

Kensington and Chelsea College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00

THE
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COUNCIL

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FUNDING COUNCIL*

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also inspects other further education provision funded by the FEFC. In fulfilling its work programme, the inspectorate assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Inspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. A member of the Council's audit service works with inspectors in assessing aspects of governance and management. All colleges are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

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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.

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	10	53	30	7	-
Cross-college provision	14	54	23	7	2

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*
 Sample size: 104 college inspections

Student Achievements

Where data on student achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in three ways:

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not included.

Summary

Kensington and Chelsea College

Greater London Region

Inspected October 1999

Kensington and Chelsea College is a medium-sized general further education college which provides a range of courses for the communities of central and west London. The majority of students at the college are adults, and in 1998-99, only 4% were aged 16 to 18. In preparation for the inspection, the college produced a comprehensive self-assessment report. This was the first self-assessment report to be produced by the college. All staff were involved in the self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with a number of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. They considered that some strengths were overstated, however, and they found some weaknesses the college had not identified. Some weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection. Inspectors awarded the same grades as the college for three of the five curriculum areas inspected and for three of the cross-college aspects of provision.

The college offers courses in eight of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Courses in five of these areas were inspected together with aspects of cross-college provision. Overall, students' achievements are in line with the national average for general further education colleges.

Many students come from areas of social and economic deprivation. The college has extensive and productive links with local organisations and develops its provision to meet local needs. Good use is made of community venues to help widen participation. There are effective communications between managers and staff. Governors have a wide range of skills and experience. Quality assurance procedures are closely linked with strategic planning. The college provides good support for students and is strongly committed to providing a good service. There is an effective tutorial system. The college should address: poor quality of management information; inadequate reporting on financial management; insufficient monitoring by governors of the college's standards and financial performance; insufficient use of national benchmarks in assessing the quality of provision; inaccessibility of parts of the college to those with restricted mobility; insufficient access to IT facilities for students; under-resourcing of study centres; inadequate co-ordination of student support services; poor teaching on some courses; students' poor achievements on a minority of courses.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Computing and information technology	4	Support for students	2
Business and management	2	General resources	4
Art, craft and design	2	Quality assurance	3
Humanities	2	Governance	3
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, adult basic education and ESOL	3	Management	3

The College and its Mission

1 Kensington and Chelsea College was formed in 1990 as an adult education college and became an incorporated further education college in 1993. Located in central London, the college primarily serves the needs of adult students. The college has two main sites, the Hortensia centre in Chelsea and the Wornington centre in North Kensington. Together, these offer a comprehensive range of courses. The Marlborough centre, on a smaller site, provides English as a foreign language (EFL), and art and design courses. The college makes use of Holland Park School as a venue for a wide range of evening provision. Some provision is also offered at the college's Edge Street centre. Courses are also provided at a range of venues within the local community, the largest of which is Nottingdale Technology Centre in North Kensington. There are three other further education colleges in close proximity to the college and several universities and colleges of higher education nearby. The college has links with many local universities including Birkbeck College, The London Institute, the University of Westminster and Thames Valley University.

2 The college offers courses designed to meet the needs of all sectors of the community. The largest areas of work are in art, craft and design, adult basic education and in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Other significant areas of provision are modern foreign languages, information technology (IT), business and management, performing arts and childcare. Some work is undertaken in humanities, counselling and food studies and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college is one of only a small number to offer millinery courses. It has a substantial contract with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to provide courses which do not lead directly to formal qualifications. Of these, the most popular are courses in art, craft and design, modern foreign languages and sport and health.

The college's training and consultancy unit provides customised training for a variety of public and private sector clients. In 1998-99, the college enrolled over 17,500 students on courses funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and adult education classes funded by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Approximately 60% of these students either lived or worked within the Royal Borough. In the same year, the college employed over 1,000 staff, approximately 100 of whom were full time. The college's senior management team consists of the principal, two vice-principals, the director of finance, two cross-college directors, one for student information and one for student services, and the college secretary. Courses are managed by four faculties.

3 Kensington and Chelsea is one of the most densely populated areas in England and has a population of 164,000. Of the population, 40% are aged between 20 and 39 and many live in bedsits and flats. Economically, the area presents sharp contrasts, with affluence in the south of the borough and comparative poverty in the north. The FEFC has identified the college as one of a group which recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas. Approximately 60% of residents in North Kensington, an area which has an unemployment rate of over twice that for London as a whole, live in subsidised housing. About 15% of the borough's residents are from minority ethnic backgrounds and nearly 100 languages are spoken within the local community. High numbers of refugees are accommodated within the area, many of whom urgently require help with English. Over 90% of companies based in the borough are in the service sector and many are small businesses. Whilst the average earnings in the borough are high, they are low in some of the wards close to the college.

Context

4 In May 1999, unemployment within the borough was 5.2%, and below the national average. There are, however, areas of significant deprivation within the borough. For example, in May 1999, the unemployment rate in the Golborne ward which is close to the college's Wornington centre, was 14.3%. There is a strong demand for basic skills courses at the college's Wornington centre and at community centres in the borough where the college offers provision.

5 The college's mission is to provide relevant education, training and development opportunities for adults, taking account of national priorities and the needs of employers and the community. Six new strategic aims have been developed to cover the period 1999 to 2002. These focus on widening participation, raising standards, developing and supporting staff and investing in accommodation and learning resources. The college is also committed to raising its profile within the London region.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected during the week beginning 18 October 1999. Before the inspection, inspectors reviewed the self-assessment report and considered information from other directorates of the FEFC. The college provided data on students' achievements for 1999 which it derived from the individualised student record (ISR). Inspectors checked these data against primary sources of evidence, such as registers and the pass lists issued by examining bodies, and found them mainly reliable. These data, together with ISR data for 1997 and 1998 were used to compile the achievement tables in the curriculum area reports. The college was notified of the sample of work to be inspected two months before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by 14 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 49 days. Inspectors observed 64 lessons and

examined students' work and a variety of documents relating to the college and its courses. Team members met students, governors, managers, staff, representatives of local schools, careers service staff, local authority representatives and managers from the local training and enterprise council (TEC).

