

# Hammersmith and West London 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](http://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	7

---

### Curriculum areas

Mathematics, computing and information technology	10
Construction	15
Business	20
Hair and beauty	27
Performing arts	33
Humanities	38

---

### Cross-college provision

Support for students	44
General resources	51
Quality assurance	58
Governance	67
Management	74
Conclusions	81

---

### 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

## Hammersmith and West London College

### *Greater London Region*

Inspected November 1999

Hammersmith and West London College is a general further education college on three sites in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. The main centre is at Barons Court in Hammersmith. The college produced its first self-assessment report for the inspection. The college draws many of its students from areas of socio-economic deprivation and inspectors took this into account. The college makes provision in nine of the 10 FEFC programme areas. Six curriculum areas were inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision.

Since its last inspection, the college has made progress in many areas of its provision. Some of these improvements have occurred relatively recently. Managers and staff are strongly committed to improving the learning experiences of the students. As part of its commitment to equal opportunities, the college provides a well-regulated, welcoming environment within which all students are valued and respected. The college has good links with its local community, and productive links with local schools. The college's strategy to widen participation has led to increasing enrolments from those who may not previously

have considered further education. It has had some success in improving student retention and achievement rates from a low level, although overall these remain below those achieved by similar colleges. The college has good governance and financial management and is led effectively. There have been improvements to the college's quality assurance system, which now covers most aspects of the college's provision. The recent introduction of a lesson observation scheme is intended to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning. There is an extensive IT system for students and staff, and well-resourced learning centres. The accommodation on the main site is good. Students have access to a wide range of support services. The college should improve: retention and achievement rates; students' attendance and punctuality; the quality of teaching and learning in some areas; the effectiveness and rigour of course review and evaluation; and the quality of tutorial provision.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Mathematics, computing and information technology	4	Support for students	2
Construction	3	General resources	2
Business	4	Quality assurance	3
Hair and beauty	2	Governance	2
Performing arts	2	Management	3
Humanities	3		

## The College and its Mission

1 Hammersmith and West London College is a general further education college based on three sites in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. The purpose-built main site, at Barons Court, opened in 1980. The Lime Grove site is in a listed building, which the college shares with Chelsea College of Art. The third site at Olympia has recently been sold and the college will cease to occupy the site by December 2000.

2 Many of the college's students are drawn from Hammersmith and Fulham and the surrounding boroughs. Wealthy areas exist close to areas of disadvantage and social deprivation. A recent competitiveness audit published by the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham indicates that the proportion of residents qualified to level 3 and above exceeds both the national and London averages, but in some areas up to 50% of residents have no qualifications. Overall unemployment rates are low, although the long-term unemployment rate is above the average for London.

3 In June 1999, the college enrolled 9,112 students of whom 38% were full time. Approximately 20% of the college's students are aged 16 to 19. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has identified the college as one of a group which typically recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas. Many students are from minority ethnic groups. In 1998-99, 6% of students were registered asylum seekers. The college recruits 70% of its students from disadvantaged areas.

4 The college offers courses in all the FEFC programme areas except agriculture. The courses range from entry level to level 4 in some areas. The college collaborates closely with local community organisations to provide a range of courses which meet the needs of specific ethnic groups.

5 The college's mission states that 'Hammersmith and West London College is committed to providing high-quality education and training and promoting participation in lifelong learning'. Following the appointment of the principal in 1997, the college undertook a strategic review of its role and future development. A discussion paper, *Tomorrow's College*, was circulated for comment to staff and a wide range of local users and interested parties. The outcomes of the consultation were reviewed in 1998-99 and the results have informed the development of the strategic plan, which emphasises the following six strategic aims:

- raising levels of students' achievements and encouraging learning
- delivering the highest possible standards within the resources available
- widening and increasing participation
- improving staff morale and motivation
- improving the college image
- achieving financial stability.

6 The college has developed a range of partnerships with the local authority, single regeneration budget schemes, community organisations and local training and enterprise councils (TECs). It is an associate college of the University of Westminster. The college works closely with other colleges in London and has led on a number of collaborative projects on areas such as credit transfer, the rationalisation of construction provision and the collection and publishing of on-line information on course availability across London. The college operates the New Deal area contract in partnership with Kensington and Chelsea College.

# Context

## The Inspection

7 The college was inspected during the week beginning 29 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. Inspectors used data on students' achievements drawn from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1997 and 1998. The college submitted its own data for students' achievements for 1999, which were checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately 12 weeks before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by 12 inspectors and an auditor, working for a total of 55 days. Five inspectors from the Training Standards Council (TSC) worked with the inspection team during the college inspection. The TSC inspectors concentrated on work-based training supported

by the college in construction, business administration and hairdressing. Where it was appropriate to the FEFC inspection framework, evidence gathered by TSC inspectors was taken into account when grading the college's FEFC provision.

8 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, 48% were rated good or outstanding. This is lower than the average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	1	2	10	1	0	14
GNVQ	2	3	7	3	0	15
NVQ	3	7	5	0	1	16
Other vocational	4	15	10	2	0	31
Other	0	2	3	0	0	5
Total (No.)	10	29	35	6	1	81
Total (%)	12	36	43	8	1	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*

# Context

9 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 (%)
Hammersmith and West London College	12.3	68
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, Computing and Information Technology

### Grade 4

10 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering mathematics, computing and information technology (IT). Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses included in the college's self-assessment report, but identified a few additional strengths and weaknesses. The report gave insufficient prominence to significant weaknesses in student retention and achievement.

#### Key strengths

- good range of courses encouraging community group participation
- good-quality learning materials
- access to good-quality computer resources

#### Weaknesses

- lack of attention by some teachers to the different learning needs of students
- poor punctuality in many lessons
- poor completion of work set in mathematics
- low retention rates on the majority of courses
- some low pass rates

11 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there is a good range of courses in mathematics, computing and IT. The college offers courses in numeracy for students who initially would not be able to cope with the demands of a general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) mathematics course. A modular general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) mathematics course has been introduced which improves choices for students. Full-time IT programmes are offered at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. These provide significant progression opportunities for the students.

Part-time programmes are organised during the day and in the evenings. Franchised provision has also been developed in partnership with a number of community organisations.

