

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**Joseph
Chamberlain
College**

May 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 23/95

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN COLLEGE
WEST MIDLANDS REGION
Inspected March - December 1994

Summary

Joseph Chamberlain College is a sixth form college situated in Balsall Heath, an inner-city area of Birmingham. The college provides good English language support for the 60 per cent of students whose first language is not English. Staff are caring and committed, the students of the college are well taught and receive good support and guidance. The college has close and effective links with local schools and community organisations and responds to their needs. The quality of the teaching and learning environment is generally good, particularly in the library, and most curriculum areas are well equipped. The college has begun to develop part-time classes and provision for adults. Transition courses are available for students who wish to improve their English skills before embarking on mainstream courses. The college has doubled in size since 1987 and has no plans for further major expansion. The college should develop a strategy for improving retention rates; review its management and administrative structures; strengthen its management information system; develop effective procedures for quality assurance; and ensure that its planning processes are effective.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	2
Governance and management	3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	4
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, including computing and information technology	2	Health and social care	2
Business	2	Art and design	3
		Performing arts	2
Leisure and tourism	2	Humanities and languages	2

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INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of Joseph Chamberlain College took place between March and December 1994. Curriculum subjects were inspected in March, October and November. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term and aspects of cross-college provision were inspected from 5 to 8 December. In all, inspectors spent 55 days in the college. They visited 138 classes, examined representative samples of students' work, attended corporation meetings and held discussions with a governor, college staff, students, local employers, parents and teachers from the college's feeder schools. Meetings were also held with a representative of the local training and enterprise council (TEC) and with representatives of the community.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Joseph Chamberlain College is situated just over a mile south of Birmingham city centre. It is close to bus and train routes and draws students from all over Birmingham and from beyond the city boundary. It occupies the site of a school built in 1967 and was established as a sixth form college in 1983 as part of the local education authority's (LEA's) reorganisation of education.

3 Sixty per cent of the students live in the inner-city area that includes the districts of Handsworth, Aston, Sparkbrook, Sparkhill and Small Heath. The loss of jobs in manufacturing in Birmingham over the past 20 years has not been matched by growth of the service sector. Unemployment in the city stands at 18.9 per cent (August 1994). In Sparkbrook, the college's ward, it is 40.2 per cent, and over 50 per cent for men only. The families of many students have limited experience of further and higher education. The college is committed to providing the strong, supportive pastoral structure that these factors demand.

4 The student body is ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse, reflecting the nature of the local population. Students have a wide variety of educational backgrounds. About 60 per cent of students speak English as a second language. The college offers a range of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses and courses leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Courses in English for speakers of other languages are offered at four levels and some of these courses have been developed jointly with community organisations. English language support is available at all levels. A programme for basic skills support is being developed in conjunction with the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit.

5 The college aims to provide opportunities for the educational and personal development of students in order to enrich their lives, develop their critical awareness and improve their job prospects within and beyond the city. Courses have been developed within clearly-established progression routes. Traditional routes enable students to progress to higher education or to employment from a two-year advanced course. It is also possible for those with overseas qualifications and those with limited educational achievement to spend several years on progressively more advanced courses.

6 The college has franchised GNVQ courses to four partner 11-16 schools. The links between the college and these schools, together with the development of community-based programmes, are specific expressions of the college's commitment to improving access for inner-city groups which are not normally involved in further education. The college has an extensive evening and weekend lettings programme throughout the year and sees this as part of its community development programme. It also offers evening and weekend courses in response to local need. The college seeks to maintain a working partnership with the city and provides community-based education, in partnership with the city's economic development department.

7 The college has always competed for students with schools which have sixth forms and with other colleges. This competition has intensified in recent years. In the 1983 reorganisation, the number of Birmingham schools with sixth forms was reduced to 25. There are now 42. The competition from seven of the eight former further education colleges in Birmingham has also increased. Colleges that are situated just outside the city boundary are also active competitors. The college's response has been to focus on its main strengths as a sixth form college, its strong system of pastoral support and wide choice of course provision.

8 The college's current enrolment is 1,312, which includes 988 full-time students. Over one-third of the college's students are over the age of 19. Percentage enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2 and enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area in figure 3. Given the current provision in Birmingham, and the college's view of the likely opening of further school sixth forms, limited growth is anticipated in the next two years.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 Staff are generally well informed of curricular developments in further education, but few of the staff asked were fully aware of the national targets for education and training.

10 The college has developed relationships with some 90 schools and there are strong links with about 24 of these. Links are promoted mainly by the four senior tutors, each of whom liaises with specified schools. School representatives speak enthusiastically about these links which include 'taster' days for feeder schools, talks at schools' careers evenings and participation in school industry days. Four schools now franchise courses from the college, mostly in business studies and care.

11 The college is an active partner in 'Compass', the local education business partnership. Students have set up a 'Young Enterprise' venture to market honey from beehives kept on the college roof. Links with parents of 16-19 year old students are maintained through open evenings, and regular reports on students' progress. There are productive links with regional and national professional bodies, including the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and the Midlands Arts Centre. A range of community links is in place, and the college is used by groups such as the Birmingham Chinese Society.

12 Arrangements have been made to facilitate students' progress to a number of higher education institutions including Cambridge and Warwick Universities. The college has compacts with the University of Central England, Coventry and Wolverhampton Universities, and has explored with the University of Central England's music conservatoire an arrangement to offer the first year of a degree course. In the past three years, the University of Birmingham has admitted six students from the college.

13 Links with the Birmingham TEC are tenuous. The introduction of an experimental, TEC-funded, weekend college failed to recruit. The college has only just begun discussions with the local TEC on its strategic plan.

14 The college lacks an overall view of its relations with employers and the needs of the labour market. Some information on the local labour market including data on the age of potential students and predictions of labour shortages have been used to inform its curriculum planning. It has links, of a varying nature, with 200 employers with whom it makes arrangements for work experience placements. The sample of employers consulted by inspectors were satisfied with the college's management of these placements. Other links with employers are not well developed. The college has not yet sent its charter to any employers.

