

# Highbury College, Portsmouth

**REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
1997-98**

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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## Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

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

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

## Retention and Pass Rates

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

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

# Summary

## **Highbury College, Portsmouth** *South East Region*

### **Inspected February 1998**

Highbury College, Portsmouth is a large general further education college in the north of the city. Production of the college's self-assessment report involved governors and staff at all levels. The self-assessment process was rigorous, though some of the judgements about teaching and learning were not fully supported by evidence and the level of students' achievements was overestimated in some areas. Inspectors chose a sample of six of the college's curriculum areas on which to base their validation of the self-assessment report. The sample omitted computing, science, leisure and tourism, health and community care, media and journalism, and humanities. Considerable progress had been made in implementing the action plans arising from the self-assessment report by the time of the inspection.

The college specialises in vocational training and offers a wide range of courses from foundation and craft level to postgraduate work. The range includes courses in all of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Approximately 80 per cent of the college's students are part time and over 60 per cent are 25 years or over. The college is pursuing strenuously its aim to widen participation. This involves substantial work in the community. There are good links with employers and a wide range of local

organisations. Since the last inspection, the college has revised its mission statement, reorganised the management structure, and improved considerably its quality assurance arrangements and the support for students. The college is now well led and well governed. Management structures are clear and communication is good. The nursery facilities are excellent. Recent improvements in accommodation have greatly enhanced many areas. The standard of teaching is generally good. Students' achievements are well above national averages in most aspects of vocational areas, but far below them in some others. The quality of provision in catering and hospitality is outstanding, and it is very good in many aspects of basic education. The college should improve: poor results and low retention in several areas; some poor teaching; tutorial support for part-time students; the use of and access to management information; room utilisation; and access to IT on the various college sites.

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cross-college provision</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Construction	3	Support for students	2
Engineering	3	General resources	2
Business and management	2	Quality assurance	2
Hospitality and catering	1	Governance	2
Art and design	3	Management	2
Basic education	2		

# Context

## The College and its Mission

1 Established in 1963, Highbury College, Portsmouth is one of the largest further education colleges in the south of England. Its main 14 acre campus is situated in Cosham to the north of the city; construction-related training takes place at the Unicorn Centre, in the city centre. The college owns a former house at Cosham and uses this and other rented sites to accommodate its adult and basic education provision. Within a 13-mile radius there are three other general further education colleges, three sixth form colleges, five maintained schools with sixth forms and extensive further education provision made by Portsmouth University.

2 The college serves a population of nearly 325,000, which has higher than average proportions of people in the professional groups and in the partly skilled and unskilled groups. The college draws the majority of its full-time students from the latter group. Unemployment levels for Portsmouth, whilst falling, still remain higher at 5.8 per cent than both the county and national averages, with the highest concentrations to the south of the city. Nearly one-third of households have no means of transport and there are significant concentrations of lone parents. Ninety-eight per cent of the population is white and there are few people from minority ethnic groups.

3 Employment is concentrated in public administration and defence, business and property services, hotels and catering and the manufacturing sector. Projected employment growth is lower than in the rest of Hampshire owing to defence cuts, the effects of recession and the contracting-out of support services by large companies.

4 The number of Portsmouth school-leavers is expected to rise to 5,469 by the year 2000. However, currently only 67 per cent remain in education which is lower than the United Kingdom average. In addition, Portsmouth has

the highest rate of permanent exclusion from school outside London. The college has established close relationships with nearly 40 local schools and has been working with other providers to develop programmes to increase skills, motivation and personal aspirations amongst disaffected young people.

5 The college specialises in vocational training across many subject areas from craft up to degree and postgraduate level. It provides customised training and consultancy services to business. Individual students' needs are met through distance learning and flexible study arrangements, when conventional classes are not appropriate.

6 The college works closely with local organisations, colleges and other training providers in order to widen participation in the Portsmouth area. Current projects include the provision of non-vocational and basic education for adults, and joint research and marketing to groups of the community which are unrepresented in training and education.

7 In 1996-97, the college had 17,089 students of whom 3,170 were full time, and 13,919 were part time. There were 2,170 students studying higher education courses. Of the total, 82 per cent were over the age of 19. The college employs the equivalent of 500 full-time members of staff.

8 The college's mission is to be 'the highest quality provider of vocational and community education in the Solent Region'. It seeks to:

- improve services to actual and potential students
- make the college's curriculum offer more flexible and more accessible
- increase the effectiveness of college management systems
- use all resources efficiently and effectively
- maximise income and increase cost effectiveness.

# Context

## The Inspection

9 The college was inspected during the week beginning 23 February 1998. Inspectors had previously analysed the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other divisions of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college provided data on students' achievements, where possible, for the three years 1995 to 1997. In some areas, only data for two years were available because of changes in the management information systems. Data were validated by an inspector against primary sources, including class registers and examining body pass lists.

10 The inspection was carried out by a team of 15 inspectors and an auditor who spent a total of 63 days in the college. Meetings were held with governors, managers, other college staff, students and employers. Inspectors observed lessons and examined students' work, in addition to a wide range of college documents.

11 Of the lessons inspected, 58 per cent were rated good or outstanding. Seven per cent of lessons were less than satisfactory. This compares with the average of 61 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, for all colleges inspected

in 1996-97, according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. The average level of attendance in lessons inspected was 75 per cent, similar to the sector average for 1996-97 recorded in the same report. The highest attendances were in basic education with 90 per cent. Construction, hospitality and catering, and engineering each registered 77 per cent attendance and art and design was lowest at 69 per cent. The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected.

### Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
Higher education	1	9	4	1	0	15
GNVQ	1	4	3	0	0	8
NVQ	6	21	11	1	0	39
Other vocational	3	19	22	5	0	49
Basic education	4	3	2	2	0	11
GCE and GCSE	0	1	1	0	0	2
Total	15	57	43	9	0	124

# Curriculum Areas

## Construction

### *Grade 3*

**12 The inspection covered a sample of the college's construction crafts and built environment provision. Twenty-six lessons were observed. The inspectors agreed with the college's overall assessment of its strengths and weaknesses, but they considered that there were instances where the college understated its weaknesses.**

#### **Key strengths**

- the broad range of courses in a variety of attendance patterns
- well-planned and organised courses
- better than average results for students on technician programmes
- the outstanding facilities for craft students at the Unicorn Centre
- good links with local employers
- effective use of homework with craft students

#### **Weaknesses**

- some ineffective teaching
- poor students' achievements on many craft courses
- low retention rates on several courses
- some lapses of established safety standards

13 Construction provision is based on two sites. A broad range of full-time and part-time programmes enables students to obtain professional, technician and craft qualifications. Most programmes of study are based on modules or units which facilitate flexible entry and joint study arrangements and meet both students' and employers' needs. Some courses are rarely found elsewhere, such as national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in plastering and gas services and a higher national

certificate in facilities management. The college's self-assessment report justifiably identified the broad range of courses as a strength of the provision. Students travel from as far afield as Kent and Cornwall to follow courses which are not available to them locally. The construction crafts school has been particularly successful in link work with local schools and, through Project Warrior, with young people who do not attend school regularly. This project is funded by the training and enterprise council (TEC) to provide alternative vocational training for those below the school-leaving age.

14 Teaching and learning were judged to be better than satisfactory for around 50 per cent of the lessons observed. All course teams use detailed schemes of work. Craft course teams use some good materials which encourage students to study on their own and enable late starters to join courses. On too many occasions, however, teachers failed to check that students had learnt anything in the lessons. They did not use question and answer techniques effectively to promote learning. Students commonly copied notes from whiteboards and overhead transparencies for long periods of time. These weaknesses in teaching practice are not identified in the self-assessment report. There is a need to strengthen attention to safety compliance during practical craft sessions. Students were observed wearing inappropriate footwear, no protective clothing or not wearing the head protection that had been supplied.

15 Tutorial work, including action-planning for students' learning, is developing. Key skills are integrated with some programmes but they should be developed more in craft courses. Course timetables are suitably balanced to include a variety of theoretical and practical activity. Many students on craft courses receive additional learning support, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Tutorials are provided on all full-time programmes and there are plans to provide them for all other students.



# Curriculum Areas

16 Students produce some good assignment and project work. The best work is displayed in corridors and on classroom walls. The marking of students' work is fair and consistent, although teachers' written feedback to students is often not detailed enough to help students improve their performance and is frequently limited. The details of the marking criteria used are not made clear. The quality of some students' drawing and written work is poor. Craft students appreciate the regular setting of homework as a valuable contribution to their studies.

17 There are very good pass rates on some technician programmes and on a few craft courses, but these are in contrast with many that are poor. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Overall, pass rates on technician courses are above the national average but below on craft courses. On several technician courses retention rates were over 90 per cent. However, the trend is downward; it has fallen from 90 per cent in 1995 to the current average of 72 per cent. There are insufficient retention data for craft courses to arrive at an overall judgement. In a few classes, students' punctuality was very poor.

Absenteeism is monitored by managers and students are routinely contacted to identify the cause of their non-attendance.

18 Curriculum management in all areas of the provision is good. Course documentation is generally of high quality. Students' achievements are thoroughly tracked. An industrial liaison committee has recently been formed which is to be chaired by a governor. Industrial links have traditionally been strong.

19 Part-time staff, currently working within the industry, bring valuable experience into the classroom. Accommodation is of high quality. There is an effective programme of redecoration and replacement of furniture within the crafts area. There is enough equipment in most areas to meet the learning needs of students. Libraries and resource areas are well stocked with up-to-date learning materials. There is little open access to information technology (IT) for most construction craft students.

## Examples of students' achievements in construction, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Higher national certificate in building studies	Retention (%)	84	80	100
	Pass rate (%)	84	79	76
National diploma in construction studies	Retention (%)	87	77	100
	Pass rate (%)	92	92	43
NVQ level 2 brickwork	Retention (%)	*	*	*
	Pass rate (%)	*	41	64
NVQ level 2 plumbing	Retention (%)	*	*	*
	Pass rate (%)	*	64	41

Source: college data

\*comparable data unavailable

Retention rates could not be calculated accurately from the college data for some of the complex NVQ groupings

# Curriculum Areas

## Engineering

### Grade 3

**20 Thirty-one lessons were observed in the schools of electronic and electrical, mechanical and motor vehicle engineering. A self-assessment report was written for each school. The individual reports did not adequately address the quality of teaching and learning but in all other aspects they were comprehensive. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment of provision in the schools of mechanical and electrical engineering but considered that in the school of motor vehicle the quality of students' achievements had been overestimated.**

#### Key strengths

- good learning opportunities within practical lessons
- well-planned teaching
- attention to safety in workshops
- assessments, assignments and practical work of an appropriate standard
- course organisation and management
- the range and quality of engineering equipment

#### Weaknesses

- poor pass rates in most courses
- lack of effective teaching in some theory lessons
- poor retention on some courses

21 As indicated in the self-assessment report, schemes of work were available for all courses. Some provided comprehensive detail while others were just lists of topics. For some of the better lessons teachers had prepared well. They involved students in discussions and in question and answer sessions, used their own and students' work experience to illustrate the topic being taught, and made the learning experience an enjoyable event. In a small number of

lessons, teachers did not involve or question students and some were obviously not learning. In others, students were required to copy notes and diagrams from whiteboards when a handout would have been a more effective use of time. These weaknesses in some classroom teaching were not identified in the self-assessment report. The quality of teaching and learning in laboratories and workshops is good. Many students prefer practical work and enjoy developing their practical skills and competences.

22 The college had difficulty in producing reliable data on students' achievements on engineering courses in the form requested by inspectors. A high proportion of the students in each school are part time and many change the period over which they intend to study during their course. This has added to the college's difficulty in recording data. In the national diploma and certificate courses in mechanical and electrical engineering the pass rate has improved in each of the last three years to reach 66 per cent in 1997. Pass rates for national diploma and certificate courses in the school of motor vehicle engineering improved significantly from 29 to 55 per cent last year. These results are below the national averages published in the FEFC's national survey report on *Engineering* in 1996. Results on NVQs, and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) courses are also below the averages quoted in the same report. In its self-assessment report the college stated that students' achievements on higher national courses were good or excellent. However, results on higher national certificate courses have fluctuated in the last three years; they were above the national average in 1996 but more than 10 per cent below in 1997. A student in the school of electrical and electronic engineering won the project prize for higher national diploma students franchised from the University of Portsmouth in 1997. Three other students were also in the top five. A student attending the college won the Ministry of Defence apprentice of the year award last year.

