set to achieve yearly improvements. Action plans for addressing areas of weakness are a further requirement of the system. Some courses did not fulfil all these requirements in 1995 and there was considerable variability in the format and depth of data collection and analysis. Course reviews are closely linked to the needs of external examining bodies.

71 Six curriculum quality teams have been assembled to strengthen the college's approach to quality assurance for the curriculum. They are responsible for reviewing and enhancing quality procedures, and ensuring that monitoring procedures are in place. The programme manager's handbook contains well-developed procedures and guidelines for the operation of the teams. This initiative is at an early stage of development and some teams have made limited progress so far. Quality assurance arrangements for student support are well documented. Each subdivision within student support has developed its own set of quality features, standards, and targets. Performance is carefully monitored and reported.

72 The academic board has not been an effective mechanism for monitoring quality across the college. This weakness has been recognised and steps are being taken to improve its efficacy. The college has recently approved an internal auditing policy which is designed to add an element of independent audit to quality monitoring. The audit team is being trained to assess whether quality assurance arrangements for particular functions within the college are effective and to provide reports on its findings.

73 Students' perceptions of the college are thoroughly researched. Students views are obtained through surveys, representation at course team meetings, and attendance at end-of-year review and evaluation meetings. Surveys of students' opinions have helped to stimulate action to improve areas of the college that have been a concern to students. As the use of surveys has grown, the need to co-ordinate the gathering of students' opinion has been recognised. The college's customer care manager now supervises this activity. A suggestions box is provided on both sites and large numbers of suggestions are received. Each receives a written response from the principal.

74 Staff development is well organised. There is a staff-development policy and an operating plan which is linked to the college's strategic objectives and to the staff-appraisal system. An annual report is prepared. The programme of staff-development activities has been effective in improving the tutoring skills of the staff. A number of special projects have been initiated to assist in strengthening teaching and management skills. Priorities are set each year; a key training priority for 1995-96 is to strengthen internal verification by substantially increasing the number of staff who are qualified verifiers.



---

75 The induction of new staff is effective. The mentoring system, in particular, is highly valued. It includes the discussion of classes taught by both the mentor and the new member of staff. The college is committed to the achievement of the Investors in People award and has carried out appropriate initial surveys. The first target date for assessment has proved over-optimistic and assessment is being delayed until the middle of 1996.

76 The appraisal scheme for teaching staff was introduced in 1993 and the first two-year cycle has been completed. The second cycle began in autumn 1995. The appraisal system for support staff was introduced in 1994. Appraisal involves a review of individuals' skills, experiences, strengths and weaknesses, and their current roles and responsibilities within the college. It has a clear focus on the development of the individual and is closely connected to identifying staff-development needs. Observation of teaching has an important and developing place within the appraisal scheme.

77 The college charter, which was highly commended by the parliamentary under secretary of state for further and higher education, provides a comprehensive guide to the support available to students. Precise standards of performance are given for some aspects of admissions, tutorial support, and assessment. A recent survey found that 95 per cent of students were familiar with the charter. The charter monitoring system is well designed and effective. There is an emphasis on monitoring numerically quantifiable standards. Recent reports show that two-thirds of the standards were fully achieved, and that there were recommendations for action and suggested revisions to the standards in the light of current performance levels.

78 The college's self-assessment report was written using as its framework the headings in the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Each section is cross-referenced to the college's strategic plan. Contributions to the self-assessment report have been made by a large number of staff and the practice of self-assessment is developing in several areas of the college. The style of the report is a mixture of description, evaluation and action planning and the general tone is constructively self-critical. Some sections contain clear references to the improvements needed but others are less forthcoming. No grades were ventured and the report fails to indicate clearly the relative importance of the college's strengths and weaknesses.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

79 There is an appropriate balance of full-time and part-time staff in most vocational areas. The majority of teachers are well qualified. Most full-time teachers have a teaching qualification. Fifty-seven per cent of all teachers have a certificate of education, or equivalent, and a further 16 per cent have a C&G teaching certificate. Courses leading to a teaching

---

qualification continue to be given a priority for staff development. Over 100 college staff have obtained vocational assessor awards of the Training and Development Lead Body. This remains a college priority and a further 25 staff have commenced training. In addition, 25 staff have obtained the internal verifier award, 20 have started working towards the award and a further 20 are expected to be trained. Only a few of the staff who work with students with learning difficulties have relevant experience and qualifications.