15 Over one third of the college's students are over the age of 19. Mature students are well catered for and value the college's flexible and supportive approach. In addition to its support for adults and for students requiring additional English language tuition, the college provides a transition course for students who wish to improve their English skills before embarking on mainstream courses.

16 The college offers some evening courses, but most of the provision consists of full-time courses which run during the day. Courses are offered in science, computing, engineering, business, leisure and tourism, health and community care, art and design, performing arts, humanities, languages and basic education. The college has extended the range of courses in leisure and tourism, and computing. The portfolio of full-time courses in art and design is broad for a college of this size. The college also has a rich mix of European and community languages leading to GCSE and GCE A level qualifications. There are no part-time vocational courses and no access to higher education courses for adults. A foundation GNVQ course in art and design was closed because it failed to recruit sufficient students. It is college policy to maintain the spread and range of courses and not to set course enrolment targets except for evening classes.

17 The college has introduced substantial provision for language development and support for its students, including adults, who have little or no command of English. A new policy statement on English language skills has recently been adopted. The college provides language development for beginners, transition courses and support for students on mainstream courses. Nine teachers, six full time and three part time, and a classroom assistant deliver English courses for speakers of other languages. There are also separate groups for certificated courses such as Pitman examination courses. A screening programme for all full-time students has been conducted recently to identify the total scale of support required. The findings show that the level of need is high.

18 The college liaises closely with its feeder schools. Promotional activities include open days, clear and informative publicity materials and use of the media. In 1994, the college's market research included a student survey to identify the most effective ways of promoting the college. The results of the survey have informed the current marketing review. A new database of all contacts became operational in October 1994. One of its aims is to provide a mailing list of potential students. All marketing is undertaken by the teaching staff. The vice-principal (student services) is the chairman of the publicity committee which meets two or three times each term and determines how to spend the advertising budget. The press officer is a member of the art and design staff who spends a few hours per week on publicity matters under the direction of the vice-principal. The college recognises that its marketing strategy is not sufficiently explicit to enable it to respond effectively to the increased competition to recruit students. The strategic plan makes limited reference to marketing and there is no formal marketing plan or budget.

19 The college saved the Birmingham International Relations Bureau from closure in 1993 by taking it over from the city council. It is now a college company which promotes exchanges between students from schools across the West Midlands and students from European centres which are twinned with the city.

20 In recent years, the college has developed outreach provision for several groups. Since 1993 classes in core-skills including English, numeracy and information technology, and Bengali literacy have been taught in the Bangladesh Women's Employment Resource Centre. Several of the women have progressed to full-time college courses. Classes in core-skills for members of the Birmingham Chinese Association are also held in the college. Relations with the Chinese community are good and an arrangement brings 500 Chinese children into the college each weekend for schooling. A recent initiative is the teaching of information technology, English and numeracy to members of the Organisation for Sickle Cell Anaemia Relief. The college has high proportions of minority ethnic students in several curriculum areas. It teaches community languages, including some through evening classes. The 'word of mouth' marketing of some of these courses is not working so well as in the past. There are transition courses in science and business studies, and some students progress from these to GNVQ intermediate courses.

21 The college has an equal opportunities policy. An equal opportunities committee, set up in November 1993, has been meeting termly. Women students have their own common room which is well used. Positive action in marketing has helped to increase the number of women students and this year the college has more women students than men. The college library has a policy to include books and videos in community languages, although the prospectus is produced in English only. There is no creche on the college campus.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

22 The corporation board has 16 members. In addition to the principal, there are nine independent members, two parents, one member each of

the teaching and non-teaching staff, a student, and the nominee of the local TEC. At various points during the period of the inspection, there were five vacancies on the board. By the end of the inspection, this had been reduced to vacancies for one independent member and for the local TEC-nominated member. There has been no representative of the TEC since March 1994. The TEC had proposed a senior partner of a leading finance company but was unable to find a female nominee to meet the principal's wish for a better gender balance in the membership of the board. Three of the current members are women and 11 men. Six are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The college has advertised for a clerk to the governors, a post filled by the college's finance officer until the end of the autumn term 1994.

23 Much of the work of the governing body is conducted by a small executive committee comprising five independent members and the principal. This group meets twice each term. The executive committee has an investment subcommittee of three members. There are also committees for audit, remuneration, and curriculum, each having three members. The curriculum committee is chaired by a member who is the headteacher of a local comprehensive school. Despite the small membership of the committees, there is only one recorded case of an inquorate meeting. The vice-principals and other members of the senior management and administration attend committees by invitation, to present reports. The principal meets with the chairman of the board every two weeks for consultation on college issues.

24 The chairman of the board holds a senior position with a major national manufacturing company and is a leading member of a local community organisation. Individual members of the corporation have used their industrial and commercial experience to contribute to the initial development of the college's finance and personnel systems, and to the management of its estates. Other independent members have brought expertise in the arts, in community development and pastoral care for students. Governors have undertaken training using external consultants. All governors received copies of the Further Education Funding Council's publication, *Guide for College Governors*. The briefing papers which accompany corporation agendas have been variable in quality, and some are tabled at the meetings. Members of the executive committee were poorly briefed on some important issues affecting the college.

25 Governors are invited to all the main college events. They come to open days, the meeting for parents of new students, and occasionally attend the music and theatre performances produced by the college. The curriculum committee has recently suggested that governors become more familiar with the work of the college by visiting departments and by inviting teachers to give presentations to the committee. So far this has involved two departments.

26 There are two vice-principals reporting to the principal, one is responsible for curriculum and staffing and one for student support. They have line management of three heads of faculty and four senior tutors, respectively, and responsibilities for cross-college functions. Management styles are open and consultative, and communications are good. The

college has 18 committees and a number of working parties which together involve most teachers. There is also a weekly meeting of all staff. Staff work in an extended-family atmosphere. This friendly ethos is one of the strengths of the institution. However, the pursuit of such a high level of consultation has made it difficult for the college to respond to the rate of change since incorporation.

27 The proposal for a new management structure for teaching and student support focuses on the administrative and managerial roles of the vice-principals and on the academic responsibilities of a third tier. The plan is at a consultative stage and is not finalised.