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

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	0	2	1	0	0	3
GNVQ/NVQ	1	1	1	0	0	3
Other vocational	6	15	14	6	0	41
Other*	5	5	6	1	0	17
Total (No.)	12	23	22	7	0	64
Total (%)	19	36	34	11	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

*includes open, access and counselling courses and ESOL/adult basic education

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. The overall attendance level in lessons observed was similar to the national average. Attendance was poor in lessons in business, art and basic education and good in humanities and IT lessons.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Kensington and Chelsea College	11.3	76
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

Curriculum Areas

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 4

9 Inspectors observed 10 lessons in computing and IT, covering a range of full-time and part-time vocational courses. They considered that the college's self-assessment report overstated some strengths. They identified a number of additional weaknesses, including in particular, the students' pass rates, whereas the self-assessment report had cited these as a strength.

Key strengths

- effective partnerships with community organisations
- good-quality learning materials

Weaknesses

- pass rates well below national averages on some courses
- inadequate open access IT facilities
- poor management of some lessons
- some students' lack of punctuality

10 The college offers vocational courses in computing and IT from foundation to advanced level. Courses are taught on a number of sites, including community centres. Most teaching takes place in an atmosphere which the students find friendly and supportive. Teachers encourage the students to help one another. Students' work is regularly assessed. It is marked effectively and returned promptly. Sometimes, the teacher also gives individual students verbal feedback on the quality of their work. Learning materials are of good quality and enable students to work at their own pace during lessons. These materials are available on-line through the college network to all teachers, including part-time staff. Visual aids are rarely used to enliven IT lessons. At the

college's Wornington centre, a widescreen computer monitor is used to demonstrate software functions. Similar demonstrations at other sites using standard size monitors are not as successful, as many students find it difficult to view the screen clearly. A number of workshop lessons observed were poorly managed and students became frustrated at having to wait long periods until the teacher was available to help them. It is commonplace for students to arrive late for lessons. Some teachers allow those students who are present at the beginning of lessons to get on with assignment work for the first half hour until more students arrive. The time available to the teacher for introducing new work is thus substantially reduced.

11 There is effective liaison with community organisations. The college has a well-established collaborative arrangement with the Nottingdale Technology Centre. This centre works with disadvantaged groups and currently has around 200 full-time IT students. During a lesson on a national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 2 IT for refugees and migrants, students found the range of learning activities stimulating. Following a wordprocessing exercise, the teacher organised a group quiz, based on the work just completed. The students participated in this with enthusiasm and enjoyment, and it helped them to extend their knowledge and understanding of IT processes.

12 The self-assessment report notes that there has been some duplication of provision in computing and IT. Courses have been rationalised this year, and students have been guided onto courses which most directly meet their needs. Some students receive little formal tutorial support. Students on a full-time access to higher education in IT course have a timetabled 30-minute weekly tutorial session. Attendance at this is optional. Students mainly use the tutorial session as an opportunity for private study. At the time of the inspection, students had received little guidance on applying to higher education.

Curriculum Areas

13 The college's self-assessment report describes students' achievements on computing and IT courses as a strength. However, inspectors judged these to be a major weakness. The retention rate is good on the NVQ course in using IT but retention rates on some courses are poor. There are low pass rates on a number of courses. In 1998-99, on the IT key skills level 1 course, which is offered to part-time students, only 70 students obtained a pass out of 1,081 students who started the course. In 1999, there has been a marked decrease in pass rates compared with 1998 and those on some level 2 and level 3 courses are well below the national average. Currently, course teams do not evaluate student achievement rates against national benchmarks.

14 The college's provision of specialist computer hardware and software is adequate for the current range of computing and IT courses. All computers have fast links to the Internet. Open access IT facilities are inadequate, a weakness noted in the self-assessment report. College study centres have few computers and the open access IT workshops which exist are only open for two days a week. Many students are not timetabled to attend college on the days when the workshops are open. The study centres lack sufficient learning materials for IT courses. In general, the teaching accommodation for computing and IT is adequate but some rooms can become uncomfortably hot.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in computing and information technology, 1997 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
IT key skills	1	Number of starters	*	*	1,081
		Retention (%)	*	*	66
		Achievement (%)	*	*	7
NVQ using IT	2	Number of starters	*	*	135
		Retention (%)	*	*	95
		Achievement (%)	*	*	84
NVQ software creation	2	Number of starters	*	14	19
		Retention (%)	*	71	68
		Achievement (%)	*	80	47
Access to higher education in IT	3	Number of starters	*	28	18
		Retention (%)	*	57	88
		Achievement (%)	*	88	44

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

*data not reliable

Curriculum Areas

Business and Management

Grade 2

15 Inspectors observed 10 lessons covering a range of business and management courses. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but identified further key strengths.

Key strengths

- good retention rates on most courses
- some good pass rates
- effective monitoring of students' progress
- much good teaching and learning
- well-managed courses

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on marketing and public relations courses
- low attendance on many courses

16 The college offers a range of courses from level 1 to level 4 leading to business, administration, management and professional qualifications. Inspectors agreed with the college that the courses are organised to meet the needs of the local communities. Most courses are part-time to allow adult students to meet personal and other commitments outside college. Upon completing their course, students progress either to higher level courses within the college, to higher education courses, or employment.

17 The majority of lessons observed by inspectors were outstanding or good. Lessons are well planned and carefully structured. Teachers use a range of appropriate learning methods and encourage students to participate fully in lesson activities. They use students' experiences and knowledge effectively as a valuable learning resource. For example, in a lesson on a National Examining Board for Supervision and Management introductory course, the teacher drew upon students'

experiences of motivation and related these findings to Herzberg's theory of motivation. This learning activity stimulated considerable interest and debate and the students furthered their understanding of the topic substantially. Teachers effectively use questioning techniques to strengthen the students' learning. For example, in a lesson on computerised accounts, the teacher made frequent checks to ensure that all students understood the concepts and terminology. Whilst demonstrating techniques, the teacher asked the students well-directed questions and questioned them again when they were completing tasks using a computer spreadsheet. Teachers make sure that all students participate fully in learning activities. For example, in a lesson on the access to business course, after viewing a film clip on the main principles of effective teamwork, students undertook a role-play exercise to put these principles into practice. They thoroughly enjoyed the activity and gained a good deal of confidence. In a few lessons, however, teaching is poor. In one lesson, the teacher lacked the skills necessary to sustain students' interest and motivation, and some students became frustrated. The students' attendance rate on many courses is low. In the lessons observed, the average attendance rate was 66%.

