

Lambeth College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
2000-01**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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

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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1999-2000, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	6	44	44	7	0
Cross-college provision	9	45	38	8	0

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Sample size: 112 college inspections

Note: percentages subject to rounding

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 1996, would appear in the results for 1997-98 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

Lambeth College

Greater London Region

Inspected January 2001

Lambeth College is a large general further education college in the London Borough of Lambeth. In readiness for the inspection, the college produced a detailed and comprehensive self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements identified in the report and found some additional strengths and weaknesses. Some weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection. Since the last inspection, the college has diversified its provision and made measurable improvements in many areas of its work.

The college offers an extensive range of opportunities for a very diverse community. The majority of the college's students are recruited from disadvantaged areas as defined in the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' Index of Local Conditions. Social deprivation indicators place Lambeth as the twelfth most deprived local authority in England. The college is highly successful in widening the participation of people in Lambeth in further education. It offers courses in all programme areas funded by the FEFC. Provision in four of these areas was inspected. Basic skills provision across the college was also inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. Governance and management are outstanding. Governors, managers and staff work well together.

They demonstrate a firm commitment to continuous improvement and the maintenance of high-quality provision. Quality assurance systems are effective. There is much good teaching. The curriculum is well managed and, in keeping with its mission, the college provides high-quality courses for its students, many of whom enter with no qualifications and poor basic skills. The college has rationalised its accommodation and made significant investment in resources. It has developed productive links with public and private employers as well as community organisations. Support for students is good. Services providing advice, guidance and information for students are a notable strength. The college should improve: retention rates on some courses; student punctuality; some poor attendance; and the variable quality of some action plans.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science and dental technology	2	Support for students	2
Business studies	2	General resources	2
Health and social care	2	Quality assurance	2
ESOL	2	Governance	1
Basic skills	2	Management	1

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Lambeth College is a large general further education college situated in South London, with four sites in Lambeth and one in Southwark. The college recruits 49% of its 19,000 students from the Borough of Lambeth and most of the rest from adjoining boroughs. There are several further education colleges in neighbouring boroughs, a Roman Catholic sixth form college nearby, and four local schools which have sixth forms. The college was formed in 1992 from three smaller colleges. Building, construction and creative arts are housed at the Vauxhall site, business studies and information technology (IT) at Brixton, science at Tower Bridge, and humanities and social care at Clapham. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and basic skills work is located at all four sites. The college also provides courses in over 30 community locations. The largest of these, in Streatham, was inherited from the local authority in 1999 when the college took over the delivery of adult education in Lambeth. In addition to Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) funded courses, the college took part in the pilot of the New Deal programme, and has a growing volume of commercial and European project work.

2 Lambeth is culturally diverse and more than 100 languages are spoken by its growing population of 269,500. English is an additional language for more than a third of local school children and 53% of 16 year olds are of minority ethnic origin. The borough ranks as the twelfth most deprived local authority district in Britain: 46% of school children receive free school meals and 81% of college students qualify for additional funding based on their postcodes. There are large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in the borough. The level of social deprivation is also reflected in Lambeth's statistics on housing, crime and single parenthood. Educational attainment is low, with less than a third of school-leavers achieving five

good grades in the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) examination. Of 11 year olds resident in Lambeth, 50% go out of the borough for their secondary education.

3 The college has 4,302 full-time students. Of the college's students, 87% are over 19, and 71% are over 25. Two-thirds of the college's student intake are black or Asian. The popularity of IT and business studies courses reflects the labour market, but basic education, social care and humanities provision each attract more than 2,000 students. Construction and art and design courses each attract more than 1,200 students. Courses are offered at all levels. There is a significant range at levels 1 and 2, and at entry level, to meet local needs. The college has grown by about 70% since 1994-95.

4 The college's mission is 'to increase the skills of people in its borough and beyond, enabling them to enjoy developing their full potential throughout their life, to the benefit of themselves, their employers and their community'.

5 The college is a member of the Central London Learning Partnership and takes a full part in a number of its projects. It enjoys productive relations with Focus Central London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The European Social Fund, the Single Regeneration Budget and other neighbourhood initiatives have enabled the college to work closely with the Borough of Lambeth, other local colleges and with local community trainers. Joint marketing is undertaken with other members of the Association of Colleges in London. Links with employers have been developed by staff in the vocational schools of study and in the central business development unit.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected during the week beginning 22 January 2001. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's

Context

self-assessment report and considered 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 1998 and 1999. The college submitted its own data for students' achievements for 2000, which were checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The data were found to be reliable and largely accurate. Ten inspectors and an auditor, working for a total of 50 days, carried out the inspection.

7 The college was also inspected in the spring of 2000 as part of an area-wide inspection of provision for 16 to 19 year olds in Lambeth. The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) report on the area incorporates the findings of inspectors from Ofsted, the FEFC and the Training Standards Council (TSC) on provision in schools, colleges, and private training providers. In the college, courses which mainly attract students aged 16 to 19 were inspected in the following curriculum areas: business and computing; art, design, performing arts and media; English and communication; social sciences and social care; engineering and construction. Most of the lessons observed in the college were considered good. In 1999, retention rates showed some overall improvement. However, on two-year general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) advanced courses, and those leading to the general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), retention was below national averages. Pass rates on GCE A level courses improved in 1999 and on GNVQ advanced courses they were above the national average for general further education colleges. The proportion of students who gained grade C or above in GCSE subjects was about average for colleges with a similar intake. The college is successful in recruiting many young people into further education who have poor or modest qualifications on entry and in encouraging them

to succeed. The college provides good support for its young students.

8 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons observed during the inspection in January 2001, and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000. It also includes some lessons inspected as part of the area 16 to 19 inspection in 2000. Of the total lessons observed, 70% were rated good or outstanding. This is well above the national average for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000. The figure of 2% for lessons rated unsatisfactory or poor is less than the average.