12 Most teaching is satisfactory and some is good. In the better lessons, teachers provided students with good-quality learning materials and linked the topic being covered to real-life situations. They gave clear explanations and frequently checked that students were understanding the work. Many students are highly motivated during their lessons. However, in many of the lessons students arrived late, in some cases well after the lesson had started. The college's self-assessment report acknowledges that there are some weaknesses in teaching. Some teachers fail to take account of the wide variety of students' previous experiences and abilities. As a result, some students make little progress with the tasks set, while others find the work too easy. Many students do not attend lessons regularly. In mathematics, coursework is regularly set, marked and returned to the students. However, only about half of the students regularly complete the work they are set.

13 Retention rates on the main courses are low. Retention is particularly poor on GCE A level mathematics and computing courses. It has fallen over a three-year period on the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) advanced IT course; in 1999 only 41% of the students who started the course completed it. Retention rates for the GNVQ foundation course in IT have usually been above the national average. Achievement rates for a number of the main courses are close to national averages. Pass rates for the GCE A level computing course have improved and 82% of the completing students were successful in 1999. However, achievements on the GNVQ intermediate and advanced IT programmes are well below the national average. Low retention and achievement levels on some courses were identified as weaknesses in the self-assessment report.

# Curriculum Areas

14 Students have good access to high-quality computer hardware and software, which are available during and outside timetabled lessons. A college network supports a common range of software. Students are able to access the Internet and materials available on the college's intranet. Mathematics teachers are well qualified, although some computing and IT teachers have no formal academic qualifications in the subjects.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ foundation IT	1	Number of starters	24	19	19
		Retention (%)	54	79	74
		Achievement (%)	69	60	57
GCSE mathematics	2	Number of starters	266	300	87
		Retention (%)	56	58	72
		Achievement (%)	31	21	24
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	Number of starters	68	77	57
		Retention (%)	66	81	70
		Achievement (%)	42	42	30
GCE A level mathematics	3	Number of starters	84	89	74
		Retention (%)	+	+	39
		Achievement (%)	37	62	48
GNVQ advanced IT	3	Number of starters	31	51	51
		Retention (%)	+	+	41
		Achievement (%)	23	67	57
GCE A level computing	3	Number of starters	17	23	20
		Retention (%)	+	+	55
		Achievement (%)	56	50	82

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)  
+unreliable data

# Curriculum Areas

## *Construction*

### *Grade 3*

15 Inspectors observed 12 practical and theory lessons covering construction crafts and housing provision. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. However, the report overstated some strengths and failed to identify some weaknesses.

#### Key strengths

- extensive range of courses with good progression opportunities
- mainly good retention rates
- good practical teaching
- the high quality of students' work

#### Weaknesses

- some unsatisfactory theory teaching
- low pass rates on some craft courses
- little opportunity for students to develop key skills
- low student attendance

16 The college offers courses in the main construction crafts, including tiling and signwriting, at the Lime Grove site. Technician level courses in housing studies are offered at Barons Court. As noted in the self-assessment report, there are good progression opportunities for craft students, from foundation level to level 3. Technician students are able to progress to higher national certificate courses. Students are able to enrol on many courses throughout the year. The construction division has productive links with schools, and final year school pupils undertake foundation craft studies. Senior managers set enrolment, retention and achievement targets for the division. However, course teams rarely use targets to inform the annual review and evaluation of their courses. Curriculum areas in the construction division operate with a degree of autonomy. This often

leads to significant differences in the quality of provision, and opportunities to share good practice are missed. Students who are eligible for support through the college's access fund do not receive their grants until late November. This results in some students delaying their purchase of the protective clothing required for workshop activities. There are good links with employers, including Hounslow Building Services and the Notting Hill Housing Trust. However, students have few opportunities to visit construction sites and manufacturers, and there are few work placement opportunities for full-time students. There is no work-based assessment on national vocational qualification (NVQ) programmes. Course manuals and student handbooks are informative, providing students with details of their courses and assessment requirements.

17 The teaching of practical skills is generally good. However, some of the teaching in construction craft theory lessons is less than satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers often use an appropriate range of teaching and learning methods which ensure that all students are learning. Teachers effectively manage groups of students who are studying at different levels. Practical activities are planned so that the students steadily develop relevant skills. Students progress at their own pace through a variety of tasks, and are often supported by high-quality learning materials. Some teachers relate classroom activities to construction site practice and draw on the experience of those students who work in the industry. The poorer lessons were inadequately planned and prepared, and lesson objectives and assessment criteria were unclear. Students were set unrealistic timescales for activities. As recognised in the self-assessment report, students are provided with few opportunities to develop the key skills of numeracy, communication and IT. Attendance in many lessons is low, with fewer than 60% of students attending some lessons.

# Curriculum Areas

18 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that retention rates on most courses have improved over the last two years and many are now above the national average.

Achievement rates on many courses improved between 1998 and 1999, but in 1997-98 many were poor, including those on level 2 courses in brickwork, electrical installation, and carpentry and joinery. In 1998-99, the college introduced foundation level qualifications in some areas to address these weaknesses. Inspectors noted differences in the data between locally and centrally held student achievement records. Most students have well-structured portfolios containing a range of good-quality materials. These are regularly reviewed by tutors. In some of the construction craft courses, teachers maintain wall charts that record the progress of

students. There are adequate arrangements for the internal verification of assessment. Course teams respond effectively to issues identified by external verifiers.

19 Construction craft workshops and equipment are generally fit for purpose. However, in some workshops there is insufficient space for students to store their work. There are insufficient numbers of hand tools in some workshops. Some workshops are overcrowded. During the inspection, several support staff were absent through sickness, leading to some students being unsupervised for short periods of time as the teacher moved around the workshops. The resource centre contains an adequate supply of books and trade periodicals. Students can use 14 multimedia computers.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ carpentry and joinery	1	Number of starters	*	22	67
		Retention (%)	*	55	87
		Achievement (%)	*	25	62
NVQ carpentry and joinery	2	Number of starters	131	87	73
		Retention (%)	80	79	82
		Achievement (%)	52	70	57
NVQ brickwork	2	Number of starters	89	58	24
		Retention (%)	46	60	83
		Achievement (%)	44	23	40
NVQ plastering	2	Number of starters	77	72	30
		Retention (%)	86	76	87
		Achievement (%)	52	62	81
Plumbing intermediate vocational	2	Number of starters	129	140	46
		Retention (%)	64	79	91
		Achievement (%)	11	9	31
NVQ carpentry and joinery	3	Number of starters	18	32	23
		Retention (%)	94	81	96
		Achievement (%)	59	73	64

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

\*course not running

# Curriculum Areas

## Business

### Grade 4

20 Inspectors observed 14 lessons across a range of business courses, including courses in wordprocessing and text processing, GNVQ programmes, GCE A level courses, access to higher education and professional courses. Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths identified in the college's self-assessment report, but considered that others were no more than examples of standard practice. Insufficient emphasis was given to weaknesses in student retention and achievement, and teaching and learning. Inspectors from the TSC observed five training sessions in business administration for work-based trainees.

