

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**King Edward VI
College,
Nuneaton**

May 1994

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a statutory duty to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements to assess the quality of provision in the further education sector. It discharges the duty in part through its inspectorate, which inspects and reports on each college in the sector every four years. The Council's inspectorate also assesses and reports on a national basis on specific curriculum areas and advises the Council's quality assessment committee.

College inspections involve both full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have specialist knowledge and experience in the areas they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member from outside the world of education and a nominated member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are described in the Council Circular 93/28. In the course of inspecting colleges, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also summarise their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses using a five-point scale. 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 28/94

KING EDWARD VI COLLEGE, NUNEATON

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected September 1993 – February 1994

Summary

King Edward VI College, Nuneaton is a sixth form college providing GCE A level courses for 16-19 year old students in Nuneaton and the surrounding areas of north Warwickshire. The college offers a good range of GCE subjects and some provision for GCSE resits. A partnership between King Edward VI College and the North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art enables students to select from the provision offered by the two institutions, thus giving them a wider choice of subjects. The standard of teaching is high. Students' levels of achievements in public examinations are generally satisfactory. In a number of subjects their results are good. The governors of the college are increasingly involved in strategic planning and quality assurance. Management structures are clear, but some managers are required to carry heavy administrative loads in addition to their responsibilities for teaching. Quality assurance procedures are in the early stages of development and the management information system is not able to provide the data essential for effective course planning and review. The college should review its strategy for managing curriculum change, the setting of priorities and the allocation of the resources required to support development. The college should also address the lack of arrangements for staff appraisal, weaknesses in the tutorial system, insufficient information technology facilities, safety procedures in science practicals and student common room provision.

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	3
Quality assurance	4
Resources: staffing	3
equipment/learning resources	3
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Chemistry	3	Economics & business studies	2
Biology	3	Modern foreign languages	2
Physics	2	History	2
Mathematics	2	English	2
		Geography	3

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INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of King Edward VI College, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, took place in three stages during the autumn term 1993 and the spring term 1994. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the college term, specialist subject areas during November 1993 and January 1994, and aspects of cross-college provision from 7 to 10 February 1994. In all, 10 inspectors spent a total of 34 days in the college. They visited 78 classes, examined representative samples of students' work, and held discussions with governors, college staff, students, local employers, parents, teachers from the college's feeder schools and representatives of the community.

2 The report is based on inspections carried out according to the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. The framework describes a four-year inspection cycle. When this cycle becomes fully established, colleges will have the opportunity to respond to the findings of earlier inspection visits before their quadrennial inspection and the subsequent published report. As the inspection of King Edward VI college occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response was not available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 King Edward VI College is a sixth form college founded in 1974. It occupies a single site near the centre of Nuneaton formerly belonging to a grammar school for boys. It is a voluntary-aided, non-denominational, co-educational college, and the only sixth form college in Warwickshire. Nuneaton has a mixed industrial and commercial base, its economy having diversified following the decline of coal mining. The town is within easy commuting distance of Coventry, Birmingham and Leicester.

4 The college has slightly exceeded its recruitment target for 1993-94. At the time of the inspection, there were 695 full-time equivalent students, almost all of them studying full time. Full-time equivalent enrolments by age and by level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2, respectively. There were 48 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 12 full-time equivalent technical and support staff (figure 3).

5 Most students follow two-year General Certificate of Secondary Education Advanced level (GCE A level) courses although a small number of students on the 'connections' programme take a one-year course and others return for a third year to repeat GCE A levels. Some students also take GCSE resits, mainly in mathematics and English.

6 For admissions purposes, the college works in partnership with the North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art, located about a mile from King Edward VI College. The college recruits from Nuneaton, North Warwickshire, Coventry and the western fringes of Leicestershire. Only four schools in the area have a sixth form. The college recruits about 75 per cent of its intake from nine 12-16 feeder schools. Apart from the North Warwickshire College, there are several colleges of further education

within easy reach of Nuneaton which students can choose to attend.

7 The college in its mission statement aims to promote the maximum development of all students personally, socially and intellectually; to provide appropriate individual programmes of study that offer a range of high quality learning experiences; to encourage lively enquiring minds; to encourage the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding, and to assist students' progression by accreditation of learning, usually through nationally accepted qualifications; to provide an effective framework of guidance, assessment and support for each student and potential student; to enable students to develop as independent learners, to take responsibility for their own development and to make informed decisions about their future; to develop interests and sound relationships, and to foster respect for others by encouraging students to contribute to college, local and wider communities. The college's strategic plan and operating statement proposes the development of General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses in collaboration with North Warwickshire College and the possible development of courses for adults, including access courses and franchised higher education courses.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 Ninety-eight per cent of students are following GCE A and advanced supplementary (AS) courses. In 1993, the college offered 23 subjects at GCE A level and around half as many AS subjects. The change from four academic blocks to five academic blocks has enabled the range of subjects available to first-year students to be increased. King Edward VI College students also had access to 12 GCE A level subjects and seven GCSE subjects at the North Warwickshire College, which in some cases allows students to study an alternative syllabus from the one offered at King Edward VI College. There is a reciprocal arrangement between the two colleges to transfer funds to compensate for any imbalances in tuition costs.