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GNVQ	1	8	6	0	0	15
NVQ	2	6	5	0	0	13
Access	1	6	2	0	0	9
Other vocational	2	8	1	1	0	12
Other*	8	17	10	1	0	36
Total (No)	14	45	24	2	0	85
Total (%)	17	53	28	2	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000 (%)	17	45	31	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Note: percentages subject to rounding

*includes GCE A/AS level, basic education and tutorials

9 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Lambeth College	11.0	73
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000	10.3	76

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Curriculum Areas

Science and Dental Technology

Grade 2

10 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering GCE A level, GNVQ science and access courses. Inspectors broadly agreed with the college's self-assessment report, which accurately reflected the main strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- well-managed range of provision
- much good teaching
- good pass rates on many courses
- well-organised practical work
- high standard of equipment and specialist resources

Weaknesses

- poor retention on some courses
- shortcomings in some accommodation

11 The college offers a wide range of courses in this area, including GCE A level, access to higher education and GNVQ science at all levels. This strength was recognised in the college's self-assessment report. Many courses are in vocational and applied sciences. Dental technology is a major part of the provision and the college is the largest provider of dental technology training in the sector. The curriculum area is well managed. Course teams meet regularly to plan courses, review assessment procedures and to discuss student performance. The portfolio of courses is consistently monitored to make sure it meets demands. Target-setting is thorough and realistic; when targets are not met, effective recovery plans are put in place. The college offers full-time and part-time courses of study, including some evening access and GCE A level courses. The introduction of modular syllabuses allows students greater flexibility in attendance

patterns, particularly those on access courses. The proportion of students progressing to further education, higher education or employment is good.

12 Most teaching is good and lesson plans are used effectively. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that teachers set clear learning objectives. Teachers are resourceful in presenting information. For example, in a well-constructed biology lesson on blood circulation, the teacher used a simple diagram to help students develop confidence in responding to questions on the working of the heart. Students in a physics class were skilfully led into deriving Kirchoff's Current and Voltage Laws from a circuit flow diagram, using a range of colours. Visiting lecturers working in the dental technology industry provide up-to-date specialist skills and knowledge. Students are well informed on modern techniques and work experience helps them to progress to employment. However, there are insufficient work placements for students on the GNVQ science courses, a weakness recognised in the self-assessment report. Practical work in all science classes is safely and effectively organised. Students handle apparatus confidently and those with little previous laboratory experience have good titration skills. Course-related study skills are part of all programmes, and their development is evident in student work, especially in the writing of reports. The integration of key skills with all courses has been effective in improving students' communication skills. Assignments are well presented and show high standards of work. Most assignments are regularly marked. However, some lack sufficient feedback to enhance students' learning.

13 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there has been a significant improvement in students' achievements over the last two years. This is particularly true of GCE A level and access to science courses where pass rates have improved from a starting point

Curriculum Areas

well below national averages. In 2000, pass rates in GCE A level chemistry and physics were 100% and retention too had improved. Vocational courses have shown more consistent levels of achievement. Pass rates on national diploma courses are well above national averages. Retention rates have generally improved, but student retention on level 2 and 3 courses remains low. There is some evidence that changes to entry criteria and stricter monitoring of attendance is improving retention. Student attendance during the inspection was good. However, punctuality was poor in some lessons.

14 Specialist equipment is a strength. The equipment for dental technology is of a high standard and comparable with the best teaching hospitals. Staff are well qualified, and many science teachers have higher degrees, although

some lack recent industrial experience. Laboratory technicians are well qualified. They provide high levels of support to all areas of science and dental technology, often helping by demonstrating the more advanced equipment. The quality of specialist teaching accommodation is variable. At the Tower Bridge site, a large dental technology group were making polymers in a small chemistry laboratory. The confined space and limited fume cupboard provision had a detrimental effect on learning. The laboratories at the Clapham site are of industrial standard and there is a specialist instrument room for dental technology at Tower Bridge. However, most laboratories are old and in need of refurbishment. This weakness was recognised in the self-assessment report.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in science and dental technology, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GNVQ intermediate science	2	Number of starters	14	18	36
		Retention (%)	86	78	72
		Achievement (%)	92	43	69
BTEC national diploma in science	3	Number of starters	40	35	41
		Retention (%)	50	49	44
		Achievement (%)	70	65	76
GCE A level chemistry	3	Number of starters	17	9	13
		Retention (%)	41	63	69
		Achievement (%)	43	60	100
Access certificate in medical/dental science	3	Number of starters	36	26	27
		Retention (%)	53	62	78
		Achievement (%)	53	69	71
Access certificate in applied science	3	Number of starters	31	32	29
		Retention (%)	81	81	66
		Achievement (%)	72	62	79

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Curriculum Areas

Business Studies

Grade 2

15 Thirteen lessons were observed in business studies, focusing on the courses in administration. The findings from observations undertaken during the area inspection of 16 to 19 provision were also taken into account. Inspectors agreed with the judgements made in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-managed courses
- much good teaching
- considerable improvements in student retention and achievement
- wide variety of support for students
- effective use of student work placements

Weaknesses

- low retention on some courses
- poor punctuality

16 The curriculum area is well managed and courses are effectively planned and well organised. Management structures are clear, appropriate and understood. Staff work well together as a team. Data on student performance are effectively used to inform the decision-making process, and staff receive regular reports. The setting of targets for student retention and achievement is used productively to improve standards. Staff follow college guidelines on quality assurance, and there is a clear commitment to continuous improvement. Systems and procedures are well implemented, and appropriate records and documentation maintained. Plans are in place to ensure that all staff have access to and use of electronic mail.

17 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that teaching is good. The proportion of lessons observed by inspectors

and judged to be good or outstanding was above the national average. Lessons were well planned and included a range of learning activities. In one particularly innovative session, students at different levels in business administration worked together on supervisory skills. The exercise involved the development of a business database, and resulted in a dynamic and stimulating session. Students enjoy their work, are well motivated and have appropriate aspirations for their future. Many enter employment and some progress to higher education. Work placement is an integral part of most full-time courses. This aspect of their work inspires and motivates students, and enables them to relate classroom theory to workplace practice. For example, a partnership developed with a local hospital has resulted in a number of students gaining employment as a result of successful placements.