#### Key strengths

- broad range of provision with good progression opportunities
- productive employer links on foundation course
- high retention rates on marketing courses
- good use of modern technology to support student learning

#### Weaknesses

- much uninspiring, ineffective teaching
- poor students' attendance and punctuality
- poor students' achievements on many courses
- declining GNVQ retention rates

21 The college offers a wide range of courses in administration, secretarial, business and professional studies and there are opportunities for students to progress from one level of qualification to another. Managers and staff have developed a range of courses to encourage people from the local community to study for business qualifications. This strength was not recognised in the self-assessment report.

22 Course teams meet with varying frequency; in some cases weekly, and in others only once or twice each term. Course teams pay insufficient attention to weaknesses in provision. The attendance and punctuality of students in some lessons is poor. The college has introduced a range of strategies to address this, but it is too early to assess their overall effect.

23 Most teaching is satisfactory. In the most successful lessons, students were well motivated, actively involved and given appropriately demanding work. For example, in a lesson on telephone techniques, students worked in pairs to carry out a role-play activity. The tutor encouraged comments from other students and skilfully drew out the strengths and weaknesses of each pair's performance. Students were keen to repeat the exercise and demonstrate the progress they had made. In other lessons, teaching was uninspiring and lacked imagination. Teachers rarely checked students' learning and often managed their time ineffectively. There was little evidence that teachers adapted learning materials or teaching methods to meet the needs of individual students. The self-assessment report did not refer to these weaknesses.

24 Students who undertake work experience are well prepared by their tutors. As recognised in the self-assessment report, there is an innovative programme for GNVQ foundation students in collaboration with a major local employer. Students attend some of their lessons on the company's premises. Employees act as mentors to the students. Students benefit from the opportunity to spend time in a working environment.

25 Pass rates on many courses have been consistently below national averages. Only 13% of students achieved NVQs in accounting in 1998-99. Pass rates on the GNVQ advanced course have been consistently below the national average. Significant numbers of students take short courses at level 1. Student achievement rates are improving on some of

# Curriculum Areas

these courses. Achievements on wordprocessing and text processing courses were low in 1997 and 1998 and, during the inspection, the college was awaiting confirmation from the awarding bodies of the results achieved in 1999. Some students experience difficulty in completing the whole qualification; on marketing and NVQ accounting courses a high proportion of students achieve individual units. Retention rates are above national averages on many courses. However, whilst retention on the GNVQ intermediate course is close to the national average, it has shown a decline over the period 1996 to 1999. This pattern is also reflected on the GNVQ advanced programme and NVQ courses in accounting. The standard of students' coursework is satisfactory, and tutors often provide constructive written feedback.

26 The majority of teaching takes place in well-decorated and appropriately equipped accommodation. Good use is made of modern technology, such as the Internet and electronic mail. This strength was recognised in the self-assessment report. Classrooms for some professional courses are inappropriate. Many teachers have relevant industrial experience which is used to good effect, especially on professional courses.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Word and text processing (24 weeks and over)	1	Number of starters	368	147	258
		Retention (%)	93	58	96
		Achievement (%)	12	28	*
Short courses	1	Number of starters	212	664	896
		Retention (%)	99	91	98
		Achievement (%)	5	23	51
GNVQ intermediate business	2	Number of starters	60	85	70
		Retention (%)	88	80	67
		Achievement (%)	62	43	62
NVQs accounting	2, 3 and 4	Number of starters	70	55	96
		Retention (%)	90	84	73
		Achievement (%)	6	4	13
GNVQ advanced business (two year)	3	Number of starters	116	143	119
		Retention (%)	+	+	57
		Achievement (%)	61	43	51
Marketing qualifications	3 and 4	Number of starters	229	234	187
		Retention (%)	96	96	98
		Achievement (%)	16	+	34

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

\*incomplete data

+unreliable data

# Curriculum Areas

## Hair and Beauty

### Grade 2

27 Inspectors observed 11 lessons, covering NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3 and equivalent specialist diplomas. They agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but considered that too little emphasis was given to the quality of teaching and students' achievements. Inspectors from the TSC observed three training sessions in hairdressing for work-based students.

#### Key strengths

- well-planned and effective teaching
- good students' achievements on many courses
- effective curriculum management
- good-quality specialist resources

#### Weaknesses

- some declining retention rates
- poor attendance rates

28 The college offers a range of full-time and part-time hairdressing and beauty therapy courses. Some NVQ courses are offered at the weekend. The short courses offered by the college acknowledge the multicultural community surrounding the college, and include Henna Mendhi skin decoration and Indian head massage. Many students progress to higher level courses. Schemes of work and lesson plans use a common format, are regularly updated, and made available to all teachers. The college arranges competitions for students, which are sponsored by suppliers of various hairdressing and beauty products. Students are encouraged to take part in external competitions. For example, three NVQ level 3 students were selected recently for the finals of a national competition organised by the Association of Hairdressing Teachers.

29 Courses are effectively managed. The curriculum is kept up to date and students' progress is closely monitored. Teachers attend regular updating sessions throughout the year. Part-time staff are assigned a mentor. All staff participate in regular course review meetings with the division manager.

30 Teaching is well planned and effective. In practical lessons, students work in a professional manner, carrying out tasks safely and hygienically. In some lessons, level 1 hairdressing students work productively assisting level 3 students. Commercial salon lessons provide students with particularly good opportunities to practise their skills. In the most effective theory lessons, teachers skilfully guided students through exercises which helped them to consolidate what they had learned in practical lessons. Teachers make good use of knowledge previously learned to ensure the participation of students, and to provide them with opportunities to gain confidence. Assessments are well planned. As identified in the self-assessment report, effectively co-ordinated and monitored work experience is an integral part of many courses. Work is in progress to develop stronger links with employers.