9 Fifteen students follow intermediate level courses as part of the 'connections' programme, two-thirds of them studying GCSE English, mathematics and single award science. Although the connections programme advertises that students can choose a combination of subjects leading to Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), GCE A level and GCSE examinations, few students take advantage of the opportunity to include a GCE A level subject. Full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 4.

10 Students can choose from a programme of foundation and elective studies to supplement their A/AS level studies. The community awareness option involves one in 10 of the college students in teaching science to young people with profound disabilities. There is a strong sporting tradition: a variety of teams compete in regional and national fixtures. A

range of courses, including a sports leader award, is offered. The college arranges work experience, usually outside term time, for students who request it. About one fifth of students take advantage of the opportunity. The work experience programme, which commonly lasts one or two weeks, is supported by guides to students, parental consent forms and appropriate arrangements for insurance cover. Employers report favourably on students' maturity and enthusiasm.

11 The course developments planned or taking place at the time of the inspection were less ambitious than those envisaged in the college's operating statement for April 1993 to July 1994. The proposed college diversification into vocational courses and the investigation of access and franchise courses to be run solely at King Edward VI College were still at an early stage of consideration. GNVQ programmes were being developed at the North Warwickshire College and the plan was for King Edward VI College to contribute units to this programme.

12 Senior tutors act as liaison officers with feeder schools, attending the events arranged for school leavers and, if requested, for pupils in earlier years. Some heads of department also visit schools in the summer term. There is a good system for logging enquiries about admission from non-feeder schools. Perceptions of the effectiveness of school-college liaison vary. The college believes that its liaison with schools is effective but some school representatives challenged this. The first budget allocation for marketing has been spent largely on an attractive new prospectus. The college has produced a brief document on marketing policy but has yet to develop a detailed marketing strategy.

13 The college has a compact with Coventry University, and there are strong links with other universities. The views of the universities have been sought before making decisions on which subjects to adopt. Relationships with employers and industry are channelled mainly towards information on careers. The college publicises information from the 'women into science and engineering' movement, and two link engineers contribute to foundation studies and GCE A level physics investigations, help to arrange work placements, and advise on careers. Parents are extremely supportive of the college and are anxious to see the maintenance of a high-quality GCE A level programme which prepares students for entry to higher education. The college has not developed any European links although some students are able to take advantage of links established by Nuneaton's town-twinning scheme.

14 Several new courses have been introduced this year: GCE A level politics, psychology, human biology, modular mathematics, and modular science, AS level information technology, GCSE business studies and GCSE travel and tourism. The college is also considering developing a one-year GCE A level programme. The importance of evaluating and developing the curriculum is clearly recognised, but the college has not developed strategies and mechanisms to ensure that this is done systematically.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

15 The college is governed effectively. The board of governors meets regularly and its committees are well attended. Foundation governors are in the majority. Other governors represent employers, parents and staff of the college. The occupations, or previous occupations, of the governors cover a variety of business, educational and community interests. The local training and enterprise council (TEC) also has a representative. Governors' expertise is deployed effectively through the boards' subcommittees. The minutes of the governing board and its subcommittees indicate that the governing body is actively fulfilling its responsibilities under the articles of government.

16 The college's main priorities since designation have been to establish a sound structure to handle financial and personnel issues. Less emphasis has been placed on strategic planning and quality matters. At the time of the inspection, the governing body was considering the creation of a new strategic planning and quality committee to address these issues. Governors have involved themselves in discussions about the curriculum and have taken part in several staff-development days. The TEC governor has spent two days with the science department; the expertise of another governor has been used in the counselling of students and a third governor has taken an interest in the Advanced Level Information System (ALIS) for analysing students' examination results, and has attended a staff-training day on the subject. Most of the governors recently took part in a staff-development day associated with the production of the revised strategic plan. Enrolments by subject and by feeder school and students' examination results are reported annually to the governing body. Information on financial matters is provided monthly.

17 The college has a senior management team of the principal, the two vice-principals, the college administrator and four senior tutors. The groups meets informally each week and formally once a month. There are 12 departments each related primarily to one or more GCE A level subjects. The departments have between one and eight members of staff. All senior managers of the college undertake some teaching. The principal has responsibility for relations with the governing body and external agencies. The vice-principals have responsibility for curriculum and staff development, and for administration, admissions and marketing, respectively. Each vice-principal also has a responsibility for several tutor teams. The college administrator manages non-academic staff and is responsible for finance and premises. The heads of department management group includes the senior tutors, the college administrator, the staff development officer and the careers officer. Senior managers feel that this group has now become too large to function effectively and are looking to adopt a faculty structure.

