

Kingsway College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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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

Kingsway College

Greater London Region

Inspected October 1999

Kingsway College is a multicultural, general further education college, based on three sites in the inner London borough of Camden. The college provides a wide range of educational opportunities for its local community and for students from across London. Since the previous inspection the college has addressed serious weaknesses in governance and management which had contributed to an accumulated deficit of £7.2 million which seriously threatened the survival of the college. The college's open and honest self-assessment report sets out the college's current position in the improvement of the quality of its provision. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but found that several strengths, such as the quality of aspects of teaching, particularly in one programme area, were overstated and that some strengths and weaknesses had not been given sufficient weight.

The college has successfully committed itself to serving the needs of its local community, and to widening participation by encouraging to further education those who are most disadvantaged and disaffected. The FEFC has identified the

college as one of a group which typically recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas. Effective managers and governors are leading the transformation of the college. Improved support for students and newly redesigned quality assurance systems are starting to have a positive impact. Students' achievements are improving and more students are completing their courses. Much teaching is satisfactory or better and students achieve well in dance and drama and in learning ESOL. The college has rationalised its accommodation to improve its financial position and the conditions in which staff and students work. The college has good links with local schools and with a large number of external agencies. The college should improve: the quality of some teaching; students' attendance and punctuality in some areas; its provision for basic skills and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; the coherence of its support for students; aspects of its quality assurance systems; and retention rates and students' achievements. The college should ensure that teachers and equipment are available for new courses in expanding areas of work.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Mathematics, computing and information technology	3	Support for students	3
Health and social care	3	General resources	3
Art and design	3	Quality assurance	3
Dance and drama	2	Governance	2
English and EFL	3	Management	2
ESOL	2		
Basic skills and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	4		

The College and its Mission

1 Kingsway College is a general college of further education located in the inner London borough of Camden. It is the major provider of post-16 education and training in the borough. The college serves a community which has major disparities in wealth, employment and social opportunities. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has identified the college as having one of the highest widening participation factors in the further education sector with some 78% of its students recruited from local authority wards with high levels of deprivation. Although the college recruits students from across London, the majority come from Camden and other London boroughs to the north and east. The college has a high proportion of students from minority ethnic communities. Significant numbers of asylum seekers and refugees live close to the college and this is reflected in the composition of the student body. The college operates from three main sites and also provides education in over 60 locations in the local community, including schools, community centres, employers' premises and local authority residential accommodation. The college enjoys strong links with local schools through consortium arrangements for sixth-form provision and new development work for young people approaching school-leaving age. The college has external contracts with two single regeneration bid partnerships in Kings Cross and West Euston, and also a national project for adults and community learning. The project and partnerships focus on developing the provision in basic skills and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) in a wide range of community groups and neighbourhood centres.

2 Kingsway College's previous inspection report was published in June 1996. At that time, the college was experiencing major financial and organisational difficulties. A new principal was appointed soon after the

inspection to lead the implementation of a recovery plan that addressed the most serious issues that were facing the college. The college has now implemented this plan over three years of radical and extensive change. The college's self-assessment report recognises that many of the newly established ways of working will require time to mature and to have a greater impact on the life of the college.

3 The college runs courses in all 10 of the FEFC's programme areas. The largest numbers of student enrolments are in the areas of humanities, basic education, art and design, and sciences. In July 1998, the college had 2,438 full-time students and 6,042 part-time students, including 2,536 adult education students funded by Camden Local Education Authority (LEA). Some 200 students are following higher education courses in the performing arts, science and engineering through links with the University of North London and City University. About 62% of the college's students are aged 25 years or over. The college uses 20% of its funding units from the FEFC to provide collaborative provision. The college employs 270 full-time equivalent staff. There are five teaching departments supported by cross-college departments responsible for student services and learning centres.

4 Whilst implementing a complex, demanding financial recovery plan, senior managers have also had to rebuild the college's quality assurance arrangements and put in place strategies to improve students' retention and achievements. Despite having to clear an accumulated deficit of £7.2 million, the college has been able to use resources derived from efficiency gains and effective budgetary control to invest in new information technology (IT) and other educational resources.

5 The college's mission is to be 'a responsive community college committed to excellence, to access for all, and to encouraging individuals to realise their full potential'. As part of the

Context

college's new 'vision and values' statement which underpins the college's development the college's governors have identified four key strategic priorities. These are to:

- establish a rigorous process of quality improvement to raise student achievement
- be effective in working in partnership with the local community to widen participation
- enable the college to be responsive in meeting the training needs of employers
- shape the curriculum to facilitate access, flexibility, choice and credit accumulation.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected during the week beginning 4 October 1999. The inspection team had previously considered the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used data on students' achievements drawn from the college's

individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1997 and 1998. The college submitted its own data for students' achievements for 1999, which were checked by inspectors against primary sources such as lesson registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. Twelve inspectors and an auditor carried out the inspection, working for a total of 57 days.

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, 52% were rated good or outstanding. This is below the average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. The figure of 13% for lessons rated less than satisfactory or poor is higher than the average.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	1	6	4	0	0	11
GCSE	1	1	3	1	0	6
GNVQ	0	6	8	5	1	20
NVQ	0	0	2	0	0	2
Other vocational	6	10	7	2	0	25
Other*	3	11	7	3	0	24
Total (No.)	11	34	31	11	1	88
Total (%)	13	39	35	12	1	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

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

*includes tutorials inspected as a contribution to support for students

Context

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Attendance was best in drama and dance lessons, where just under 80% of students were present. Fewer than 70% of basic skills students and students with learning difficulties were present in the lessons observed.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Kingsway College	10.9	77
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

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

Curriculum Areas

Mathematics, Computing and Information Technology

Grade 3

9 Inspectors observed 13 lessons in mathematics, computing and IT. The courses covered included: general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) mathematics, computer studies and IT ; general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) mathematics; national diplomas and general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) in IT at foundation and intermediate levels; IT courses for visually impaired students; and part-time evening courses in business technology. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment of this programme area.

Key strengths

- enjoyable, effective teaching
- wide range of IT and computing courses to meet business and community needs
- consistently good achievement rates in GCSE mathematics
- improving achievement rates in GCE A level mathematics

Weaknesses

- inadequate resources to support the rapid expansion in IT courses
- poor retention rates on some courses
- poor achievement rates on GCE A level computer studies and RSA Examinations Board (RSA) computer literacy and information technology courses
- inadequate cover arrangements in some cases of staff absence
- some poor pre-GCSE mathematics and numeracy provision

10 As identified in the self-assessment report, the college offers a wide range of computing and IT courses to meet the needs of local businesses and the community. This year three new full-time courses have been introduced which have recruited well and have resulted in significantly higher numbers of full-time students studying computing and IT. Resources have not been increased to match the rapid expansion of the number of students, so that computers are not always available for all students who need them. The college continues to develop and offer courses in the latest developments in technology. Recent additions include web authoring and Java programming. The college offers an extensive range of modular GCE A level mathematics courses. GCSE mathematics courses are offered during the day and the evening.

