

Leyton Sixth Form College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1998-99

THE
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COUNCIL

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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

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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1997-98, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	60	29	2	–
Cross-college provision	18	54	24	4	–

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*
Sample size: 108 college inspections

Student Achievements

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

- as expected completions, which is the number of initial enrolments on qualifications where the student expected to complete the qualification in a given 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 the students have completed as expected (or are continuing with the prospect of late completion). 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 shown.

Summary

Leyton Sixth Form College

Greater London Region

Inspected May 1999

Leyton Sixth Form College is a multicultural sixth form college in the London borough of Waltham Forest. The college lies within the area covered by London East TEC. The college's self-assessment process involved all the college's staff. The college produced a clear and comprehensive self-assessment report which drew on established quality assurance procedures. The report was updated just before the inspection. It contained sound evidence and set out action plans for addressing specific weaknesses. The college is making good progress in implementing these plans. The self-assessment report was evaluative but paid insufficient attention to analysing students' achievements. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report but found several additional strengths and weaknesses. Three of the grades awarded by inspectors were lower than those given in the self-assessment report while two were higher.

The college offers courses, ranging from foundation to advanced level, in eight of the 10 programme areas funded by the FEFC. Provision in five programme areas was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. The college is well managed and the mission and strategic objectives of the college are well supported by staff. Governors closely monitor the college's financial health, which is

sound. There is a strong commitment throughout the college to quality improvement. The college provides excellent pastoral care for its students and has an effective tutorial system for full-time students. Students have access to good IT facilities. In many subjects, teaching and students' achievements are often good. The college should improve: students' poor achievements in some areas; support for students of different ability levels on GCSE English and mathematics courses; the use of management information in quality assurance; the poor quality of some accommodation.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science and mathematics	2	Support for students	1
Business	2	General resources	2
Leisure, tourism and physical education	2	Quality assurance	2
Art, design and media studies	2	Governance	1
English and modern foreign languages	3	Management	2

The College and its Mission

1 Leyton Sixth Form College was established in 1988 as part of the reorganisation of secondary education in the borough of Waltham Forest. It is located on a single campus that was formerly occupied by a boys' school and has extensive sporting facilities. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has identified the college as one of a group which typically recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas. Waltham Forest is one of the most deprived boroughs in the country. The college recruits students primarily from Waltham Forest but also from several adjoining boroughs most of which are also characterised by high levels of economic deprivation. At least 91% of full-time students and 78% of part-time students live in wards which are classified as disadvantaged areas. The local labour force survey shows that 7% of the local population are benefit claimants and 13% are actively seeking work. The educational achievements of year 11 students from Waltham Forest's schools are low in comparison with achievements nationally. In 1998, 37% of these students gained five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) passes at grade C or above compared with the national average of 46%. Of the full-time students at the college, 29% are taking one or more GCSE subjects as part of their course.

2 The composition of the student body reflects that of the local population: 79% of students aged 16 to 18 and 44% of part-time evening students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The growth in the number of students from refugee groups is a consequence of the increasing number of refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia and eastern Europe, who are making their home in the borough. The college provides strong pastoral support for its students and recognises the difficult circumstances that many of them face. The college is situated in an area where there is strong competition to attract and recruit students. Other institutions in the borough include one other sixth form college,

one large general further education college, and two grant-maintained schools with sixth forms. The college has recently joined the Lee Valley Learning Partnership. This new partnership includes two large general further education colleges and three sixth form colleges. The five colleges worked together successfully on other collaborative projects. In 1998, the college enrolled 1,358 full-time students and, by April 1999, 1,076 part-time students had enrolled. Courses offered by the college include 33 at the general certificate of education advanced/advanced supplementary level (GCE A/AS level); five courses leading to general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) advanced; five GNVQ intermediate and three GNVQ foundation courses; GCSE courses in mathematics and English; two BTEC national diploma programmes; two BTEC first diploma courses; a diploma course in nursery nursing and a full-time course in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). In addition, the college offers over 25 evening courses for part-time students.

3 The college's mission is 'to be the most successful and innovative sixth form college in east London'. The mission is underpinned by four corporate objectives. These focus on the themes of participation, progression and partnership; development of quality, excellence and performance management; learner support; and effective resource management.