18 The roles and responsibilities of staff and the formal lines of communication within the management structure are clearly identified, and job descriptions have been produced for most academic and

non-academic staff. Since the number of academic staff is small, discussions and decision-making often take place informally. Some staff are finding it difficult to fulfil their management responsibilities in addition to their teaching. For example, as more managerial responsibilities have been devolved in the wake of designation, senior tutors have been obliged to take on additional cross-college roles which they are finding hard to sustain effectively.

19 Senior managers and heads of department have recently adopted more formal procedures for their meetings which include the recording of actions to be taken, the date by which actions are to be completed, and the identification of individuals responsible. Minutes of management meetings are made available to all college staff, as are the minutes of the governing board and its committees.

20 The college's unit of resource for 1992-1993 was £2,390. The median for sixth form colleges nationally was £2,647. Summaries of the college's estimated income and expenditure are shown in figures 5 and 6. Budgets based upon a well-publicised and agreed system of allocation are devolved to departments. Departmental budgets are provisionally allocated in April and confirmed in September when student numbers are known. Departments are allowed to carry over surpluses or deficits. Some 20 per cent of the budget set aside for departments is held centrally and is allocated through a bidding process under which the senior management match bids against college development plans and priorities. The system fairly rewards expanding departments and encourages initiative. Furniture and general equipment is purchased centrally.

21 Senior managers have calculated departmental unit costs and hourly costs on the basis of staffing, equipment and estimated accommodation costs. The highest unit costs are four times greater than the lowest. There has been no attempt to cost tutorial provision, recreational classes and elective studies and the system disadvantages those departments which undertake service work. Nevertheless, the wider publication of the figures should assist heads of department and staff in developing and delivering more cost-effective provision.

22 The college's strategic plan was developed 18 months ago, with contributions from academic staff and governors, and has subsequently been modified as a result of various departmental and cross-college initiatives. The present strategic plan does not make significant allowance for the time and resources required for curriculum development and lacks a considered set of priorities.

23 The governing body has received and approved a health and safety policy. The college has a draft policy statement which addresses equal opportunities. Efforts have been made to redress the gender balance among students in some subjects. Some success has been achieved in attracting more female students to study mathematics. Four posts are held by women out of a total of 20 senior managers and heads of department although nearly 50 per cent of the main teaching staff are

female. Staff development opportunities have been made available to some female staff in order to improve their promotion prospects.

24 The college has no up-to-date staff handbook although a collection of loose documents is available. The college intends to rectify this situation as part of its policy to achieve Investors in People status. The college operates the School's Information Management System. This produces computerised information for the senior management and returns for the FEFC and the Department for Education. Information, in the form of spreadsheets, is made available on a regular basis to departmental heads. Records of student applications are entered on the database which enables staff to estimate the likely numbers for each subject. The system is unable to cope with the information on students' choice of subjects at the beginning of the academic year. This is managed manually which is a cost-effective method given the relatively small numbers of students. The major limitation of the system is the inability to handle the measurement and analysis of data. A senior tutor acts as the management information system officer. He receives insufficient remuneration for undertaking the development and maintenance of the system and there is little assistance from non-academic staff.

25 Enrolment targets are set across the college. The reasons for the decline of numbers in some subject areas require further investigation. Students' destinations are accurately monitored and a summary of the information on destinations is published. A high proportion of students go on to higher education and the college takes pride in reporting the success of its students to the feeder schools.

26 There are a significant number of transfers between subject areas in the first few months of the academic year and the college has effective procedures to deal with this. There was a small drop-out of students between October 1992 and June 1993 amounting to approximately 2 per cent of total enrolments. So far, in the current year, the figure is about 1.3 per cent. These are low figures for the sector. However, in 1993, nearly 10 per cent of students elected either to withdraw or to transfer their base of study during their first year, a significant increase over previous years. The college has identified that many of the students had transferred to other courses at the North Warwickshire College.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

27 Pre-admissions guidance is offered under the Nuneaton Junior College scheme whereby both King Edward VI College and the North Warwickshire College of Technology and Art jointly interview and admit students to programmes. The scheme ensures that students are given clear and impartial advice. Both colleges are represented at school careers fairs and open evenings. Applicants are usually interviewed in their feeder school. Students from other institutions apply directly to, and are interviewed at, the college. There is a college open day in the autumn for

potential students and their parents, and an induction day in the summer term enables students to sample their chosen subjects. At enrolment, students get a further opportunity to check and change their subject choices. Students have their tutorial base in whichever of the two colleges the majority of their subjects is placed. A free bus service enables students to move between the sites of the colleges mid morning. At lunch times students have to make their own arrangements.

28 The college has records of students' previous achievements at their schools. In some cases, this knowledge of students is reinforced by the good links which exist between college departments and subject departments in the schools. Both the college and the local schools provide bridging courses in modern foreign languages and science to assist the transfer from GCSE to GCE A level.

29 Induction is well managed and receives favourable comment from students. In geography, there is a two-week induction programme supported by a very attractive course booklet. Similarly in chemistry, there are good induction packages. As a result of the timetable changes introduced this year, students no longer receive an induction visit to the library or to the information technology facilities, although they are given written guides.