11 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that the provision is well managed. There are detailed schemes of work and many teachers plan their lessons thoroughly. However, in some GCE A level and numeracy lessons teachers had not prepared the work adequately and there were not enough resources for the students to use. Most assignments and assessments are appropriate and interesting. Students on many full-time courses are provided with course handbooks containing detailed schemes of work and assessment information. Some teachers provide extensive, detailed written commentaries on the quality of students' assessed work; others restrict their feedback to ticks, crosses and a grade.

12 Many of the lessons were enjoyable and stimulating, and teachers demonstrated good classroom management skills. In one GCSE mathematics lesson, the teacher had prepared a lesson that had a clear and logical structure which took account of the learning needs of the large, mixed-ability group, and provided stimulating demonstrations and carefully planned work for the students. The students

Curriculum Areas

responded well to the lecturer's energy and enthusiasm and the atmosphere in the lesson was one of constructive and motivated learning. In a lesson on a full-time computing course, the teacher combined clear explanations with interesting worked examples to encourage the students to develop up-to-date skills in web authoring. Some teachers have developed good-quality lesson notes and learning materials, which are available to students on the college's academic computer network. The quality of the teaching of pre-GCSE numeracy and application of number is sometimes poor. This weakness was partially identified in the self-assessment report.

13 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report relating to retention and achievement rates in mathematics and computing. Achievement rates on GCSE mathematics courses are consistently above the national

average. Rates of achievement on GCE A level mathematics courses are improving, while those for GCE A level computing and RSA computer literacy and information technology courses are poor.

14 Although most teachers are well qualified, there are few suitably skilled and experienced staff to teach mathematics programmes below GCSE level. This issue was identified in the college's self-assessment report. The large computing centre is used to accommodate timetabled lessons. As a consequence, some students have little access to IT resources outside timetabled lessons. The college had not identified this issue as a weakness.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
RSA computer literacy and information technology (one year)	1	Number of starters	161	82	47
		Retention (%)	96	68	93
		Achievement (%)	70	41	45
GCSE mathematics	2	Number of starters	222	134	266
		Retention (%)	88	63	86
		Achievement (%)	79	95	74
National diploma in computer studies	3	Number of starters	26	21	23
		Retention (%)	96	86	35
		Achievement (%)	38	45	100
GCE A level mathematics (two years)	3	Number of starters	140	90	86
		Retention (%)	94	83	67
		Achievement (%)	22	54	75
GCE A level computer studies (two years)	3	Number of starters	47	31	44
		Retention (%)	96	97	86
		Achievement (%)	24	14	50

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

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care

Grade 3

15 Inspectors observed 11 lessons on health and social care programmes, including a group tutorial, a work placement session and a lesson in which students were working on their own. The self-assessment report for this area was comprehensive and self-critical.

Inspectors agreed with most of the college's judgements but concluded that the quality of some teaching was overstated.

Key strengths

- well-developed schemes of work and lesson plans
- sound integration of key skills with the vocational aspects of students' work
- good achievements in GNVQ health and social care at all levels and national vocational qualification (NVQ) childcare at level 3
- good retention in GNVQ advanced diploma in playgroup practice
- well-organised courses

Weaknesses

- some poor teaching methods
- low retention on GNVQ foundation and NVQ childcare courses at levels 2 and 3
- low achievement on the NVQ childcare level 2 course and the diploma in playgroup practice
- declining recruitment
- lack of permanent specialist staff

16 The college offers GNVQ health and social care qualifications for full-time students from foundation to advanced levels. Access to youth, community and social work is offered to part-time students. NVQs in childcare at levels 2 and 3 are offered part time during the day and in the evening. The Council for Awards in

Children's Care and Education certificate is being offered for the first time this year. The college is working in partnership with a single regeneration budget funded project to offer pre-school learning alliance and NVQ childcare courses in the community. In order to sustain response to local need, the college recognises that it should diversify and expand the current range of care courses on offer.

17 Lessons were well planned. Assignments were clear and gave students opportunities to undertake interesting and productive tasks. Teachers are introducing computerised individual learning programmes for vocational units and there was productive liaison between a teacher and one of the college's resource-based learning assistants. In the tracks towards employment project, key skills were successfully integrated with the vocational programme. All students are offered work placement opportunities. In the self-assessment report the college stated that a range of effective teaching methods were employed and that students' individual needs were addressed on most courses. Inspectors did not agree.

18 On some courses, achievement and retention rates are good; on others, they are poor. Achievement and retention rates on the GNVQ health and social care course at advanced level are above the national average. The NVQ childcare course has both low retention and achievement when compared with national averages. Students produce written assignments of a good standard. Awarding body reports largely confirm this. Most students receive effective feedback on their written work which helps them to continue to improve their performance. Students are well motivated and have clear personal goals for progression. Retention is recognised as a particular area of concern in the self-assessment report but newly developed strategies to address this have not been fully implemented.

Curriculum Areas

19 Courses are well organised. There are regular course team meetings. There are clear and informative handbooks. Induction programmes successfully introduce students to their courses of study. These strengths were listed and evidenced in the self-assessment report. GNVQ foundation level students were given an induction task of personal interest which enabled them to practise all the assessment skills required of a GNVQ student. The internal verification process is planned and staff respond to comments from external verifiers. Monitoring and reviewing of course action plans are not satisfactory.

20 Resources for students to learn on their own have been built up in the learning centre, where staff also respond speedily to the need to acquire additional books when new courses are

introduced. Access to learning resources for off-site students has not been addressed. Only a small number of full-time staff are used to co-ordinate the provision and there is an over-reliance on part-time staff to teach the programmes. This has an adverse effect upon staff and upon students' learning. This weakness was not included in the self-assessment report.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in health and social care, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ foundation health and social care	1	Number of starters	15	13	*
		Retention (%)	47	54	*
		Achievement (%)	85	100	*
GNVQ intermediate health and social care	2	Number of starters	17	19	20
		Retention (%)	82	84	65
		Achievement (%)	57	57	69
NVQ childcare	2	Number of starters	*	*	10
		Retention (%)	*	*	47
		Achievement (%)	*	*	84
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	Number of starters	19	18	16
		Retention (%)	42	78	81
		Achievement (%)	43	80	84
NVQ childcare	3	Number of starters	*	*	20
		Retention (%)	*	*	47
		Achievement (%)	*	*	84
Access to youth, community and social work	3	Number of starters	23	33	19
		Retention (%)	61	64	83
		Achievement (%)	71	85	47

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

*courses not running

Curriculum Areas

Art and Design

Grade 3

21 Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with the main strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report but considered that it understated some weaknesses in teaching and learning and the strength in students' achievements.