31 Students' achievements have been rising on most courses and are at, or above, national averages. The pass rate on the NVQ level 2 beauty therapy course in 1999 was 95%, and on the one-year NVQ level 1 hairdressing courses 90%. Retention rates on a few courses were below national averages. On NVQ level 2 courses, retention has been declining over the past three years; on the NVQ level 1 hairdressing course, the retention rate fell significantly in 1999. Attendance rates are low on most courses, as noted in the self-assessment report. The standard of the students' commercial salon work, particularly on the beauty therapy courses, is good. Additional support in English language is offered on all full-time courses. The majority of students identified as needing this support achieved their qualification and most have progressed to higher level courses within the division.

# Curriculum Areas

32 Inspectors agreed with the college that there are good-quality specialist resources for hairdressing and beauty. The facilities are self-contained and there are separate entrances for customers. Wheelchair access to some areas is restricted. The salons and treatment rooms provide a realistic work environment. Students are provided with opportunities to practise customer care skills, organise bookings and to develop retailing skills. All students spend one week working in the dispensary, carrying out stock control and dispensing products and equipment. There is an adequate stock of specialist books and video tapes in the library. Within the hair and beauty area, there are a few computers with Internet access and a range of training videotapes.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ hair and beauty (one-year courses)	1	Number of starters	*	26	39
		Retention (%)	*	73	77
		Achievement (%)	*	68	93
NVQ hair and beauty (one-year courses)	2	Number of starters	76	150	122
		Retention (%)	78	78	61
		Achievement (%)	81	73	81
NVQ hairdressing (two-year courses)	2	Number of starters	18	*	23
		Retention (%)	+	*	43
		Achievement (%)	87	*	80
NVQ hair and beauty (one-year courses)	3	Number of starters	16	45	39
		Retention (%)	94	91	74
		Achievement (%)	93	93	97
Complementary diplomas in beauty (one-year courses)	3	Number of starters	23	47	48
		Retention (%)	83	85	77
		Achievement (%)	89	98	89

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

\*course not running

+unreliable data



# Curriculum Areas

## Performing Arts

### Grade 2

33 Inspectors observed 12 performing arts lessons. They agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report. Some weaknesses identified in the report had been addressed by the time of the inspection.

#### Key strengths

- many examples of good teaching and learning
- good students' achievements on some courses
- good standard of performance skills
- imaginative, well-prepared course assignments
- commitment to equal opportunities through innovative curriculum projects
- productive links with professional arts organisations

#### Weaknesses

- low retention on two year courses
- students' poor punctuality in some lessons

34 The college offers first certificate courses in performing arts and community arts, and national diploma courses in performing arts and popular music. As noted in the self-assessment report, the college has taken initiatives to meet the needs of the local community by offering a varied and innovative range of short vocational courses. These include international performing arts, theatre certificate courses, and the Cambridge course in music technology. There are strong links with local arts organisations. Some aspects of the community arts course are taught by staff at the Riverside Studios. Students attend workshops and participate in major events at the Lyric Theatre in Hammersmith. There is a range of initiatives to

promote equality of opportunity. For example, the Remix Theatre Company brings together students from different parts of the college and includes students with learning difficulties. The Windrush Project, inspired by the arrival of Jamaican immigrants 50 years ago, celebrated cultural diversity over a period of several months, through a series of arts events and curriculum projects. Students on popular music courses benefit from strong links between the college and the music industry. Popular music students can also undertake additional activities, including guitar tuition and drumming workshops. The division is effectively managed. There are regular meetings of teachers and managers to review their courses. These meetings help to ensure good communications between teachers and managers, and consistent standards for schemes of work and lesson plans.

35 Much of the teaching and learning is good or better. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, teachers set students well-designed, interesting tasks. For example, students for whom English is a second language responded well to the challenge of adapting and performing extracts from books by Charles Dickens. Students on a music course carried out an assignment in which they were asked to present their compositions to their teacher, who took the role of a record company buyer. The rest of the group evaluated each presentation. Most second-year popular music students were accomplished in using IT to create backing tracks. Teachers frequently explained the professional relevance of tasks by referring to their own experiences of working in the arts industries. There were a few examples of poor teaching, where teachers did not pursue clear lesson objectives, and failed to monitor sufficiently students' progress.

36 Students' achievements are above the national average for courses in performing arts and popular music. Taking into account the high number of students from socially disadvantaged areas, overall retention rates on

# Curriculum Areas

one-year courses are satisfactory. Retention rates on two-year courses are low, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Performing arts students achieve good standards. In a dance class, many students performed to a professional level, showing good ensemble skills. Students extend their performance skills through their involvement in a national dance competition. Although the division is implementing strategies to improve the punctuality of students, not all teachers rigorously enforce them and some students continue to arrive late.

37 The provision is based currently at two sites, Barons Court and Olympia, but the college plans to develop a single large arts complex at Barons Court. Resources for performing arts and popular music are good at both sites. At Olympia, the accommodation comprises a large hall converted into a performance space, two rehearsal studios, a large office, and a classroom. At Barons Court, there is a well-equipped drama studio, music studios, and shared access to a dance space. A technician supports both sites.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Southern Regional Council for Education and Training certificate in performing arts	2	Number of starters	*	22	24
		Retention %	*	59	92
		Achievement %	*	100	91
BTEC first diploma in performing arts	2	Number of starters	31	44	33
		Retention %	58	82	79
		Achievement %	83	86	85
BTEC national diploma in performing arts (one-year and two-year courses)	3	Number of starters	34	22	28
		Retention %	+	+	64
		Achievement %	100	93	89
BTEC national diploma in popular music (one-year and two-year courses)	3	Number of starters	*	*	21
		Retention %	*	*	52
		Achievement %	*	*	91

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

\*course not running

+unreliable data

# Curriculum Areas

## Humanities

### Grade 3

38 Inspectors observed 20 lessons covering courses in English, communications, psychology, law, sociology and an access course to higher education in the humanities. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but identified some additional strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning.