30 There are good arrangements to enable students to change their subject choices, which last from enrolment until the middle of the first term. There is careful consultation between relevant departments and tutors so that students can be fully advised of the consequences of any decision. When, for example, students do not wish to repeat GCSE mathematics or English to achieve a grade C or better, there is consultation with parents to ensure that both students and parents are made fully aware of the implications for students' further progress.

31 The college sees the tutorial system as central to academic and pastoral guidance. There are 40 tutor groups. Each group is headed by a tutor who reports to one of four senior tutors or, for 12 of the groups, directly to a vice-principal. Tutors are responsible for monitoring students' progress and general welfare and there are contacts with tutors at the North Warwickshire College to ensure there is a clear overview of students' progress.

32 Tutorials take place for one hour each week. Day-to-day issues such as the checking of absence and the general review of students' progress are dealt with by tutors but, in the case of more serious problems, issues are referred to senior tutors and, if appropriate, to external agencies. Tutors and senior tutors report upon students' progress at parents' evenings.

33 In practice, the tutorial system faces a number of problems which need addressing, some of which stem from the reorganisation of the timetable in September 1993. A students' questionnaire, carried out in the autumn of 1993, indicated relatively high levels of students'

dissatisfaction with tutorials. In particular, students thought the tutorial time too long for its purpose. The new timetable means that students from different years no longer mix in tutor groups, and it is more difficult to contact all students at any one time. Some students argued that the useful network of links between second and first-year students had been weakened. For students who have their subject teacher as tutor, tutorials are a useful additional subject support. For other students, the system is less satisfactory. One beneficial result of the new timetable arrangement, which students appear to value, has been the allowance of time in which students can obtain individual guidance on their progress.

34 The guidance for tutors on the content of tutorial session is limited. It currently consists of a scattering of loose sheets with brief outlines of the topics which should be covered, such as study skills, profiling, action planning and discussion of work experience. A more developed and structured guide for tutors should make tutorials more effective.

35 There are good arrangements for reporting to parents on students' progress. There are meetings for parents prior to students' entry to college and in the third week of the first year. Subsequently, there are three parents' evenings: in the middle of the first year, after first-year examinations, and when the results of the mock examinations are known in the second year. Separate arrangements are made to meet parents where students' progress is unsatisfactory.

36 There is a thorough programme of careers advice and guidance. The college has a well-furnished careers centre which contains a wide range of documentation, video material and computer-assisted packages. Students are alerted to career needs early in their first year when a joint programme is offered by the college and the local education authority (LEA) careers service. Students are issued with a helpful career planner which includes a plan of action and useful advice on sources of information, work experience and applications to higher education and employment. Information is supplemented by a programme of careers talks by visiting speakers. The LEA careers advisory service, which is situated adjacent to the college, sees between 50 and 80 per cent of college students. The great majority of students, over 80 per cent, seek entry to higher or further education. Relatively small numbers enter employment directly.

37 The college is strongly committed to the production of records of achievement, closely linked to the tutorial system. At five points in the two-year course, students complete or modify their profile and agree a statement of progress after consultation with their group tutor. By the beginning of the second year, students have produced word processed curriculum vitae. Completed profiles are then available for use at higher education or employment interviews. Closely linked to records of achievement has been the development of plans of action under which students agree with tutors the targets they set themselves to achieve.

38 Students' attendance is closely monitored and urgent action is taken

if there are unexplained absences. This monitoring also extends to students who are undertaking part of their programme at the North Warwickshire College.

39 The college has a students' council, elected by the students. Council members attend the governing body as observers. There is a students' agreement in place which provides a lot of information on students' responsibilities and some on students' rights. The agreement has been approved by the governors together with disciplinary procedures. Discussions about a students' charter have just begun although the college argues that many aspects of this are already in place.

40 The students' common room is a poor facility. Furniture is broken and the room is in poor decorative condition. Students spoken to during the inspection expressed dissatisfaction with the general quality of the social accommodation. Many said they were deterred from entering the common room. They felt that there was a need for a non-smoking area and for more provision of quiet study places. The students' restaurant has recently been refurbished and is now an attractive, if sometimes crowded, facility.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

41 Of the 78 teaching sessions inspected, almost 70 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed the weaknesses. The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are shown below.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A/AS level	9	39	20	5	0	73
GCSE	0	4	0	0	0	4
Other	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	9	44	20	5	0	78

42 The majority of sessions were well planned and had clear aims and objectives. Relations between staff and students were good. Students were well motivated and effective learning took place.

43 In good lessons, teachers employed an appropriate range of teaching strategies, and the work was lively and challenging. Teachers were authoritative in their subjects and presented their material in ways which helped to develop students' knowledge and understanding. In history, particular strengths included the emphasis on examination preparation and the thorough pursuit of primary sources of evidence. Textual analysis in English was sound and rigorous. In electronics, the understanding of complex concepts was advanced through the careful relating of theory to practice. In modern languages, students consistently spoke in the language they were learning and teachers' use of English for explanation was kept to a minimum. The library CD-ROM facility was used in some geography

sessions. Teachers made good use of audio-visual aids in the teaching of physics.