Key strengths

- good range of provision
- thorough schemes of work and course handbooks
- good specialist accommodation
- effective access to IT facilities
- general improvement in students' achievements

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped management of key skills provision
- insufficient checking of students' understanding in some lessons
- lack of punctuality and poor attendance
- poor retention on some courses
- inadequate specialist equipment in photography

22 The college provides a good range of courses covering fine art, graphic design, media and multimedia, photography, three-dimensional design and fashion. Qualifications include GNVQ intermediate level, GCE A level, professional development awards, national diplomas and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) creative studies. Opportunities for students to progress within the college are good.

23 The organisation and management of the programme area has changed during the last year and, as indicated in the self-assessment

report, some significant problems have been rectified. For example, changes in course management and teaching on the GCE A level course and the national diplomas in photography and multimedia have resulted in improvements in students' achievements. The recent introduction of an 'integrated programme' that brings GNVQ intermediate students and national diploma students together does not include the setting and assessment of key skills. This programme was not running when the self-assessment report was completed. Although course teams meet regularly the minutes of meetings do not always identify responsibility or deadlines for action. This was not identified in the self-assessment report.

24 Much of the teaching in art and design is satisfactory. Inspectors observed examples of good teaching of ceramics, drawing, historical studies, IT, packaging design and photography. Lesson planning is good and schemes of work take into account the different needs of students. In one lesson, the teacher had carefully prepared a still life set made up of black, white and grey painted objects. The drawing presented students with a subtle and difficult range of tones and they were clearly challenged. The teacher's enthusiasm for drawing and his good demonstration of techniques ensured that students were learning. In a theory lesson, students were learning about the work of different artists. The lesson had been carefully prepared and the teacher was successful in giving students the confidence to talk and write about the different aspects of an artist's work. A few lessons observed by inspectors were less than satisfactory. These lessons lacked direction and presented problems for students who had not yet acquired essential basic drawing skills. Teachers sometimes failed to check students' understanding of what was required of them. Poor punctuality disrupted some lessons and several students missed important introductions to assignments. Poor punctuality and low attendance were not sufficiently emphasised in the self-assessment report.

Curriculum Areas

25 Although some students' achievements and retention rates are below national averages, there is a general pattern of improvement. On some courses, students' achievements have improved significantly. For example, the pass rate on GCE A level and the national diploma in photography courses for 1998-99 was 100% and the pass rate on the national diploma in foundation studies, whilst below the national average, is high at 93%. The college recognises in its self-assessment report that students' achievements are low on some courses. The pass rate on the GNVQ intermediate course for 1998-99 was well below the national figure at only 40%. Only 50% of the students completing the C&G course in creative studies obtained an award. The standard of most students' practical work is good and work in the students' portfolios demonstrates an appropriate range of activities, including the use of IT. The college's records of students progressing to higher

education show that an increasing number of students are being offered places on degree course across a range of subjects.

26 Although there are sufficient appropriately qualified full-time teachers, the college recognises that some teachers' experience requires updating and a programme of staff development is planned to help them integrate new technologies more effectively. The programme area makes good use of part-time teachers who are practising artists and designers. They bring to the college a good range of industrial experience and contribute to the content and organisation of the curriculum. Accommodation for art and design has improved since the last inspection. Students have access to a good range of studios and workshops that are generally well furnished. There are good displays of students' work. Specialist equipment in photography is inadequate and its poor quality in some respects makes it difficult for students to maintain professional standards.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ intermediate	2	Number of starters	*	13	7
		Retention (%)	*	46	71
		Achievement (%)	*	100	40
C&G creative studies	2	Number of starters	34	25	25
		Retention (%)	76	80	90
		Achievement (%)	100	45	50
National diploma in general art and design	3	Number of starters	28	38	48
		Retention (%)	93	68	70
		Achievement (%)	50	70	93
National diploma in foundation studies	3	Number of starters	46	56	35
		Retention (%)	70	70	82
		Achievement (%)	100	64	93
GCE A level art and design	3	Number of starters	26	21	17
		Retention (%)	80	70	76
		Achievement (%)	19	25	100
National diploma in photography	3	Number of starters	18	14	14
		Retention (%)	94	76	85
		Achievement (%)	73	100	100

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

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Dance and Drama

Grade 2

27 Inspectors observed a total of 13 lessons covering vocational courses in drama and dance at intermediate and advanced levels, and GCE A level performing arts. Inspectors judged that whilst the self-assessment report gave a realistic assessment of the provision overall, it did not distinguish sufficiently between the visual and performing arts, so that the strengths of performing arts were not fully recognised.

Key strengths

- consistently good teaching
- well-planned curriculum
- rigorous emphasis on vocational relevance
- good student progression to higher education

Weaknesses

- some unsuitable accommodation
- insufficient technician support

28 There is a good range of well-planned courses. Programme managers are aware of the changing needs of students and alter the provision to meet them. Courses are structured so that students can specialise in either dance or drama.

29 The teaching of dance and drama is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. A policy of mutual respect between staff and students is firmly implemented, and students are encouraged to value their work and that of others. Students acquire sound acting and dancing techniques and are appreciative of the high-quality teaching they receive. High standards are maintained. Practical lessons commence with effective vocal and physical warm-ups. Students are taught a sound basic understanding and knowledge of physiology

which is central to the teaching of dance.

Teachers maintain high standards in practical activities and insist on students wearing suitable clothes and footwear. Teachers distinguish clearly between rehearsal and performance. Students were observed using effective trial-and-error techniques to further their understanding of character work, particularly in association with the teachings of Stanislavski. Staff teach together regularly and effective systems are in place to monitor such activities. The high quality of teaching is recognised in the self-assessment report.

30 Students' achievements are good and sometimes outstanding. Students' attendance is good. Retention and achievement rates on the first diploma course have been improved. Students' achievements on the advanced programmes compare well with national averages. The college has discontinued GCE A level theatre studies and replaced it with GCE A level performing arts. This has led to improved pass rates. Considerable efforts are made by staff to help students with their applications to higher education and progression to higher education is impressive. Last year, 90% of applicants were successful in gaining places in this very competitive area. Students have opportunities to perform to the general public. Written assignments are vocationally relevant and demanding. Students are involved with projects with both the Royal National Theatre and the Royal Court Theatre and they are encouraged to act as extras in television and filmed dramas shot on location in central London. Students are expected to consider themselves as trainee professional performers and technicians. All these strengths were identified in the self-assessment report.