80 In several vocational areas, full-time teachers have either insufficient or dated vocational experience. The college has recognised this and industrial updating has been recognised as a priority for staff development. The college plans to commit 10 per cent of its staff-development budget to it in 1995-96. Some staff do not have the experience needed to teach new courses such as the GNVQ. The need for staff development to overcome this problem has been recognised.

81 Teaching is well supported by appropriately-qualified technical and administrative staff. The number of support staff has recently been increased. The college is reviewing the balance of technical support staff across the practical subjects to ensure that there is appropriate support as subjects develop. In catering, the number of domestic assistants has been reduced because of falling rolls, but provision remains adequate. In art and design, it is difficult for one full-time technician to cover a range of activities across the two sites. Teaching staff undertake a variety of administrative tasks which might be undertaken more appropriately by support staff.

82 Overall, 55 per cent of the teaching staff are female, and 45 per cent are male. There are significantly different proportions amongst the full-time and part-time teachers, with females making up 46 per cent of full-time teachers and 67 per cent of part-time teachers. There are no women in the college senior management team but there is an almost equal number of men and women in middle management.

83 Staff turnover has provided the opportunity to modify the balance of staffing in the college and to reduce the proportion of the college budget devoted to staffing. During the academic year 1994-95, 19 teaching staff left and 12 started. During the same period, 20 support staff left and 24 started.

#### **Equipment/learning resources**

84 The purchasing of equipment is centralised and controlled through a three-year rolling programme. Equipment levels across the college are generally adequate. Significant strengths were observed in resources devoted to biology, chemistry, physics and geology, with particular reference to the use of information technology. The art and design department lacks specialist computer-aided design facilities and photographic equipment. Subject areas taught or partially taught in

---

demountable classrooms are not generally supported by teaching aids, other than overhead projectors, or wall displays. Students with special needs are especially well catered for, particularly at Whittingham Road. A room with an induction loop has been provided for students with impaired hearing on the Walton campus.

85 The main library located on the Whittingham Road campus is well furnished. It has a security system, a computerised bookstock system and an on-line catalogue available to students. Periodicals and pamphlets have yet to be entered onto the system. A recently-prepared library-development report identifies serious deficiencies in the quality of the bookstock and the reference classification system. The co-ordination of library resources and the curriculum has not been effective in the past. The Walton library was created from the Whittingham Road bookstock and consequently has a relatively narrow range. It has very restricted opening hours and no computer stock control or referencing system.

86 The college's information technology resources are principally available in two centres, one on each campus. There are 139 personal computers and 16 printers, slightly more than half of them at the Walton campus. Other information technology resources are located throughout the college. Examples include computer-aided design equipment in the engineering department, 12 personal computers in the learning centre, and five personal computers in a staff resource area. These are in addition to a wide range of computer equipment which supports management and administrative functions.

87 A college-wide information technology policy has been adopted and is monitored by a steering group. A three-year replacement programme has assured a range of machines and workstation furniture with modern specifications. Laser printer facilities for students are generally poor. The ratio of open-access machines to full-time equivalent students is 1:13. The open-learning areas are often block-booked, sometimes by link schools. CD-ROM facilities are available but they are not connected to a network and their use is not monitored. Students' use of information technology has been evaluated annually by means of a questionnaire.

### **Accommodation**

88 The college is located on two sites close to each other and to the town centre. Whittingham Road has purpose-built modern buildings. The Walton campus is a converted former girls' school. Purpose-built accommodation accounts for 83 per cent of the general teaching space. The remainder is provided in 13 demountable buildings. The demountable accommodation also includes a nursery and a room for private prayer. A residential building at Whittingham Road has been converted into a high-standard centre to enhance independent living skills for students with disabilities and to provide a community resource. A high priority has been given to providing appropriate facilities for students with restricted mobility. Parking spaces for wheelchair users have been allocated and

---

are clearly signposted. Wheelchair access has been provided to every part of both campuses other than the first-floor section of the performing arts area at Walton.