44 Some of the work lacked challenge or was conducted at too slow a pace. In some of the practical work in science, students worked in groups of three, an arrangement which did not always succeed in extending all members of the group. There were several examples of lessons in which students spent excessive time in the copying of notes from the board or from overhead projector transparencies. In business studies, opportunities were missed to draw on the experience of employers outside the college. The unsuitable accommodation for some English and history lessons restricted the teaching methods adopted. Classrooms were so overcrowded it was difficult to use audio-visual aids or to split students into sub-groups for discussion.

45 Science students did not always wear goggles and laboratory coats when undertaking practical work. There is a need for a policy on safety in science laboratories and staff should ensure that students observe safety procedures.

46 Some teaching failed to take sufficient account of the needs of weaker students, particularly the need to improve their oral skills. A number of students lacked sufficient confidence to speak in class and other students' answers to teachers' questions were hesitant and laboured. There is a case for teaching methods which offer some students more direct support, and for the provision of suitable materials for individuals to work on at their own pace.

47 The college has recently recognised the need to provide a more coherent approach to learning support. A new post of learning opportunities co-ordinator has been created to implement a college-wide policy. Literacy and numeracy workshops have been created and have been well advertised. A mathematics for science course is offered to provide additional support for students. The college has recently carried out a pilot project to assess students' basic skills. Students who have attended the literacy support workshop speak warmly of their progress and of the serious and mature manner in which they are treated.

48 The use of information technology varies from subject to subject. Its use is limited in some science subjects and in business studies. In contrast, history students use a computer-assisted learning package which helps to develop information technology skills and encourages them to be more independent in organising their learning.

49 As a basis for developing a core skills entitlement, the college has carried out a thorough and imaginative audit of subject content to ascertain the extent to which its courses contribute to the development of communication skills, personal skills, information technology and numeracy. This initiative should encourage staff to view students' subject combinations as an overall programme and help to pull together the present fragmented approach to core skills.

50 In most subjects, the marking of written work is accurate and helpful. Teachers' comments are diagnostic, covering both the quality of writing and the analytical aspects of the work. They provide a good basis for students to set about improving their work. In many cases, however, insufficient attention is given to correcting spelling and syntax. The grades awarded by staff provide an accurate assessment of achievement. In some subjects, for example geography, assessments are supported by a detailed marking scheme.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

51 Staff set high standards in most of their work with students. Students respond well, demonstrating high levels of commitment.

52 There were wide variations between subjects in the levels of students' success in their GCE A level examinations, 1992-93. Achievements in mathematics were particularly good. Overall, the average pass rate for students achieving grades A or B, and for those achieving grades A-E, were slightly below the national averages for sixth form colleges. However, the 281 students entered for two or more GCE A levels gained an average point score of 13.1 (where A=10, E=2) placing the college in the top 25 per cent of all colleges within the further education sector.

53 Relatively small numbers of students take GCSE subjects. In mathematics, where the numbers are largest, 56 per cent obtained pass grades A-C, which is above the average for the sector. On average, students re-sitting mathematics improve their performance by one grade over the level they had achieved before entering the college. However, some students resit GCSE mathematics on as many as four occasions before leaving the college.

54 The presentation of examination results could be improved by including, for example, an analysis of examination performance in terms of the numbers originally enrolled. Published results also need to make clear how well the college achieves in comparison with national norms for all institutions and norms for the further education sector.

55 Value-added analysis, to measure students' progress at college by comparing their final examination performance with their qualification on entry, has now been adopted by the college as a policy. Departments have yet to implement it.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

56 The college is reviewing its approach to managing quality and has recently taken the decision to use the Investors in People programme as its vehicle for quality improvement. In addition to this, the staff in each department have been asked to define the characteristics of a quality service and to create a set of quality standards. Together these two initiatives comprise the formal strategy for quality assurance and improvement. As yet, the college's strategic documents on quality are imprecise about the goals and standards to be reached, and how the

process will operate. It is not clear how the college will know whether it is improving its quality.

57 The college has a quality co-ordinator who leads the quality development process. An action plan has been established to guide the college towards attainment of recognition as an Investor in People. This initiative is steered by a small committee which, appropriately, includes representatives from support staff as well as academic staff. The quality committee, which meets regularly, is co-ordinating work on the production of written quality standards and will monitor progress on this initiative.

58 In the past, individual departments have taken their own steps to review aspects of quality. Some have administered student questionnaires, and some have conducted their own value-added analysis on the results achieved by their students. They have produced some useful findings which have led to improvements.

59 Some course review documentation was supplied by departments during the inspections, but the college does not have a universal system of formal course review. Without this, it is difficult to see how it can ensure effectively the standards of teaching, learning and assessment. The performance of college's library services is now being analysed in terms of library association standards.