18 In its self-assessment report, the college recognised that retention rates are consistently high on most courses, particularly on the access to business and National Examining Board for Supervision and Management courses, which have rates well above the national average. Pass rates on the IT for administrators/secretaries level 2 course have improved significantly over the past two years. Two general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) courses are offered and the pass rates on these have improved steadily and are now above the national average. In 1997-98, 18 students on the access to business course were offered places in nine universities. On the secretarial and office studies course, there was a sharp fall in the pass rate in 1998-99 from the

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previous high level. Pass rates on the marketing and public relations courses are poor. These poor pass rates are not identified as weaknesses in the self-assessment report.

19 In general, students' work is good and meets the standards required by the awarding bodies. Students' work on the management course, both in lessons and in assignments, is of a high standard. Teachers on all courses give students thorough and constructive feedback when they mark their work. Effective tutorial support is provided and teachers pay particular attention to providing individual students with help and support in lessons. For example, in a keyboarding lesson, while most students were working through past examination papers, some received individual attention from the teacher. Students speak very highly of their teachers and there is a purposeful rapport between teachers and students.

20 Teachers are academically and vocationally well qualified. Many part-time teachers are practitioners in industry and commerce and they have up-to-date knowledge and expertise which they use well in lessons. Some full-time teachers lack recent commercial and industrial experience but the college has plans to enable them to obtain this. Course teams work effectively and course reviews contain a good analysis of issues and data. Both full-time and part-time teachers take part in staff development activities. Most of the teaching accommodation contains appropriate displays of course-related materials. Much of the accommodation for management, GCE A level economics, and computerised accounts courses is poor. These strengths and weaknesses in the accommodation are not recognised in the self-assessment report.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Secretarial and office studies	1	Number of starters	*	94	59
		Retention (%)	*	86	86
		Achievement (%)	*	84	43
IT for administrators/secretaries	2	Number of starters	11	22	28
		Retention (%)	100	86	86
		Achievement (%)	*	58	83
Access to business	3	Number of starters	24	24	23
		Retention (%)	75	79	78
		Achievement (%)	*	89	100
Management introductory award/certificate	3	Number of starters	*	45	55
		Retention (%)	*	98	93
		Achievement (%)	*	91	92
GCE A level (one year)	3	Number of starters	37	23	26
		Retention (%)	86	83	65
		Achievement (%)	41	58	59
Certificate in marketing/public relations	3 and 4	Number of starters	*	37	47
		Retention (%)	*	54	77
		Achievement (%)	*	20	19

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

*data not reliable

Curriculum Areas

Art, Craft and Design

Grade 2

21 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering a range of courses in art, craft and design. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- good retention rates and pass rates on many courses
- much good teaching
- well-organised courses
- students' success in progressing to further and higher education
- students' high level of technical skill on craft courses

Weaknesses

- some inadequate accommodation
- poor attendance on the part of some students
- too few students on some courses to facilitate group work and discussion

22 The college has built on its firm base of adult education provision and has further adapted its provision to meet the needs of adults. Students can join courses at different times in the year and there are clear progression routes between courses. The majority of students are enrolled on Open College Network courses. Students in printmaking may start on introductory adult education courses, which do not lead to accreditation, and move through appropriate Open College Network courses to further qualifications. Full-time courses lead to a range of qualifications including intermediate general national vocational qualification (GNVQ); national diplomas in general art and design, and design crafts and fashion accessories, and a

diploma in foundation studies in art and design. Level 4 courses include a professional development programme and a teacher training course for aspiring artists in residence. The range of City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) courses includes industry-relevant IT courses. In its self-assessment report, the college acknowledges that there are too few students on some courses to facilitate the sharing of ideas and the discussion of concepts. Following a needs analysis the college is currently working in partnership with colleges in the Central and West London Partnership to review its range of provision.

23 The programme area is well managed and courses are well organised. Schemes of work are clear and lessons are carefully planned. When it is appropriate to do so, teachers work in teams and promote lively and imaginative learning activities which require students to co-operate and respond to one another. In one lesson, foundation level students threw themselves enthusiastically into a role-playing exercise as part of an assignment on colour. On Open College Network and C&G courses in subjects such as millinery, photography, stained glass and ceramics, the students acquire a particularly high level of technical skill and keep well-ordered reference files with samples of their work. For the most part, full-time teachers and the many part-time teachers are also practising artists and craftspeople. Their knowledge of current developments clearly stimulates the students. The college's website has a well-developed art and design section which shows examples of teachers' and students' work. The adult students come from varied backgrounds and they enrich lessons by drawing on the rich diversity of their experience. They make valuable contributions to group discussions and younger students benefit from their maturity and breadth of knowledge. Teachers mark projects according to clear criteria. During regular tutorials, tutors have discussions with students about their

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progress. Teachers are sensitive to the different learning needs of students. They provide opportunities in lessons for students to develop both their technical and personal skills. On the intermediate GNVQ course, all students took part in an exercise to determine who needed additional support. In a minority of lessons, teachers had low expectations of their students. They failed to provide activities which challenged students to think rigorously and use their skills to the full. The students learnt little, were often bored and valuable lesson time was used to poor effect. Many students have a record of irregular attendance at lessons. Some students arrive late for lessons or make excuses to leave them early. In its self-assessment report, the college recognised the need to address the issue of students' poor attendance.

24 Students' achievements are mainly good. Students are encouraged to exhibit their work and they regularly enter and win high-profile competitions. In the millinery area the students' work is of an excellent standard and demonstrates professional, creative and technical expertise. Two students recently won awards from a large national retailer against strong competition from students in higher education. The exhibition in the college gallery, which is open to the public, shows the best of students' work in 1998-99. The establishment of the gallery has been effective in motivating students to produce work of a sufficiently high standard to merit exhibition. Pass rates on most courses are generally in line with the national averages for the sector. The pass rates on the intermediate GNVQ and BTEC national diploma courses are above the national average. Substantial numbers of students enrol on the Open College Network course at level 1 and pass rates on this are good. In its self-assessment report, the college acknowledges that the poor quality of management information on student retention and achievement rates is a weakness. The retention rate on the foundation course, although above or at the national average, has

fallen over a three-year period. On most courses, students who achieve their qualification progress to further courses, including those in higher education. Tutors set assignments which the students find interesting and demanding, and the students' work in portfolios and the studios is of a high standard. Teachers assess students' work thoroughly and they provide students with thoughtful and constructive feedback to help them improve their performance. Methods of assessment on Open College Network courses are designed to meet the needs of individual students.