28 The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 is £20.30 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.81. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

29 The 1993-94 strategic plan set a number of modest objectives, the majority of which were achieved within the anticipated timescale. The strategic plan for the three-years 1994-97 emphasises the maintenance of the college's distinct identity as a sixth form college attractive to 16 year olds and the development of a marketing strategy for recruiting adult students. The college failed to meet its enrolment target by December 1994.

30 The college has a policy to provide for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but few students have enrolled. The strategic objectives refer to continuing development of diagnostic testing for numeracy and communication skills, using materials of the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, and the development of learning facilities for hearing-impaired and visually-impaired students and for those with moderate learning difficulties. The accommodation strategy in the strategic plan does not include plans to improve access for wheelchair users.

31 The college purchased a management information system before incorporation which was designed for use in the schools sector. It is unsatisfactory for the college's current requirements. Two members of the academic staff have undertaken an in-house development of the system to provide more accessible data on student attendance and absence, registration, and examination results. The unreliability of the finance software package resulted in problems with the end-of-year accounts for 1993-94, and in May 1994 a chartered accountant was appointed on a one-year contract to help secure and maintain the college's financial system. The difficulties continued into the new financial year and the first set of accounts for the 1994-95 financial year, which were from August to October, were not presented until the December 1994 meeting of the executive committee of the corporation. At this same meeting the governors approved the proposal to use a consultant, jointly with another sixth form college, to explore the availability of other management information systems.

32 The college's potential to plan effectively is hampered by the unreliability of some of the data and the varying formats in which data is presented. Some performance data, such as examination results and statistics on progression and retention, are received by governors.

However, they have yet to be used effectively to inform college-wide planning. There is no history of year-on-year evaluation of performance indicators.

33 Students may study religious studies at GCSE and GCE A level. However, the college does not provide a weekly act of collective worship as required under section 44 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

34 The college has well-developed procedures for recruitment which are clearly stated in the prospectus and in other documents. Potential students are provided with information at presentation events, taster and open days.

35 Students receive effective guidance at an initial interview which is focused on suitability of courses and the students' career aspirations. There are specific criteria for entry to each programme. If the criteria are not met and appropriate provision is unavailable, applicants are provided with counselling for suitable alternatives.

36 Enrolment is well planned and well organised, but the content and quality of advice given during enrolment varied. There is a documented policy for assessing and accrediting students' prior learning and experience, but the implementation of the policy is not well developed and has yet to be fully tested in practice. There are thorough procedures in place to allow students to transfer between programmes based on the involvement of the student, subject teachers, tutors, senior tutors and heads of department. Transfer only occurs when written permission is given by the two heads of departments concerned.

37 The college has a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. Students are quickly introduced to college life. The induction programme includes a thorough introduction to the library. Induction assignments are used to familiarise students with college services and course requirements. In both the GNVQ and NVQ programmes, the students' responses to these assignments were followed up effectively. In some other areas, the course induction was not of such a consistently high quality. Those identified as needing support in numeracy and literacy are provided with additional teaching, individually and in groups.

38 There is a well-developed tutorial system which recognises the differing needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. A particular strength is the provision of tutor support for students whose first language is not English. Senior tutors hold monthly meetings to provide tutors with support and guidance. They also provide training for staff on the college's enrolment procedures and counselling.

39 Tutors are caring and supportive of students' needs. Regularly-timetabled group tutorials are supplemented by scheduled tutorials for individual students. Students are referred to senior tutors if there is a particular concern. Good use is made of outside agencies to give assistance where appropriate. There are regular pastoral reports on students which are used to monitor their progress.

40 Comprehensive careers education and advice is available to all students. Guidance on higher education is particularly well developed. The college provides a well-resourced careers centre, which includes appropriate up-to-date software, and additional facilities are provided in the library. There is a good relationship with the Birmingham City Careers Service whose staff provide students with individual interviews and counselling.

41 Tutors undertake a termly review of each student's progress using an individual record. Students contribute to the discussion of their attainments, goals and next steps. In vocational education, this process is better developed with students encouraged and enabled to produce personal records of achievement. In other areas there is only the termly review.

42 The accuracy of registers has now been improved and attendance is monitored effectively. Students with persistent absences are monitored carefully; reasons are sought for poor attendance; and appropriate action is taken, where necessary. A number of students have poor records of attendance.

43 Students are advised of their rights and responsibilities through the student handbook and diary and the college charter. Extracts from the college charter are featured in both the student diary and the prospectus.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

44 Strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses in 65 per cent of the 138 sessions. The following table summarises the grades given to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		10	31	13	2	0	56
GCSE		3	14	8	0	0	25
GNVQ		2	5	10	2	0	19
Other		10	15	11	2	0	38
Total		25	65	42	6	0	138

45 All programme areas had coherent schemes of work and most had clear aims and objectives which were shared with the students. There was evidence of well-planned teaching. In the better sessions the objectives of the lesson were clearly stated. Students were encouraged to learn and were well motivated. Staff were friendly and supportive. In many classes, the teaching was lively and students responded well to varied learning activities. Many teachers employed teaching methods that were sensitive to those students whose first language was not English. Less successful sessions were characterised by ineffective teaching, inappropriate learning materials or low levels of response from students.

46 Teachers regularly set and mark assignments. These are assessed fairly and usually handed in and returned by agreed deadlines. The feedback given to students is generally helpful, but some teachers' comments were not sufficiently detailed to help students see how they could improve. Teachers in most curriculum areas regularly reviewed students' learning and informed them of their progress. The college keeps good records of students' achievements but in business they failed to ensure that students covered the appropriate range of competencies. There is a well-documented appeals procedure.

47 Good schemes of work in science assisted students' learning and ensured adequate coverage of the syllabus. Teachers made effective use of computer programmes and other learning materials to support their teaching.

48 Students received clear practical instructions and their progress was regularly tested. There was good attention to the development of literacy and numeracy skills, especially in physics. There were far fewer examples of the similar development of oral skills. The quality of teaching on the transition course for students with little practical science experience and limited English language skills was outstanding.

49 Computing classes had coherent study programmes and staff kept good records of students' achievements. The rapport between staff and students was productive and the students were well motivated. Several sessions involved students in a good range of activities. Students responded well to the questions posed by teachers. A small number of students were failing to make adequate progress in a class from which there had been a particularly high level of student withdrawals.