#### Key strengths

- provision increasingly responsive to students' needs
- good and improving students' achievements
- high standard of students' work on access and GCE A level psychology courses

#### Weaknesses

- low retention rates on many courses
- poor attendance and punctuality in some lessons
- failure to address the individual learning needs of some students
- poorly implemented course review and evaluation

39 There is a wide range of courses in the humanities area including pre-GCSE, GCSE, GCE A level courses and an access course to higher education. Inspectors agreed with the college that many courses are arranged to meet the needs of students. For example, the recent introduction of the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) course as an alternative to GCSE English has provided a more appropriate level 2 course in English. The access programme is modularised and offers students 11 subject pathways and attendance patterns to suit their needs and convenience. Students on the GCE A level courses are able to gain additional skills in drama, magazine production, and IT.

40 The review and evaluation of courses is poorly implemented at course level. Many course review documents are incomplete, and many schemes of work consist of no more than lists, and do not refer to learning objectives or teaching methods. Lesson plans often fail to include teaching and learning objectives. Assessment procedures are well developed on some courses such as the access course to higher education, where the students have a clear understanding of how their work is marked and moderated. Students on other courses are less clear about how or why particular marks are awarded. There is some good practice amongst teachers in setting assignments, correcting written work and providing constructive comments to students on how their work could be improved.

41 Most teaching is satisfactory. In the best lessons, students are involved in demanding work and understand what is expected of them. In a GCE A level English lesson, groups of students were presented with a list of statements about public speaking which they were required to mark 'true' or 'false'. The discussion that followed was skilfully managed and drew on students' previous learning experiences. In a GCE A level psychology lesson, students carried out group experiments to contribute to their understanding of research methods. In both lessons, students demonstrated keen interest and were making good progress. Some teachers use a good mixture of whole-class teaching, small group work and opportunities for students to work on their own. However, the self-assessment report did not recognise the restricted range of methods used by teachers in many lessons. Teachers often fail to fulfil the variety of students' learning needs and do not emphasise sufficiently alternative ways of learning. In some lessons, teachers do not thoroughly check what students have learned.

# Curriculum Areas

42 Students' achievements are good and improving on access to higher education, and GCE A level psychology, sociology, English language and literature courses. In GCE A level communication studies, students' achievements are below the national average. The self-assessment report recognises that retention rates on many courses are below national averages. In GCE A level law, retention and achievement rates are particularly low. The standard of many students' written work on the access to higher education and GCE A level psychology courses is good. The college has recently implemented procedures to address poor attendance and punctuality. However, students often arrive late for their lessons, and attendance in some classes is low.

43 Most teaching takes place in dedicated areas. In some instances, the accommodation is not appropriate for the planned activities and interference from lessons in neighbouring rooms disrupts teaching and learning. A few teaching rooms are too small to accommodate the number of students in the class.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE English	2	Number of starters	162	218	84
		Retention (%)	54	57	81
		Achievement (%)	25	32	47
GCE A level communication studies	3	Number of starters	25	21	25
		Retention (%)	+	+	44
		Achievement (%)	29	83	55
GCE A level English language and literature	3	Number of starters	49	57	35
		Retention (%)	+	+	43
		Achievement (%)	67	71	93
GCE A level psychology	3	Number of starters	30	27	24
		Retention (%)	+	+	58
		Achievement (%)	47	69	83
GCE A level sociology	3	Number of starters	44	34	18
		Retention (%)	+	+	50
		Achievement (%)	43	93	86
Access to higher education	3	Number of starters	188	157	107
		Retention (%)	79	71	67
		Achievement (%)	65	61	74

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

+unreliable data

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### *Grade 2*

44 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

#### Key strengths

- efficient pre-entry guidance and admissions procedures
- productive liaison with schools
- comprehensive individual action-planning and progress review for full-time students
- effective additional learning support in lessons

#### Weaknesses

- poor quality of some tutorial provision
- slow progress in developing initiatives to improve retention and achievement

45 There is a comprehensive guidance and advice service for prospective students. The college's information centre provides a helpful service to postal, telephone and personal callers. All enquiries are stored on a database, which is used to inform curriculum development and the planning of the college's promotional activities. The college's Internet website is well designed and used extensively by prospective students for enquiries about college services. Informative leaflets are produced for each course and contain relevant course details and progression opportunities. A range of attractive booklets is produced for school-leavers, adults and employers. However, an inadequate number of leaflets is produced for students who are speakers of other languages. The college has close links with many local schools. The college arranges many productive events, including school visits and open days. The proportion of students joining the college from local schools has increased in recent years.

46 The induction process is supportive and effective. Students are given a useful college diary, containing the student charter and other relevant information, which is discussed during induction. Students are made aware of the complaints procedure. Most students complete a diagnostic assessment at induction to identify additional learning support needs in literacy and numeracy. Additional learning support tutors work effectively with teachers to ensure that the learning support is placed in an appropriate course context. Through a recent evaluation of this approach, college managers consider that there have been improvements in students' achievements. The specialist support provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is thorough and helps them to access the range of courses offered by the college.

47 In response to issues raised in the previous inspection report, the college has made some progress in developing initiatives to address low levels of students' achievements. Some of these initiatives have been introduced only recently. These include providing support for individuals who are identified as being at risk of leaving their courses early, or as being unlikely to achieve the qualification for which they are studying. A strategy has been developed to improve the punctuality of students. Evaluations carried out by managers indicate that some of these initiatives are leading to improvements, although it is too early to assess the impact of others.

48 All full-time students are allocated a personal tutor and most participate in a weekly tutorial session. Tutors work from a pack of tutorial documentation and an informative tutor newsletter is circulated regularly, giving updates on events and briefings. Tutors carry out individual interviews with full-time students every term to review their progress and to agree actions for improvement. These reviews are well documented and lead to specific targets being set for the student. The tutorial programme for part-time students is less

# Cross-college Provision

developed and co-ordinated, as noted in the self-assessment report. Apart from the processes of individual interview and induction, there is no college-wide minimum tutorial entitlement to ensure that all students receive an adequate tutorial programme. The planning of specific tutorial activities is left to the discretion of tutors, which leads in some cases to inadequate tutorial provision for some students.

49 Students are well supported by tutors when they apply for places in higher education; the support for access course students is particularly good. An enthusiastic and well-qualified team of careers advisers supplements the work carried out by vocational course tutors. The guidance offered on skills for employment for part-time students and adults is less developed. The careers centre at the Barons Court site is extensively resourced and well organised. Many students value the careers guidance they receive, and act upon it.