25 In the self-assessment report, the college acknowledges deficiencies in its accommodation for art, craft and design courses. Students enjoy working in the studios but, in general, these are cramped. Some rooms have imaginative wall displays of course-related materials, but in other rooms the wall space is not used effectively to support and strengthen students' learning.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
London Open College Network	1	Number of starters	*	475	281
		Retention (%)	*	87	84
		Achievement (%)	*	69	67
London Open College Network	2	Number of starters	*	70	238
		Retention (%)	*	86	87
		Achievement (%)	*	76	75
GNVQ intermediate in art and design	2	Number of starters	20	16	12
		Retention (%)	80	73	75
		Achievement (%)	*	55	100
BTEC diploma in foundation studies	3	Number of starters	38	17	35
		Retention (%)	*	88	80
		Achievement (%)	*	87	93
BTEC national diploma in general art and design	3	Number of starters	40	16	17
		Retention (%)	90	100	88
		Achievement (%)	61	100	100

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

*data not reliable

Curriculum Areas

Humanities

Grade 2

26 The inspection of humanities covered access to higher education courses in the humanities and social sciences, counselling courses and GCE A level courses. Ten lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but found some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- many good retention and pass rates
- well-planned and thoroughly documented courses
- good teaching
- well-motivated students
- students' success in progressing to higher education from access courses

Weaknesses

- non-availability of the study centres in the evenings
- insufficient library stock in the study centres

27 The college offers an access to higher education course with a good range of humanities options. These include literature, history, anthropology, African and Caribbean studies, psychology and sociology. There is also a study skills course which contains a module on gaining entry to suitable degree courses, and includes some preparation for teaching. Courses in GCE A level English, law, and classical civilisation are offered. GCE A level courses in history, politics and psychology have been discontinued since they attracted insufficient numbers of students. A good range of counselling courses are offered at various times of the year on different sites. The provision includes a number of introduction to

counselling courses, specialist courses and an advanced certificate in counselling and interpersonal skills.

28 Courses are managed effectively. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that most teaching is good. There are good schemes of work for courses and lessons which are carefully planned to meet the needs of adult students. Teachers take account of the different needs and aptitudes of individuals, and provide learning activities which excite the students' interest. Teachers explain topics clearly, and make good use of classroom equipment and well-prepared written materials. In most lessons, the teachers challenge the students to think and explore concepts rigorously. They provide students with good support and have high expectations of them. Students are encouraged to examine particular issues from cross-cultural perspectives. For example, in a well-managed lesson on an advanced counselling course, students drew successfully on their own knowledge and experience of different cultures to increase their understanding of the role of the counsellor. They explored how their own individual identity had been conditioned by their cultural background and they discussed the need for counsellors to be sensitive to the cultural beliefs and values of their clients. Most teachers checked regularly that students understood what they were learning, and gave additional help if necessary. In most lessons, teachers provided students with good opportunities to practise and develop their analytical skills in order to deepen their understanding of topics and concepts. In a few lessons, the teacher gave explanations of complex topics too quickly without handouts and the students found it difficult to take accurate notes. In a few instances when group debate and discussion took place, the teacher failed to ensure that all sides of an argument were fully explored and given equal weight. Most students are well motivated. Students are punctual and

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attend regularly. Responses to questionnaires indicate that most students are highly satisfied with their course. Students' progress is closely monitored and carefully recorded. Students receive regular tutorials supplemented by more informal help from teachers.

29 Reliable data on students' achievements are derived mainly from course teams, not the ISR. The poor quality of the college's ISR data has made it difficult for staff to compare students' achievements with national data, and the self-assessment report over-values the level of some students' achievements. In 1998-99, retention on access courses was above national averages, but the proportion of those completing the course who obtained the full certificate was not high, as the self-assessment claims. However, all the students who successfully completed the course progressed to higher education. Retention and pass rates on most counselling courses are satisfactory and those for the advanced certificate course are good. Retention and pass rates on GCE A level courses vary considerably and some are poor. Pass rates in English are good, with a preponderance of high grades, but retention and pass rates in psychology are poor, as the self-assessment report acknowledges. Retention and pass rates in GCE A level law have improved and have risen from well below the national average in 1998, to above it in 1999.

30 Teachers are well qualified. The part-time teachers of law and counselling are active in the legal and counselling professions. Classrooms contain a suitable range of equipment and learning materials. The library stock in the study centres is relevant to the courses and curriculum but is insufficient for the number of students who want to use it. Most of the stock is for reference only and may only be studied in the centres. The centres, however, are not open long enough during the day to meet demand and they are closed in the evenings. The self-assessment report acknowledges that the opening times of the centres are unsuitable for

access students but it does not highlight the insufficiency of the library stock enough. Good-quality classrooms are used for access courses and they have useful facilities for storing course materials. There is no suitable accommodation where individual counselling may be carried out. An unsuitable room with poor acoustics is used on the neuro-linguistic programming course. Students have had insufficient access to IT facilities but these have now been made more available to them.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Introductory counselling courses	2	Number of starters	*	*	117
		Retention (%)	*	*	79
		Achievement (%)	*	*	75
Advanced counselling courses	3	Number of starters	*	*	18
		Retention (%)	*	*	83
		Achievement (%)	*	*	87
Access and higher education: humanities and social sciences	3	Number of starters	*	*	53
		Retention (%)	*	*	80
		Achievement (%)	*	*	60
GCE A level English	3	Number of starters	25	32	29
		Retention (%)	76	72	62
		Achievement (%)	79	83	89
GCE A level law	3	Number of starters	*	18	10
		Retention (%)	*	61	90
		Achievement (%)	*	45	67
GCE A level psychology	3	Number of starters	*	19	14
		Retention (%)	*	26	50
		Achievement (%)	*	60	57

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

*data not reliable

Curriculum Areas

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

Grade 3

31 Inspectors observed 20 lessons across the range of provision. They agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the college's self-assessment report. They found some weaknesses, however, which the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- good support for students
- good provision of work experience for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- effective links with community organisations
- good curriculum initiatives
- wide range of courses leading to appropriate qualifications
- good range of vocational options for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of initial assessment in planning some lessons
- inadequate monitoring of students' progress
- lack of differentiation in learning materials to meet individual students' needs
- narrow range of teaching styles
- some poor retention rates
- inadequate specialist resources

32 The range of courses in ESOL covers five levels and is offered at the college's two main sites and 12 community centres. The college also offers a range of courses including a full-time modular course for people with severe

learning difficulties, British Sign Language courses at stages 1 and 2 and a range of adult basic education courses. This provision is offered at both main sites and a number of community venues. Most courses are for part-time students. Teachers on these courses offer advice to the college's additional learning support co-ordinator in relation to students who have undertaken disability and specialist assessments.