18 Students speak positively and with enthusiasm about their experience in the classroom. Teachers give effective support to individual students and there is a wide variety of other support made available through specialist staff. Diagnostic testing is used to identify the numeracy and literacy needs of full-time students on entry, and many students make good use of the help that is available. The programme area offers two vocational courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some of these students have progressed to level 1 business administration courses. Good progression for students between levels is a feature across the programme area. However, there is as yet no systematic attempt to analyse the value added to the students' achievements by their courses.

19 The self-assessment report states that much work has been done to improve both retention and achievement. Inspectors agreed that significant progress has been made. Pass rates are above the national benchmarks at most levels, with many national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 1 courses and the higher diploma in administrative procedures

Curriculum Areas

being particularly successful. Retention in some areas has improved significantly. For example, at NVQ level 2, retention has increased by 20% over the past two years. Some areas are still below the national averages and action plans are in place to address these issues. Attendance is close to the national average for the programme area and policies have been established to encourage further improvement. Efforts are being made to address the problem of poor student punctuality identified in the self-assessment report.

20 Assessment is well organised, fair and effective. Students' portfolios of work are good and most students demonstrate confidence in the use of new technology. Students' work is generally well presented, well structured and appropriate to the level of study. Many

assignments given to students reflect current business issues, making them relevant and effective. Teachers mark work constructively and make useful comments for students on how they can make progress. Marked work is returned promptly to students.

21 The relocation of business studies on one site has been successful. It has resulted in efficient and effective use of resources and a clear identity and base for the work. Teachers are well qualified and there are frequent opportunities for further development. For example, some staff have been involved recently in industrial placements. A comprehensive programme of training events addresses issues arising from changing needs and national initiatives.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in business studies, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
NVQ	1	Number of starters	26	26	569
		Retention (%)	70	52	82
		Achievement (%)	92	73	75
NVQ	2	Number of starters	180	172	551
		Retention (%)	61	62	80
		Achievement (%)	57	70	57
NVQ	3	Number of starters	92	92	67
		Retention (%)	63	74	77
		Achievement (%)	61	53	51
Short courses	3	Number of starters	91	452	2,024
		Retention (%)	86	82	87
		Achievement (%)	37	63	57
Other courses – 24 weeks	3	Number of starters	672	928	613
		Retention (%)	71	80	70
		Achievement (%)	64	67	67
Higher diploma in administration procedures	4	Number of starters	15	12	36
		Retention (%)	67	100	77
		Achievement (%)	90	100	89

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care

Grade 2

22 Inspectors observed 16 lessons, focusing on NVQ provision and access, counselling and childcare courses. They broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-planned expansion of the courses offered
- well-managed NVQ provision
- good pass rates on most courses
- clear learning objectives and high expectations of students
- effective support and guidance of students

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some courses
- confusion over some tasks in lessons

23 Courses are generally well managed. The high quality of NVQ provision is a notable strength. As identified in the self-assessment report, the range of social care courses has expanded since the last inspection, in response to the needs of individuals, organisations and employers in the community. Growth has been carefully planned to allow progression from pre-foundation level to levels 3 and 4 in childcare, health and social care; progression from NVQ level 2 to level 4 in health care and counselling; and progression to higher education or employment on completion of studies. Of particular note is the expansion in counselling and access to nursing courses, and the rationalisation of NVQ provision in care and childcare.

24 The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the last inspection. In most lessons, learning objectives are clear

and are shared with students. Inspectors agreed that teachers have high expectations of their students and that students respond well to this. They are given clear instructions and challenging deadlines are set for completion of tasks. The ambience created by teachers enables students to share their individual doubts and anxieties, which strengthens the learning process. In a diploma in therapeutic counselling lesson, students were remarkably open about the impact of their own child-rearing experiences. The discussion was intense and students demonstrated self-awareness in giving accounts. A well-structured workshop for students undertaking NVQ level 3 in health care engaged students in learning both individually and in groups. Highly effective tutorials help students to identify concrete objectives and attain a desired goal. Tutors see students individually to track progress on their portfolios and to set targets and actions. The process is thorough, supportive and rigorous. In one tutorial, while the tutor saw individual students, others were working well in groups, identifying key factors to consider in producing an effective care plan. The standard of debate was high and students clearly demonstrated improvement in work-based practice as a result of their studies. In a few lessons, the explanation of tasks required of students was unclear, leaving students confused and struggling to complete the task. In some cases students were inundated with too many handouts.

25 Inspectors agreed with the college that the pass rates on some courses are good. Of particular note has been the national certificate in childhood studies, which has achieved a 100% pass rate over the past three years as well as having a retention rate well above the national average. Pass rates on the access to social work and NVQs in care courses are also high, but retention rates, while improving, are still below the national average. The college acknowledges that there are variable retention and pass rates on other courses. These include the NVQs in childcare and education, where

Curriculum Areas

retention is a particular problem on the level 2 provision. Retention on counselling courses is generally improving. On the diploma in childcare and education course, retention and pass rates are below the national average. In most of these courses, actions are being taken to deal with the issues. Students' work is of an appropriate standard and some of it displays a good level of critical analysis. Marking is thorough and clear, helping students to make progress. Internal verification is effective in maintaining high standards.

26 Full-time teachers have relevant professional backgrounds and are appropriately qualified. Many keep up to date through regular professional practice and many part-time staff are engaged in a wide range of business projects in the local community. Inspectors agreed that the quality of accommodation and learning materials is good. Of particular note are the well-produced handouts used to support teaching and learning.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in health and social care, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
Certificate in counselling	2	Number of starters	140	143	170
		Retention (%)	81	68	79
		Achievement (%)	96	78	79
Certificate in childcare and education	2	Number of starters	21	27	23
		Retention (%)	67	67	70
		Achievement (%)	57	61	87
NVQ in care and childcare	2	Number of starters	37	70	85
		Retention (%)	72	67	67
		Achievement (%)	97	93	72
Access to social work and nursing	3	Number of starters	69	74	103
		Retention (%)	74	71	78
		Achievement (%)	71	86	80
NVQs in care and childcare	3	Number of starters	49	48	76
		Retention (%)	81	81	87
		Achievement (%)	100	88	84
National diploma and certificate in childcare studies	3	Number of starters	34	27	23
		Retention (%)	65	66	79
		Achievement (%)	91	100	82
Advanced certificate in therapeutic counselling	3	Number of starters	22	61	40
		Retention (%)	86	79	83
		Achievement (%)	89	67	48

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Curriculum Areas

ESOL

Grade 2

27 Inspectors observed 15 lessons on ESOL courses. They broadly agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report, but considered that the college had underestimated some of the strengths of the provision.