50 Most teaching sessions in business studies were effective. Presentations were well planned and teachers used technical language at the appropriate level. They stated the objectives of their lesson clearly. Teachers generally communicated ideas successfully, but there was little use of visual stimuli to help the less able students. Students receive helpful guidance and their work is carefully monitored. In a few less successful classes the pace of work was too slow, or the language used was too difficult for some students. Many classes included students whose first language was not English. These students struggled but could generally cope until required to write. The standard of some of their written work was poor.

51 The programme of teaching and learning in leisure and tourism was well planned and delivered. Teaching methods were varied and classroom activities well organised. Out-of-date computer equipment had an adverse affect on the quality of some of the learning. Students received individual guidance and support, including good feedback on the quality of their work and the progress they were making.

52 Teaching in health and social care was based upon a clear understanding of the needs and abilities of students. Many of the students had come to the college with limited ability to speak and write English. A specialist language teacher provided additional support to help with language development. Attention was paid to developing students' study skills, including learning how to find the information they needed.

Students' interest was motivated by the varied topics and the wide range of classroom activities. Much of the work consisted of practical tasks carried out in small groups. One example of good practice was a session in which students, working in such groups, prepared for a health promotion exhibition. They produced posters which showed a good appreciation, both of poster design and of the health promotion issues. Not all the sessions observed were as productive. Some contributed little to students' understanding of their subjects. In a number of classes teachers paid inadequate attention to students' need for a summary of the key points which had been covered.

53 Most of the teaching in art and design programmes was thorough but uninspired. It often did not stimulate appropriate creative responses and some students were insufficiently challenged. Good records are kept of students' work and their progress is reviewed regularly. Assignments were spread over too long a period. Many students applied themselves well, although some were observed to be unoccupied for long periods. Little advantage was taken of the potential for group work or for team teaching. Characteristically, each member of staff taught in his or her own studio space with little reference to the students' activities elsewhere. The teaching in photography was lively and supported by good resources. Students appeared more involved than in other areas of art and design and they produced high-quality work. The recently-introduced GNVQ courses required a more specific vocational content and had not been adequately planned.

54 Much of the teaching in performing arts was of a high standard. The work was lively and students learned successfully. Teachers deployed their teaching skills effectively through well-planned sessions. Varied methods of working made most sessions interesting and challenging for students. There were good opportunities for students to work on their own with guidance from teachers. The briefs for assignments had clear objectives and assignments were regularly set and fairly assessed. The amount and quality of written comments on students' work varied. In a minority of sessions teachers failed to manage the lesson time effectively or to control discussion. In some practical sessions, teachers did not intervene sufficiently to check students' learning and guide them in taking notes. There were adult students in most classes and they worked well together with the younger students.

55 English and modern language lessons were well planned and delivered and some of the work was imaginative. Relationships between teachers and students were almost universally friendly and supportive and the atmosphere in sessions was purposeful. Some teachers succeeded in engendering a sense of excitement about language in their lessons. Work was regularly set and marked. The additional support in English language, provided for students who require it, was well organised and delivered but teaching materials require further development. One GCE A level language translation class, for students whose first language was not English, provided an excellent example of English language support, where team-teaching was used to help students to produce a fluent English version of the text.

56 In other humanities subjects there were clear schemes of work and classroom activities were well planned. There was a disciplined atmosphere in the classroom moderated by humour and sensitivity. Students were guided carefully towards examination targets and the marking and grading of work was generally thorough and sensitive. The provision for English language support was again good. Learning materials were used well and effectively in some classes. There was some variance in the quality of the development of oral skills. In some less successful sessions, the pace of work was too slow, and students were sometimes insufficiently challenged.

57 In those curriculum areas where group work was a part of the course, such as English, health care and performing arts, students worked effectively and were happy to contribute ideas to discussion and to practical work. In history and psychology, there were some good examples of small group work. There was little group work in art and design or in science. Some students preferred to work alone, or remained relatively silent in class but there were observable improvements in self confidence as a result of the better organised group work sessions. In language classes, where students were given the opportunity to work in small groups independent of the teacher, they made more use of the language they were learning. In subjects where practical or workshop activity was part of the course, students carried it out competently and they were well inducted to health and safety procedures for workshop practice. Inspectors had concerns about minor aspects of safety in some of the science sessions observed. The college has only recently purchased laboratory coats for use in practical lessons.

58 There is evidence of information technology activity in a number of curriculum areas, extending in several instances to substantially more than wordprocessing. Compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database press-cuttings are used by students of French. In other areas such as art and design, and leisure and tourism the use of information technology was too limited or not as effective as it might be. Students receive guidance on the use of information technology in those subjects where it is integral to the course, but other students have not received much formal guidance on its use.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

59 Students aged 16-18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1993-94 scored, on average, 4.0 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector, based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. There were notable successes in performing arts and theatre studies, with pass rates of 88 and 80 per cent, and higher grade (A-B) passes of 59 and 12 per cent, respectively. Eight subjects had 100 per cent pass rates. These were: Arabic, art, Chinese, dance, English literature, French, German and textiles. Both chemistry and photography had over 90 per cent pass rates, whilst a high proportion of students gained A-B passes in Arabic (83.3 per cent), Bengali (66.7 per cent), computer studies (33.3 per cent), and Urdu (58.3 per cent). Pass rates of 50 per cent or less were recorded in accounting, film studies,

general studies and mathematics. There were no passes in design. Overall average pass rates, both at grades A-B and A-E, were 7 per cent below the provisional average pass rates for sixth form colleges. The figures for 1993 were similar.

60 In 1993 and 1994, the college participated in the Advanced Level Information System value-added survey. This shows that many students obtained better GCE A level results than would have been predicted from their achievements at GCSE. The value added was most marked for physics, theatre studies and geography in 1993 and for biology in 1994.