31 The already well-qualified staff are encouraged to update their qualifications. Staff are encouraged to attend appropriate events including the Venice Film Festival. The policy of employing current practitioners as part-time teachers contributes to the vocational relevance

Curriculum Areas

of the courses. The overall level of equipment is good, with easy access to appropriate teaching aids such as video and audio facilities, overhead projectors and transparencies, whiteboards and pianos. The accommodation includes several practical studio spaces, including dance studios with sprung floors, barres and mirrored walls. However, the accommodation is disparately located over three floors and some spaces are often insufficiently ventilated and affected by extraneous noise. There is a lack of suitable teaching areas for written and textual work and it is sometimes carried out in inappropriate conditions, where, for example, students do not have desks or tables. Whilst it is proposed to appoint a technician, the programme area has been without one for several months and the lack of maintenance and security of equipment is evident. These weaknesses have not been recognised in the self-assessment report.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
First diploma in performing arts	2	Number of starters	15	18	16
		Retention (%)	73	78	80
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100
National diploma in performing arts	3	Number of starters	43	52	40
		Retention (%)	81	73	88
		Achievement (%)	76	81	97
GCE A level performing arts	3	Number of starters	*	40	21
		Retention (%)	*	67	100
		Achievement (%)	*	94	82

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

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

English and EFL

Grade 3

32 Inspectors observed 12 lessons, including one tutorial, in English as a foreign language (EFL) from entry to advanced level, GCSE in English language and in English literature, and GCE A level in English language and in English literature. They agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report. However, inspectors identified some weaknesses related to teaching and learning that were not identified by the college. The college did not give sufficient weight to some weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-prepared and thorough teaching
- successful course team leadership and course management
- good EFL and GCSE pass rates in 1999
- well-qualified, highly motivated specialist staff
- thorough initial assessment of students and effective individual support

Weaknesses

- some poor achievement and retention rates
- failure to vary teaching methods appropriately
- insufficient work at different levels in EFL lessons
- insufficient use and availability of IT and specialist resources
- poor punctuality and attendance
- inadequate student support services for EFL students

33 The college offers a good range of well-planned courses which meets the needs of differing groups of students. GCSE and

GCE A level students come from diverse ethnic backgrounds and lessons reflect the multicultural character of the student body, and of the inner city in which the college is located.

34 Enthusiastic teachers plan and organise courses carefully, and create a friendly, purposeful atmosphere which is conducive to learning. These strengths were identified in the self-assessment report. Teaching is well prepared and students are given clear objectives for their lessons. Some teachers are skilled at promoting students' confidence in dealing with concepts which are difficult for them, such as the complex imagery of Shakespeare's plays. In an outstanding lesson in EFL, an enthusiastic tutor used imaginative pictures to fire students' imagination. However, many teachers of EFL rely solely on worksheets when a wider range of teaching methods could help students to learn more effectively. In many lessons, only a minority of students contributed to the work. Some teachers allowed students to remain passive for long periods. Lack of punctuality, especially by younger students, was a problem in some lessons and the tutor did not always question it during the lesson or make any attempt to address it. In some EFL lessons, adult students were held back because of the behaviour of young students which required teachers to spend time maintaining classroom order. The college self-assessment report did not identify this as a weakness.

35 Students' work is assessed regularly. However, there is no homework policy to ensure the regular setting and return of work. This is a weakness identified in the self-assessment report with regard to GCE A level and GCSE provision. Most teachers' feedback on written work is adequate, though in some cases students are not given sufficient information on why a mark or grade has been awarded.

36 There have been some recent improvements in students' achievements and retention. Students' written work in GCE A level

Curriculum Areas

and GCSE English lessons demonstrates sound knowledge of literary texts and good analytical skills. In lessons, GCE A level students demonstrated well-developed critical and analytical skills. Achievements in GCSE English language and GCSE English literature were above the national average in 1997, 1998 and 1999. In 1999, results for students on all EFL courses were above the national average. However, retention rates for EFL are poor in comparison to national averages, as were those for GCE A level English language and English

literature before 1999. The college identified all of these strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report.

37 Teaching is carried out by an adequate number of appropriately qualified teachers. Students have insufficient opportunity to develop their IT skills. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. Accommodation is adequate at present and plans are underway to transfer the EFL courses to better accommodation, where staff and students will have improved access to resources and to the general facilities of the college.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
First certificate in English (FCE): EFL	1	Number of starters	515	297	86
		Retention (%)	95	82	73
		Achievement (%)	98	42	74
Preliminary English test (PET): EFL	1	Number of starters	281	195	11
		Retention (%)	91	58	50
		Achievement (%)	100	15	67
Certificate in English (CAE): EFL	1	Number of starters	273	180	40
		Retention (%)	91	74	70
		Achievement (%)	100	41	81
GCSE English language	2	Number of starters	181	196	208
		Retention (%)	79	78	87
		Achievement (%)	54	46	46
GCSE English literature	2	Number of starters	8	14	18
		Retention (%)	75	57	78
		Achievement (%)	67	63	80
Certificate of proficiency in English (CFE): EFL	2	Number of starters	136	91	19
		Retention (%)	98	67	84
		Achievement (%)	100	44	88
GCE A level English language	3	Number of starters	57	125	98
		Retention (%)	81	67	82
		Achievement (%)	59	41	63
GCE A level English literature	3	Number of starters	14	24	30
		Retention (%)	71	75	97
		Achievement (%)	100	64	73

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

Curriculum Areas

ESOL

Grade 2

38 Inspectors observed 12 lessons on college premises and in locations in the community. They agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-planned lessons
- consistently good teaching
- well-structured tutorials
- effective systems for monitoring students' achievements
- improved students' achievements in the last two years
- the development of general educational and vocational options on intensive courses
- strong community links
- good diagnostic assessment procedures

Weaknesses

- declining retention in recent years
- overlarge classes on some courses
- no marking policy

39 The range of provision for ESOL is good, with courses available from entry level to intermediate level. Students' achievements are accredited through the London Open College Network. The work is well managed and good links with the local community make it possible for the college to be responsive to changing local needs. An effective initial assessment enables staff to place students on appropriate courses. This is followed by a more thorough diagnostic assessment which enables teachers to identify students' learning needs and forms the basis for individual action-planning. General academic and vocational options on intensive courses have been developed to improve access and progression to other courses at a higher level.

There is evidence that progression rates from the community education lessons to higher level ESOL courses are good.

40 Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Lesson plans have clear links between schemes of work and London Open College Network assessment criteria. Detailed schemes of work are produced for each component of the course. These are shared with students and displayed in classrooms. Most lessons are well planned with aims and objectives which are clearly appropriate for students' needs. In one lesson in which students were learning to describe people, some effective vocabulary building followed the initial discussion. The teacher made good use of materials and the students were engaged in a variety of activities which built on their previous experiences and clearly demonstrated the development of their language skills. Teachers use a variety of appropriate teaching and learning methods which take account of the needs of individual students. Materials are well produced and adapted to meet the students' needs. Teachers pay attention to equality of opportunity and to issues relating to the different cultures of students in their lessons. Record-keeping by students and teachers is good. Students are given homework regularly. However, the department does not have a marking policy and this results in some inconsistent marking of students' work.