60 The college spends about £18,000 a year on staff development. When staff time and other internal activities are taken into account, the college estimates that this expenditure rises to approximately £43,000 or 1.3 per cent of the budget. There are no formal staff-development interviews and little progress has been made on staff appraisal. Six members of staff have recently been trained as GNVQ assessors. The induction process for new teaching staff is being reviewed.

RESOURCES

Staffing

61 The student staff ratio is 15:1 which is the ratio agreed as policy by the governing body. Academic staff are well qualified for the subjects they teach. All have first degrees and most have teaching qualifications. Very few academic staff have recent industrial experience, and this will prove a disadvantage when the college ventures into GNVQ work with its partner college. Currently staff are fully occupied with the delivery of academic courses and elective studies. However, as a consequence of the high proportion of full-time staff, the college has little scope to redistribute staff if the numbers on courses decline or if the development into vocational areas requires a shift in the balance of teaching expertise.

62 Technicians and support staff work on a term-time only basis. There are sufficient technician staff to support science subjects and information technology facilities. Administrative support is provided by full-time and part-time staff. There is limited reprographic support for the academic

staff at the college. Levels of staffing for the library restrict day-time hours of opening and the number of weeks the library is open during the year.

Equipment

63 The range and quality of equipment, including teaching aids, is generally adequate. The library has a satisfactory book stock, together with various computerised information retrieval systems including CD-ROMs. There is no clear policy on the acquisition of books. The librarian has inadequate channels of communication with departments on book purchasing and on learning resources in general.

64 The college does not have sufficient computers to offer an effective open-access facility for students. Most machines are becoming outdated and are incapable of running up-to-date software. Those which are able to run the software are in constant use by students in the library. The timetable demands on the computer suite mean that students cannot use computing facilities as and when they wish.

65 Over 120 student each year obtain the information technology award accredited by the Royal Society of Arts. However the demand for information technology facilities is such that the college has to restrict this course to second-year students. This prevents first-year students from gaining the skills necessary to use information technology in their other subjects. The shortage of information technology facilities is such that students were either having to complete their work without using the technology or use equipment at home or at another college.

Accommodation

66 The college has a varied collection of buildings, some dating from the late nineteenth century. The oldest buildings have been difficult to adapt to modern teaching requirements although some remodelling is taking place. Wheelchair access to much of the college is difficult. The trustees own a second site a short distance from the main site but this has not been used for some considerable time. It is proposed to demolish the existing building on this site and to construct a modest classroom facility for use from September 1994. The trustees own nearby sporting facilities which are used by the college.

67 The accommodation in use is efficiently managed. Monitoring has shown that the teaching rooms are well used during the college week. There is a shortage of large teaching rooms which results in a significant amount of overcrowding in smaller rooms. An extension of the teaching day would be one means of relieving this situation. Rooms are adequately furnished and well maintained. The exception is the students' common room.

68 The library contains all the officially-designated study places for students. It is heavily used and often operates to full capacity. Frequently there is an overflow into extra space in a nearby hall.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

69 King Edward VI College is making satisfactory progress towards achieving some of the aims contained in its mission statement. The strengths of the provision inspected are:

- the governors' clear perception of their role and their involvement in strategic planning and in aspects of curriculum development
- the sound GCE A level provision
- the high standards of teaching
- students' satisfactory performance in external examinations
- the good record of students' progress to higher education
- the well-qualified academic staff
- the open nature of the procedures for allocating budgets to departments
- the development of records of achievement and effective careers support
- the community awareness programme.

70 If it is to improve the quality of provision and the standards of achievement of its students the college should address the following issues:

- the college strategy for managing curriculum change, the setting of priorities and allocation of resources to support development
- the arrangements for quality assurance
- the management information systems
- the tension for some staff between management roles and teaching responsibilities
- the effectiveness of the tutorial system
- the dissemination of information on unit costs to departments
- the development of a staff appraisal system
- the improvement of the information technology facilities
- the improvement of students' social facilities
- safety in some science practical work.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Percentage full-time equivalent enrolments by age (1993-94)

 - 2 Percentage full-time equivalent enrolments by level of study (1993-94)

 - 3 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)

 - 4 Full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)