61 In recent years, the GCSE results in languages have, with the exception of Spanish, been good. In many cases all students entered achieved A-C grades. In 1994, the pass rates in art, dance, media studies, music technology, photography and religious studies were high, and there were considerable improvements in biology and chemistry. There were no A-C grade passes in electronics or history. Despite an improvement in mathematics results in 1994, fewer than 40 per cent of students who sat mathematics and English achieved grades A-C. In 1994, there were 723 entries at GCSE and the overall pass rate, at grades A-C, was 46 per cent. This is an improvement on 1993. The average pass rate for all sixth form colleges in 1993 was approximately 50 per cent.

62 Comparison with national data on the vocational results achieved by 16-18 year olds in national diploma examinations is unrealistic, because only nine students from this age group took examinations in 1994. The Business and Technology Education Council's (BTEC's) national diploma courses in business and finance, and in nursery nursing attract mainly students in their twenties. Almost all second-year students achieved a pass but the drop-out rate for these courses was high, resulting in overall pass rates of 64 per cent for business and finance and 52 per cent for nursery nursing. The best vocational results were for the BTEC first diplomas in business and finance which had an 80 per cent pass rate. GNVQ foundation courses were available in four subject areas but, in all except health and social care, the pass rate was below 50 per cent. There were some merit and distinction passes in GNVQ courses.

63 A proof copy of the examination results document which is circulated to schools was available at the time of inspection. This gives the percentages of full-time students proceeding to higher education, further education or employment. Details were only available for higher education destinations at the time of the inspection. These indicated that about a third of 16-18 year old leavers proceeded to higher education, a substantial proportion of them to study humanities and performing arts.

64 Students achieve good levels of success at basic and elementary levels in English for speakers of other languages examinations. There were notable achievements in a range of sports leadership awards, in media techniques, television and video competencies and in graded tests of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, where all entries for practical examinations were successful and almost half gained a merit or distinction. Twenty-three of the students entered for theory examinations gained distinctions.

65 Students enjoyed their studies and most were well motivated. Many students, including some who had only been speaking English for a relatively short time, were able to describe their work clearly and with understanding. The smaller number of evening students, unemployed students and some who had recently arrived in the country spoke appreciatively of the opportunities gained through their study and in some cases of how courses were assisting them to develop skills relevant to their future choice of career.

66 Assignments were well presented in coursework folders and portfolios. In leisure and tourism, although there were good standards of written work, some achievements were heavily dependent on strong staff support. Students of modern languages acquired the core skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, few used the language they were studying for normal communication purposes in the classroom and often they reverted to English for quite simple utterances. Low retention rates caused problems in many curriculum areas such as English, performing arts and languages, where small class sizes made it difficult to develop a group dynamic. The progress of some students was hindered by lateness and absence.

67 In several subjects, students were held back by language difficulties. Written English in particular caused problems, especially for students studying modern languages at GCE A level, or those whose studies necessitated familiarity with technical vocabulary, such as legal or business terms. There is extensive help for English for speakers of other languages but students were not always given sufficient support to overcome their problems with literacy. Programmes for developing appropriate core skills and study skills in vocational art and design courses were not well defined. However, mathematical core skills were being developed effectively in physics, and there was good attention to study skills and problem-solving skills on some GCE A level courses.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

68 Many of the college procedures for quality assurance are of recent origin and have yet to be tested.

69 The National Charter for Further Education was distributed to all members of the teaching staff. The college charter is in place having been produced as a result of wide consultation and it has been circulated to students. Staff and students are well aware of the contents which include a significant number of measurable targets. Not all staff are convinced of the need for formally published standards and there is limited understanding of the purpose and processes of quality monitoring and assessment.

70 The college has designated a quality assurance co-ordinator and established a quality committee. The committee has been established recently and has held only two meetings. Its remit includes all areas of college work and its membership includes non-teaching staff. A major focus of its work is to systematise review procedures and address relevant items in the strategic plan. A quality policy was presented to the corporation's executive committee in October 1994 and was subsequently

adopted by the college. It will not be presented to the full corporation for formal adoption. The policy document is undated, and policy is described in outline only. There are no measurable targets and there is no reference to those responsible for taking action. There is no reference to standards and no accompanying strategy.

71 The college's use of performance indicators is not well established. There has been some work on the collection and analysis of indicators, particularly on retention and completion rates, but no targets are set against which progress can be measured. Statistics produced are often unreliable and not easily available in a form which can be checked. Year-by-year trends are not analysed in depth to assist the college in evaluating its performance.

72 The college has produced an assessment of its own quality, using the seven headings from the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The assessment does not contain cross-references to supporting documents. Points are listed without an indication of whether they are strengths or weaknesses. However, two areas of work are listed as strengths and this accords with the findings of the inspection team.

73 Quality monitoring and assessment in the college consist mainly of the twice-yearly departmental reviews which have been in place for a number of years. They include student feedback obtained by the use of an extensive questionnaire, although students are not involved in review meetings. A college-wide review of student satisfaction is undertaken and evaluations of students' progress on work experience are sought from employers. There is little recorded evidence of the analysis of feedback influencing planning and change. The college strategic plan includes an intention to make use of student and community evaluation.

74 Departments with vocational courses have a well-developed quality review system which takes account of the reports of external assessors but the diversity of review systems across the college leads to inconsistency. Most reviews are not conducted with sufficient rigour and there are no formal systems in place to implement such changes as are required. The absence of measurable targets and performance indicators in departmental reviews is reflected in a lack of precision in departmental plans. There is a corresponding lack of measurable targets in the operating statement contained within the strategic plan.

75 The college budget for staff development in 1994-95 is £12,600, approximately 0.4 per cent of total expenditure. The current staff-development plan sets college priorities and reflects some aspects of the strategic plan. It includes a detailed programme for Training and Development Lead Body training but so far only one member of staff has been trained as an adviser for the accreditation of prior learning and five other members of staff trained as internal verifiers and assessors. The college intends to make a commitment to Investors in People and has drawn up an action plan. The majority of staff responses to the Investors in People initiative have not been positive.

76 An appraisal scheme has been drawn up, based on the scheme produced by Birmingham LEA. The original timescale envisaged that all teaching staff would have received an appraisal by the end of the academic year 1993-94. To date, only the principal and one vice-principal have undertaken appraisal and between 70 and 80 per cent of staff have received training. It is not clear how the remaining appraisal programme scheme will be developed.