41 Tutorials are regular, well structured and used effectively to support students. Most students are highly motivated and appreciate the effective teaching and tutorial support they receive. Progress reviews take place at the end of each six-week module. Teachers are aware of, and responsive to, the needs of students with learning difficulties. The college's programme of extra-curricular activities is not available to students on all sites. The college identified this as a weakness in the self-assessment report and is seeking to remedy the situation.

Curriculum Areas

42 As identified in the self-assessment report, students' achievement rates have improved and are now above national averages. However, as was also identified in the self-assessment report, retention rates have declined over the last two years and are now below the national average. The college has started to introduce measures to improve retention. These include a well-structured tutorial pack with support materials adapted to meet the needs of students with differing levels of ability, a core syllabus adapted for different ESOL levels, and the requirement for rigorous monitoring of punctuality and attendance. The department has improved its systems of monitoring attendance, retention and achievement through appointing ESOL support workers. Advice and guidance is available on a daily basis throughout the year. Some classes enrol too many students to allow for a substantial dropout during the early weeks of the year. The college had not identified this in the self-assessment report.

accommodation at the main sites is good. Some classrooms have good wall displays of posters, maps and students' work. Students on the main sites are encouraged to use the college's resource centre and most do so. These strengths are identified in the self-assessment report.

43 Teachers are well qualified and very experienced. All full-time staff teach both in the community centres and on the main college sites to encourage the sharing of good practice. A monthly newsletter is published to keep part-time staff informed of developments within the department. The standard of

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
London Open College Network	Entry and level 1	Number of starters	2,329	1,562	1,341
		Retention (%)	68	65	56
		Achievement (%)	24	68	77

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

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills and Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Grade 4

44 Inspectors observed 14 lessons covering provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and students developing basic skills. The self-assessment report identified some of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision but inspectors did not agree with all of the strengths. The extent of some weaknesses in teaching, learning, and students' achievements were underestimated in the self-assessment report. Some progress has been made in addressing weaknesses since the self-assessment report was produced.

Key strengths

- increased responsiveness to the needs of the local community
- good teaching of students with sensory impairments
- successful development of students' spoken language

Weaknesses

- poorly managed entry to courses
- low retention and achievement on some courses
- some poor teaching of basic skills and of students with learning difficulties
- insufficient opportunities for students to learn independently at their own pace
- inadequate opportunities for practical learning

45 The college is committed to widening participation and has developed a number of successful recruitment initiatives which are effective in bringing people into the college who

may not have previously considered a course in further education. The college recognises this as a strength. Student numbers have grown rapidly, and there is now a diverse range of students, including asylum seekers and refugees living in temporary accommodation, many of whom have experienced disruptions in their education. Programmes are taught at three of the college's main sites and at some community venues. Courses are designed to provide students with nationally recognised qualifications and progression routes to other courses in the college.

46 Entry procedures for students are inadequate. The assessment arrangements are slow. Students arriving late are not properly inducted on to their courses. Many students were unsure of the aims of the course they were undertaking. Poor entry procedures sometimes result in a mismatch between students' skills and aspirations and their learning programmes. These weaknesses were not identified by the self-assessment report.

47 The initial assessment of students' learning needs is not sufficiently thorough, particularly for those whose first language is not English. As a result, precise learning goals are not set. Those goals which are set are not described in ways which teachers can use to plan teaching and learning. Inadequate attention is paid to the ways students learn most effectively and to the knowledge and skills they already have. As a result, many students are underachieving and their main learning needs are not being met. The college did not identify this weakness in the self-assessment report.

48 The college recognises that students' achievements on some courses are poor. The self-assessment report acknowledged that in 1997-98 retention and achievement rates on entry and foundation programmes were poor. Nearly 60% of the students on foundation GNVQ programmes left before the end of the course and only 35% of students who started achieved

Curriculum Areas

a full or part award. Achievements on some courses are low, particularly on those for adults with basic education needs. Although there are opportunities for some students to learn practical and creative skills in art, design, media and cookery, there are few opportunities for students to participate in a range of practical vocational areas. Few students undertake work experience despite identifying it as one of their goals in attending college. Some lessons are inappropriately dominated by the requirements of external accreditation. Few teachers ensure that there is detailed monitoring of students' learning objectives, other than those for accreditation, or use them to plan teaching. However, courses for students with visual impairment enable them to achieve their goals and some are succeeding where they have failed elsewhere. Some students with learning difficulties were able to demonstrate progress and increased confidence in social and life skills. Progression from some courses to other further education courses is good. Retention across the area improved last year.

49 Some lessons were carefully planned, and teachers sustained students' interest and built up their confidence. In most lessons, opportunities were taken to extend and develop students' spoken language. In one lesson for adults with learning difficulties, the group discussed the course rules. The teacher prompted students in order to ensure that all the students understood the rules and could use appropriate vocabulary to explain them. However, most teachers provide too few opportunities for students to work on their own and at their own pace. This particularly disadvantages the most able students. Students who may learn better through practical activities were not well catered for. In some lessons, teaching aids were not used in situations where they would have been helpful. For example, students with poor language skills would have been able to work more independently if there were pictures and objects to help them

understand the topic. Class sizes in some areas are too large for the teacher to meet the diverse needs of the students.

50 Course teams have identified targets and strategies for improving the quality of the provision. However, course team meetings do not always include discussions of the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Many actions identified for improvement have not yet been implemented. The quality of some teaching accommodation is poor and some rooms are bare and unwelcoming. In some areas, there is a poor range of teaching materials available to meet the diverse needs of the students.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 3

51 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. Some weaknesses have been addressed since the report was written. Inspectors identified some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- comprehensive counselling service
- well-managed access to financial support
- effective use of resource centres for students' learning
- careful delivery and evaluation of additional support to students on courses
- outstanding support for students with dyslexia

Weaknesses

- slow identification of support needs at the beginning of students' courses
- lack of co-ordinated planning between student services' teams
- lack of analysis of the reasons for students' change of courses
- lack of effective support for students who enrol late
- no evaluation of pre-entry guidance and admissions procedures

52 The college provides satisfactory support for students which is now beginning to result in some improvements in retention and achievements. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that information about courses is good. There are attractive prospectuses and information leaflets giving clear information about courses and entry criteria. Pre-entry guidance and admissions procedures are comprehensive and well managed but the effectiveness of the procedures is not monitored. The self-assessment report

notes this as a weakness. Clear procedures exist for students to transfer between courses, but, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report, there is no analysis of the reasons why students transfer or withdraw.