Key strengths

- well-planned and well-managed curriculum
- much good and some outstanding teaching
- effective identification of students' learning needs
- good retention and achievement rates
- students' success in progressing to higher level courses

Weaknesses

- failure to challenge students in some lessons
- instances of inadequate assessment of students' work
- low attendance on some courses

28 The college offers a good range of ESOL courses for both full-time and part-time students across its four main sites. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the curriculum is well planned and well managed. The number of students enrolling for ESOL courses has grown significantly over the past two years. Courses offered at foundation levels 1 and 2 are well structured to support students with poor literacy skills, whereas foundation levels 3 and 4 are designed to help students progress to mainstream and vocational courses with an ESOL component.

29 There are effective arrangements to ensure that students are enrolled on courses that are appropriate to their needs. Teachers review the progress of their students each term. Those

who are performing well are able to move to a higher level course. Opportunities for students to benefit from extra curricular activities are included in course planning. For example, there are class visits to museums and the Houses of Parliament. Students have opportunities to gain external accreditation in addition to the college certificate.

30 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that most teaching is good and some is outstanding. There are good schemes of work which map grammar structures at each level. The best lessons are well planned and have clear aims and objectives. For example, in one lesson on the topic of food, effective use was made of the overhead projector in presenting colour photographs of food items from different parts of the world. This involved the whole class in practising the names of the foods in English. As the lesson progressed, students were actively engaged in pair and group activities. Learning was reinforced through listening and role-play tasks. The lesson ended with the teacher eliciting feedback from students to check that learning had taken place. Students completed a record of work. However, a few lessons were not well planned. They lacked clear objectives and structure. Tasks were insufficiently demanding and checks on students' understanding were not made. In some cases, there was an over-dependence on worksheets.

31 Teachers encourage students to use the college's study centre. The students receive an induction to computer-assisted language learning. The system enables students to develop skills of working independently and to practise, consolidate and extend the language learnt in the classroom. Computer-assisted language learning programmes are linked to schemes of work and teachers integrate study skills within their course delivery. There is an effective programme of tutorials for students using a common checklist of tutorial activities. Tutors help students to monitor their progress against individual learning plans and produce short-term action plans. Attendance

Curriculum Areas

on some courses was low; this was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. Rigorous systems to monitor students' attendance and address poor punctuality are in place.

32 As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, student retention and achievement have improved over the past two years and are significantly above the national averages. Many students move to higher level courses and 70% of students progress to vocational courses with ESOL. There are effective internal and external moderation procedures in place. Most students achieve good standards in their assessed work. As part of marking and assessment, most teachers give students clear and helpful feedback on the quality of their work. However,

a few teachers fail to mark students' work and do not provide students with sufficient guidance on how they may progress and improve their performance. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

33 Accommodation for ESOL students is good. Dedicated base rooms are attractive and walls are decorated with posters and displays of students' work. Study centres are well stocked with a wide range of learning materials for both students and teachers. Students have access to tape recorders and computers. Teachers are well qualified and suitably experienced, and there is a good proportion of bilingual teachers. Teachers make good use of the range of staff development opportunities available to them.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in ESOL, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
Pitmans (basic)	Entry	Number of starters	30	91	220
		Retention (%)	40	84	100
		Achievement (%)	33	71	75
Pitmans spoken (basic)	Entry	Number of starters	*	36	345
		Retention (%)	*	94	94
		Achievement (%)	*	82	66
Pitmans (elementary)	1	Number of starters	107	89	210
		Retention (%)	58	93	100
		Achievement (%)	48	77	69
Pitmans spoken (elementary)	1	Number of starters	*	45	264
		Retention (%)	*	93	91
		Achievement (%)	*	71	76
Pitmans intermediate	2	Number of starters	61	49	135
		Retention (%)	52	94	100
		Achievement (%)	72	61	56
Pitmans spoken intermediate	2	Number of starters	*	48	170
		Retention (%)	*	92	92
		Achievement (%)	*	84	75
Pitmans spoken (higher intermediate)	2	Number of starters	*	21	46
		Retention (%)	*	95	100
		Achievement (%)	*	95	85

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

*data may be unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills

Grade 2

34 Inspectors observed 13 lessons, covering discrete basic skills provision and additional learning support. Inspectors agreed with all of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- responsive, flexible provision meeting diverse needs
- highly effective curriculum management
- much good teaching
- increasing numbers of students gaining external accreditation
- effective use of study centres
- good additional learning support

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of individual learning plans
- poor punctuality and attendance on some courses

35 The college offers a wide range of discrete basic skills courses at a number of levels and in a variety of modes, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Additional support is offered across all sites, either within vocational courses or in study centres. Basic skills courses are also offered in a number of community venues; examples include family learning in eight local schools and franchised provision within the voluntary sector. Students have diverse learning needs; they include disaffected young people who have previously dropped out of traditional education. Progression routes are clearly mapped and made explicit in course information given to students at induction. Curriculum management is rigorous, ensuring a consistent quality of provision across all sites. Course documentation is detailed and thorough and course reviews are effective, involving all

staff. Targets for student retention and achievement are set and monitored effectively at course team level, using readily accessible management information.