4 The current principal took up her post in September 1997. The college's strategic management team, departmental and committee structure and support services have been restructured over the past 18 months. The college employs 118 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 32% are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Of the college's managers, 60% are women. The college was one of the first educational employers in the London East Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) area to gain the Investor in People award. The college is strongly committed to providing education for students of all abilities. This aim is reflected in

Context

the breadth of the curriculum offered. Extensive support is provided across the full range of students' abilities and learning needs and includes provision for sensory impaired and dyslexic students. The college is closely involved with its local community. For example, local voluntary groups make extensive use of the college's facilities at weekends and the college has entered a partnership with a neighbourhood church to provide childcare facilities. The college has developed collaborative arrangements with a local school and several universities.

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected during May 1999. The inspection team had previously studied the college's self-assessment report and reviewed information about the college held by other divisions of the FEFC. Data on students' achievements in 1995-96 and 1996-97 were obtained from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC. Data on students' achievements for 1997-98

were provided by the college before the inspection. These data were checked against class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies and, in most cases, the data were found to be accurate. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected three months before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by 10 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 44 days. Inspectors observed 73 lessons, examined students' work and a variety of documentation, and held meetings with governors, students and staff. They discussed the work of the college with representatives of local employers, the London East TEC, partner schools, the local education authority (LEA) and the careers service.

6 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the lessons observed, 71% were rated good or outstanding and 4% were less than satisfactory. This profile compares with figures of 65% and 6%, respectively, for all lessons observed by inspectors during 1997-98.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	6	23	9	2	0	40
GCSE	1	0	4	1	0	6
GNVQ and NVQ	8	13	4	0	0	25
Other	1	0	1	0	0	2
Total (No.)	16	36	18	3	0	73
Total (%)	22	49	25	4	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

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7 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Attendance at lessons during the inspection was good.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Leyton Sixth Form College	12.2	78
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

Source for national average: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report

Curriculum Areas

Science and Mathematics

Grade 2

8 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report for science and mathematics although little reference was made to weaknesses in GCSE mathematics. Sixteen lessons were observed.

Key strengths

- good pass rates in GCE A level biology and GNVQ sciences
- high retention rates
- the high quality of teaching and learning in science and GCE A level mathematics
- students' good written and oral communication skills
- good progression to further study
- exceptional support from teachers

Weaknesses

- the weak numerical skills of some students
- low pass rates in GCSE mathematics
- poor science laboratories

9 A good range of qualifications in science and mathematics is offered, including modular GCE A levels, GNVQ intermediate and advanced and GCSE mathematics. Science and mathematics are popular subjects; recruitment is high and still growing. The provision is well managed. As the self-assessment report noted, courses and lessons for science and GCE A level mathematics are well planned. The college has analysed the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observations and inspectors agreed with its results. Staff focus on the standards that are reached by students. They subsequently plan carefully to improve students' levels of achievement. For the GCE A level and GNVQ courses, this approach has been largely successful. The differing needs of students are

rarely diagnosed when they enter the college. Most students are entered directly for the GCSE examinations.

10 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the quality of teaching and learning in science and GCE A level mathematics is a significant strength. In these courses, 77% of lessons were graded by inspectors as good or outstanding, compared with the national average of 62%. Teachers have high expectations of their students and provide good support. Students pay close attention and work hard in lessons. Teachers maintain a firm but helpful approach in their dealings with students. They offer clear and straightforward explanations of concepts. Students work well together in lessons. In a GNVQ advanced science lesson, students were producing high-quality work for a project on car safety. They used computers effectively to find, organise and present the information to support their project. The quality of teaching and learning in GCSE mathematics lessons is weak and sometimes poor. In a badly structured GCSE mathematics lesson, attendance was low and few students had brought their textbooks or calculators with them. Despite being only a month away from their examinations, the students' understanding of percentages was weak.

11 Students produce high-quality written work. For example, one GCE A level chemistry student had undertaken an extended investigation into the synthesis and analysis of benzocaine. This work resulted in a comprehensive project which included an excellent overview of local anaesthetics combined with a rigorous analysis of a practical investigation into methods of production. Much of the extended work undertaken by students displays good information technology (IT) skills. In contrast, some science and mathematics students have weak numerical skills. The college has identified this weakness in the self-assessment report and plans to provide specific support, particularly for physics students.