53 The college is slow to provide support for those students who arrive with their support needs already identified. Through the college application form students can inform the college that they have a disability or may need learning support. However, there are no formal procedures to ensure that this information is passed on to interview staff, or that support is arranged quickly. Students are not told at interview what will happen as a result of their having a disability or requiring additional support. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

54 As part of their induction all full-time first-year students and many part-time students receive diagnostic assessments for literacy and numeracy, linked to the level of their course. A clear procedure ensures that students receive the extra literacy and numeracy support they need. Inspectors agreed with the college that there is careful evaluation of the effectiveness of additional support. Inspectors agreed that the college provides outstanding support for students who have dyslexia.

55 Inspectors observed some effective tutorial sessions. An updated personal tutor handbook clearly sets out tutors' roles and responsibilities. All full-time and many part-time students are entitled to two, one-hour tutorials each week. One tutorial is devoted to personal and social education and the other to learning development. Students and teachers understand the difference between the two. The handbook identifies the induction procedure for students who enrol late. In some tutorials, this procedure was not carried out and teachers were unaware that it existed. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

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56 The tutorial programme provides opportunities for students to receive help with their applications to higher education. Performing arts course teams have devised some effective ways of helping students with these applications. Second-year students applying for higher education courses were observed in a tutorial session discussing suitable audition speeches for performance at their higher education interviews. Following the tutorial, all students went to their acting technique lessons and worked on their audition pieces. Specialist teachers, many of whom work in the visual arts, provide advice on careers and progression to visual arts courses in higher education.

57 Separate teams working independently of each other provide a range of student services. The manager of student services now has overall responsibility for the individual teams but there is, as yet, little planning to bring them together as a coherent service. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The resource centres are well attended and popular with students. Centre managers are developing appropriate curriculum resources for students and teachers. The resource centre staff effectively support induction and tutorials. The college's welfare services are well developed and provide a comprehensive counselling service on all three main sites. One member of the team, who supports students who are asylum seekers or refugees, is multilingual and has strong links with agencies in the community. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the counselling service is effective.

58 Good childcare provision is available on the three main college sites and nine of the community centres. The welfare services team manages a substantial access and hardship fund. There are clear criteria for allocating funds but no formal systems to evaluate the effectiveness of whether the funds helped recipients to complete their courses. The college has a prayer and contemplation room. A small

activities team provides support for students, which includes helping to run the student common room, and organising many sporting activities and trips. Students are encouraged to set up clubs and societies and a number have been formed, including dance and meditation clubs and an Islamic society. The college has no student union, but plans are underway to set one up in the near future.

General Resources

Grade 3

59 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements about general resources in the college's self-assessment report. However , some strengths were overstated and one strength included in the report was judged by inspectors to be a weakness.

Key strengths

- effective strategy to rationalise the college's accommodation
- good recreational and sporting facilities at Gray's Inn centre

Weaknesses

- some poor accommodation
- insufficient open access computing facilities
- restricted access for wheelchair users at Gray's Inn and Kentish Town centres

60 The college's accommodation has been effectively rationalised and now comprises three distinctive main sites. Gray's Inn, the largest centre, accommodates many courses and presents a lively environment. It also houses most of the college's administrative and student services. The Kentish Town centre, where the art and design courses are based, is a grade II listed former school where the high ceilings contribute to the effective display of students' work. The Regents Park centre was purpose

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built in the early 1960s. It accommodates performing arts courses and ESOL courses. Because of the need to improve the college's financial position, there has been little investment in the buildings. Refurbishment and planned maintenance have not been carried out in a systematic way. However, some refurbishment has taken place so that each centre has some good teaching accommodation. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that there is a need to improve further the fabric and appearance of the buildings. In addition to the three main sites, teaching takes place at the Vernon Square centre which is currently being sold and will soon be vacated, and at around 60 other community sites. The learning environment at many of these locations is poor, with ill-equipped teaching rooms and few student services available. However, the advantage of these venues is that they provide access to college courses for people who would be daunted by large main centres or who cannot easily travel to them.

61 The IT resources of the college have been upgraded and all computers have fast links to the Internet. There are 312 computers available to students, approximately one computer terminal for every 12 students. Open access computing facilities in the college do not meet student demand. For example, although 60 computers are located for open-access use at Gray's Inn computing learning centre, many are not available for open-access use much of the time as they are used for timetabled lessons. Few computers are available for general use at the other centres. Inspectors did not agree with the self-assessment report which judged that students' access to computers was a strength.

62 Each of the main sites has a learning resource centre. The centres are well managed and staff are helpful to students. Centre staff provide informative induction lessons to all full-time and many part-time students so that they are aware of the services and facilities on offer. A high-quality multimedia presentation

for business and finance students was observed which outlined the services available and showed relevant examples from the business world. After seeing this, students completed a course assignment in the centre. The centres at Gray's Inn and Regents Park are too small for the number of students wanting to use them and are often overcrowded. The stock of books is sufficient and has been improved by the recent removal of old stock. There are too few computers and too narrow a range of materials for students to use to work on their own. Links between the resource centres and teaching teams are poorly developed, a fact acknowledged in the college self-assessment report. New staff have been appointed as learning resource assistants in order to improve links and communications.

63 At the Gray's Inn centre a spacious common room is well used by students. A range of sporting activities takes place in the well-equipped gymnasium, fitness studio and main hall. In response to requests from students, a prayer room has been created. The centrally located college shop at Gray's Inn sells snacks, refreshments and newspapers. Similar facilities are lacking at the other college sites and few students travel to the Gray's Inn centre to use the recreational or sporting facilities. Each of the main sites has a canteen which is well used by students and provides a satisfactory service. There is a crèche at each of the three main sites and caring staff create a stimulating environment for the children.

64 The absence of lifts at the Gray's Inn and Kentish Town centres creates access problems for wheelchair users and those with restricted mobility. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that this is a significant weakness. Some redecorated staff workrooms are comfortable, whereas others are overcrowded and lacking in storage space. Computing resources are good for administrative staff, but many teaching staff experience difficulties in gaining access to shared computers and in using the electronic mail system.

Cross-college Provision

Quality Assurance

Grade 3

65 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements of quality assurance in the self-assessment report but identified a few additional weaknesses. Some strengths identified by the college were considered to be no more than normal practice. A few weaknesses had already been addressed prior to inspection.

Key strengths

- effective quality assurance arrangements leading to measurable gains in performance
- comprehensive self-assessment, including franchised provision
- effective staff development

Weaknesses

- unclear understanding by staff of links between curriculum quality assurance elements
- inadequate procedures for the approval of new provision
- ineffective action-planning by course teams

66 There have been improvements recently in a number of aspects of the college's performance. For example, the college has recently introduced systems to improve the quality and accuracy of achievement and retention data. These data show an overall improvement in students' achievements and retention rates between 1997-98 and 1998-99. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the quality of many schemes of work and lesson plans, which were weak at the time of the previous inspection, are now good. Students have welcomed the improvements to some parts of the college's accommodation and resources. Inspectors agreed with the college that a

number of these improvements had been brought about through a strengthening of the quality assurance procedures.