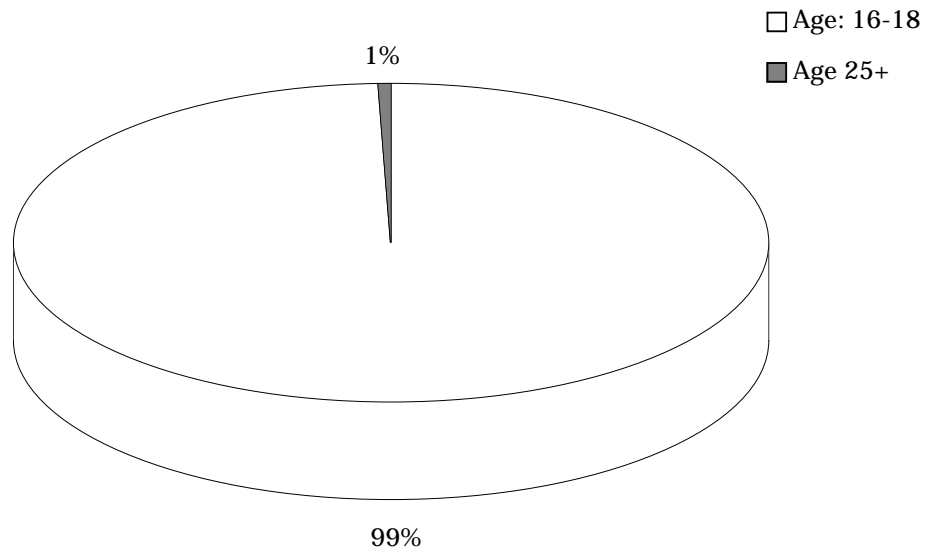
 - 5 Estimated income (for 16 months ending July 1994)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 16 months ending July 1994)

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

Figure 1

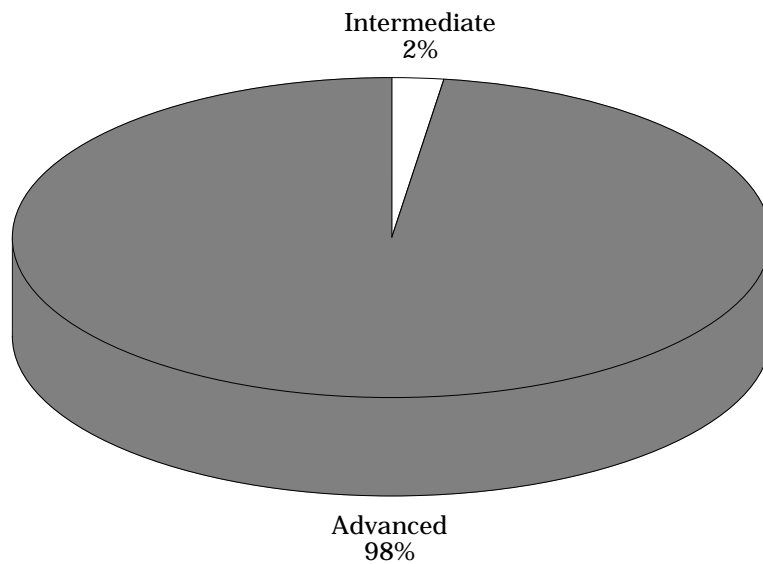
King Edward VI College: percentage full-time equivalent enrolments by age (1993-94)



Enrolments: 695

Figure 2

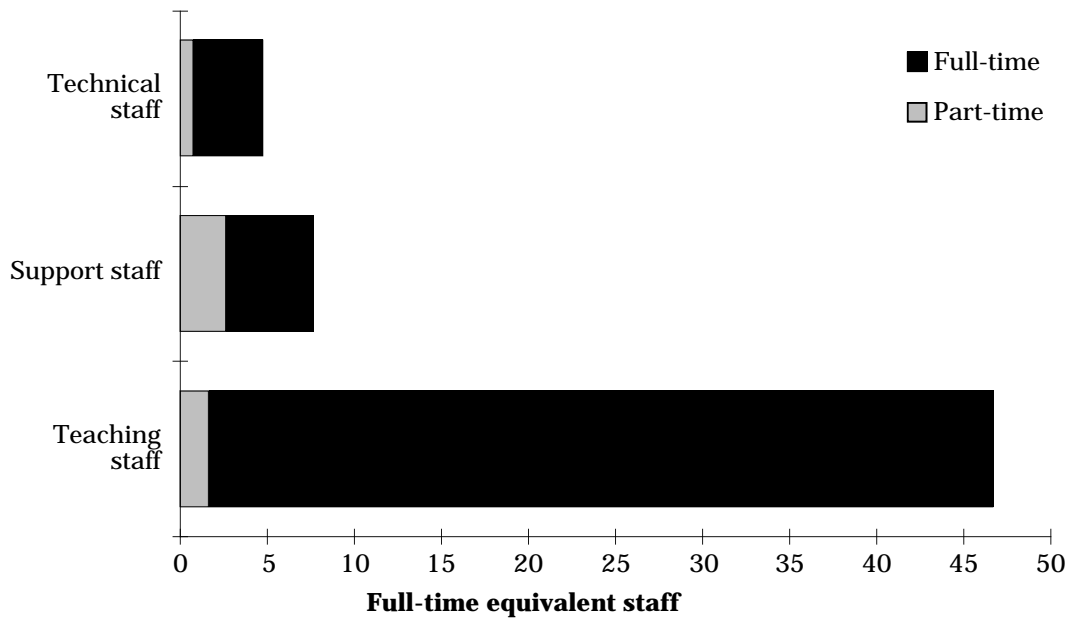
King Edward VI College: percentage full-time equivalent enrolments by level of study (1993-94)