Curriculum Areas

12 Most GCE A level and GNVQ advanced students progress to a wide range of courses in higher education that are related to science and mathematics. Most GNVQ intermediate students progress to the GNVQ advanced course. These strengths were identified in the self-assessment report. The college has high retention rates on many of its science and mathematics courses. In most subjects, these rates are consistently above the national averages for the sector. There are high retention and pass rates on both the GNVQ intermediate and advanced science courses. Pass rates in GCE A level biology are consistently above the national average. GCE A level physics, chemistry and mathematics pass rates are close to the national average. While

retention rates are good in GCSE mathematics, pass rates are poor.

13 Inspectors agreed with the college's analysis of the quality of accommodation and equipment for science and mathematics. Mathematics rooms are pleasantly decorated, grouped together and have good resources. In contrast, science laboratories are old, are often poorly decorated and some have insufficient storage or circulation space. Several laboratories have poor acoustics. Teachers do well to promote effective learning in laboratories which provide generally an unsatisfactory environment for both practical and theoretical lessons.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in science and mathematics, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE mathematics	2	Expected completions	*	*	305
		Retention (%)	*	*	83
		Achievement (%)	*	*	33
GNVQ intermediate and advanced sciences	2 and 3	Expected completions	*	*	35
		Retention (%)	*	*	83
		Achievement (%)	*	*	93
GCE A level physics	3	Expected completions	*	*	41
		Retention (%)	*	*	88
		Achievement (%)	*	*	78
GCE A level biology	3	Expected completions	*	*	94
		Retention (%)	*	*	81
		Achievement (%)	*	*	88
GCE A level chemistry	3	Expected completions	*	*	81
		Retention (%)	*	*	69
		Achievement (%)	*	*	86
GCE A level mathematics	3	Expected completions	*	*	98
		Retention (%)	*	*	85
		Achievement (%)	*	*	81

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*data not reliable

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 2

14 The inspection covered GCSE and GCE A levels in business studies and accounting, GNVQ business at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels, and some part-time courses. Sixteen lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but found that insufficient consideration was given to the large number of students at the college recruited from areas with high levels of deprivation.

Key strengths

- the high attendance and retention rates
- good pass rates on GNVQ foundation and GCSE accounting courses
- good teaching
- the good behaviour and attitude of students in lessons
- well-planned courses
- good accommodation

Weaknesses

- the underdeveloped use of IT as a learning resource
- a low pass rate on GNVQ advanced courses
- the inadequate library bookstock

15 The college provides a range of full-time and part-time vocational and general education courses from foundation to advanced level. There is good recruitment to all of these courses. The provision of evening part-time courses is more restricted. The self-assessment report identified as a priority the development of part-time courses aimed more widely at all sections of the local community. Inspectors found that little progress had been made in achieving this aim. As noted in the self-

assessment report, courses are well planned and effectively managed. There is a strong sense of teamwork and co-operation among teachers.

16 The self-assessment report identified as a strength the good quality of teaching. Inspectors judged 88% of lessons observed to be good or outstanding. The grade profile given to lessons observed by inspectors closely matches the college's own observation profile. Lessons were well paced, and involved an appropriate variety of teaching techniques and activities that were relevant and interesting. In a particularly good lesson students on a GNVQ advanced course were preparing detailed business plans, using a wide variety of media, for a competition that was arranged by a local business and innovation centre. In another interesting lesson, the scheme of work linked GNVQ foundation students to a telecommunications company initiative. Attendance and punctuality at lessons is good, and working relationships between teachers and students are positive. Students are keen to learn and have high aspirations. They have benefited from trips, visits and attendance at conferences, all of which had vocational relevance to their courses. GNVQ intermediate students undertake a work placement but this constructive opportunity is not available to GNVQ advanced students. Students' performance is monitored on an individual basis, and teachers provide additional support to students where appropriate. GNVQ advanced students have intensive revision sessions where a strong emphasis is placed on developing examination techniques. Students respond well to these sessions. Overall, the students speak positively about their learning experience and are highly motivated.

17 The teaching accommodation is good. It is located in a modern building which is well decorated and contains relevant display material. The staff work area is overcrowded. Although all students are issued with key textbooks, the self-assessment report identified that the library stock needs improving or

Curriculum Areas

alternative and complementary access provided through the use of electronically distributed materials. Some of the books are outdated and inadequate for the students' needs. The college recognises that students have insufficient access to computer-aided learning materials. Teachers are appropriately qualified. Their own development needs are identified through the review of staff training and development, and wherever possible these needs are met.