89 The external environments of both campuses are attractive, well maintained, well lit and have appropriate signs. The main teaching accommodation is in buildings which lie in close proximity to each other. The main library at Whittingham Road and the information technology centres located on each campus are clean, attractive environments which encourage purposeful study. The library and associated open learning areas are heavily used. Many internal modifications to buildings have been completed recently to provide additional facilities. These include the life-skills centre, the conversion of the Walton campus gymnasium to an open-learning and information technology centre, the provision of staff space in a previously underused circulation area, a new learning centre adjacent to the college library and a new training restaurant.

90 Accommodation in the purpose-built blocks is generally clean and well decorated. At Whittingham Road the variation in size and arrangement of classrooms means that some can be used less flexibly than others and this sometimes leads to overcrowding. The college is aware of its accommodation weaknesses and has responded to some of the subject inspections by rearranging the accommodation for some courses in health care. The demountable classrooms are reasonably well decorated and clean but have disadvantages as teaching spaces. Two demountable classrooms were burnt down in 1994 and there is a general concern for the security of college property in the remaining units.

91 The use of available space is planned and monitored through a computer system which is not yet adequate for the purpose. Manual measurements indicate efficient use of space by sector standards. The college is developing the use of appropriate outreach facilities in the nearby town centre. Social space for students is extremely limited and some of the building modifications have restricted students to the refectory areas when they are not in classrooms. These are noisy at peak times. There are no indoor sports facilities or changing rooms for sport or for dance. Outdoor sports facilities are restricted to one rugby pitch and two football pitches.

92 A computer-aided, 10-year maintenance programme is in progress and the re-roofing of a major teaching block is in advance of the planned schedule. The college is presently finalising plans to provide classroom accommodation to replace the demountable classrooms by 1997 and to provide additional space for open learning.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

93 The strengths of Halesowen College are:

- the wide range of full-time courses
- the improved access provided through the use of outreach centres

- 
- the dedication and enthusiasm of the corporation board
  - the effective management systems and controls
  - the good-quality support for students
  - the supportive environment for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
  - the systematic arrangements to monitor retention of students
  - some good examination results, particularly in GCE
  - the effective use made of targets and standards
  - the attention paid to monitoring the college charter
  - the well-organised staff-development and staff-appraisal arrangements
  - students' success in progressing to higher education.

94 If it is to continue to succeed in achieving its aims, the college should address the following issues:

- the lack of focus on strategic planning by the corporation board
- the relatively small number of programmes which allow flexible modes of attendance
- limited links with industry
- the underdeveloped marketing of provision, other than to schools
- the lack of co-ordination of equal opportunities issues
- this year's poor pass rates on vocational courses
- some low completion rates
- the need to strengthen some course review arrangements
- the inadequate temporary classroom accommodation
- the poor library provision and organisation at Walton.

---

## FIGURES

- 
- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1995)

---

  - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)

---

  - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)