36 Most teaching is good, ensuring high levels of student motivation and participation. Lesson plans and schemes of work are detailed, identifying clear learning outcomes. A wide range of teaching methods take account of varying student learning styles. In one lively session on key skills, three teachers who were teaching as a team used three different methods to explore text: a tape recording of someone reading the text, a written version which students could follow individually, or a wordprocessed version which they could follow collectively on a data projector screen. The students' preferred method of learning was linked back to work they had previously undertaken. Relationships between staff and students are supportive, contributing to a friendly atmosphere which assists learning. Students value the positive encouragement they receive from teachers. This boosts their confidence and contributes to the 'can do' philosophy which underpins all teaching and learning. In an effective session on communication, designed to improve presentations given within the course, the teacher's sensitive feedback to students on their first attempts made them feel positive about what they could achieve. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that insufficient use is made of individual learning plans. A pilot project has been set up to establish which model would best meet students' needs, but this is in the early stages of development. Equality of opportunity issues are discussed in group work, and imaginative use is made of students' writing about discrimination as the basis for reading and comprehension practice. Progress reviews are held regularly, although there is some inconsistency in the completion of records. Additional learning support is effective, and links between vocational areas and learning support teachers are strong, a strength

Curriculum Areas

identified in the self-assessment report. All courses at level 1 include timetabled communication and numeracy lessons.

37 Increasing numbers of students are gaining external accreditation, as noted in the self-assessment report. Achievement rates are good and some are above the national average, for example, City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) communication skills at level 1 and Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR) key skills award in communication at level 1. There is poor punctuality and attendance on some courses. Teachers challenge lateness, which is recorded and followed up through the tutorial process. Student support assistants are used effectively to monitor late arriving 16 to 18 year olds; students who are more than 10 minutes late are telephoned, often on their mobiles. There is good progression from basic

skills to mainstream courses, particularly from the summer school provision.

38 Teachers are experienced; however, some do not have specialist teaching qualifications, a weakness which was identified in the self-assessment report. There is a comprehensive programme of in-house staff development, which is linked to weaknesses identified in the regular cycle of lesson observations. There are well-resourced study centres at the college's three main centres. The college is actively developing computer-assisted learning through the appointment of an information and learning technology 'champion', whose role is to facilitate the production of basic skills materials, specifically at level 1. Teaching accommodation is generally good and rooms are enlivened by displays of students' work.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in basic skills, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
C&G 3611 communication skills level 1	1	Number of starters	139	115	90
		Retention (%)	50	80	62
		Achievement (%)	71	47	62
C&G 3791 profile of achievement	1	Number of starters	57	186	143
		Retention (%)	100	74	78
		Achievement (%)	30	71	88
C&G 3793 communication skills Wordpower stage 1	1	Number of starters	73	138	29
		Retention (%)	78	73	100
		Achievement (%)	40	60	93
C&G 3750 numeracy stage 1	1	Number of starters	165	214	135
		Retention (%)	65	80	78
		Achievement (%)	67	65	59
OCR key skills award level 1	1	Number of starters	38	51	81
		Retention (%)	47	76	64
		Achievement (%)	100	49	90
AEB achievement tests in literacy, levels 1, 2 and 3	1	Number of starters	45	61	213
		Retention (%)	80	82	66
		Achievement (%)	69	74	88

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

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Support for Students

Grade 2

39 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. The college has made substantial progress in addressing weaknesses identified in the report and has dealt with issues raised in the area inspection of provision for 16 to 19 year olds.

Key strengths

- good pre-course guidance and admissions procedures
- effective additional learning support, including support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- comprehensive student welfare services
- extensive childcare support arrangements
- effective tutorial system for full-time students

Weaknesses

- some shortcomings in careers provision
- inadequate tutorial support for part-time students

40 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that procedures for guidance and admissions are a notable strength. A wide range of high-quality course information is carefully targeted to specific groups of prospective students. Well-designed prospectuses for school-leavers, adult returners and part-time students provide useful information for students. There are well-established arrangements for open days, and for careers, schools and community events. The college's website provides additional information on the college and its courses. Each curriculum area has a designated admissions officer providing effective liaison and expertise. Interviews are carried out effectively against specified criteria. The college monitors and

evaluates its systems of matching students to courses, and actions are taken to improve retention; admissions procedures are continually reviewed. Staff receive training to reinforce their effectiveness in interviewing and assessing the needs of all students, including ESOL students.

41 The college has good arrangements for identifying and providing help for students who need additional learning support. Such support is provided for students with literacy and numeracy needs and for bilingual students. In the last year, over 700 students received basic skills support. There are designated specialist support teachers in each curriculum area. Support is provided either in normal lessons, in one-to-one tutorials or in small group sessions. Students make good use of the study centres, which are well resourced with a wide range of specialist materials and computer-aided learning packs for basic skills. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported. The support service provided for students with dyslexia is a notable strength and over 100 students receive help. The college is also responsive to those receiving support from the mental health service and it provides effective discrete provision for those wishing to increase their confidence and explore the possibility of other courses. On all vocational access courses, student support assistants work closely with teachers.

42 Since the last inspection, the college has made significant progress in developing its tutorial system. This has been helped by the establishment of academic tutors in each area who monitor tutorials, carry out observations of tutorials and provide support to tutors and new staff. A comprehensive course tutor handbook, which is regularly updated, provides helpful guidance. Observations by inspectors confirmed that tutorials are of good quality, providing an effective mix of group activities and individual student progress reviews. All full-time students receive a weekly group tutorial and scheduled

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individual progress reviews. Detailed records are maintained by tutors. Guidance on tutorial practice for part-time students has been incorporated into the tutors' handbook. However, although progress in implementation has been made, tutorial provision for part-time students is at an early stage of development.

43 The college's student welfare services are extensive and appropriately resourced. A team of three experienced welfare officers provides advice across the college sites. The service is available on a 'drop-in' and appointment basis. Students receive helpful advice on a wide range of welfare issues and there is well-targeted use of funds to assist students with financial and travel difficulties. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that childcare support for students is extensive. User surveys confirm the importance of this support in enabling a significant number of mothers to participate in education and training. The college has three nurseries on the Adare, Brixton and Clapham sites. These are supplemented by use of registered private nurseries. The college has converted a double-decker bus into a mobile training unit, with computers on the upper deck and a nursery for up to five children.