18 Pass rates on most courses are high. Achievement on GNVQ foundation is particularly good; there are high retention and pass rates. There have been good pass rates on the BTEC national diploma in business and finance which has recently been discontinued and the GCSE accounting courses. Pass rates at GCE A level are generally good, but there is a significant proportion of lower grades. In general, pass

rates in GCE A level business studies are slightly above the national average for the sector. As noted in the self-assessment report, there are good retention rates on GCE A level courses. The report identified some students' poor achievements as a weakness. However, inspectors, when taking into account the level of achievement reached by students when they commenced business courses, found this weakness only applied to the GNVQ advanced course. This course was introduced by the college in 1996 and the first set of pass rates in 1998 were below the national average for the sector. There is a good record of students progressing from lower to higher level courses. Most of those studying at advanced level aspire to go to university and many students are successful in obtaining places at university.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in business, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ foundation	1	Expected completions	35	14	22
		Retention (%)	86	89	96
		Achievement (%)	94	100	82
GNVQ intermediate	2	Expected completions	34	31	26
		Retention (%)	95	85	72
		Achievement (%)	59	68	73
GCSE accounting and business studies	2	Expected completions	15	13	19
		Retention (%)	94	100	90
		Achievement (%)	93	100	100
BTEC national diploma/ GNVQ advanced	3	Expected completions	68	35	30
		Retention (%)	97	88	82
		Achievement (%)	100	100	57
GCE A level accounting and business studies	3	Expected completions	153	80	108
		Retention (%)	98	76	87
		Achievement (%)	72	76	69

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Leisure, Tourism and Physical Education

Grade 2

19 The inspection covered foundation, intermediate and GNVQ advanced courses and GCE A level physical education including sports studies. Ten lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that the significance of some weaknesses in the report was understated and that some strengths were actually examples of routine practice.

Key strengths

- an appropriate variety of activities to promote learning
- effective support for students
- students' good achievements on the GNVQ advanced course
- systematic assessment, tracking and verification of students' progress
- effective curriculum organisation and management
- strong links with local schools and community groups
- effective accreditation of additional key skills for GNVQ students

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on the GNVQ foundation course
- some poor retention rates
- underdeveloped opportunities for some students to work in a realistic work environment

20 Courses in leisure, tourism and physical education are well managed and provide good learning opportunities for students. Effective teamwork by teachers influences curriculum planning, delivery and assessment. Students'

progress is systematically reviewed and recorded. Close attention is paid to students' attendance. Lessons are well planned and provide a range of stimulating learning activities. Course documentation and learning materials are of a high standard. Schemes of work and lesson plans are appropriately detailed. Opportunities for developing and assessing key skills are clearly stated. As the self-assessment report recognised, students can gain additional qualifications to strengthen their employment prospects. These include coaching and leadership awards and qualifications in Spanish and additional key skills. GNVQ advanced students have an opportunity to attend a course in mainland Europe.

21 Of the lessons observed, 80% were graded by inspectors as outstanding or good. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that a full range of teaching strategies is used to develop students' skills and knowledge. In a few lessons, teachers did not ensure that students were fully engaged in appropriate activities. Students respond well in lessons and are encouraged by teachers to contribute to discussions. Full account is taken of the students' differing abilities. Assessments are imaginative and clearly set in a vocational context. They are checked by an internal verifier before being issued to students. Students work well and enthusiastically in groups. On the GNVQ advanced course, students may choose from a range of options in either leisure or tourism. Work experience, which enables students to apply theoretical concepts in a practical environment, is a feature of the GNVQ advanced course but is not offered at intermediate or foundation level. Productive links have been established with two major holiday and business travel companies. Course materials and assignments are firmly set within a realistic industrial context. For example, students from all GNVQ courses work together over a two-week period on the organisation, planning and running of an event for the local community.

Curriculum Areas

22 The self-assessment report recognised that there are good resources for courses in leisure, tourism and physical education. Classrooms are of a high standard. Students have access to a well-equipped computer room. The model travel office holds a good stock of current brochures. There is a view data connection that enables students to make simulated bookings. A satisfactory number of current textbooks and video tapes are held within the subject area. The library bookstock is satisfactory. Students who study sport as part of their programme use a good range of indoor and outdoor sports facilities. Teachers have relevant vocational qualifications and most have teaching and assessor qualifications. Staff development activities are identified in the curriculum area's operational plan and include a minimum of five days a year for curriculum planning. Some staff have benefited from recent short periods of industrial updating through work shadowing.