---

  - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

---

  - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

---

  - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

---

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

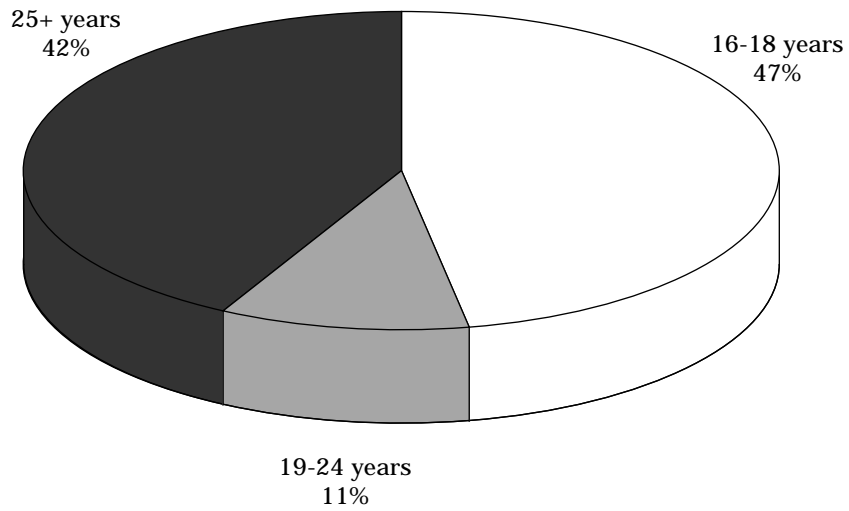
---

---

**Figure 1**

---

**Halesowen College: student numbers by age (as at November 1995)**

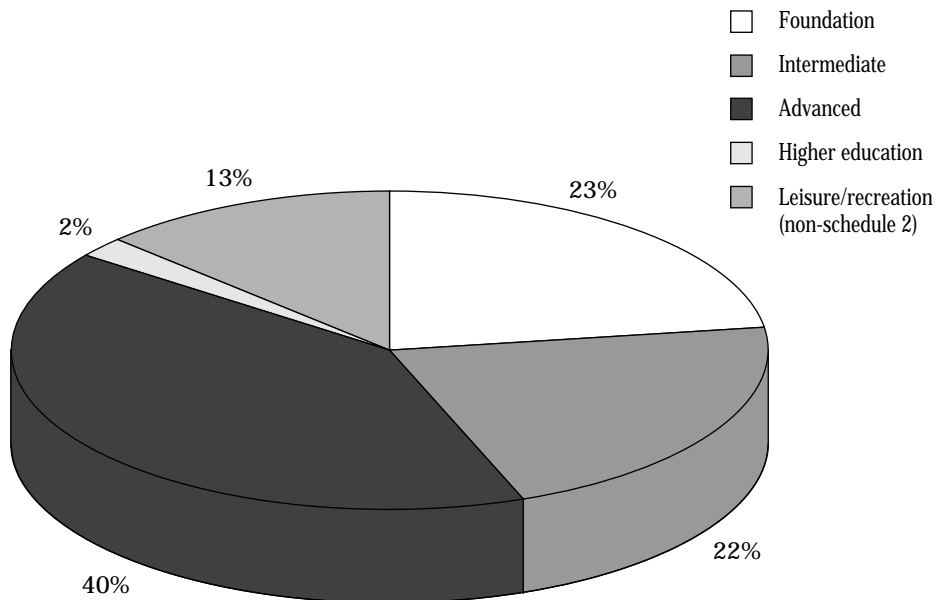


Student numbers: 5,283

**Figure 2**

---