Enrolments: 695

Figure 3

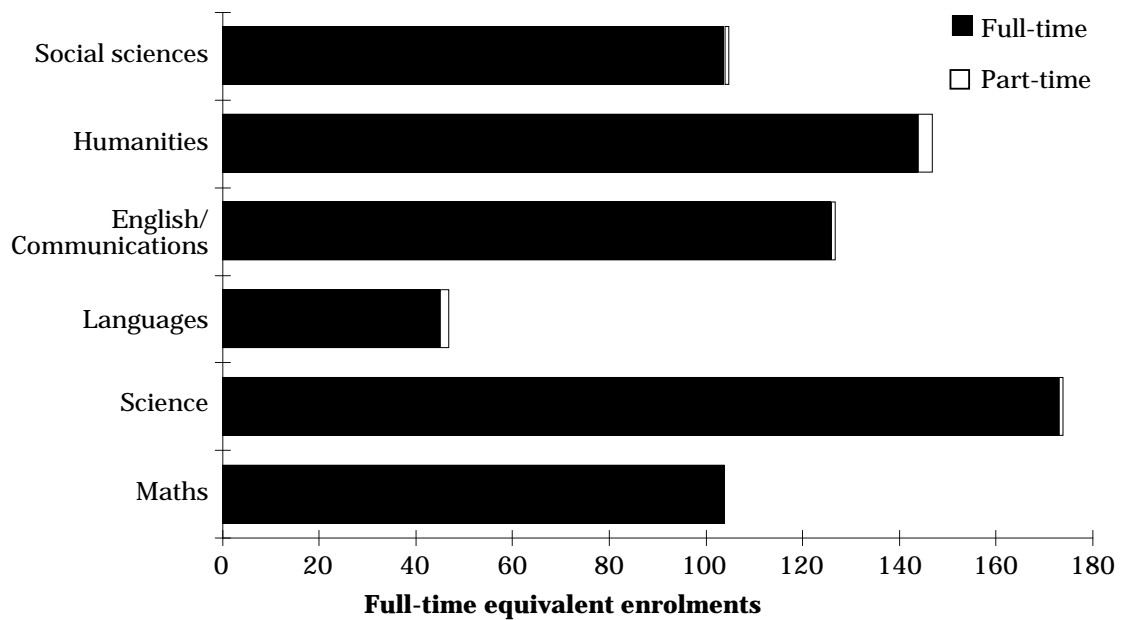
King Edward VI College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 60

Figure 4

King Edward VI College: full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent enrolments: 695

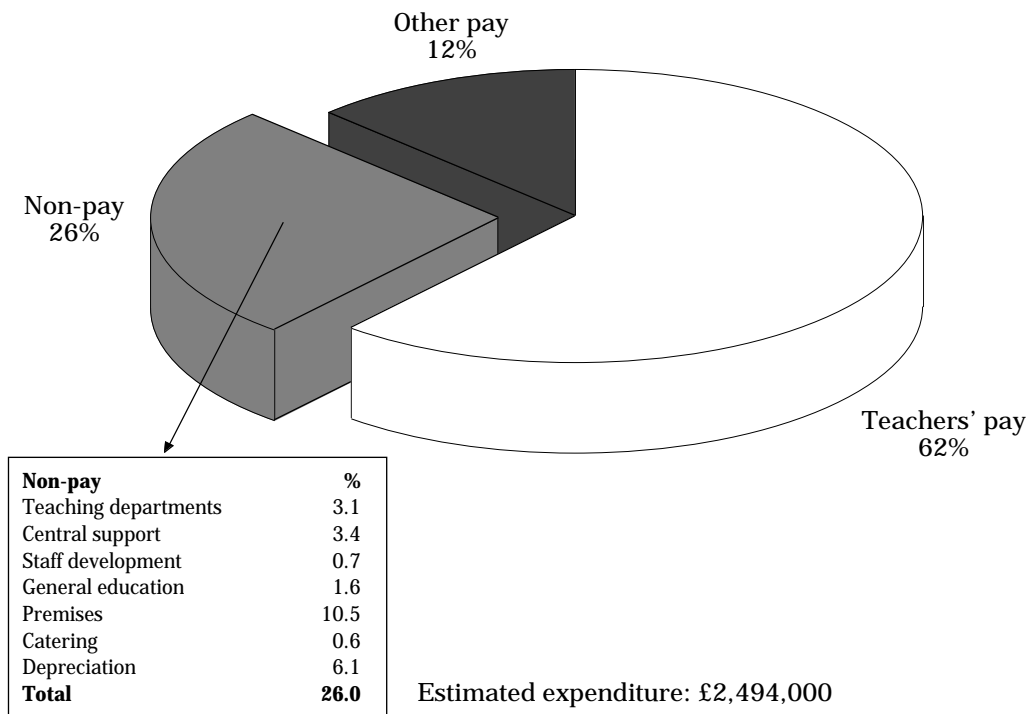
Figure 5

King Edward VI College: estimated income (for 16 months ending July 1994)



Figure 6

King Edward VI College: estimated expenditure (for 16 months ending July 1994)



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