23 Students' achievements on the GNVQ advanced course are good. Pass rates for

physical education at GCE A level are broadly in line with national averages for the sector. However, the pass rate on the GNVQ foundation course is poor. The self-assessment report recognised that the retention rate on the GNVQ foundation course in 1998 was good. Retention rates on GCE A level and GNVQ advanced courses are low. Students' written work is of a good standard and is generally well presented. Much of the work is wordprocessed. Marking is thorough and most, but not all, teachers provide written comments which aim to help students to improve their performance. Students' IT skills are well developed. The number of GNVQ advanced students who progress to higher education has increased over the past two years. A significant number of GNVQ foundation students progress to the college's intermediate programme. Strong links with local schools and community groups enable students to gain sports coaching qualifications and to obtain relevant work experience and part-time employment. Community groups also make use of the college's sports facilities.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in leisure, tourism and physical education, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ foundation leisure and tourism	1	Expected completions	14	*	28
		Retention (%)	93	*	85
		Achievement (%)	90	*	47
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	Expected completions	19	*	22
		Retention (%)	84	*	73
		Achievement (%)	93	*	69
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	Expected completions	–	*	21
		Retention (%)	–	*	67
		Achievement (%)	–	*	86
GCE A level physical education, including sports studies	3	Expected completions	16	*	21
		Retention (%)	88	*	62
		Achievement (%)	100	*	77

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*data not reliable

–course not running

Curriculum Areas

Art, Design and Media Studies

Grade 2

24 Inspectors observed 11 lessons in art, design and media studies. They agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified a few additional strengths and weaknesses. Some weaknesses described in the report were understated.

Key strengths

- the high standard of students' practical work in textiles, photography and media studies
- the appropriateness of courses to the students' cultural background
- the high quality of curriculum management
- good GCE A level pass rates in most subjects
- the effective use of past students' work to set standards for current students
- vocationally relevant IT resources

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on GNVQ advanced and GCE A level design courses
- some ineffective teaching

25 The college provides a wide range of full-time and part-time art, design and media courses which includes GCSE courses, GNVQ intermediate and advanced programmes, GCE A level courses and recreational courses. There is a good spread of specialisms including three-dimensional design, fashion, textiles, fine art, photography, graphics and media studies. The multicultural student population brings a wealth of influences and visual stimuli to art and design courses which are reflected in students' assignments. The courses are appropriate and sensitive to the varied cultural backgrounds of the students. In art, for example, the traditional

nude model is clothed or an alternative still life arrangement can be drawn or painted, in recognition of the beliefs of Muslim students. The curriculum areas of art and design and media are well managed. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that course documentation, student records, staff records and moderator reports are comprehensive and effectively organised.

26 Of the lessons observed 55% were good or outstanding. This is a lower proportion than the national average for the programme area in 1997-98 and also lower than the college's own lesson observations. In most lessons there was an appropriate range of teaching methods employed. Teachers use their subject expertise in stimulating ways to develop the students' creative skills, critical awareness and technical ability. Their skills are particularly well illustrated in one-to-one teaching and in practical work. In weaker lessons teachers fail to engage students in fruitful discussion and to develop their individual talents.

27 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that much of the practical work is of a good standard. In textiles, photography and media studies work is of a high standard and shows a high degree of technical ability, visual awareness and creativity. In GCE A level photography, some students experimented with the use of photography in a three-dimensional way which was demanding and extended the creative potential of the media. The high standard of work is reflected in examination results. Most GCE A level subjects have good pass rates. In GCE A level design, however, pass rates are poor, a weakness identified in the college's self-assessment report. Retention rates on most courses are at or above national averages for the sector. Recruitment and retention on the advanced art and design GNVQ and GCE A level design courses are poor.