77 In the past, staff have referred themselves for staff development, either on an individual basis or in consultation with their head of department, as and when suitable courses were available. There is evidence that the needs thus identified were met. Staff development priorities have included both curriculum updating and management training and funding has been provided to obtain post-graduate teaching qualifications. Opportunities for staff to discuss their professional development needs in the context of departmental and college priorities and plans have varied between departments. Strategies for meeting staff development needs, disseminating outcomes and evaluating the effectiveness of the various activities have been similarly dependent on individual departments, rather than on whole-college policies and procedures. The college has recognised the importance of ensuring greater consistency and has re-established the professional development committee which has a remit to include the needs of non-teaching staff. It is in the process of drawing up a staff development policy which will include evaluation of professional development activities. There is a need to ensure that all staff receive professional training to enable them to undertake new responsibilities. These developments will need to be supported by a college-wide programme of staff review and appraisal.

78 There is a brief induction programme for new staff, mainly concerned with information giving. Effective day-to-day support is provided by the heads of department. While this support is valued, a more structured induction programme which includes the provision of consistent support for all newly-appointed staff would be helpful.

RESOURCES

Staffing

79 Of the total of 86 teaching staff, 49 are female and 37 male. There are four women among the group of 10 senior managers which includes the principal, vice-principals, senior tutors and heads of faculty. Eight of the 19 heads of department are women. The support staff includes six technicians. The college buys in the services of 10 peripatetic music teachers and good use is made, on an occasional basis, of professional companies and performers as teachers in performing arts workshops.

80 The teaching staff are highly committed with a good balance of age and experience. Fifty-three have a first degree or equivalent and 17 have higher degrees. Seventy-six per cent hold a teaching qualification. Eleven staff have relevant industrial, commercial and other vocational experience but there will be a need for more vocational experience and updating if staff are to deliver new GNVQ courses successfully. Increasing use is being made of part-time and sessionally-paid teachers to deliver outreach and evening work.

81 Administrative and technical support staff are on the whole suitably professionally qualified and some hold first degrees. Support staff are in heavy demand and insufficient in number to cater fully for current needs. The college has a policy to employ more specialists in this area, for example in the library and for finance and personnel functions. Some of these staff work only on a part-time basis so that senior teaching staff continue to carry a heavy administrative and support load.

Equipment/learning resources

82 The classrooms and laboratories are well supplied with good-quality teaching aids and specialist equipment. The large music studio contains a grand piano and an excellent range of percussion instruments. The drama studio/hall has an impressive lighting and sound system, and a roll-out dance floor. The language laboratory is shortly to have satellite television added. This laboratory is to be made available as a college-wide facility so that students of other subjects can make use of it. In the sciences, there is a good range of laboratory equipment, glassware and other specialist apparatus. In art, there is an extensive range of equipment in each of the specialist areas of visual studies, design crafts, photography, ceramics and to a lesser extent textiles. Texts to support teaching and learning, and other aids were relevant and appropriately designed. Much of this material is kept in the classrooms or the departmental office so students have easy access to it. The quality and quantity of furnishings and furniture throughout the college are good.

83 Information technology forms part of the curriculum in a number of areas including sociology, psychology, caring, science, mathematics, English and business studies. The number of computer workstations available for student use is high, with a student to computer ratio of 5.3:1. On the specialist computing courses, the students have good access to a range of appropriate hardware and software applications. During the specialist inspections information technology equipment in science, business and leisure was judged to be old and was unable to support the latest versions of software applications available in other parts of the college. Access to appropriate information technology was also limited for art and design and business students. Students' access to printers was inadequate in many parts of the college. By the time of the team inspection, the college had upgraded and replaced a number of computers and improved access to printers in most areas. There was an insufficient number of technicians to support and maintain the growing demand for information technology in the college.

84 The library is located on the first floor of the main building. There are also two separate career libraries. The accommodation is pleasant, airy, with good daylight provision and is of sufficient size to meet present needs. The quality of the bookstock is good in languages, art and the sciences. The provision for English literature is outstanding, and there are science books in Arabic and other languages. The total bookstock is small for the number of students in the college but students do have access to books held in departmental libraries. Funding to the library has been reduced in 1994 because of the college's loss of income. The library

produces a good induction guide for students, coupled with informative leaflets on books and other learning aids such as CD-ROM to assist them in their studies. Liaison and support for the library from teachers is strong. It is well used and students are encouraged to see it as the main information resource of the college.

Accommodation

85 The college is located on a single site close to an inner-city ring road. The buildings consist of a six-storey teaching and administration block, a sports hall and an art block.

86 The main entrance and reception area provide an attractive focal point for visitors and students. The teaching rooms and other work areas are of sufficient size to accommodate the numbers of students in teaching groups. Rooms throughout the college are clean, well maintained and in good decorative order. Most subject areas are located together, for example modern languages has a suite of teaching rooms plus an office and a language laboratory on the first floor. The specialist accommodation for languages suffers from ineffective sound insulation. The college hall and theatre has good-quality wall and floor finishes, and retractable seating. The drama and dance studio is equipped to a high standard. The gymnasium is also used for dance but the hardwood floor is in need of repair. The quality of accommodation is also good in other areas, for example art. The canteen has recently been refurbished to an acceptable standard in the food preparation and servery areas, but the dining hall is in a poor decorative state.

87 Floor managers have been appointed to act as co-ordinators on matters relating to cleaning, repair and maintenance in their areas. Departmental ownership of specialist areas has led to good housekeeping. The rooms are well furnished and a number of areas are carpeted. Many classrooms have attractive and stimulating wall displays, including examples of students' work and photographs of students involved in various learning activities. In the physics laboratory there is an imaginative use of the walls for the display of electrical circuitry. Some areas, especially corridors, need refurbishment and redecoration to bring them up to the standard of the rest of the college. The accommodation strategy and space utilisation analysis should be developed further.

88 Access for people with restricted mobility is difficult on all parts of the site and there is no direct access to the reception area. There is only one ramp into the main building which is located at the rear and there is a similar situation for wheelchair users wishing to gain access to the canteen. There are two lifts that service only four upper floors of the main block. They are old and provide a restricted service to staff and to students with disabilities only. The east wing has no lift.