50 There is a well-equipped and attractive nursery facility at Barons Court, which is licensed for 30 children. The college self-assessment report identifies the absence of such provision on other sites as a weakness. The college's access fund provides financial support for students who make use of this facility. The student union executive has been re-established for 1999-2000, following the failure to operate effectively the previous year. The recreational facilities at Barons Court are popular, and the students' common room is equipped with computers, which provide access to the Internet. The Lime Grove site offers few student services, although advice and counselling staff and the careers team are available for some sessions. Few students at Lime Grove travel to the Barons Court site to avail themselves of the facilities. Helpful and friendly reception and security staff contribute to the pleasant atmosphere in the college.

## General Resources

### *Grade 2*

51 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but noted that some planned developments are claimed as existing strengths.

#### Key strengths

- good teaching and social accommodation at the main site
- responsive estates management and development
- effective resources for producing teaching and learning materials
- well-resourced learning centres
- extensive IT system

#### Weaknesses

- some inappropriate accommodation at Lime Grove and Olympia
- underutilised teaching rooms
- some unsatisfactory access for students with restricted mobility

52 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the main site at Barons Court, which opened in 1980, provides very distinctive, attractive accommodation. Several significant building alterations have been made to improve the accommodation. The main entrance has been adapted to provide a welcoming and efficient reception area for visitors and a focal point for students seeking information. The service area of the refectory has been redesigned to enable an extensive range of meals to be provided. In several teaching areas, the accommodation has been thoughtfully redesigned. Staff have contributed significantly to planning changes in the accommodation. Science laboratories have been refurbished and provided with adjacent study areas equipped with computers. This addresses a weakness

# Cross-college Provision

stated in the previous inspection report. In another part of the college, a section of one floor has been fitted with foldaway dividing walls so that it can be used for individual teaching rooms or for exhibitions, conferences and examinations. The former gymnasium has been redeveloped as a comprehensively equipped leisure and fitness centre, and is operated by an external contractor. It provides a facility for the local community as well as the college. Many staff work areas have been substantially improved, although a few are small and have inadequate storage space.

53 The main site is well maintained with regular inspections of the fabric and services. There are clear service standards for cleaning and repair work. Graffiti is usually removed rapidly and much of the college is clean and free of litter. The college's security officers contribute significantly to maintaining a secure and well-ordered environment for students and staff. They have established good relationships with students, and deal effectively with potentially disruptive situations. There is discreet surveillance through a system of security cameras. Access to the main building is controlled and monitored by the use of swipe cards which are issued to all staff and students.

54 The self-assessment report recognises the deficiencies in accommodation at its other two sites. The Lime Grove site, which is used mainly for building crafts courses, is a listed building. This, together with the shared use of the site with the Chelsea College of Art, restricts its development. The Olympia site has been sold under an agreement that allows the college to continue to provide catering and some performing arts courses on the site until the end of 2000. The college then plans to accommodate these courses at the main site. At both annexe sites there has been extensive redecoration, and some important work to improve health and safety. At Lime Grove, the resource centre has good IT facilities and an appropriate range of books and journals. Some

corridors and staircases at both of these sites are unattractive, and some of the specialist accommodation offers only restricted workshop areas. Across the whole college many classrooms are not used for a substantial number of periods during each week.

55 The college has a well-managed and efficiently maintained network of computers. There are 500 computers for students' use in learning centres, specialist areas and many curriculum areas. There is a satisfactory ratio of one computer to seven full-time equivalent students. Staff have the use of 200 computers, which are available in staff offices, and in a general workshop where staff can receive help in producing learning materials for the college's intranet. A reprographics unit provides an efficient service in producing copies of worksheets and information for courses.

56 The main learning centre at Barons Court is spacious and well used, as recognised in the self-assessment report. It contains 55,000 books, 417 study places and 124 computers. Two thousand students use the centre each day, and book borrowing increased by 24% between 1998 and 1999. There is a booking system for computers. At times, demand exceeds availability, particularly for the use of printers. Each of the seven professional librarians works with teachers in a particular curriculum area to enable the centre to respond effectively to learning needs. Library staff successfully maintain silent use of one area of the centre. The bookstock is good and has been updated, but in some curriculum areas it does not fully meet students' needs.

57 There are some places where access for students with restricted mobility is poor. At Barons Court, the access for students who use a wheelchair is through an unwelcoming basement entrance. People who use wheelchairs cannot gain access to some parts of the Olympia site.

# Cross-college Provision

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 3

58 Inspectors agreed with a number of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report, although they considered that some of them were overstated. Inspectors identified significant weaknesses that had not been recognised in the self-assessment report.

#### Key strengths

- effective integration of quality assurance process with the planning cycle
- rigorous monitoring and review at curriculum division level
- staff development closely related to strategic objectives

#### Weaknesses

- inadequate attention to retention and achievements in course reviews
- insufficiently developed lesson observation scheme
- incomplete implementation of staff appraisal

59 Since the last inspection, the college has made progress in developing a quality assurance system, which covers most aspects of the college's provision. Procedures have been implemented to improve students' retention and achievements across all courses. There is evidence that these are having an impact on improving standards. Retention and pass rates have improved overall, although the rates on some courses are low compared with those for similar colleges. Measures to improve teaching and learning are just beginning to have an effect.

60 Quality assurance procedures include: course review and evaluation; surveys of students' views; collection of information on retention and achievements; and action-

planning. As noted in the self-assessment report, students' views are sought through questionnaires, which are analysed centrally. Course teams supplement this information with other questionnaires which focus specifically on their courses. Changes have been made to course structures to take account of students' views. Most teachers are involved in reviewing their courses annually. A number of annual course reviews for 1998-99 did not include an analysis of enrolments, retention and achievement. Course teams rarely refer to national benchmarking data published by the FEFC or consider sufficiently the reasons for low achievement and retention.

61 The college has been slow to address the weaknesses in teaching and learning identified in the last inspection. As noted in the self-assessment report, college-wide standards for teaching and learning have now been developed. The standards were used as the basis for observing all teachers between March and May 1999. The observations contributed to the college's self-assessment. Another aim of the observation process was to support and develop teachers. Those teachers whose lessons were less than satisfactory received support from the staff development manager and their division manager. The director of quality and planning produced reports for each division, which included a list of the recorded strengths and weaknesses and a summary of the grades awarded to lessons. The reports did not focus on the quality of teaching and learning in individual programme areas within each division. Overall, the lesson observation system has been of limited value in sharing good practice.