28 The accommodation provides a stimulating learning environment. Each specialism has a dedicated base room which is equipped with

Curriculum Areas

specialist machinery, furniture, materials, and visually stimulating reference information and examples of art work. Some of this work has been completed by professional artists and designers but there is also a high proportion of past students' work. This work is used very effectively by teachers to create benchmarks, develop potential and excite the students. Students are encouraged to criticise and

evaluate this work and suggest improvements. The curriculum areas are particularly well resourced with vocationally relevant IT hardware and software. Inspectors agreed with the college's view that the IT equipment is used effectively by the students and good examples of computer-generated images are included in the work on display.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in art, design and media studies, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate	2	Expected completions	18	11	15
		Retention (%)	89	100	87
		Achievement (%)	56	91	77
GCE A level art	3	Expected completions	34	27	24
		Retention (%)	100	96	83
		Achievement (%)	100	95	90
GCE A level media	3	Expected completions	64	60	60
		Retention (%)	100	80	73
		Achievement (%)	100	91	93
GCE A level textiles	3	Expected completions	19	9	14
		Retention (%)	95	100	97
		Achievement (%)	100	100	92
GCE A level photography	3	Expected completions	9	11	20
		Retention (%)	78	73	70
		Achievement (%)	80	100	100
GCE A level graphic design	3	Expected completions	16	20	21
		Retention (%)	94	90	76
		Achievement (%)	100	94	100

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

English and Modern Foreign Languages

Grade 3

29 Inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths and weaknesses that were identified in the self-assessment report. Some weaknesses were not identified. Twenty lessons were observed.

Key strengths

- well-managed, well-planned courses
- good teaching
- improved English pass rates in 1998

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on some modern language courses
- some poor and declining retention rates
- an inadequate analysis of students' achievements in GCSE English

30 The college offers GCSE English courses to full-time students who have not previously achieved a grade C or above, and also in the evening to part-time students. Full-time GCE A level courses are provided in English language and English literature. Part-time students can take GCE A level English language and literature in the evening in one year. There are full-time GCE A levels in French, German and Spanish, and also national vocational qualification (NVQ) language units for students on GNVQ and other courses. In the evening, NVQ units are offered in French and Spanish. A GCSE course in Arabic and British Sign Language courses are provided at levels 1 and 2 during the day and evening. Relatively few students take modern language courses with the exception of GCE A level French.

31 Courses in English and modern languages are well managed. There are thorough common schemes of work for all English and modern

languages courses, which teachers adapt for their own schemes. Considerable care has been taken in the choice of syllabi and set texts for GCE A level courses to suit the needs of students and reflect the cultural diversity within the college. The internal verification of coursework is carried out conscientiously. The progress of GCE A level students is carefully monitored. Enrichment activities, for example attendance at conferences, and theatre trips, are provided for students in both curriculum areas.

32 Of the lessons observed by inspectors 65% were graded as outstanding or good. Lessons are well planned. An appropriate range of teaching methods is used including group discussions and whole-group teaching. In English, students receive individual support from their teachers in the key skills workshop. Teachers devise handouts to support students in their investigations of set texts. In both English and modern languages, students' written work is marked with care, and constructive comments are provided by teachers. In one GCSE English lesson, students revised with their teacher the key characteristics of descriptive writing. The teacher asked the students to produce short pieces of writing. Through discussion and encouragement she built up their confidence, until all students had succeeded in their aim. In a few lessons, teachers did not ensure that all students concentrated sufficiently on the work. In modern languages, additional support is given to individual students by teachers and language assistants, a strength recognised in the self-assessment report. Lessons make effective use of the target language. In a GCE A level French lesson, small groups of students worked for a time on three different activities. Some GCE A level students achieve good standards in their written work. In modern languages, most students are confident in their use of the target language. There is provision in languages for non-sighted students.

33 Students' achievements on two-year, full-time GCE A level English courses improved in 1998, when they were approximately in line

Curriculum Areas

with national averages for the sector. Good pass rates were achieved in 1997 in GCE A level English literature, while the pass rates for GCE A level English language were below national averages. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report. Retention rates have declined on GCE A level English courses. On GCSE English courses, pass rates at grades C or above were poor in 1996 and 1997 but there was a considerable improvement in 1998, when the results were in line with national averages. Over the last three years, there has been a substantial proportion of students on GCSE courses who complete the course but do not sit the examination. This indicates that the needs of some students in English at this level are not

being met effectively. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. In GCE A level French, pass rates are significantly below national averages. GCE A level Spanish and German pass rates are good, but the number of students on these courses is very low. The self-assessment report identified the need to improve pass rates in GCE A level modern languages.