33 The college is responsive to adult learners. Its extensive work in the community increasingly draws in students who may not have previously considered further education. Both the structure and management of courses have been reviewed recently. Course directors now have more clearly defined roles, good curriculum initiatives have been introduced, and stronger links with community organisations have been developed. An initiative with Mencap has resulted in the provision of vocational training opportunities for local people in catering, horticulture and retail. The training is based at the Harrow club, a community venue, which provides an outstanding community resource. A student with severe learning difficulties was observed working in the cafe at the Harrow club preparing meals competently for members of the public. Another group of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities runs a stall in the Portobello market, with help from teachers, for the North Kensington Community Trust. This type of work experience develops students' personal skills, builds up their confidence and extends their knowledge. Such activities as these are exciting and imaginative. In general, however, there is insufficient development of a specific curriculum, with clear aims and objectives, to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college clearly states as a strategic priority the need to implement a programme to integrate the learning activities of these students with those on other courses in the college, focusing on the improvement of teaching and learning.

Curriculum Areas

34 As indicated in the self-assessment report, there is some good teaching and effective course and lesson planning. Most teachers use a range of appropriate activities to excite and sustain the students' interest and involvement in the lesson. A few teachers, however, rely on a narrow range of learning activities which have little appeal for the students. Most teachers evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning and inform students of their progress but a few do not. In some lessons, the quality of teaching was less than satisfactory. Students' initial assessments are not usually taken into account in the planning of teaching. The college failed to identify some of these weaknesses in the self-assessment report.

35 The self-assessment report acknowledges that retention rates on some courses are poor. However, many students who attend regularly and complete their courses improve their skills and attain their primary learning goal. The adult basic education section has introduced short, sharply focused courses, for example in spelling and punctuation, to help to improve students' retention. Tutors in ESOL have been given specific time to provide students with advice and guidance to ensure that students are placed on appropriate courses and complete them. Students clearly value their experiences at the college and provided positive feedback to inspectors about the support they receive. They feel valued and respected. Students on ESOL courses progress to higher level courses within the college and some obtain employment. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop self-confidence and the skills required for independent living. These students spend a significant amount of time learning through practical work rather than through theory lessons. On adult basic education and ESOL courses, there are insufficient opportunities for students to develop the skills of working on their own. The development of appropriate vocational options for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

represents a strength of provision. The college, however, does not provide these students with enough progression routes to vocational courses to help them build on the skills they have already acquired.

36 Most teachers are appropriately qualified and suitably experienced. In its self-assessment report, the college acknowledges that there are inadequate specialist resources for teaching and learning and the strategic plan indicates that the provision of these is a priority. Some of the general classrooms used by students are poorly maintained and untidy. There are insufficient IT facilities available for students. There is an open learning centre with up-to-date hardware but no computer-assisted learning packages for students in this programme area.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

37 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report although they considered that some had been overemphasised. Some weaknesses had been rectified by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- clear, impartial pre-entry advice for applicants
- effective induction programme including initial screening
- well-structured tutorial system
- comprehensive support for students on personal issues

Weaknesses

- insufficient co-ordination and evaluation of student support services
- insufficient availability of learning support facilities in the centres

38 The college primarily serves the needs of adults, many of whom live in areas of substantial deprivation. The college has been successful in widening participation in further education amongst people living in these areas. The college provides students with good support to meet their needs. Many students are enabled to progress from non-vocational to vocational and academic courses and most are successful on these. Retention rates on most courses are good and improving and students' achievements on most courses are at, or above, the national average for general further education colleges. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college provides an effective pre-entry guidance service. Publicity is clear and informative. An attractive prospectus is complemented by detailed course leaflets. A series of successful publicity events was

organised in 1998-99 to raise the profile of the college, including concessionary training programmes for employers. Impartial advice is provided by the college advice and admissions team which includes information on benefits, housing and financial matters. Prospective students are referred to other colleges if they offer programmes which are more appropriate for them.

39 Most students on FEFC-funded courses receive initial screening to determine their numeracy and literacy skills. Staff have received training related to the reception processes and procedures for new students. This has raised the awareness of staff about the importance of developing proper learning plans for individual students. Students undertake a comprehensive induction programme. There is an informative student handbook which includes the college charter. Students who enrol late receive full induction. Induction is planned according to the needs of the individual student and the nature of the course. Staff and students across the college are uncertain about the nature and scope of the learning support service provided through the open learning and study centres. Teachers timetable some groups into these centres but they have insufficient learning resources such as computers. Usually, computers are only available to students who have directed study tasks to complete. This insufficiency of learning support facilities was not identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. The guidance team is based in two study centres and there are support facilities in the centres' base rooms. The centres are closed in the evening, however, and they are open for too few hours in the day.

40 In its self-assessment report, the college recognises that there are problems over keeping clear records of applicants and of students when they enrol. To some extent, these problems are caused because the admission and enrolment teams operate databases which are not compatible with one another. The provision of

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support for services is not efficiently organised. It is fragmented and poorly co-ordinated. The director of student services is responsible for guidance, advice and counselling services, admissions, study centres and nurseries. The director of student information is responsible for enrolments, reception and marketing. Additional learning services and the open learning centres are based within the faculty of communications and learning support. There is no permanent cross-college group with responsibility for the co-ordination of support for students.

41 Most tutorials were conducted well and students spoke positively about them. The tutorial system is well structured and well documented. All students have an entitlement to tutorial support, the details of which depend upon the length and nature of their course. Tutorials are held regularly and are supplemented by informal advice and support from teachers. Records are kept of the tutorial support that students on longer courses receive. In a particularly effective tutorial for access students, students worked on a well-prepared exercise on how to apply to university, while the tutor talked with individual students to review the progress they were making with their applications. Records are kept of tutorial activity. The topics covered in tutorials varied widely. All students made good use of the opportunity in tutorials to define and discuss their learning needs, review their progress, and identify ways in which they could do better, and their tutor gave them skilful support and guidance. All staff receive a detailed staff handbook which includes a handbook for personal tutors. This is clear, comprehensive and updated annually. Staff are committed to ensuring the implementation of the college's equal opportunities policy. Appropriate training is provided for tutors. Tutorials are sometimes observed as part of the college's lesson observation programme. There are good relationships between teachers and students.