# Curriculum Areas

23 The engineering schools are located in the large faculty of the environment and technology. The faculty and schools are well managed. The schools offer a wide range of courses from entry level to higher national diploma. The motor vehicle school introduced the NVQ level 1 in 1996 in an attempt to reduce the failure rate of students for whom a NVQ level 2 course was inappropriate. This course also proved to be too difficult for some students and, this year, the RSA Examinations Board (RSA) foundation course was introduced for students who have not performed well in school. These changes are identified in the self-assessment report as a positive response to students' needs. The school of motor vehicle engineering is also involved in 'Project Warrior'. The engineering schools have good links with local industry and run courses to meet individual company needs.

are good fabrication and welding facilities, although the workshops are in need of decoration. The electrical and electronic engineering school is also very well equipped with modern microelectronics and communications equipment. Computing and library facilities are well organised and provide adequate support for the current courses.

24 The engineering schools are well equipped for the wide range of courses offered. The four motor vehicle workshops are equipped to industrial standard and the engineering workshops have recently been reorganised and decorated. These are recognised as key strengths in the self-assessment report. There

## Examples of students' achievements in engineering, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Advanced vocational	Retention (%)	*	(90)	(80)
	Pass rate (%)	43	55	72
Intermediate vocational	Retention (%)	*	83	68
	Pass rate (%)	*	61	47
NVQ and C&G (two-year courses)	Retention (%)	*	(78)	(73)
	Pass rate (%)	*	49	58
NVQ and C&G craft (one-year courses)	Retention (%)	*	75	53
	Pass rate (%)	*	59	53
Higher national certificate	Retention (%)	*	(68)	(93)
	Pass rate (%)	75	87	69

Source: college data

\*comparable data unavailable

Retention figures shown in brackets are only for the final year of a two or three-year course

# Curriculum Areas

## Business and Management

### Grade 2

**25 The inspection included observation of 19 lessons covering courses at all levels. Although inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, the college failed to identify some weaknesses, including poor retention and achievement rates on some programmes.**

#### Key strengths

- enthusiastic and varied teaching
- effective planning for key skills on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) programmes
- well-presented student portfolios with helpful feedback from staff
- good students' achievements on professional courses
- effective internal verification systems
- continuous curriculum development in response to course review
- supportive links with local employers

#### Weaknesses

- low levels of retention on some programmes
- insufficiently-detailed written feedback on some assessed work
- insufficient workplace experience on the NVQ level 2 administration programme

26 The school of business and management was formed by the merger of two schools in September 1997. This merger has been generally regarded as positive by staff. Teachers are enthusiastic and are well supported by the school managers. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that course management is good.

27 The school offers a comprehensive range of courses including a higher national certificate in

business and finance, NVQ levels 2, 3 and 4 in administration, the certificate in personnel practice, Association of Accounting Technicians examinations, GNVQ in advanced business and GNVQ in advanced retail and distributive services. The GNVQ intermediate in business is no longer offered by the school and has been replaced by a college-devised programme which includes NVQ level 2 in administration, supported by two GNVQ intermediate units. Enrolment targets have been met and, in some cases, exceeded. A school target of 5 per cent improvement on retention is a key priority for all staff within the school this year. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report's identification of the recent increase in courses provided outside the college, and the range of full-cost programmes as a strength.

28 Although the quality of teaching is often high, in some lessons the teaching lacks lustre, and teachers give poor presentations which fail to maintain the interest of students. In the better lessons, teachers incorporate effective question and answer techniques which both check students' learning and ensure that they are involved in the work. Students work well in small groups. On the GNVQ business and retail and distributive services courses, there is effective identification and integration of key skills in students' assignments. In addition, in the GNVQ retail and distributive services programme there is a specific key skills development programme which enables students to work on any identified areas of difficulty. On NVQ level 2 administration programmes there is insufficient workplace experience and assessment resulting in an overreliance on evidence gathered during simulated activities. Lessons on professional courses make appropriate links between course content and the students' workplace.

29 The quality of students' written work is generally good, and work is marked and returned quickly. The school has effective internal verification systems which require all

# Curriculum Areas

assignments to be verified before they are given to students. This system has been extended to other courses. Students' NVQ portfolios are well presented and their work is generally of a high standard. There are good levels of achievement on professional courses. Teachers' written feedback on a small amount of assessed work is insufficiently analytical to help students improve their work. The self-assessment report identified the poor retention and achievement rates on the intermediate GNVQ business course. In addition, in 1997, there was also poor retention on the part-time advanced GNVQ business course and the higher national certificate business and finance course which was not identified in the self-assessment report.

30 Teachers are appropriately qualified, although commercial updating is necessary for some full-time staff, as the self-assessment report recognises. Most rooms are well equipped and some have recently been refurbished in response to the results of surveys of students' views. Students have good access to IT facilities.

## Examples of students' achievements in business and management, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
National Examination Board of Supervisory Management certificate	Retention (%)	100	89	94
	Pass rate (%)	88	90	85
Institute of Administration Management diploma	Retention (%)	70	69	83
	Pass rate (%)	90	95	94
Higher national certificate business and finance	Retention (%)	+	94	69
	Pass rate (%)	+	70	58
NVQ level 3 administration (full time)	Retention (%)	+	60	85
	Pass rate (%)	+	60	63
GNVQ intermediate business	Retention (%)	+	100	47
	Pass rate (%)	+	50	57

Source: college data

+no final year cohort completing in this year

# Curriculum Areas

## Hospitality and Catering

### Grade 1

**31 The self-assessment report was comprehensive and inspectors generally agreed with its findings. The resulting action plan was clearly written and considerable progress had been made in its implementation by the time of the inspection. Observation of teaching and learning has begun but insufficient information had been accumulated to provide a source of evidence at the time of writing the self-assessment report. Inspectors observed 16 teaching lessons.**

#### Key strengths

- well-managed teaching programmes
- well-qualified staff supported by a well-organised staff development strategy
- high-quality practical experience gained within realistic working environments
- strong links with industry both locally and nationally
- a good range of well-planned additional qualifications
- appropriate individual progression routes for students
- high students' achievements and retention rates
- well-developed school liaison
- good facilities and equipment

#### Weaknesses

- out-of-date library materials
- insufficient underpinning knowledge included on some NVQ programmes
- lack of appropriate variety in teaching and learning methods in some cases

32 The college offers extensive provision which includes NVQ levels 1 to 3, GNVQ

intermediate and advanced courses and a range of related craft specialisms. A degree is run in association with the University of Portsmouth and a postgraduate conversion programme with the University of Buckingham. Students' experiences and career prospects are improved by opportunities to gain qualifications in addition to their main programme. The knowledge and skills acquired enable students to take advantage of further career opportunities and encourage lifelong learning. The college recognises in its self-assessment report that the breadth and organisation of the provision allows ready access for those students who require part-time modes of study. There is very good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who, where appropriate, are included in vocational classes.