89 The landscaped areas are well maintained and the car parking facilities are adequate. Public transport facilities to the college are good.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

90 The strengths of the college are:

- the commitment of its governors
- the commitment to equal opportunity
- the good staff-student relationships
- the responsive and effective links with feeder schools
- the caring and hard-working staff
- the clearly-stated and effective recruitment procedure
- the links with community organisations
- the quality of teaching
- guidance and support for students
- the responsiveness to the needs of students for whom English is not the first language
- the success of the transition courses
- the standard of accommodation and equipment.

91 If the college is to build upon its strengths and fully develop its mission it should address the following issues:

- the policy of not setting enrolment targets
- the development of a comprehensive quality assurance policy with clearly-defined procedures
- a policy for the development of management structures
- the development of a management information system that will meet current and predicted needs
- the levels of administrative and technical support
- the use of year-on-year data to inform management planning
- the low retention rates on some courses
- the lack of access for people with restricted mobility.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

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

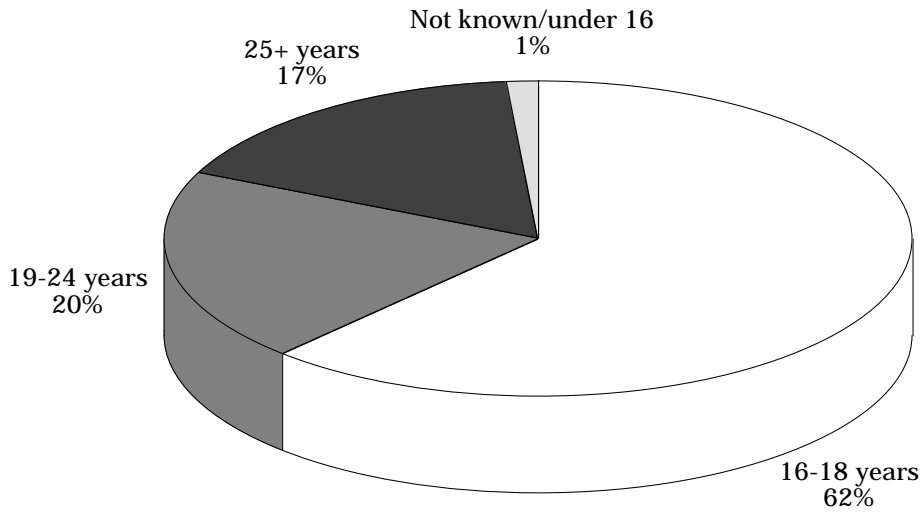
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

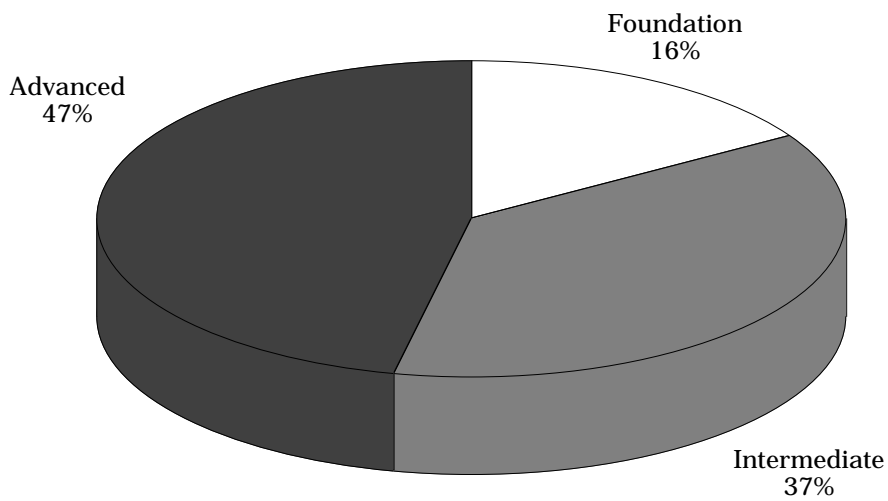
Joseph Chamberlain College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)



Enrolments: 1,312

Figure 2

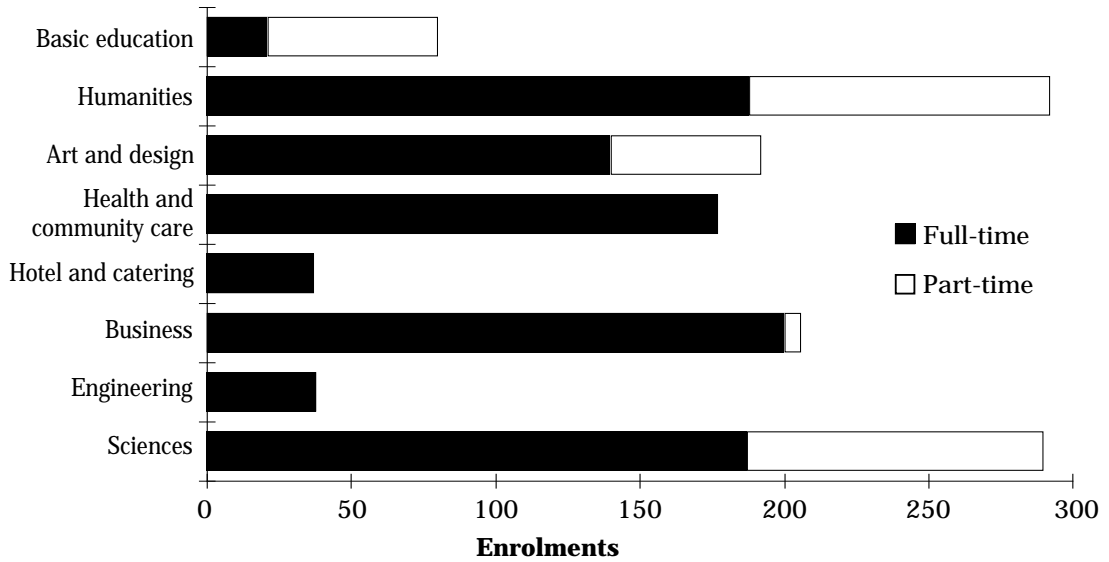
Joseph Chamberlain College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 1,312