67 The quality assurance framework was revised in early 1998 as part of the college's recovery plan. The framework has been introduced through a number of quality assurance initiatives. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, these include well-documented quality standards for teaching and learning and business support areas. The curriculum quality assurance systems include course review and evaluation, standards for teaching and learning, comparisons of retention and achievement against national benchmarking data, lesson observation, and self-assessment. The links between these elements are unclear and some staff feel that the procedures are cumbersome. Managers are planning to simplify the system. The college recognises as a weakness the lack of a quality assurance handbook which would provide a much needed overview of the quality assurance procedures. Quality standards for business support areas are being reviewed to refine further standards and targets.

68 Thorough and comprehensive procedures were used in the preparation of the college's self-assessment report. Curriculum and business support teams produced their own reports which contributed to the overall assessment of departments and business support areas. Senior managers validated each section of the report, with external consultants assisting in the validation of the cross-college sections. The college's corporation and academic board received the final report for endorsement. The strategic plans drawn up by departments are informed by the outcomes of the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report acknowledges that the college has involved partners running franchised provision in the implementation of its quality systems. The partners received training on self-assessment and the college's quality

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assurance procedures. All partners have systems for reviewing and evaluating their work and have produced self-assessment reports.

69 The college's curriculum management group develops and reviews quality assurance procedures and receives reports on their implementation and impact. The director of curriculum and quality chairs the group, which includes assistant directors of curriculum. The group has inadequate procedures for the approval and subsequent review of new provision. As indicated in the self-assessment report, there is now a system for actioning the issues identified by external verifiers, monitored by the director of curriculum and quality.

70 Action plans arising from the annual review and evaluation of courses by course teams are often incomplete. Progress on the actions identified through course review as being necessary to improve quality is not systematically monitored. The recently introduced peer lesson observation scheme has helped to raise teachers' awareness of the college initiatives introduced to improve teaching and learning. The outcomes of lesson observation are rarely used to inform course review and evaluation. The profile of grades awarded to lessons observed by college staff was much higher than that awarded by inspectors. Revisions to the scheme are now being planned. The college has a well-documented system for staff appraisal, which has been in operation for two years. Most staff were appraised in the second year; an improvement on the first year. Training needs identified through appraisal are incorporated in the college training plan. For example, an IT training programme has been developed as a result of needs identified from appraisals carried out in 1999.

71 Staff development is effective and has been a major element in the college's strategy to transform its provision. All staff have an entitlement to staff development. The annual staff development budget totals £90,000,

equivalent to approximately 1.3% of the college payroll. There is a training and development strategy and clear links between staff development, strategic and operational objectives and the college mission. Support for the improvement of teaching and learning is provided through a team of teachers who have been identified as having high levels of expertise. The impact of staff development is evaluated each year by the senior management team and a staff development group, which includes a governor.

72 In the self-assessment report the college acknowledged the need to amend its charter. The corporation has now approved a revised version which is included in the student handbook. Comprehensive surveys of the views of students are used to analyse the effectiveness of the charter. The handbook provides guidance to students on how to make a complaint. College managers analyse all complaints every six months. Senior managers consider the resulting reports, but reports are not sent to the governors or the academic board.

Governance

Grade 2

73 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses of governance identified by the college in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- open and accountable style of governance
- governors' clear strategic vision
- governors' effective support of college's financial recovery
- effective use of the good range of governors' expertise

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Weaknesses

- governing body membership not reflective of community and student diversity
- lack of indicators for governors to assess college's academic performance

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

75 After considering the requirements of the modified instrument of government, the corporation now comprises 16 members. There are five business governors, three co-opted governors, two staff governors, a student governor, a local authority nominee, three community nominees and the principal. Vacancies exist for the student governor and two community nominees. The self-assessment report acknowledges that the current membership does not reflect the ethnic diversity of the local community and student body. The search committee has established appropriate procedures, approved by the corporation, for filling these vacancies and addressing this weakness. The college already benefits from the diverse range of skills and experience that existing governors bring to the corporation. Members have good knowledge of the local community and the context in which the college operates.

76 Governors work in an open, accountable manner. This strength is identified in the self-assessment report. Members clearly understand the distinction between governance and management. They have a code of conduct. The papers and minutes of corporation and committee meetings, including management accounts, are freely available for scrutiny. The corporation produced an annual report for 1997-98, which clearly identified the activities

undertaken by the corporation through the year. The report shows how the corporation fulfilled its responsibilities under the instrument and articles of government. A similar report is planned for 1998-99. A summary of corporation business is also provided occasionally in the staff newsletter.

77 The corporation has finance, employment and remuneration committees, in addition to the statutory committees. A curriculum committee has also been established recently but has yet to meet. The finance committee closely monitors the implementation of the college's recovery plan. The committee approves and monitors key strategic financial decisions and reports to the full corporation. All governors receive copies of the monthly management accounts. The audit committee operates competently within a framework that generally accords with current good practice. The committee has not set formal performance targets against which the performance of its internal and external audit services can be monitored.

78 As noted in the self-assessment report, governors have been closely involved in developing the college's new vision and values and in steering its future strategy. This work has been the focus of an annual training weekend and discussion at corporation meetings. The clerk is aware of the new requirements for governor training. At present, the induction process for new governors is limited to meetings with the clerk and the principal and the provision of the members' handbook. There is also no formal assessment of governors' training needs or a continuous training programme. A weakness identified in the self-assessment report was the lack of procedures for the appraisal of senior postholders. This had been addressed by the time the inspection took place.

79 The corporation has recognised the need to improve members' understanding of the curriculum and the students' experience of the college. The new curriculum committee is intended to provide a forum for this work. The

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corporation has exercised some oversight of the college's quality assurance process, for example, by receiving the self-assessment report and an analysis of students' achievements. It has not set performance indicators by which the college's academic work can be monitored effectively. This weakness was not noted in the self-assessment report.

80 The operation of the corporation is assisted by the use of a handbook for members which includes a comprehensive framework for the administration of corporation business. This includes terms of reference for committees, standing orders and rules on quoracy. Corporation agendas clearly distinguish between items for decision and those intended only for discussion. The papers supporting agenda items are clear and include, for more complex items, an executive summary to aid understanding. Although not explicitly acknowledged in the self-assessment report, the clerking of the corporation is good. A staff member with other responsibilities in the college currently carries out this work. The corporation has decided that, in keeping with current good practice, an external appointment should be made.

Management

Grade 2

81 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths of management identified by the college in its self-assessment report, but noted two weaknesses not recorded by the college.