33 Programmes are well managed and have clearly-defined objectives and outcomes. Teaching on all programmes is effective and of a high standard. In a few instances, teachers failed to vary their methods sufficiently to take account of individual students' needs. Students' motivation and application is high and there is a good working relationship between students and teachers. The realistic working environments in the catering outlets within the school provide students with high-quality practical experience, as the self-assessment report notes. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for organising their own learning and charting their progress. This positive approach has developed their ability and confidence to the extent that they now initiate their own progression by booking competence assessments when they consider themselves to be ready. There has been considerable effort invested in the development of learning materials which enable students to prepare assignments and develop their knowledge with relatively little assistance from teachers. These teaching packs are clearly successful although a recent review suggests that some students devote too little time to developing the basic knowledge that they need.

# Curriculum Areas

Industrial links are well developed both locally and nationally. These enrich the quality of many programmes and some employers sponsor awards for achievement. However, industrial contacts could be further extended to provide students with a wider variety of work placements.

34 Targets are set and regularly reviewed for recruitment, retention and achievement. The need for close monitoring of attendance has been addressed and has led to improved retention and achievement rates, as illustrated by the school's own data in its self-assessment report. The poorest retention is on the diploma in hotel reception course and the college has recognised that there is still need for improved initial advice and guidance for students entering this programme. Pass rates on most craft skills courses are high. Well-organised assignment work for GNVQ programmes is being further developed in order to improve the number of merit and distinction grades. Good progression routes exist within the college for students who wish to develop specialisms in craft or

supervisory and management skills. Students' achievements for those identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been improved with the introduction of the Northern Council for Further Education multi-vocational course.

35 Roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly defined and understood. Courses are well managed and staff are involved in all aspects of curriculum development and organisation. Staff are appropriately qualified, and have a good awareness of industrial standards and requirements through well-established industrial links. There is effective learning and technical support, and sufficient administrative assistance for course managers, both strengths acknowledged in the college's self-assessment. The school is well equipped, and the recently-refurbished restaurant, the kitchen and teaching accommodation are of a high standard. Some theory teaching areas would be improved by the addition of displays of work and posters.

## Examples of students' achievements in hospitality and catering, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering	Retention (%)	*	*	*
	Pass rate (%)	91	92	91
NVQ level 3 advanced food preparation	Retention (%)	94	92	84
	Pass rate (%)	91	79	89
NVQ level 2 food preparation and food service	Retention (%)	84	85	86
	Pass rate (%)	84	81	81
NVQ level 1 food preparation and food service	Retention (%)	69	74	72
	Pass rate (%)	75	100	96
Southern Regional Council for Education and Training certificate in general reception	Retention (%)	+	+	53
	Pass rate (%)	+	+	75

Source: college data

\*data not available

+course not running

# Curriculum Areas

## Art and Design

### *Grade 3*

**36 Seventeen lessons were observed on a range of courses within art and design and furniture programmes. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report.**

#### **Key strengths**

- well-planned and well-managed courses
- the extension of students' knowledge and skills through a range of teaching methods
- realistic projects with good support from industry
- strictly observed health and safety rules
- the standard of students' practical work

#### **Weaknesses**

- some ineffective, uninspiring teaching
- some poorly-planned projects and assignments
- little work experience available to all students
- attendance and punctuality in some areas
- some poor advanced level examination results
- below average drawing standards in art and design

37 The college offers full-time and part-time courses in furniture, and art and design. These include higher national certificates and diplomas; craft and NVQ courses in furniture and interior design; a BTEC national diploma in interior design; GNVQ, general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) in art and design. Though there are currently 94 full-time and 191 part-time students, with this range of courses the number

of students preparing for any individual qualification, in any one year, is generally small. As a consequence, in order to make teaching groups economically viable, most groups combine students who are aiming at different qualifications. While this provision gives students a wide range of courses it makes planning, teaching and group relationships more difficult. The self-assessment report recognises these drawbacks in course organisation, but considers the provision well planned. Progression routes within the department are well developed.

38 Inspectors considered courses to be well planned; there are appropriate schemes of work and clear assessment structures. Most lessons are part of a project period which may take up to six weeks. Teaching is sound but does not always communicate to students an appropriate sense of urgency. Progress varies greatly between individuals and across different qualification groupings within the same teaching group. Assignment and project briefs do not always indicate aims and objectives clearly and are not broken down into shorter components providing students with regular targets to be met.

39 Students enjoy their courses. They receive good support from teachers through academic tutorials and the college personal professional development programme which is customised to the needs of art and design students. Teachers use a range of teaching and learning methods to widen students' experience as far as possible. This includes working on 'live briefs' such as the four-panel mural for a local primary school on which GNVQ advanced students are working. Students have worked with the young children in the school to develop the design brief. Intermediate students are working with a local secondary school whilst national diploma interior design students have recently completed the design for the decoration of a hair salon. This involvement of students in community-based projects was recognised as a strength in



# Curriculum Areas

the self-assessment report. Art and design students are expected to undertake research and make clear records as a basis for their work. In some portfolios, this was done particularly well. The school has good links with industry and provides work experience for some, but not for all, students.

40 Students' achievements on a number of advanced courses are poor but they are better at intermediate level. Punctuality and attendance on some courses could be improved and contribute to the lack of urgency seen in a number of classes. This issue is identified in the self-assessment report. Retention is poor on some programmes. Staff keep detailed information on early leavers, students' achievements and progression but these are not routinely analysed for planning and marketing purposes.

41 Teachers are all appropriately qualified and possess good skills for their areas of responsibility. They enjoy good support from their workshop managers. A recently-developed stock control system ensures that students are always able to obtain the right materials at an affordable price. Studios and workshops are suitable for their purpose, though machinery is often situated too close to workbenches to allow

students to work freely. Teaching areas lack appropriate displays. Library and computing facilities are adequate for most current programmes but need to be improved as more advanced work increases.