62 The quality assurance process is closely integrated with the strategic and operational planning cycle. Managers are required to identify actions to meet the strategic objectives. All divisions have targets and performance indicators. The division managers have meetings four times a year with the principal,



# Cross-college Provision

the director of quality and planning, the director of finance and resources and one of the other five directors who make up the senior management team. At these meetings, there is a rigorous review of the progress made in meeting targets and carrying out agreed actions.

63 The self-assessment report notes that quality procedures are not implemented across all areas of the college's work. Standards have been developed for most, but not all, support services. Many of the service areas use surveys to find out the views of their users. All have regular meetings to review their work. The manager responsible for franchised provision checks enrolment and attendance at all centres. Teaching at the centres has been observed following the college's procedures, and students' views are sought. The centres all produce annual reports, but these pay insufficient attention to retention, achievements, progression or the quality of the teaching.

64 There are systems in place to check that quality procedures are carried out. The director of quality and planning monitors the implementation of the self-assessment process and reports to the academic board, the senior management team and the corporation. A quality audit is carried out to check that all procedures are being followed. However, the quality audit does not consider the comprehensiveness of course reviews or the quality of the self-assessment reports. Internal verification procedures are in place for all externally verified courses. The standards in the college's charter are reflected in the standards set for teaching and support services.

65 The self-assessment report cites staff appraisal as a strength. An appraisal system has been in operation since 1993 and it is intended that all staff should be appraised every two years. However, over 20% of staff eligible for appraisal have never been appraised and at least a third have not been appraised in the last two years. The college's strategic objectives

determine the key priorities for staff development. Individual needs are identified through appraisal and course review. A well-organised programme of staff development includes management training for 22 managers. All teachers are required to undertake a level 1 qualification in IT. Of all staff, 91% have achieved this.

66 Divisions carried out self-assessment of the curriculum at a whole day meeting of all staff. They drew on information from a variety of sources, using performance indicators, course review reports and summaries of lesson observation. Few of the reports make precise judgements about the quality of teaching and learning, often referring to planning and documentation rather than teaching.

## Governance

### *Grade 2*

67 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college in its self-assessment report, but judged that insufficient emphasis was given to weaknesses in the academic standards achieved by students on some courses.

#### Key strengths

- good range of expertise amongst governors
- governors' involvement in strategic planning
- consistently high standard of clerking
- effective working of committees
- effective links with some curriculum and service areas

#### Weaknesses

- little liaison with students
- lack of effective oversight by governors of students' performance

# Cross-college Provision

68 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

69 After considering the requirements of the revised instrument of government, the corporation has re-determined its membership to 16. The membership currently comprises six business governors, four co-opted governors, two staff governors, a student governor, and the principal. Vacancies exist under the new arrangements for two additional governors from the local community. The self-assessment report identified a need to recruit more women governors. The search committee has established appropriate procedures, approved by the corporation, for filling vacancies. The college already benefits from the broad range of skills and experience that existing governors bring to the corporation. A skills audit of members has revealed the need to recruit a qualified accountant to the corporation. Governors have good knowledge of the local community and the context in which the college operates. To promote an open approach to governance, the college management and governors arrange an annual open meeting to which staff, students and members of the community are invited. These meetings are well attended. There are effective arrangements for the appraisal of the principal.

70 Average attendance at corporation meetings is 75%. As noted in the self-assessment report, governors are updated on developments in further education through presentations from curriculum and service managers at the beginning of each corporation meeting. Additionally, there is an annual two-day conference attended by governors and members of the college senior management team. At recent conferences, governors have considered self-assessment, and the implications of curriculum 2000 developments.

71 Members have a clear sense of the distinction between governance and management. The corporation has established an appropriate range of committees. The terms of reference of the committees are appropriate. The committees concentrate on the detailed work within their remit, and report regularly to the full corporation. The corporation has a part-time independent clerk. The clerking is of a consistently high standard, effectively helping governors to perform their roles. Board and committee meetings are well planned. Discussions and decisions are clearly recorded. The cycle of board and committee meetings is determined in advance, and key items of business are identified. The papers for meetings are clearly presented and distributed well in advance of meetings. Papers are rarely tabled at meetings. Financial reports include graphical illustrations so that governors who do not have a financial background can more easily understand their content. The corporation operates in accordance with a comprehensive code of conduct. The code of conduct does not make reference specifically to the seven principles of public life as set out in the second Nolan report, but broadly encompasses its values. The corporation has established a comprehensive register of interests which is reviewed annually and which has been extended to all college senior postholders. Agendas, papers and minutes are available for public inspection in the resource centres on each college site. The terms of reference for committees, standing orders and rules on quoracy and other corporation documents are available on the college intranet.

72 Governors have made a significant contribution to reviewing the mission of the college and the development of the college's aims. They are involved in the strategic planning process and receive termly reports from the principal on the progress made towards the achievement of strategic objectives. The director of quality and planning provides annual reports to the governors on students' retention and achievements. Governors

# Cross-college Provision

question managers about courses where performance is poor and ask for explanations. However, governors have not yet proved themselves to be fully effective in overseeing the performance of students at the college. Governors have closely monitored the college's financial health.

73 Governors take an active part in college life, through attendance at exhibitions, awards ceremonies and other events. Governors' contact with curriculum areas was a weakness in the previous inspection report. A governor observes meetings of the academic board, and reports back to the corporation. Most governors have identified a division or service area with which they are developing links. Some of the links are very productive, and in a few cases have led to curriculum developments. Governors often give useful advice to college service and curriculum teams. In a few cases, links involving governors are newly established. Governors identified in their self-assessment report that they had few links with students. The recent appointment to the corporation of the student union president is a first step to strengthening relationships with the student body.

## Management

### *Grade 3*

74 Inspectors and auditors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in management identified by the college in its self-assessment report. They considered, however, that the report understated an important weakness regarding students' achievements and retention.

#### Key strengths

- effective leadership
- clear management roles and responsibilities
- effective communications across the college
- strategic planning involving all staff
- good financial management
- effective promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient progress in achieving strategic objectives relating to students' achievements and retention
- underdeveloped use of targets and benchmarking data at course level
- incomplete data on students' destinations

75 The management of the college is satisfactory. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the revision of management arrangements and the redeployment of managers have resulted in improved managerial effectiveness. Management roles and responsibilities are well defined and documented, through job descriptions. Curriculum management has been devolved to 12 new division managers who are effectively line managed by the principal. There is a clear policy of delegating authority to managers so that they can perform their roles more effectively. Managers are highly committed and confident. Managers have overseen general

# Cross-college Provision

improvement in students' achievements and retention, although the improvement has been slow. Recently audited college data on student achievement and retention rates indicate that these remain well below the national averages for similar colleges. Target-setting and the use of national benchmarking data published by the FEFC is underdeveloped at course level.