**Halesowen College: student numbers by level of study (as at November 1995)**

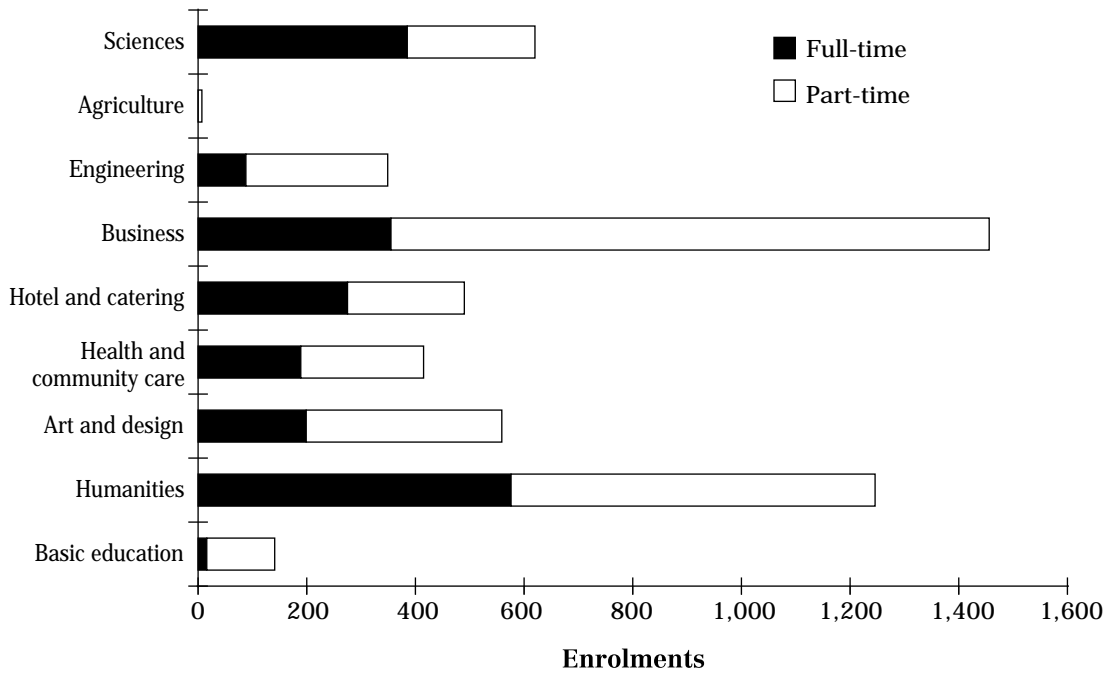


Student numbers: 5,283

---

**Figure 3**

**Halesowen College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)**

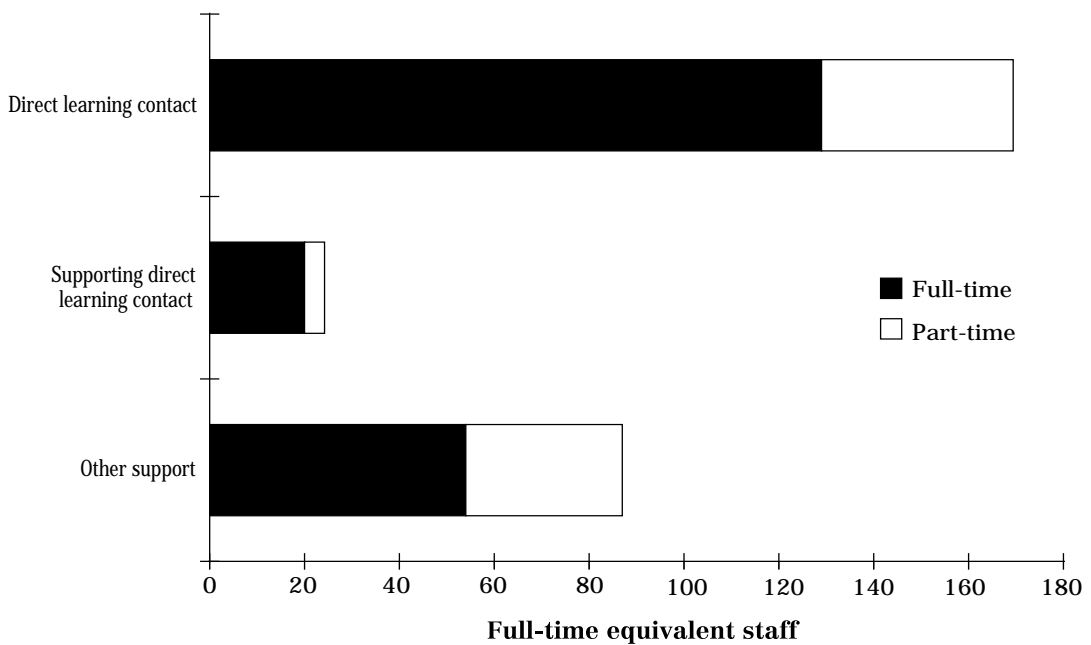


Student numbers: 5,283

---

**Figure 4**

**Halesowen College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)**



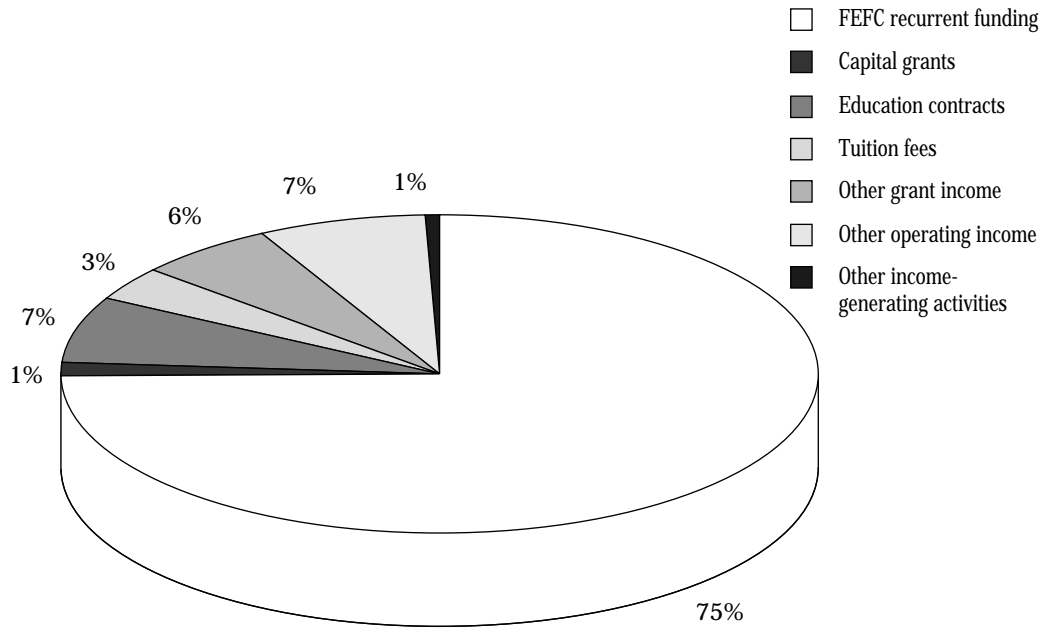
Full-time equivalent staff: 281



---