## Examples of students' achievements in art and design, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
National diploma and GNVQ advanced	Retention (%)	+	86	66
	Pass rate (%)	+	71	66
NVQ level 3 and C&G advanced	Retention (%)	84	91	93
	Pass rate (%)	76	57	66
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	+	100	89
	Pass rate (%)	+	50	89
C&G parts 1 and 2	Retention (%)	95	99	92
	Pass rate (%)	76	73	78

Source: college data  
+courses not running

# Curriculum Areas

## Basic Education

### Grade 2

**42 The self-assessment report on basic education was based on a thorough process of consultation involving all staff. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report, although they considered that some weaknesses in teaching were not recognised. Fifteen lessons were observed during the inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- the range of basic education courses
- the high quality of literacy courses
- basic education courses well planned to take account of the differing needs of students
- clear progression routes
- stimulating teaching, relating learning to students' experience
- effective reviews of students' progress
- students' increasing confidence
- sound management and effective teamwork

#### Weaknesses

- some inadequate individual learning plans
- some poorly-planned lessons resulting in unclear aims and objectives
- failure of some teachers to take account of the needs of students in their teaching

43 Since the previous inspection, the college has increased its provision in basic education. There is now a comprehensive range of courses with clearly identified progression routes to meet the needs of various students. This includes innovative literacy and numeracy projects, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and full-time and part-time programmes

for students with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Much of this work is done in community centres within the Portsmouth area, although some takes place on the main college site. The college's successful bid for single regeneration budget funding will provide additional IT resources which are needed to support the further development of numeracy and literacy programmes within the community. This expansion of opportunity is identified as a strength in the college's self-assessment report.

44 Most teaching is sound; often it is good. Teachers provide a variety of tasks to stimulate and maintain students' interest and relate their lessons to students' own experience of life. In some well-taught ESOL lessons, teachers ensure that students can cope with everyday situations such as talking to their doctor or going shopping. The high-quality family literacy courses increase parents' knowledge of how children learn as well as improving their own literacy. In some lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teachers do not take sufficient account of students' individual learning needs. The content of lessons is dissociated from the life of students and the worksheets used are often too complex for students to understand. This weakness is not recognised in the self-assessment report.

45 The faculty has recently introduced individual education plans for all students. Basic education course students have a termly progress review. Students record their progress in lessons, and against targets that they have agreed at the start of the programme. Following each review, subsequent targets for improvement are agreed. Education plans for students with learning difficulties are intended to be more comprehensive. They include plans for social and personal development, education, and individual learning. These set targets and define the means by which they will be met. Some of these learning plans are not sufficiently analytical in their identification of a student's learning difficulties and do not formulate

# Curriculum Areas

adequate teaching methods. The college's increased links with employers, allowing students with moderate learning difficulties to develop their skills further through work experience, resulted from the college's self-assessment action plan. These placements work well and employers are pleased with students' performance.

46 The standard of students' work is generally good. Students' commitment to their learning is high. Their growing confidence is reflected in their eagerness for homework. Parents on the family literacy course readily undertake projects with their children which effectively complement their work in class. All students have the opportunity to study for an externally accredited award. Students on literacy and numeracy courses are making very good progress. Some have started at entry level Wordpower and Numberpower and are now taking GCSE mathematics and English. They are justifiably proud of their achievements.

47 The management of the curriculum is effective, a claim made appropriately in the college's self-assessment. Course teams meet regularly and work well together to plan and review their work. The systematic procedure for evaluating lessons and students' progress is being used well by most staff. Course co-ordinators ensure that all staff are well informed about curriculum developments, organisational matters within the school and wider college issues. In view of the large numbers of part-time staff, many teaching entirely in distant centres in the community, this is a significant achievement. There is a strong team of volunteers who support teachers in the classroom. They are actively encouraged to study for a qualification in learning support and most do so. Most of the accommodation is satisfactory. The poorly maintained New Road building, which the college rents from the city council, is scheduled for closure and the college has been offered an alternative.

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 2

**48 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report's identification of the strengths and weaknesses of this provision. Considerable progress had been made in implementing the action plan resulting from the self-assessment.**

#### Key strengths

- the centralised admissions process and pre-entry guidance
- the new tutorial system for full-time students
- the careers education programme
- the nursery provision
- the management and co-ordination of client support services

#### Weaknesses

- some variability in tutorial provision for second-year and part-time students
- the small proportion of students using the curriculum support service
- the management of the support services for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

49 The college has addressed all the issues raised in the previous inspection and made notable progress in the organisation and delivery of its support services for students. Thorough planning and concomitant staff development have ensured the successful introduction of new systems, some of which have been operational only since the beginning of the current academic year. Indicators, such as the improvement in retention in some areas compared with the same time last year, provide evidence that the new systems are working.

50 Despite the competitive educational environment, the schools liaison team has

increased the number of schools with which it has contacts. 'Taster' and 'shadow' days, and link programmes for pupils at special schools help prospective applicants to make more informed decisions about their future. An enquiries line enables members of the community to receive information promptly. A guidance team offers impartial advice and guidance to those who are unsure about their education and training needs. This includes directing people to other educational and training providers. Such impartial advice is seen as a key strength within the self-assessment report. Project Warrior for pupils not regularly attending school is a notable success.

51 A newly-established centralised admissions service, reinforced by challenging service standards, has ensured that applications are handled more efficiently and consistently. Training of faculty staff in interviewing has improved the quality of the experience for applicants. In its self-assessment report, the college recognised that a minority of courses in the last two years have provided inadequate information in advance about the academic and financial demands of the programme. This has now been rectified. All students receive a welcome pack prior to enrolment.

52 All full-time and most part-time students have an induction programme to help them settle into college quickly and to introduce them to the facilities available. An induction pack with a checklist provides staff with valuable information and ideas. Most students find induction to be a positive experience. More work is needed on a few courses to make more effective use of the time. International students receive an additional induction to address their particular needs.

53 All new full-time students on level 3 courses or below are screened during induction, using the National Foundation for Educational Research basic skills tests in literacy and numeracy. The curriculum support unit

# Cross-college Provision

administers and marks the test papers. All students identified as requiring additional support are invited for interview to formulate an individual education plan. Only 38 per cent of those identified last year responded to the offer, although 70 per cent of these successfully completed their courses or proceeded to the next year. Seventy-three per cent of students at the Unicorn Centre identified as needing additional help are receiving support, a remarkable achievement. Tests used for students with learning difficulties are inappropriate. The work of the curriculum support unit could benefit from a more central physical and organisational location.