76 The principal and senior managers provide clear leadership within an open and supportive environment. A senior management team, led by the principal, includes seven directors who have the following responsibilities: finance and resources; adult, community and higher education programmes; information learning technology; 16-plus programmes; quality and planning; collegiate services; and employer sponsored programmes. It meets weekly, focusing on policy, strategic development and the monitoring of quality. Items for discussion are supported by carefully prepared, detailed papers. The curriculum management team, chaired by the principal, comprises the senior management team and the 12 division managers. It focuses on operational issues affecting the divisions and meets fortnightly. A college management group meets in a monthly conference which provides opportunities for many middle managers to meet and discuss a wide variety of topics. The academic board has recently been reconstituted. It provides a regular opportunity for teachers and managers to discuss curriculum developments. Academic board meetings are well managed; a strength identified in the college's self-assessment report.

77 Communications throughout the college have improved significantly since the last inspection. Staff are kept informed through a comprehensive intranet system which provides easily accessible information on all aspects of the college's work. The use of electronic mail has also had a positive impact on communication and a useful staff newsletter is circulated to all staff. Results of a recent survey on the effectiveness of the college's communications confirms that the majority of staff feel that they are kept well informed.

78 The college has developed a comprehensive management information system and managers receive an appropriate range of reports. However, data for two-year courses provided for inspectors had not been analysed to highlight the number of students who are withdrawing between the first and second year of their courses. Information on student destinations is incomplete and managers are unable to analyse issues affecting student progression. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that it has a well-developed and comprehensive process of strategic planning. The college adopts a consultative approach in seeking the views of its staff. Strategic planning is also informed by good market research and its links with the local community and employers. The current strategic plan defines the corporate aims it considers critical to its future success. These aims are reflected in all of the divisional operational plans. In its mission statement, the college commits itself to widening participation and to the encouragement of lifelong learning. It wishes to be a key partner in the economic and social regeneration of the area. The college is now perceived by the local community and a variety of public and private employers as a responsive and supportive partner. It is involved in a number of local initiatives including a schools project and a substantial regeneration scheme. It is also collaborating with other London colleges.

79 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The college has a large cash balance resulting from the sale of surplus accommodation and forecasts continuing surpluses on a historic cost basis. There is an appropriately qualified and experienced finance team. Senior managers receive monthly management accounts, which are fully scrutinised at meetings. Monthly accounts, providing concise and readily understood information, are prepared also for budget holders. The college's financial systems have been upgraded and provide managers with easy access to an extensive range of reports. A

# Cross-college Provision

comprehensive budgeting process, through which budgets are drawn up from course plans, is now in place and budget holders who have devolved responsibility receive expert help in managing their expenditure effectively. Governors and managers monitor the college's financial position frequently.

80 The college has a strong commitment to equal opportunities. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that equality of opportunity is evident in the college's procedures for appointing staff and enrolling students. Equality of opportunity is promoted and monitored through an effective equal opportunities committee and is an integral part of the college's work in widening participation and inclusive learning.

## Conclusions

81 The college produced a comprehensive self-assessment report, covering all aspects of the college's provision. The report served as a useful basis for planning and conducting the inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses recognised in the report. Some additional strengths and weaknesses were identified by inspectors. The college gave insufficient emphasis to weaknesses in student achievement and retention rates. Some curriculum areas of the self-assessment report gave insufficient prominence to weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors agreed with the grades awarded by the college in four of the curriculum areas. In two curriculum areas the grades awarded by inspectors were one lower than those awarded by the college. In the cross-college areas, inspectors agreed with three of the grades awarded but awarded grades one lower than those awarded by the college in two other areas.

82 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 (June 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	20
19-24 years	24
25+ years	56
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation)	32
Level 2 (intermediate)	25
Level 3 (advanced)	22
Level 4/5 (higher)	6
Non-schedule 2	15
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	192	628	9
Construction	323	401	8
Engineering	111	58	2
Business	630	1,514	23
Hotel and catering	244	386	7
Health and community care	373	287	7
Art and design	340	120	5
Humanities	659	1,518	24
Basic education	549	779	15
Total	3,421	5,691	100

Source: college data

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 70% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (June 1999)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	152	38	8	198
Supporting direct learning contact	58	0	4	62
Other support	102	2	10	114
Total	312	40	22	374

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

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£15,428,000	£15,426,000	£16,209,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£20.26	£18.43	£17.14
Payroll as a proportion of income	70%	59%	60%
Achievement of funding target	109%	101%	101%
Diversity of income	23%	22%	24%
Operating surplus	-£1,461,000	-£101,000	-£229,000

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

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

### Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	548	408	275	1,169	1,109	979
	Retention (%)	65*	76*	52*	74*	92*	60*
	Achievement (%)	17	37	49	15	29	28
2	Number of starters	978	725	904	1,346	1,300	1,410
	Retention (%)	69*	65*	67*	77*	73*	71*
	Achievement (%)	36	41	41	34	44	42
3	Number of starters	1,053	856	758	1,424	1,461	1,211
	Retention (%)	84*	83*	75*	80*	78*	70*
	Achievement (%)	51	48	60	47	50	52
4 or 5	Number of starters	-	-	1	145	112	157
	Retention (%)	-	-	0	93*	89*	86*
	Achievement (%)	-	-	-	54	67	48
Short courses	Number of starters	133	167	180	821	657	690
	Retention (%)	81	89	83	83	76	80
	Achievement (%)	63	61	55	56	63	78
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	274	413	538	3,407	4,564	5,270
	Retention (%)	94*	94*	93*	92*	97*	94*
	Achievement (%)	26	25	41	26	23	39

Source: ISR

-ISR data not collected

\*ISR data may not be reliable

## FEFC Inspection Report 37/00

Published by the  
Further Education Funding Council  
Website [www.fefc.ac.uk](http://www.fefc.ac.uk)  
© FEFC February 2000