**Figure 5**

**Halesowen College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)**



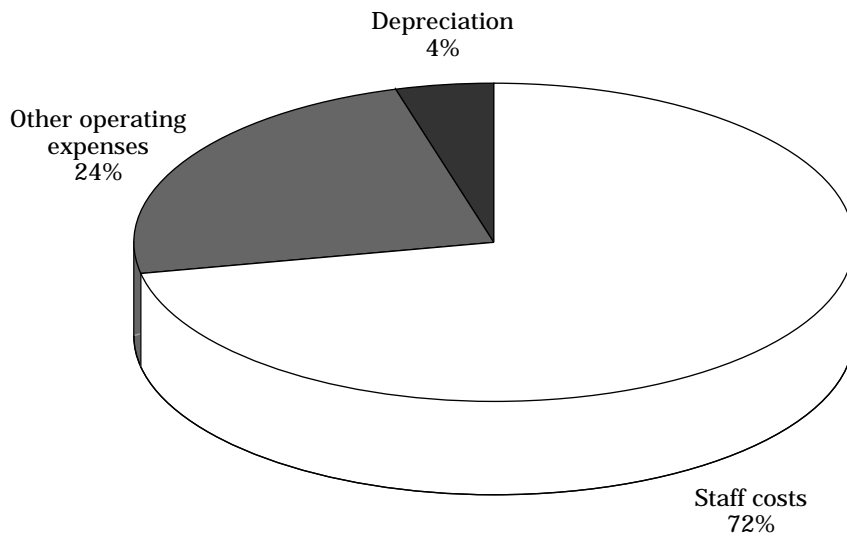
Income: £8,201,000

*Note: FEFC recurrent funding includes £42,000 restructuring and £3,000 access.*

---

**Figure 6**

**Halesowen College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)**



Expenditure: £8,074,000

*Note: this chart excludes £24,000 interest payable.*

Published by the  
Further Education Funding Council  
March 1996