54 All new full-time students in the current academic year are allocated a support co-ordinator to look after their pastoral needs. Support co-ordinators effectively monitor students' progress and attendance, refer students for additional guidance or help where appropriate, and regularly update individual action plans. Their work is overseen and guided by a senior tutor in each of the three faculties. The consistent level of support provided for first-year and international students is very marked in comparison with that provided for other full-time and part-time students. This is noted in the college's self-assessment report. In a few areas, teachers fail to adopt a planned approach to the academic guidance of students and tend to wait until students reveal problems.

55 The college is innovative in having established a personal and professional development programme which ensures that all full-time students receive planned careers education. The programme is delivered in the hour timetabled for contact with support co-ordinators. Specialist aspects are provided by the careers co-ordinator or one of the careers advisers from Vosper Thorneycroft Southern Careers Limited. Relationships with the careers service are productive and the service level agreement meets college objectives.

Destination data are not detailed enough to be of use to inform planning.

56 Client support services have grown dramatically since the last inspection. The team is well managed and effectively co-ordinated as the self-assessment report indicates. The counselling service is valued by students and provides help of a good standard.

Accommodation and financial guidance services are delivered efficiently and sensitively. A recent inspection by Ofsted confirmed the high quality of the nursery provision. The student union is more active than it was at the time of the previous inspection.

## General Resources

### *Grade 2*

**57 Inspectors agreed with the majority of strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report. A few strengths were overstated, descriptions of practices were given rather than a judgement about their effectiveness, and a few of the strengths were negated by the weaknesses that accompanied them.**

#### Key strengths

- improvements in accommodation since the last inspection
- the detailed accommodation strategy
- the range of IT equipment at the Highbury site
- good workrooms for staff
- the food halls, coffee shops and social areas for students
- the spacious and well-stocked library at the Highbury site

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient IT equipment on open access at the Unicorn Centre
- poor space utilisation

# Cross-college Provision

- inequitable allocation of the library budget across the sites
- lack of a central record of the contents of the various learning resource centres

58 The college's main site at Cosham, in north Portsmouth, consists of 12 multi-storey teaching blocks, built in the 1960s. Since the last inspection the college has remodelled significant parts of its accommodation, including the reception area, the student advice centre and the student records section. The new food halls and coffee shops provide good refectory services and social areas for students; nursery facilities have more than doubled in size; and the motor vehicle, mechanical engineering and hair and beauty teaching facilities are much improved. There is a new sports centre, built with lottery funding. The positive impact of these changes is identified in the self-assessment report. Access to buildings for wheelchair users is improving. There is a lift for wheelchair users in the sports centre, and plans to install a chair lift to the floor above the reception area. A college 'disabled access group' identifies the needs of people with disabilities which can be dealt with through the college's minor works budget.

59 The Unicorn Centre, close to the centre of Portsmouth, is on a long-term lease. The reception area at this site has also been remodelled and provides a considerably improved information and reception facility. The third site, Cosham Park House, is a listed building and formerly a private dwelling. It has been repainted, and two huts have been replaced with an annexe. New ramps at the rear of the building give access to wheelchair users to the ground floor but access to the upper floor is not possible. The college uses other sites for adult and outreach provision.

60 A detailed accommodation strategy has been approved by the governors. It includes a priority to improve space utilisation, which is low. Timetabling and room usage are not

managed centrally, resulting in many spaces being used inefficiently. There is a professionally qualified estates manager. The sites are generally well maintained and clean. Some parts of the buildings require modernisation and refurbishment. There is a costed 10-year maintenance programme. The college has a well-managed security system.

61 The college has a good range of IT equipment with an overall ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students of 1:8. Although there is a ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students of 1:9 at the main site and 1:4 at Cosham Park House, there is a very poor ratio of 1:32 at the Unicorn Centre. The self-assessment report does not include this weakness. Open access for students to computers is good on the main site, very poor at the Unicorn Centre and unavailable at Cosham Park House.

62 There is an assets register and an equipment replacement policy. Most teaching rooms are well equipped with teaching aids, though some overhead projectors need replacing and many rooms do not have projection screens. A few teaching rooms are cluttered with obsolete equipment. Teachers' workrooms are comfortable and provide generally good working space. Staff are well served by a good central reprographics service.

63 The library at the main site is spacious and well stocked. It has almost 45,000 books, 303 periodicals, 548 videos, 48 CD-ROMs and one internet connection. There are 205 workplaces including those for computer use, and good multimedia learning resources. The book issue system and catalogue are computerised and there is a good electronic security system. The library at the Unicorn Centre is much smaller. Whilst it has enough books, periodicals and videos, there are only five computers on open access for students and no CD-ROMs or internet connection. There is no library at Cosham Park House and students have to use the library on the main site, about a mile away. The

# Cross-college Provision

proportion of the library budget allocated to the Unicorn Centre library is too low. The college recognises this. Library staff are linked with specific faculties to work with teachers to maintain appropriate library resources. This arrangement works better in some areas than in others. There are approximately 20 separate learning resource centres in various faculties and schools of study. Most are richly resourced. However, the main library does not have a central record of what is held. The college plans to centralise this information.

64 There is a well-publicised health and safety policy. A college safety committee monitors compliance with health and safety procedures. Health and safety procedures are generally followed closely. Safety audits are conducted regularly and reports are made to governors.

## Quality Assurance

### *Grade 2*

**65 The college has made significant progress in improving its quality assurance since the last inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths identified in the college's self-assessment report but felt that some were undervalued. Inspectors considered other areas of weakness to be significant.**

#### **Key strengths**

- the college's commitment to continuous improvement
- staff support for, and understanding of, the quality assurance policy and procedures
- the effective scrutiny process by the academic board and its committees
- involvement of staff, students and governors in self-assessment process
- the close monitoring of internal and external verification

- the rigorous monitoring of action plans to effect change and improvement

#### **Weaknesses**

- lack of reliability of data on students' retention and achievements
- little use of data in some reviews
- the imprecise targets for improvement in some operating plans

66 Following its last inspection in 1994, the college reviewed its mission. The resulting statement commits the college to providing high-quality vocational and community education. To ensure this, the college reconstituted its academic board and committees and drew up a well-conceived set of procedures drawing on the best of existing practice in the college. Effective action-planning is the key element of the process.