42 There is an effective range of advice and guidance services to help students with personal issues. The advice and admission teams operate at the Wornington and Hortensia centres and work in conjunction with the guidance team. Students receive good advice on careers and progression. There are good links with specialist external agencies. Procedures for referring students to these are clear and well documented. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the counselling service is effective. The college monitors the effectiveness of the counselling service and the extent to which the students consult the counsellors. Students know and understand the process by which they can be referred to the service and appreciate the range and scope of the counselling available. The counsellor and the team of voluntary counsellors have received appropriate training.

43 Documentation for providing students with additional learning support and help with basic skills is clear and concise, and reference is made to appropriate learning services. The additional learning support team works with faculty heads to promote their support services and to assist staff in resolving issues. The evaluation of student support activities, both within the faculties and across the college, is underdeveloped. There is insufficient evaluation of whether the provision of additional learning support leads to improvement in student retention and achievement rates. There is statistical data relating to the progression of students from main course areas.

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General Resources

Grade 4

44 Inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in general resources which the college identified in its self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- improvements in decoration and equipment in many teaching rooms
- good use of community venues
- good learning resource service

Weaknesses

- poor access to accommodation above ground floor level to people with restricted mobility
- under-resourced study centres
- insufficient open access to IT facilities
- lack of social areas for students

45 The college operates from six sites and a number of community venues in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The Wornington centre in North Kensington has buildings dating from the 1930s. The Hortensia centre in Chelsea comprises former Victorian school buildings. Another three smaller centres are also nineteenth century school buildings. A modern comprehensive school in Holland Park is used by the college in the evening. This range of sites gives the college a presence in different parts of the borough and enables it to attract a diverse clientele.

46 Using external consultants, the college has undertaken an extensive review of its accommodation and has produced a good accommodation strategy which has yet to be implemented. The strategy includes well-considered plans to rationalise and develop the college's accommodation, and these were identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. The estates and facilities committee of

the corporation has been set up to steer the implementation of the plans. Extensive work has been carried out on the college's older buildings to make them weatherproof. The college is implementing a programme of refurbishment. Classrooms are gradually being improved to an agreed standard. Most teaching rooms are at least adequately furnished and decorated, and some provide a pleasant learning environment. A few are in a poor state of decoration. In its self-assessment report, the college acknowledged the inaccessibility of all the college's main sites, particularly above ground floor level, to people with restricted mobility.

47 The college also provides courses in a number of venues based in the community. Charitable organisations such as the Nottingdale Technology Centre and the Tabernacle provide good accommodation and facilities, for example a gymnasium, a theatre, IT equipment and teaching rooms, and all are easily accessible to people with disabilities. These organisations work with disadvantaged communities and assist the college in its aim of widening participation amongst local residents who do not feel confident to approach one of the college's main sites. This strength was noted in the self-assessment report.

48 The college identified a lack of investment in IT as a weakness in its self-assessment report. During 1999, it has devised and started to implement a strategy to improve IT resources. A total of £100,000 had been invested in IT by the time of the inspection. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is approximately 1:10, compared with 1:25 at the time of the last inspection in 1995. However, students do not have sufficient access to computers outside timetabled lessons. A few computers are available to students in the study centres and open learning centre. At the Hortensia and Wornington centres, a further 43 computers in teaching rooms have recently been made available to students who have some knowledge of computing, for several afternoon

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and evening sessions a week. Students at the college's other centres do not have access to IT on those sites, unless they are taking a computing course.

49 The college's study centres are seriously under-resourced. There are two small centres, one at the Wornington centre and the other at the Hortensia centre. They offer small, mainly non-lending libraries of reference books, periodicals, careers information, videos and learning materials. The centres have a joint budget of £3,000 each year. The centres are not open for long enough in the daytime and they are closed in the evening. There is a total of only 26 private study spaces in both centres. The low usage of the study centres was acknowledged as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Staff have tried hard to make best use of the limited resources. However, the centres do not provide adult students with enough opportunities and resources to learn independently; many such students find it difficult or impossible to study at home. As a result, there is a lack of curriculum development to ensure that students develop the skills of using resources to learn independently. An enthusiastic team provides good learning resources and other services for teaching staff, and has done a great deal to improve teaching rooms.

50 There are small cafeteria facilities at three of the centres, and a snack bar at the evening centre at Holland Park. These are the only places where students can gather outside lessons, apart from seats outside. At the Hortensia centre, the cafeteria and corridors can become uncomfortably crowded at times. At this centre, the reception area is poorly designed. It is located to the side of the main entrance and is no more than a small opening in the wall. There are sports halls and dance studios at the Hortensia and Wornington centres which are used for timetabled classes. In addition, there are good facilities for lessons in community venues. There are no opportunities for students to take part in recreational sporting activities.

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

51 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but they considered that some strengths were overstated. In some of the curriculum sections of the self-assessment report, the college did not give sufficient weight to student achievement rates and did not compare these with national averages when making judgements.

Key strengths

- strong commitment of staff to providing a good service to students
- close linking of quality assurance procedures with strategic planning
- systematic identification of staff development needs
- effective scheme for observing lessons

Weaknesses

- insufficient evidence of the impact of quality assurance procedures on students' achievements
- some poor use of data relating to students' achievements in course reviews
- little evaluation of performance against national benchmarks

52 Inspectors agreed that the college is committed to providing a good service to students. This is reflected in the corporate objectives, one of which is to raise retention and achievement across the college. Since the last inspection, the college has continued to review courses and service areas annually. The quality of annual reviews has improved and they are becoming more evaluative. The college's quality review committee oversees the system and monitors its effectiveness. This committee has co-ordinated the process of self-assessment throughout the college. The quality assurance policy and framework have been revised to

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incorporate the self-assessment process. The remit of the academic board has been extended to give it a clear role in reviewing the quality of provision. Minutes of recent academic board meetings indicate that discussions focus on quality and are robust. Governors have recently established a curriculum and quality committee in order to strengthen their understanding of the college's performance. Students' views are collected through interviews and questionnaires throughout the year. These views indicate a high level of satisfaction amongst students with the service provided by the college.

53 The self-assessment report was the result of the first complete cycle of self-assessment in the college. Many staff were consulted during the production of this report. Observations of teaching and learning contributed heavily to the college's judgements about the quality of provision. The college acknowledged as a weakness, the failure of some curriculum teams to use statistical data on retention and achievements effectively in their self-assessment report. When making judgements, course teams do not evaluate performance against national benchmarks. Judgements made in annual course and curriculum reviews contributed to the curriculum self-assessment reports produced by heads of faculty. To some extent, faculty managers moderated each other's judgements. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths in the self-assessment report, but considered that some strengths were overstated. They identified additional weaknesses in some curriculum and cross-college areas.