44 Following reductions in the service provided by an external careers company, the college intends to develop a greater measure of self-sufficiency in the delivery of careers support to its students. Its plans are well considered and clear progress is being made. At the time of the inspection, two careers advisers had recently been appointed and a further appointment was imminent. Schemes of work and observations of tutorials by inspectors showed that careers inputs are appropriately incorporated into students' programmes of study. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that some aspects of careers guidance and education are underdeveloped.

45 The college has supported the participation of the student union in many aspects of its provision. There are student councils on each

site and a well-structured framework of student course representatives. Training in the role of the representatives is used effectively to develop general skills such as communication, decision-making, counselling and listening. At the Vauxhall site, a 'life centre' has been established to provide positive, structured and supervised youth work, primarily aimed at students aged 16 to 21. Two experienced youth workers oversee the facilities and provide valuable support.

General Resources

Grade 2

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

Key strengths

- substantial improvements to accommodation
- effective learning resource service
- good IT provision

Weaknesses

- some accommodation needing refurbishment
- a few areas of poor access for students with restricted mobility

47 The college operates from four main centres, three of which are in the London borough of Lambeth. The fourth is at Tower Bridge in the adjoining Borough of Southwark. Since the last inspection, the college has sold a fifth centre, at Norwood, and consolidated its provision on the other sites. The centre at Tower Bridge is an imposing Victorian listed building while those in Clapham, Brixton, and Vauxhall were all built shortly after the Second World War. In 1999, the college took over responsibility for Lambeth's adult education provision, and also inherited the leases on two

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smaller centres, Adare and Henry Thornton. The college also runs courses in a number of community venues.

48 Inspectors agreed with the college that its substantial investment in its buildings has greatly improved facilities for students. Since 1997, the college has spent almost £8,000,000 on improving its buildings. When the Norwood site was sold, humanities and science were transferred to Clapham, engineering and creative studies to Vauxhall, and business to Brixton. These changes have been highly effective. Most curriculum areas are now concentrated at specific sites. Major projects carried out since the last inspection include: the provision of new multi-skills workshops for construction; the insertion of mezzanine floors to house engineering at Vauxhall; the provision of additional classrooms at Clapham; and the conversion of an old gymnasium at Brixton into additional classrooms and a fitness room. At other sites, the emphasis has been on improving the quality of general teaching areas. The college has produced a standard specification for all classrooms. Most are well equipped and provide a stimulating learning environment. However, some classrooms and common areas are still in need of refurbishment. During the area inspection of provision for 16 to 19 year olds, inspectors found that specialist resources in most areas were good and that resources for electronics, sound recording and building crafts were outstanding. The college's community venues provide a secure and welcoming environment for students who might not otherwise attend college.

49 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the standard of learning resources is high. There are libraries at all four main sites and three have separate information learning technology centres and study centres. The study centres include provision for additional learning support and also space where students can study independently, using computers and other learning materials.

Overall, the number of study spaces available to students has increased since the last inspection. The learning resource service is effectively managed and there is good liaison with curriculum areas. Subject librarians are allocated to specific curriculum areas and attend relevant staff meetings. The service regularly reviews the opening hours of the libraries and information learning technology centres in response to student demand.

50 The college has continued to invest heavily in its IT facilities and, since the last inspection, has spent more than £2,700,000. The IT network has been improved and computers are regularly replaced. There are 976 computers available for students' use, giving a ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students of 1:6.8. Since the last inspection, a large number of specialist IT rooms have been created. Most of these are linked to curriculum areas and hold specialist software and data projectors. There are also specific suites available for students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most computers have access to the Internet. The college has adopted a clear information learning technology strategy and 'champions' have been appointed within each curriculum area. The champions are responsible for developing materials for a college intranet and for developing the use of IT within their curriculum area. IT is also available within the community venues used by the college. The college delivers training within the community through its mobile IT training unit.

51 The college is improving access to its buildings for students with restricted mobility. Access is good at Brixton, Clapham and Vauxhall but there are still problems with a few areas elsewhere. The college's disability audit recognises that access is poor at centres which the college eventually hopes to stop using. The self-assessment report identifies limited opportunities for student recreation as a weakness. The college has tried to address this by the provision of fitness centres on three sites.

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It also provides a range of activities for students such as women's football and dance classes in salsa, rhythm and blues, and the 'Lambeth Walk'. Social facilities for students have been improved with the provision of the 'life centre' at Vauxhall and a new canteen and large sitting area at Clapham. Both the Clapham and Brixton sites enjoy large garden areas used by staff and students. The inner courtyard at Brixton boasts a listed fountain, the work of Kenneth Martin.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

52 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report. Some weaknesses had been addressed prior to the inspection. An additional weakness was identified.

Key strengths

- strong commitment to continuous improvement
- comprehensive quality assurance system and self-assessment process
- quality assurance procedures that lead to measurable improvements
- responsive and productive arrangements for staff development
- effective incorporation of adult education provision into the college's quality framework

Weaknesses

- some lack of rigour in action-planning
- the slow impact of quality assurance strategies on student retention rates at level 3

53 There is a strong commitment at all levels within the college to improving quality. As recognised by the college in its self-assessment

report, the framework for quality assurance covers all aspects of the college's work and includes all staff and governors. Procedures are well established and include course and service reviews, self-assessment, lesson observation, surveys of the views of students and staff, and staff appraisal. Clear documentation supports their implementation. A modified version of these procedures is used for the college's franchised provision. The adult education provision, newly transferred from the local authority, has been effectively integrated within the college's overall quality framework.

54 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the college's self-assessment report that there is extensive senior management involvement in the monitoring of the curriculum and cross-college services. Each of the four assistant principals has responsibility for the quality of a group of curriculum or service areas. The principal and the senior assistant vice-principal hold annual meetings with each section manager to review recruitment and student performance on courses, and agree those which require recovery plans. Retention and achievement rates are examined closely, reasons for underperformance discussed, and actions agreed. Course and section teams meet regularly to review progress against action plans. Courses which consistently fail to meet quality criteria are discontinued. Boards of study for each area meet termly and report directly to the academic board. A college quality committee, chaired by the principal and comprising members of the senior management team and the head of quality development, meets monthly. The committee agrees quality assurance policy, and reviews information on student achievement and retention rates. Although there are good mechanisms for monitoring the quality assurance system, procedures to monitor the consistency of staff appraisal or the lesson observation scheme across the college are insufficiently developed.