34 There are suites of rooms dedicated to both English and modern languages. Resources are good for modern language courses, and adequate for English courses. There is a well equipped language centre which is well used by students for individual study as well as work in small groups.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in English and modern foreign languages, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
NVQ language units	1	Expected completions	–	–	28
		Retention (%)	–	–	71
		Achievement (%)	–	–	55
British Sign Language	1	Expected completions	–	–	38
		Retention (%)	–	–	55
		Achievement (%)	–	–	67
GCSE English all courses	2	Expected completions	267	289	341
		Retention (%)	92	89	84
		Achievement (%)	25	19	52
GCE A level English (two-year courses)	3	Expected completions	*	138	129
		Retention (%)	*	88	81
		Achievement (%)	*	81	91
GCE A level French, German, Spanish combined	3	Expected completions	31	49	34
		Retention (%)	100	86	88
		Achievement (%)	55	43	60

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

–course not running

*data not reliable

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Support for Students

Grade 1

35 The self-assessment report was comprehensive and evaluative. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college.

Key strengths

- well-managed arrangements for supporting students
- productive links with schools
- effective learning support
- a well co-ordinated tutorial system
- careful monitoring of students' progress
- effective careers and welfare guidance

Weaknesses

- some less effective tutorials

36 Support arrangements for students are well managed. The roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly defined. The teams that provide tutorials, careers guidance, learning support and counselling work well together to meet students' needs. The college has a strong commitment to help all of its students to reach their full potential, a strength noted in the self-assessment report. There is increasing success across the whole college in planning learning so that students who have many support needs can choose their individual programmes of work from a wide range of courses. Services to support students are widely advertised in the college and in the student diary.

37 Prospective students are well informed about the college and its courses. The college has established very productive links with a large number of schools locally and in neighbouring boroughs. College staff and students give presentations at 'progression events' in many schools. During the summer vacation prospective students can attend 'taster'

courses, and many of those who attend subsequently enrol on a course at the college. All prospective students are interviewed before being offered a place on a course and where appropriate a learning support teacher is involved in interviews. Course induction is effective and there are clear procedures enabling students to change course.

38 Inspectors agreed with the college that there is a well-developed tutorial system which provides effective support for students. Students are allocated a personal tutor, who is usually one of their subject teachers. Tutor groups meet weekly for one hour. There is a detailed tutorial handbook and tutors receive weekly briefings setting out important events and deadlines. Tutorial activities are reviewed and modified regularly. Three times a year, lessons are suspended for an academic review day, during which students meet their tutors to review progress and produce action plans for improvement. Students are set minimum target grades which are reviewed in the light of the progress which they make. Students speak highly of the personal and academic support which they receive from tutors and subject teachers. In their own time, many teachers give students substantial academic support. Students' punctuality and attendance are carefully scrutinised and appropriate action is taken where problems are identified. Parents are kept informed by written reports and through the opportunities which they are offered to attend parents' evenings. Scrutiny in monitoring students' attendance and performance has helped to achieve generally good retention rates across the college. Inspectors agreed with the judgement made by the college that some tutorials are less effective. The college has instituted a scheme of observation of tutorials, which is used to monitor the quality of tutorials and to identify training needs for tutors.

39 Students value the provision of learning support which may cover any aspect of their work. The extent to which students need

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additional learning support is identified at enrolment and monitored throughout their course, a significant strength identified by the college. Students requiring further support complete an additional learning agreement, and attend support sessions. Their attendance and progress are carefully monitored. All students can attend the open access key skills workshop for extra support, and the college's records show that approximately 50% of GCE A level students have taken advantage of this opportunity during 1998-99. In addition, teachers provide academic subject workshops as they are needed throughout the year.

40 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are enrolled on appropriate courses and provided with the support necessary to achieve their primary learning goal. The college has close links with a number of special schools; planning for specific support requirements for students at these schools starts two years before the commencement of the college course. Specialist equipment such as laptop computers, special computer screens and a machine for translating text into Braille are available to help students with their work. Changes were made to the location of performing arts accommodation so that a student who uses a wheelchair could join the course. Teachers are informed of the likely needs of students in their classes, and given the appropriate training to support them.

41 The careers guidance and support provided for students who wish to progress to higher education or to employment are comprehensive. The college's careers adviser is supported by staff from a local careers company. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have access to interviews with a specialist careers adviser. There is an extensive range of careers literature in the careers room and library. The college holds an annual three-day 'progression event', which includes a series of talks by employers and providers of higher education, and a range of practical exercises designed to help students to plan their future. The careers

service and senior tutors have forged effective links with a number of employers who provide work experience and contribute to work preparation sessions in tutorials. The college provides additional help for those students intending to apply for Oxford and Cambridge universities.