54 Quality assurance arrangements are closely linked to strategic planning. Staff in service areas are developing relevant service standards. Course teams consider the extent to which strategic objectives have been met during the year. Most programme area reports are evaluative and self-critical. In judging the quality of provision, course teams make effective use of the substantial amount of information gathered from observations of lessons.

However, data relating to students' achievements and retention are not always analysed by course teams or compared with national benchmarks. There are high retention rates on many courses, but achievement rates vary considerably and some are below the national average. Targets for recruitment, retention and achievement are set annually, but progress towards reaching them is not always monitored consistently. The college has identified as a priority for 1999-2000, the implementation of the action plan to improve student retention and achievement rates.

55 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that arrangements for staff appraisal and staff development are a significant strength. There is a comprehensive induction programme for all new staff. The college holds annual conferences for full-time and part-time staff which focus on important developments in the college and in further education in general. All new teachers are observed teaching soon after their appointment. Subsequently, their teaching is observed at least once every two years. The findings from the observations are recorded clearly and they are used effectively to identify the training needs of staff. The findings from observations are carefully considered during the appraisal of full-time and fractional staff and are taken into account by course teams and faculties when drawing up their annual training plans. The lesson grades awarded by the college were higher than those given by inspectors. The objectives for staff appraisal and staff development reflect the college's corporate objectives, the college's strategic plan and the divisional plans. Staff appraisal and staff development are co-ordinated by the staff development committee, a subcommittee of the academic board. Much staff training takes place in college. Staff are required to evaluate training undertaken, and many cascade what they have learned to their teams. All staff are entitled to attend college courses for up to four

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hours each week, free of charge. Many staff use this opportunity to improve their skills; others participate in leisure or general interest courses. The college originally achieved Investors in People status in 1995, and approval for this was renewed in 1998.

56 The college's charter is published in the students' handbook. It has recently been reviewed, and its commitments are reflected in operational objectives. During the annual review process, staff review to what extent the commitments have been achieved. Most students are aware of the commitments the college makes in the charter. Some were unaware of formal complaints procedures. Students said, however, that any problems or issues are usually dealt with promptly and the number of formal complaints the college receives is small.

Governance

Grade 3

57 Inspectors broadly agreed with strengths and weaknesses in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- governors' wide range of skills and experience
- effective contribution of governors to the development of the college's mission and aims
- effective clerking arrangements

Weaknesses

- inadequate oversight by governors of the quality of the college's provision
- insufficient monitoring of the college's financial performance
- restricted scope of internal audit programme

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

59 The governing body has 16 members of whom six are independent governors. As recognised in the self-assessment report, governors are committed to furthering the success of the college and offer a wide and relevant range of skills and experience. There has been a good level of attendance from a core of governors during the last year, although attendance overall is below the college's target. The search and governors' development committee effectively scrutinises the appointment of governors. Governors receive appropriate induction material and are updated on developments within the sector through regular presentations. They are not required to make annual declarations of eligibility. Recently, the college has established a formal training and development programme for governors. The search and governors' development committee has recently conducted a skills audit of the governing body membership in order to identify skills required when filling vacancies.

60 Governors have a clear understanding of the distinction between governance and management. They have played a significant role in reviewing the mission of the college and in the development of the college's aims. Governors are involved in the strategic planning process and are kept informed by managers of progress in meeting strategic objectives and annual targets. As recognised in the self-assessment report, although governors are informed annually of the achievements of students on individual courses, they have insufficient awareness of the overall quality and effectiveness of the college's provision and performance, compared with other colleges in

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the sector. Governors have not been given timely and accurate management information and have not been provided with a clear picture of the overall performance of students. In addition, they have lacked the necessary information to enable them to evaluate the effectiveness of management strategy. The college has recently established a governors' curriculum and quality committee to address these weaknesses.

61 Governors play an active part in college life, through attendance at exhibitions, ceremonies and other college events. There is governor representation on the academic board. Some governors have participated in courses offered by the college either as teachers or students. A few governors, however, know relatively little about the college's provision. The governing body has established an appropriate range of committees. The terms of reference of the committees are appropriate with the exception of those for the employment and finance committee, which do not include a requirement to advise the full board on annual budget allocations. The college has experienced significant difficulties regarding financial reporting. Governors have received insufficient information about the college's finances. Recently, the employment and finance committee has considered the college's monthly management accounts. However, these financial reports do not include financial and non-financial performance indicators. The audit committee has substantially operated within its terms of reference but it has failed to ensure the scope of the college's internal audit included the whole system of internal control.

62 Clerking arrangements are good. The clerk to the governors also holds the position of college secretary. Governing body and committee meetings are well planned. Discussions and decisions are well reported and carefully minuted, and the clerk services all committees with the exception of the remuneration committee. The cycle of

governing body and committee meetings is determined well in advance, and key items of business are identified. The operation of governor business is in accordance with comprehensive bye-laws. As stated in the self-assessment report, there has been a regular review of the operating arrangements for governance, and weaknesses within the bye-laws have been recognised and addressed. The governing body has established a comprehensive register of interests which is updated on an annual basis. The register has been extended to all college staff budget holders. Agendas, papers and minutes are available for public inspection.

Management

Grade 3

63 Inspectors broadly agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- effective communication between managers and other staff
- productive links with a wide range of external organisations
- well-defined strategic planning process

Weaknesses

- little reliable management information on students' performance
- slow response in addressing weaknesses in management information systems
- insufficient information provided in financial management reports

64 Managers have found it difficult to find money to rectify recognised weaknesses in the college resources, such as defects of accommodation and insufficiency of IT equipment. The principal has been in post since

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January 1999. There are clearly documented management structures and reporting lines and staff understand these. Managers have job descriptions and know what is expected of them. The management style is open and responsive. The principalship of the college comprises the principal, two vice-principals and the director of finance and has overall responsibility for strategic management. The senior management team, comprising the principalship and heads of faculties and service departments, deals mainly with operational matters. The principalship and management team meet frequently and the minutes of meetings are available to staff. There are regular meetings of faculty and business support teams.