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55 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that quality assurance arrangements have led to measurable improvements in student performance and the quality of services. For example, student achievement at most levels has improved steadily and in many cases is well above national averages; an IT helpdesk has been introduced in response to complaints from staff and students; and additional sports and leisure facilities and audiovisual resources for the library have been provided in response to feedback from student surveys. Short-term curriculum working groups are used effectively to address underperformance. For example, a team has reviewed and improved arrangements for tutorials, and established procedures for monitoring and improving student attendance. However, while there has been an improvement in rates of student retention on many courses, retention at level 3 has remained below national averages.

56 The college's comprehensive lesson observation scheme is in its third year of operation. Teachers are observed at least once each academic year. Where teaching is judged to be less than satisfactory, support and training is provided, and further observations are arranged until at least a satisfactory outcome is achieved. The lesson observation process has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. This strength was recognised in the self-assessment report. A thorough analysis of the outcomes of lesson observation is produced and results are compared with national averages.

57 Self-assessment reports are thorough and self-critical. Inspectors agreed with many of the college's judgements. Course and service area reviews contribute to programme and service area reports and subsequently to the whole-college self-assessment report. There are clear procedures for validation at each stage, including audit and review by members of the senior management team. The college's corporation receives the final draft of the college

report for consideration and approval. There are clear links between the self-assessment process and strategic and operational planning. Since the last inspection, the college has improved its procedures for setting targets for student retention and achievement at course level. Teams review performance against national benchmarks and new targets are set for the forthcoming year. Good use is made of student feedback, the outcomes of lesson observation and a variety of other evidence. Support teams assess the quality of their services against performance standards. However, the setting of targets for support functions is less well developed. An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of franchised courses has yet to be integrated within the college's overall self-assessment report. The self-assessment report highlighted some weaknesses in relation to action-planning. There are inconsistencies in approach and a lack of rigour in some action-planning. A few action plans lacked timescales or detailed responsibilities for implementation.

58 Staff are aware of their individual entitlement to training and professional development and speak highly of the training they have received. Development needs are identified through appraisal, the self-assessment process and team meetings, and provision is effectively linked to the achievement of operational and strategic objectives. Training to address weaknesses identified through course reviews or recovery plans has led to improvements in performance. Some 1.8% of the overall staffing budget is allocated for staff development.

59 All students receive a student handbook that contains a copy of the college's charter and complaints procedure. The charter provides clear statements of entitlements, and the college's compliance with these is monitored and analysed annually.

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Governance

Grade 1

60 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They considered most weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- governors' involvement in strategic planning and the monitoring of performance
- their commitment to the college's mission and for widening participation
- constructive links with curriculum areas
- effective arrangements for induction and training
- wide range of skills and experience
- openness of corporation business

Weaknesses

- there were no significant weaknesses

61 The governors strongly support the values described in the college mission. They demonstrate a commitment to dealing with issues of equality and the college's vision of widening participation. They are enthusiastic about their work and challenge the principal and senior managers on how aims and objectives are being achieved. There is a clear understanding of the distinction between governance and management.

62 The corporation has a membership of 17, comprising six business members, three co-opted members, two staff, one student, one local authority member, three members representing the local community and the principal. The corporation has delegated its work to six committees: finance and general purposes; planning and performance; audit; student affairs; search; and remuneration.

These committees have appropriate terms of reference. As identified in the self-assessment report, the college benefits from governors' extensive range of business, professional, financial and academic skills and experience, as well as their effective links with key agencies and external bodies. The corporation recognises the need to appoint a governor with an accountancy background. There are seven women governors, and seven from minority ethnic groups. Attendance at corporation and committee meetings is good. Inspectors agreed with the college that induction procedures for new governors are highly effective. There is a sound approach to identifying both collective and individual training needs, and the clerk maintains detailed individual training records. Governors are kept informed of training opportunities and attend a range of external training events. They provide reports to the board on the issues covered and their implication for the college.

63 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the corporation effectively oversees the strategic direction of the college and is appropriately involved in strategic planning and monitoring. Governors have discussed in detail the mission statement and the broad strategies to be adopted in response. They attend an annual weekend conference each April to consider strategic issues. The planning and performance committee effectively monitors and reports on the progress made towards achieving the operating plan. Governors are presented with clear, aggregated data that illustrates trends in student retention and achievement over six years and enables them to compare the college's performance with national benchmarking data. However, there is limited monitoring by the performance and planning subcommittee of student performance at programme or course level. Action is being taken to address this.

64 A notable strength of the corporation is that it has in place a series of clear policies and associated procedures for governance. These

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set out how governors conduct their business and the frequency of reporting requirements. The corporation reviews all key policies annually. Inspectors agreed that governors have established comprehensive procedures to ensure openness in relation to corporation and committee minutes. With the exception of confidential items, papers are made available for public inspection. The clerk to the corporation maintains an annually updated register of the financial interests of governors. Governors have established a code of conduct, which embraces the seven principles of public life stated in the Nolan report, a code of ethics, a public interest disclosure policy and standing orders.

65 The clerk to the corporation services all committees. Minutes, agendas and supporting papers are well presented and distributed to governors at least one week in advance of meetings. Draft minutes are available within one week of meetings. The register of interests of governors and college staff who have significant financial responsibilities is available through the clerk. The clerk to the corporation produces an annual report on issues relating to governing body performance.

66 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. The college's annual budget and three-year financial forecasts are considered by the finance committee prior to being recommended to the corporation for approval. The committee also considers management accounts prior to their referral to the corporation for consideration. Governors receive a regular and extensive overview of college financial performance. The management accounts contain detailed narrative explanations of the reasons for budget variances. Although the corporation has agreed some key financial

policies, these are not yet adequately summarised in the information monitored by the corporation.

67 The self-assessment report had a clear and accurate analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of governance. Procedures for evaluating the performance of the board against performance indicators have been developed. Inspectors agreed with the college that there are good links between governors, managers, staff and students. Governors have established effective contact with curriculum areas. Individual governors meet regularly with the heads of schools, staff and students to discuss issues or to participate in events.