Figure 3

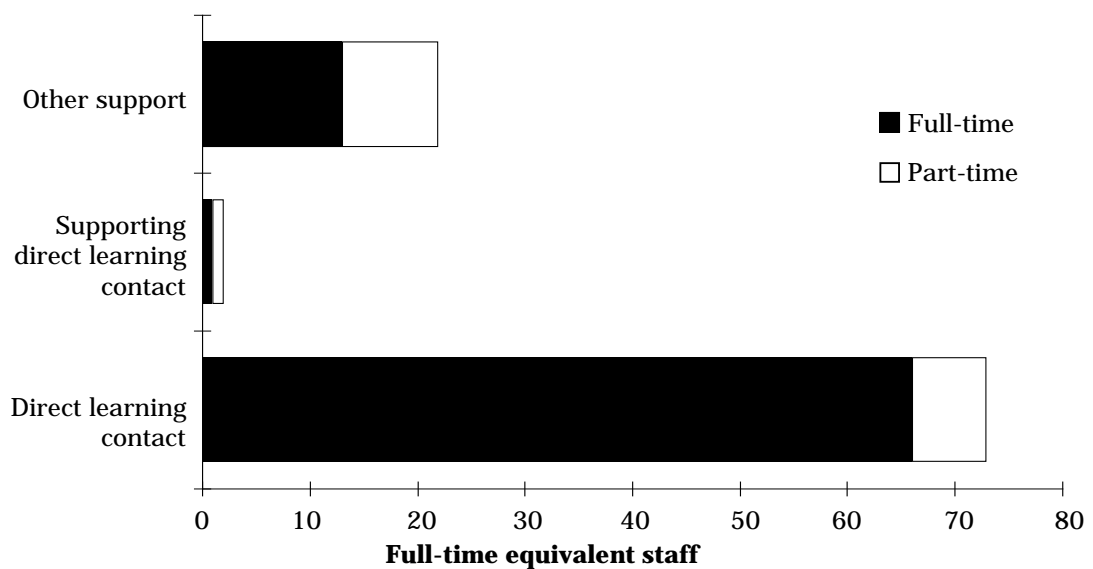
Joseph Chamberlain College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 1,312

Figure 4

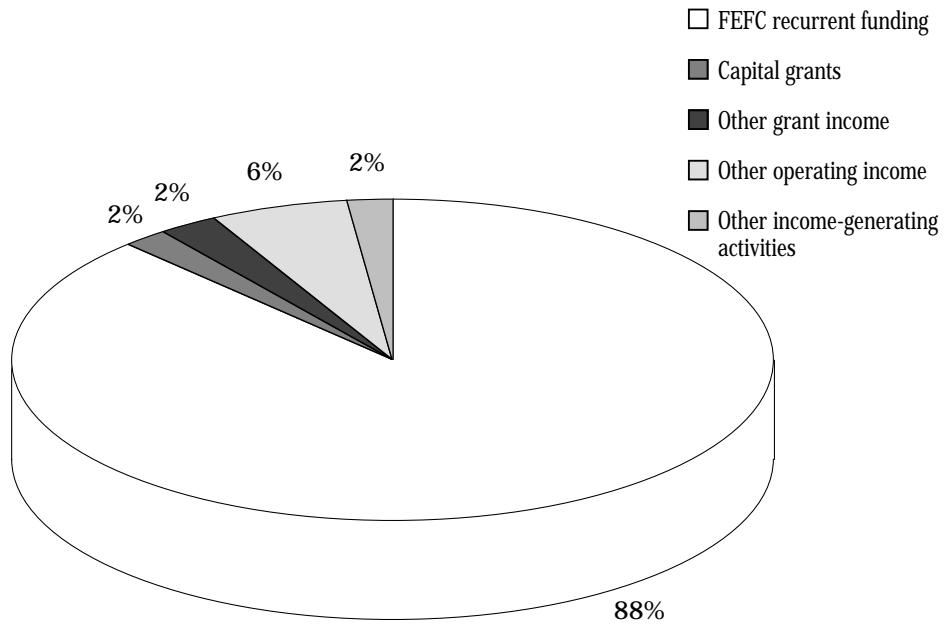
Joseph Chamberlain College: staff profile—staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 97

Figure 5

Joseph Chamberlain College: income (for 12 months to July 1994)

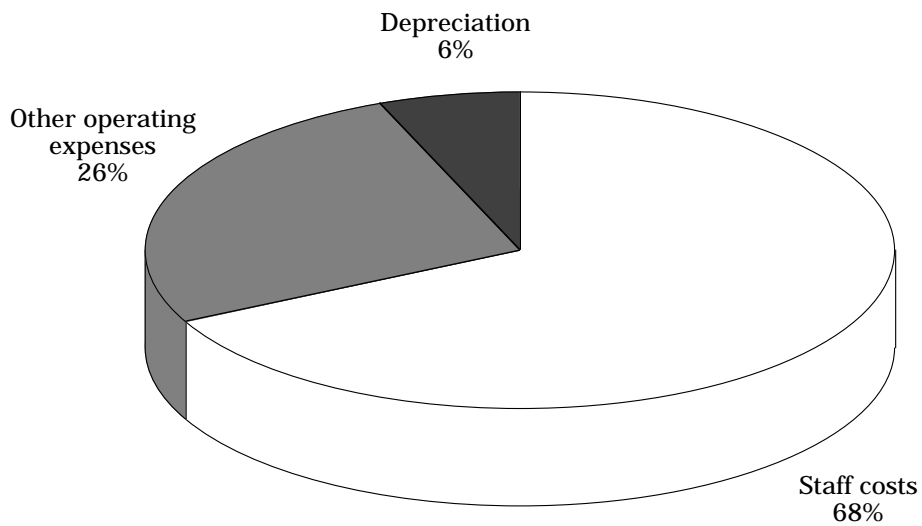


Income: £3,559,028

Note: this chart excludes £11,269 education contracts/tuition fees.

Figure 6

Joseph Chamberlain College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £3,397,640

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