67 The quality assurance system is based on a common format of termly course review which includes consideration of the course organisation, internal and external verification, achievements, retention and the views of students. Course reviews are collated by programme review boards and then considered at the termly meeting of each faculty's quality assurance committee. Members external to the faculty ensure an effective assessment and moderating function. The summary reports from these committees contribute to annual operating and action plans. These set targets for recruitment, retention and achievement. A few are not precise. The processes for monitoring internal verification and the rigorous checking of action in response to external verification are well established. They have brought about some significant improvements although inspectors' judgements about teaching quality are similar to those in the last inspection. The assessment and examinations committee of the academic board scrutinises all aspects of students' achievements and provides

# Cross-college Provision

comprehensive and detailed termly reports to the academic board. The overall review system is rigorous and effective, a key strength recognised in the self-assessment report.

68 Support and administration departments are at different stages in establishing and monitoring service standards, as the self-assessment acknowledges. For example, the student support area is well advanced but the library is only at the stage of drawing up proposals for discussion. Support areas have a review process based largely on surveys of clients' satisfaction. Increasingly these are designed for optical mark reading which provides a speedy analysis of opinion. Information can be aggregated at different levels throughout the organisation.

69 The college completed its first self-assessment for the academic year 1995-96. The college considered it inadequate both in its coverage and judgements, and the experience served to identify potential procedural difficulties with self-assessment. As a result, the self-assessment for 1996-97, based on the new inspection framework, was a much more thorough and rigorous process. It involved staff at all levels of the organisation and incorporated external advice from another college principal and from the quality manager at a major local firm. Governors carried out their own self-assessment exercise. They also received progress reports on the college-wide review. The final report was approved by the academic board and subsequently endorsed formally by the corporation. The resulting document provides a generally realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses. The college had made considerable progress with its action plan by the time of the inspection.

70 Since the last inspection, the college has redesigned its appraisal scheme. All staff, both academic and support, are covered by the arrangements. In the first round, 98 per cent of full-time staff and 70 per cent of part-time staff were appraised. A lower figure was achieved in

the second round. The appraisal process is evaluated and, as a result, some appraisals were repeated and documentation was modified. All staff development activities are evaluated and their value to the individual and the organisation is assessed. In the current year, the college has undertaken a skills audit of all its staff in order to ensure that they are effectively deployed to meet current and future needs. The success of the appraisal and staff training schemes is clearly recognised in the self-assessment report.

71 The college changed its management information system in 1996. The new system is only just beginning to capture data satisfactorily on students' recruitment, retention and achievements which are consistent with statistics held in departments. This discontinuity provided some difficulty in the forming of sound judgements about academic performance during the inspection. Senior managers and the corporation still face the challenge of obtaining equally credible data from all areas of the college with which to make strategic decisions. Nevertheless, there are solid data within most departments and, in well managed areas, these are used to inform course review and evaluation, to monitor standards and to plan remedial action. Weaknesses and inconsistencies in course review, resulting from inadequate data recording, are not sufficiently acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Reports produced by the performance review co-ordinator and the quality manager are presented to the corporation every term, along with regular reports from the principal. The audit committee routinely monitors the college's performance against the six standard FEFC performance indicators and four of its own.



# Cross-college Provision

## Governance

### Grade 2

**72 Inspectors agreed with the strengths of governance identified in the self-assessment report. However, they considered that the report identified some of the weaknesses but failed to identify others.**

#### Key strengths

- a good range of experience which relates to the college's curriculum provision
- governors' involvement in strategic planning and the self-assessment process
- effective monitoring of the college's finances
- appropriate and effective committees
- governors' collective and individual support for the college

#### Weaknesses

- lack of a clear action plan to fill vacancies on the corporation
- a minority of governors without a clear understanding of their duties and responsibilities
- difficulties in interpreting the volume and range of data on academic performance

73 Membership of the corporation was recently extended from 15 to 18. New governors strengthened the links with Portsmouth City Council, a newly-created unitary authority, and greatly reinforced the educational representation. Other governors have experience in general management, hotel and catering, human resource management, journalism, finance, computing, engineering and construction. There is no member with legal experience. The corporation is seeking to appoint a new member with experience in

leisure and tourism and to strengthen its financial expertise. The self-assessment report emphasises that governors have experience which relates strongly to the work of the college and that they provide it with effective guidance and support.

74 The membership working party of the corporation searches for new members through advertisements and local contacts. Likely candidates are interviewed against an agreed job description. In the recent past, this process has failed to produce applicants judged to be of an appropriate calibre. The corporation identified this process as a weakness in the self-assessment report but did not identify a way of dealing with it. As there were two vacancies at the time of the inspection, one of which had existed for a year, and two members have declared an intention to retire, this is now a matter of some urgency. When appointments of governors are made, the minutes of the corporation do not always adequately record that they have been appointed in accordance with the instrument of government.

75 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 also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC. Comprehensive papers are provided to the corporation and its committees, which provide a sound basis for decision-making. Corporation and committee meetings are well attended. Each committee has terms of reference which identify clearly its responsibilities and relationship to the corporation. Financial monitoring by the finance and general purposes committee is effective, involving active consideration of a comprehensive set of management accounts. The corporation has not yet found an efficient and effective way of examining the complex range of statistics relating to students' retention

# Cross-college Provision

and achievements. The corporation has established a register of interests which is complete and has a wide scope. It includes declarations by all governors and also by senior college management.

76 Governors are actively involved in the strategic planning process, including consideration of the financial estimates which make the plan possible. These are strengths identified in the self-assessment report. A small group of governors joined senior managers in a working group to initiate the plan. This came before the corporation in outline and then, in a finished form, for approval. A similar process operated for the self-assessment report. The governors have not yet begun to review the strategic plan in a coherent way at corporation level and do not receive regular progress reports which would enable them to monitor progress against the annual objectives.

77 Most governors have a good grasp of the corporation's responsibility for determining the strategic aims of the college. They understand the need to realise these aims by delegation to an appropriate range of committees and to the principal. A minority of governors were much less clear about their duties and responsibilities and the means by which they were to be discharged. Nevertheless, members appreciate the distinction between governance and management and observe it.