Management

Grade 1

68 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. There had been progress in rectifying the weaknesses by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- successful management of change
- consistent achievement of funding unit targets
- effective strategic planning involving wide consultation with staff
- timely, reliable management information
- extensive, productive links with business and the community
- good communication
- high priority given to equality of opportunity

Weaknesses

- there were no significant weaknesses

69 The management of the college is outstanding. Since the last inspection, senior

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managers have successfully led the college through a period of change and restructuring. The ethos and mission of the college is clearly understood and supported by all staff. The senior management team comprises the principal, the senior assistant principal, the director of finance and resources, the assistant principal student services and three assistant principals who each lead college centres. The senior management team meets each week to consider operational concerns and strategic matters. The senior management team and the heads of schools and services meet formally twice a term. As noted in the self-assessment report, the management structure is clearly defined and understood by all staff. The importance of teaching and learning is evident in all decision-making. This attention has resulted in a notable increase in the number of lessons judged by inspectors to be good or outstanding since the last inspection. Progress against targets for student retention and achievement is monitored rigorously. There have been significant improvements in students' achievements over the last three years.

70 A thorough analysis of education and training needs underpins effective operational and strategic planning. It is closely co-ordinated with financial planning and self-assessment procedures. All planning involves extensive consultation with staff. A range of key college targets, service standards and curriculum targets is agreed for each year and performance against targets is regularly reviewed. Curriculum management is good. Managers are readily available to teaching and support staff. The college has recently assumed responsibility for adult education provision previously delivered by the borough. The organisation and management of this provision has been effectively aligned with the rest of the college.

71 Since the last inspection, the college has developed a reliable and accurate management information system, networked across all sites. This strength was noted in the self-assessment

report. The college produces many scheduled reports to meet the management needs of a large and diverse college. Managers understand and set a variety of performance targets and make effective use of data for planning and analysis. Teachers and managers have confidence in data relating to courses and student performance. However, there are insufficient terminals for all teachers to have easy access to the network. This is currently being addressed through the college's information and learning technology plan.

72 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. Funding unit targets have been achieved every year since incorporation. Since the last inspection, the college has successfully managed a significant reduction in its average level of funding per unit. It has made operational deficits in a number of years but has a strong cash position. Management accounts are produced each month for consideration by the senior management team and are received regularly by governors. The supporting commentary to these management accounts are detailed, but would benefit from a regular summarising of performance against specific financial indicators. The well-qualified and experienced financial team is headed by the director of finance and planning, who attends all meetings of the finance and planning committee and the corporation.

73 In keeping with its mission, the college has developed extensive and productive links with local community organisations, businesses, learning partnerships, and other public bodies. This strength is recognised in the self-assessment report. The college is involved in many projects. These include support for disadvantaged women returning to study and professional guidance for black people wishing to set up their own businesses. Short courses are also provided for aspiring business people in South London. The college is successful in

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working with local partners to promote its mission, in widening participation amongst people in the borough, and in meeting the learning and training needs of local people. Equality of opportunity is strongly underpinned through a comprehensive policy which is vigorously implemented and monitored. Many aspects of provision are effective in promoting equal opportunities. For example, a scheme for the development of black managers in the college is proving successful in increasing the number of staff of minority ethnic origin in more senior positions.

Conclusions

74 The college produced its fifth self-assessment report in preparation for the inspection. The inspection team found the college to be committed to a self-critical process of assessment. The report presented a clear, comprehensive and honest evaluation of the college's work and provided a sound basis for planning the inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college. A few strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors had not been recognised by the college. Some weaknesses identified by the college had been addressed by the time of the inspection. Most of the findings of the inspection team were in line with those of the college. Inspectors awarded higher grades than the college in one curriculum area and in two cross-college areas.

75 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 (November 2000)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	1
16-18 years	12
19-24 years	16
25+ years	71
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 2000)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation) and entry level	50
Level 2 (intermediate)	29
Level 3 (advanced)	18
Level 4/5 (higher)	2
Level not specified	0
Non-schedule 2	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (November 2000)

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	984	2,355	23
Agriculture	9	125	1
Construction	423	695	8
Engineering	230	291	4
Business	370	2,020	17
Hotel and catering	41	124	1
Health and community care	732	1,188	13
Art and design	363	855	8
Humanities	323	1,348	12
Basic education	827	1,095	13
Total	4,302	10,096	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1998-99 ISR data, the college recruited 78% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 2000)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	260	17	74	351
Supporting direct learning contact	34	10	0	44
Other support	176	10	0	186
Total	470	37	74	581

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1998	1999	2000
Income	£21,428,000	£23,814,000	£26,716,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£22.78	£19.64	£18.11
Payroll as a proportion of income	60%	54%	58%
Achievement of funding target	100%	106%	105%
Diversity of income	13%	19%	24%
Operating surplus	-£1,753,000	-£721,000	-£1,205,000

Sources: Income – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

ALF – Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999), college (2000)

Payroll – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1998-99 (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Diversity of income – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Operating surplus – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
1	Number of starters	702	614	983	3,072	2,715	4,030
	Retention (%)	62	68	72	64	70	77
	Achievement (%)	62	58	69	65	64	73
2	Number of starters	668	662	959	2,414	2,387	3,498
	Retention (%)	63	70	73	60	68	75
	Achievement (%)	64	66	69	67	69	72
3	Number of starters	354	302	380	1,613	1,306	1,889
	Retention (%)	49	57	53	62	65	69
	Achievement (%)	68	76	78	75	74	72
4 or 5	Number of starters	9	7	5	241	239	233
	Retention (%)	100	43	80	71	79	64
	Achievement (%)	22	33	50	51	69	77
Short courses	Number of starters	164	403	436	2,155	3,779	7,592
	Retention (%)	84	83	83	90	88	89
	Achievement (%)	60	64	65	76	64	64
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	124	126	138	723	636	1,322
	Retention (%)	67	78	69	62	73	62
	Achievement (%)	70	81	100	76	79	96

Source: ISR

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