Key strengths

- strong leadership
- successful implementation of financial recovery plan
- appropriate new structures and processes to implement the revised college mission
- improvement in management information
- successful initiatives for widening participation

Weaknesses

- improvements at programme and course team level not yet fully achieved
- management information not fully utilised
- slow development of an inclusive approach to learning
- inadequate staffing and resources for some courses

82 The management of the college is good. Strong leadership from senior managers, who have a clear vision for the college's future, directs all developments. They have skilfully overseen a radical redevelopment of all aspects of the college's operations, and are managing a transformation of the quality of its work. There are early signs of improvements in many aspects of the college's provision. These strengths are recognised in the college's self-assessment report.

83 The reorganisation of the management structure has resulted in improved management of the academic and service departments by senior managers. As noted in the self-assessment report, the staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and there are clear reporting lines. There are four directors, responsible for curriculum and quality assurance, community partnership and services to students, finance, and business development, respectively. Assistant directors deal with planning and resources, widening participation, and academic and service management. The principal's co-ordinating group ensures overall coherence of management. The curriculum management group provides a regular forum for academic heads to meet with the director for curriculum and quality assurance to review the quality of their work.

84 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. In 1996 the college faced a serious financial deficit. A

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recovery plan to secure its long-term future had to be developed and implemented. This plan required a major rationalisation of operational structures, such as staffing, and of the college's accommodation. Managers and governors routinely monitored the college's progress in achieving its planned objectives. The financial recovery of the college is now complete, a strength noted in the self-assessment report. A new finance team has established an appropriate system of controls and reporting mechanisms. These include the timely production of monthly management accounts which provide a sound basis for the financial control of the college. The college has identified further improvements to be made to these mechanisms.

85 A new statement of 'vision and values' for the college was developed through an extensive process of consultation. Comprehensive arrangements for departmental and course team meetings ensure that the college's development objectives are conveyed to all staff. Assistant directors and heads of services monitor the implementation of college initiatives and action plans in their departments. Communications in the college have improved through the use of electronic mail, and a regular staff bulletin. Programme team leaders understand the college's strategies for the improvement of achievements and their role in implementing them. Programme team leaders value the extensive management training provided for them, and find the range of new whole-college systems helpful in managing their teams. These strengths were identified in the self-assessment report. All staff understand the college's revised mission, although some do not agree with the changes which are taking place to achieve it.

86 The college's strategic plan for 1998 to 2000 builds on the recovery plan. Teaching and service departments have developed their own three-year strategic plans based on the college's strategic priorities. Individual members of staff at all levels have personal targets for their

annual activities. All courses have targets for enrolment, achievement and retention. At programme and course team level, staff are aware of the college's strategy for improving achievements, but further time is needed for staff to become familiar with new structures and systems.

87 Other important aspects of the college's operations, such as its personnel functions, have been redesigned. A comprehensive staff handbook has been produced for the first time. The college has recognised the need to strengthen its marketing and services to business to develop further its responsiveness to the community and other potential customers. New posts have recently been created to develop these aspects, along with a new assistant directorship to focus on widening participation. It is too soon to judge the effect of these appointments.

88 Considerable investment and effort have been put into developing effective management information systems. Managers now have access to accurate information on student retention and achievement. However, as acknowledged in the college's self-assessment report, managers are not yet making full use of the information available to them. Systems are in place for monitoring the effective deployment of resources. For example, teaching costs for planned courses are worked out and monitored on the basis of the guided learning hours needed. However, inspectors found some instances where high enrolment numbers had resulted in inadequate staffing and learning resources. This had not been identified in the self-assessment report.

89 The college is committed to widening participation and has successfully developed effective learning programmes within the local community. It has been involved in a range of local partnerships with other colleges. Over the past year, 50% of the 1,000 students concerned in outreach activities have progressed onto

Cross-college Provision

college courses. Innovative projects have included training former basic skills students to become mentors for other students and gain mentoring qualifications. These strengths were noted in the self-assessment report.

90 The college has strategies for improving equal opportunities and inclusive learning in which students' individual learning needs are matched by college resources. An equal opportunities forum has recently been established and policies relating to equality of opportunity are being developed or updated. The college is planning a comprehensive training programme in relation to equal opportunities and inclusive learning. It is too soon to judge the success of the strategy, which is claimed as a strength in the college's self-assessment report.

Conclusions

91 The inspection team was impressed by the college's open approach to self-assessment and found that the report provided an effective basis for planning the inspection. Staff, governors and representatives from external organisations were involved in the process of self-assessment. The report presented a clear and comprehensive evaluation of the college's work. It was mainly supported by good evidence. Inspectors agreed with most of the college's judgements. Inspectors agreed with four of the seven curriculum grades, and with all of the grades awarded for cross-college provision. In two of the curriculum areas inspectors awarded one grade better than the college, and in the other area they awarded one grade lower.

92 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 1998)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	1
16-18 years	17
19-24 years	15
25+ years	62
Not known	5
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1998)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	25
Level 2 (intermediate)	15
Level 3 (advanced)	32
Level 4/5 (higher)	1
Non-schedule 2	27
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 1998)

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	356	875	15
Agriculture	6	14	0
Construction	48	69	1
Engineering	0	90	1
Business	280	184	6
Hotel and catering	88	293	5
Health and community care	285	989	15
Art and design	385	1,011	16
Humanities	610	1,421	24
Basic education	380	1,096	17
Total	2,438	6,042	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 78% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1998)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	121	8	25	154
Supporting direct learning contact	36	5	0	41
Other support	70	5	0	75
Total	227	18	25	270

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£12,973,000	£12,993,000	£12,706,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£17.09	£17.09	£16.20
Payroll as a proportion of income	86%	56%	54%
Achievement of funding target	91%	95%	99%
Diversity of income	33%	26%	23%
Operating surplus	-£3,474,000	-£348,000	£951,000

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

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

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

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

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

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

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	339	230	320	864	1,615	705
	Retention (%)	93	69	69	84	68	78
	Achievement (%)	71	43	90	32	43	49
2	Number of starters	509	537	561	811	805	953
	Retention (%)	83	75	84	80	67	75
	Achievement (%)	86	69	73	43	58	58
3	Number of starters	1,297	1,529	1,544	1,504	1,626	1,484
	Retention (%)	88	76	83	82	74	83
	Achievement (%)	46	60	67	47	56	67
4 or 5	Number of starters	-	-	-	76	31	27
	Retention (%)	-	-	-	89	81	67
	Achievement (%)	-	-	-	0	52	46
Short courses	Number of starters	202	41	96	3,872	1,573	1,730
	Retention (%)	90	80	79	81	86	78
	Achievement (%)	78	36	55*	56	40	35*
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	433	499	494	3,989	2,011	1,239
	Retention (%)	87	78	90	73	74	58
	Achievement (%)	16	14	100	28	42	89

Source: ISR

-ISR data not collected

*incomplete at time of year

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