78 The chairman appraises the principal annually. This appraisal, and those for all other senior postholders, are taken to the remuneration committee. The self-assessment report recognises the need to make the principal's review more focused on objectives. Governors express their confidence in the principal and her senior staff and are keenly supportive of the college. Governors' review of their own performance is still at an early stage of development.

## Management

### *Grade 2*

**79 Inspectors agreed with the key strengths of management identified in the self-assessment report but considered that there were weaknesses, not identified by the college, which qualified some of these strengths.**

#### **Key strengths**

- a demonstrable commitment to a new mission statement
- an effective strategic planning process
- a clear management structure
- effective communication
- sound financial management
- responsive and productive liaison with the local community

#### **Weaknesses**

- the lack of rigour in some operational plans
- the principal's extended span of control during a transitional period
- access to, and use of, management information systems

80 Since the change of principal in 1995 there have been major developments in the management of the college. New systems have been introduced to address the lack of strategic direction identified in the last report and to cope with the college's reducing unit of resource. There is ample evidence to confirm that these new arrangements are working increasingly effectively.

81 Consultation with staff has been used to produce a new mission statement. A new strategic planning process has involved governors, senior management and other staff and similar arrangements have produced the self-assessment report. The combination of

# Cross-college Provision

these initiatives has produced a new emphasis on the vocational nature of the college, partnership with other providers and diversifying the college's sources of income. There is a considerable degree of understanding of these developments and support for them amongst staff at all levels. Operational plans derived from the strategic plan vary in quality, and some lack rigorous targets, although these variations are not noted in the self-assessment report.

82 The management structure locates academic staff in schools within three faculties. Support staff are placed in college teams. Heads of school were particularly enthusiastic about the structure and the autonomy it gave them. Amongst staff in general there was a good understanding of the new structure and considerable support for it. A few staff displayed some uncertainty about the roles of faculty staff with cross-faculty briefs. The principal's line management responsibility for 14 people is too wide for effective control.

83 Good communications have played a vital part in the successful introduction of the new initiatives. The communications system is designed to promote the regular and consistent passage of information from the principal and other managers to all staff, and is claimed as a strength in the self-assessment report. Carefully-structured, timetabled meetings for all staff allow this. These meetings encourage dialogue and feedback and staff value the opportunity to meet in sessions which have a clear agenda, including a combination of college-wide and more specialised items to discuss. Meetings are reinforced by written communications and by electronic mail. The system works well with full-time staff but less well with those part-time staff who cannot attend meetings. Some staff feel their capacity to express their views, though improving, is still limited.

84 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the financial

management of the college is good and the college is in sound financial health. The budget planning process is well defined and clearly understood by staff. Budget holders receive accurate, timely financial reports and appropriate advice when they need it. There is detailed and effective monitoring of the college's financial performance by management. Management accounts include forecasts of the college's future financial position. The college's financial regulations are comprehensive and are being complied with. The college's internal and external auditors have not identified any significant weaknesses in the college's systems of financial control.

85 Staffing costs are budgeted to account for 65 per cent of the college's expenditure in 1997-98. Virtually all staff now have new contracts which give the college more flexibility in responding to enrolment patterns. Job descriptions are regularly updated as a consequence of annual appraisal.

86 The college has identified in its self-assessment report that it has extensive and productive links with external providers which allow it to respond to a range of local and national initiatives. It plays an active role in the local adult education partnership and is effectively involved with local colleges and schools. The college is emerging as a responsive organisation willing to work in co-operation with other providers. Employers share this view. Market analysis is good and is used to inform college actions. The college promotes the widening of participation in further education through a range of initiatives.

87 The college recognises that it has had difficulties in generating comprehensive and reliable management information. One action recorded in the self-assessment report is the plan to integrate the separate systems it uses, where that is appropriate, and the provision of easier access to the systems. Senior managers and some middle managers use the systems and are increasingly convinced of their value. Some

# Cross-college Provision

staff do not share this confidence and continue to use their own systems. The college needs to consider how far this is attributable to the systems themselves, to inadequate access or to lack of effective staff training.

88 The college has a range of policies including one on equal opportunities. Staff are aware of developments such as the recent policy on harassment. There is evidence of curriculum arrangements being made to provide equality of opportunity by ensuring that the provision takes account of the needs of students, individually or in groups.

## Conclusions

89 The inspection was informed by the college's second self-assessment report. It involved staff at all levels of the organisation and incorporated external advice from another principal and the quality manager of a major local employer. The resulting document was comprehensive and provided an effective document upon which to base the planning of the inspection. The report provides a generally realistic view of the college's strengths and weaknesses, although evidence in relation to teaching and learning is currently limited until the college has fully developed its own system of classroom observation. Most of the grades awarded by inspectors for curriculum provision were the same as those awarded by the college. Inspectors agreed with all of the college's gradings of cross-college activity except in one case where inspectors concluded that the college had underestimated its strength. The self-assessment report has been used by the college as an effective planning tool and considerable progress had been made with the action plan by the time of the inspection.

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

# College Statistics

## Student numbers by age (July 1997)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	2
16-18 years	16
19-24 years	19
25+ years	60
Not known	3
Total	100

*Source: college data*

## Student numbers by level of study (July 1997)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	14
Intermediate	21
Advanced	16
Higher education	13
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	36
Total	100

*Source: college data*

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	140	1,309	8
Agriculture	18	6	0
Construction	561	972	9
Engineering	690	1,536	13
Business	272	2,098	14
Hotel and catering	683	3,648	25
Health and community care	377	925	8
Art and design	270	228	3
Humanities	132	2,744	17
Basic education	27	453	3
Total	3,170	13,919	100

*Source: college data*

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (January 1998)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	186	149	15	350
Supporting direct learning contact	20	8	0	28
Other support	105	17	0	122
Total	311	174	15	500

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

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£16,909,000	£16,959,000	£16,572,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£22.80	£19.79	£20.02
Payroll as a proportion of income	78%	67%	71%
Achievement of funding target	87%	102%	104%
Diversity of income	33%	26%	26%
Operating surplus	-£2,065,000	-£413,000	-£798,000

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	71	32	23
	Average point score per entry	1.4	2.1	2.1
	Position in tables	bottom 10%	bottom 10%	bottom 10%
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	+	182	184
	Percentage achieving qualification	+	52%	77%
	Position in tables	+	bottom 10%	middle third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	101	84
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	40%	64%
	Position in tables	*	bottom third	middle third

Source: DfEE

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

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

+results not submitted by the college

\*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

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