65 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that communications between management and staff are effective. Most staff are well informed of issues affecting the college and their work. The outcomes of meetings between senior staff are communicated through team meetings at various levels of the college. There are many part-time teachers and they are well managed. Part-time teachers are well informed about general developments in the college and particular developments affecting courses. They help to determine teaching and learning methods and they participate fully in quality assurance procedures. Informative bulletins and the principal's newsletters are circulated regularly to all staff. Part-time teachers attend some course team meetings and are paid for doing so, and there are annual staff conferences for both part-time and full-time staff.

66 The college's three-year 1999 to 2002 strategic plan is informed by a thorough and comprehensive needs analysis. Six concisely expressed strategic aims are supported by specific objectives. The college has consulted widely in formulating the strategic plan. Consultation has included all college staff, the local education authority (LEA), and the local TEC. In its self-assessment report, the college

did not recognise as a strength, the clear strategic planning process which takes account of findings from the quality assurance process. During the course of 1999, the college's strategic planning process has been refined and improvements have been made to management information systems and financial controls.

67 Progress towards achieving the targets set in the college's annual operating plan is reported to the governors termly, and a report summarising the extent to which targets have been met is presented annually to governors by the principal. In 1998-99, a substantial number of operational targets were met. The extent to which faculty plans are implemented is reviewed at meetings involving the principal and heads of faculties. Faculties and business support areas present annual reports to the academic board. Interim reviews of progress on meeting targets take place during team meetings and meetings between middle and senior managers. The senior management team and faculty management teams, however, do not carry out a systematic review of progress in implementing college and faculty operational plans.

68 As the college recognises in the self-assessment report, it has productive partnerships with external organisations and the local community and these help the college to realise its aim of widening participation. Senior representatives of five organisations spoke highly of the responsiveness of the college. The college is the main provider for adult education in Kensington and Chelsea. There is an effective partnership with a local technology centre, which provides IT training for many disadvantaged young adults. The director of the centre is a member of the college's academic board. There are close links with two other London adult education colleges, and the college is a member of the central London strategic lifelong learning partnership and central and west London widening participation partnership. The college has good links with higher education institutions. For example, the

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college has strong links with The London Institute which accepts students on its art and design courses. The college is working with Birkbeck College to provide degree courses in the local community.

69 The monitoring of students' achievements centrally does not lead to reliable data that managers can use with confidence when taking decisions. Governors and staff are aware of this major weakness, which was also identified during the previous inspection. Managers and course teams go to considerable lengths to collect and check data manually. This is an excessively time-consuming task. Management information systems have only recently been developed to release staff from having to carry out the manual collection and checking of data, but it is too early to judge whether these are producing reliable and accurate data. The lack of reliable data makes it difficult for college managers to assess some aspects of college provision. Managers and governors are unable to consider the overall trends in student performance. Faculty managers monitor the deployment of staff but do not provide senior managers with an overview report on this. Recently, the college has made some progress in improving the timeliness of data returns to the FEFC. Assisted by the standards fund, the college is planning to make management information more accessible to managers. The college has a range of policies, which includes a health and safety policy and an equal opportunities policy. Senior managers and the governors receive reports on the extent to which the specified standards in these policies are met. Policies are subject to periodic reviews and the dates of these are recorded.

70 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is weak. The director of finance is a full member of the senior management team and principalship. The finance team has suffered from significant staff shortages and these have caused problems in

financial reporting and monitoring. The budgetary process is briefly documented and faculty staff are involved in the maintenance of financial records. Budgets are allocated according to agreed unit targets and these are reflected in the college's annual plan. Reporting processes have improved recently. Budgets, budget monitoring reports and management accounts are now produced promptly, when they are needed. Monthly management accounts are regularly considered by the principalship, but the financial reports have not included balance sheets, cashflow statements, achievement of FEFC funding units, or financial performance indicators. Financial regulations and procedures have yet to be fully established. The college's internal auditors have reported significant weaknesses in the college's systems of internal control which are now being addressed.

Conclusions

71 The college produced a thorough and detailed self-assessment report which provided a useful basis for planning the inspection. Staff and governors were fully involved in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report was based upon findings from the college's quality assurance processes. Evidence to support judgements was clearly indicated and there were detailed action plans for rectifying weaknesses. Many of the findings of the inspection team were similar to those of the college. Inspectors found some additional strengths and weaknesses. They agreed with three of the curriculum grades and three of the cross-college grades. Of the four other grades the inspectors awarded, two were higher and two were lower than the corresponding grades in the self-assessment report.

72 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 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	1
16-18 years	7
19-24 years	21
25+ years	71
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1999)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation)	28
Level 2 (intermediate)	16
Level 3 (advanced)	11
Level 4/5 (higher)	0
Non-schedule 2	45
Total	100

Source: college data

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

	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	399	1,157	16
Engineering	0	51	1
Business	44	1,082	12
Hotel and catering	0	126	1
Health and community care	121	402	5
Art and design	239	1,745	20
Humanities	109	2,296	25
Basic education	42	1,948	20
Total	954	8,807	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 60% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (October 1999)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	72	4	96	172
Supporting direct learning contact	3	0	5	8
Other support	82	3	0	85
Total	157	7	101	265

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£7,377,000	£7,781,000	£8,385,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£16.38*	£14.39	£16.20
Payroll as a proportion of income	73%	76%	71%
Achievement of funding target	134%	99%	98%
Diversity of income	38%	39%	32%
Operating surplus	-£49,000	-£247,000	£100,000

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

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

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

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

Diversity of income – Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

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

*provisional data

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	40	56	123	738	1,068	1,979
	Retention (%)	88	82	69	92	86	75
	Achievement (%)	51	67	49	35	47	51
2	Number of starters	17	23	51	374	469	740
	Retention (%)	88	70	45	87	81	73
	Achievement (%)	60	63	57	52	60	57
3	Number of starters	41	77	79	603	789	787
	Retention (%)	83	82	75	91	82	79
	Achievement (%)	35	53	67	37	39	63
4 or 5	Number of starters	0	14	1	43	61	96
	Retention (%)	n/a	100	100	98	92	69
	Achievement (%)	n/a	0	0	29	23	37
Short courses	Number of starters	94	140	264	2,817	4,335	6,822
	Retention (%)	93	93	94	93	91	93
	Achievement (%)	20	22	77	22	24	67
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	124	146	158	2,663	3,184	3,599
	Retention (%)	90	73	70	89	74	70
	Achievement (%)	12	19	75	16	20	76

Source: ISR

-ISR data not collected

*ISR data may not be reliable

n/a not applicable

FEFC Inspection Report 16/00

Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
Website www.fefc.ac.uk
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