42 The college employs a qualified counsellor and an educational psychologist for one session each week. In addition, there is a counselling service available close to the college which provides emergency and long-term counselling. Students are encouraged to participate in college life outside their studies. Sporting activities take place every day. The college enters teams in local leagues for many sports. Students' achievements are celebrated in publicity materials, on noticeboards in the college and at awards ceremonies.

General Resources

Grade 2

43 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, and found some additional strengths.

Key strengths

- a highly regarded and effective learning resources area
- good teaching accommodation
- excellent sporting facilities
- access to well-equipped nursery provision

Weaknesses

- the poor state of some buildings
- incompatible administration software

44 The college is based on an 8-hectare site. There is a single entrance which is staffed throughout the day. Security is unobtrusive but effective. Recent maintenance work on the

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windows of the main building and the well-cared-for gardens make a pleasant first impression. Inspectors agreed that the newly built Meridian building provides an excellent environment for staff and students. The separate human sciences block is also of good quality. In addition to these three blocks, many of the other specialist teaching areas are of high quality. The college has successfully managed to accommodate teaching staff adjacent to their teaching areas. Most staff have sufficient space for working and for using the computer facilities. Provision for administrative staff is adequate. Accommodation in the main building is generally fit for purpose.

45 Space utilisation has improved with the extension of the college's working day. The college has a five-year maintenance investment plan. However, due to late commencement the programme has fallen behind schedule. The squash court and some students' toilets are in a poor state of repair. The small premises team has brightened up various parts of the college. The accommodation strategy was produced when the college was facing severe financial constraints and is no longer up to date. Wheelchair users can gain access to all the college's buildings. A wide range of specialist resources has been built up to support students with sensory and other impairments. There are sufficient social spaces for students which include: a large coffee bar and refectory which has a comfortable seating area; student common rooms, one reserved for women students with a linked quiet study area; and a prayer room for Muslim students. Students use some of these areas to supplement the study spaces available in the learning resources area. Most students are able to find a base for private study when they need one.

46 Inspectors agreed that the learning resource area is well used, highly regarded and responsive to students' needs. It has 127 study spaces and 40 computer stations including five spaces for video editing. The quality of the

equipment in the learning resources area is high. Since the last inspection the library has considerably improved its stock of fiction books and materials to support courses in ESOL. Most curriculum areas have their own bookstock which supplements books available in the library. However, the college does not have an accurate record of its total bookstock. The library has a wide variety of CD-ROM databases, study packs and audio and video cassettes. There are nearly 200 computers located in curriculum areas which represents an overall ratio of computers to students of 1:6. Students report that there is usually easy access to computer facilities. Although there is no formal IT strategy the college has given priority to improving the quality of equipment and to ensuring that the equipment is compatible throughout the college. Students can access the internet from most parts of the college. The college has installed an excellent IT suite which is used for training purposes for local businesses. The college acknowledged in its self-assessment report that software used by the college's administration functions cannot be linked together. A new computer system is being introduced in September 1999 together with the installation of a new telephone system.

47 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college has excellent sporting facilities. These include: a large playing field for football and cricket; two all-weather surfaces for football, hockey, basketball and tennis; and a large well-equipped sports hall and fitness suite. These are well maintained and used extensively by staff and students, local schools and the local community. The college has the use of a new, adjacent nursery, which is operated by a local church. The nursery is well equipped and well used, and helps meet the childcare needs of adult students.

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Quality Assurance

Grade 2

48 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. There has not yet been time for some recent developments in quality assurance procedures fully to reveal their impact on students' achievements.

Key strengths

- a clear commitment to continuous improvement
- the full involvement of staff in self-assessment and internal audit procedures
- an effective response to student evaluations
- benefits to teachers from the scheme of lesson observation
- effective linkage of the staff development programme to quality assurance and strategic planning

Weaknesses

- inconsistent implementation of the course review system
- under utilisation of management information in quality assurance systems
- the underdeveloped quality standards for some cross-college services

49 Inspectors agreed with the college that there is a commitment to continuous improvement in the college and that quality assurance systems are well understood and supported by staff and students. Quality assurance procedures have contributed to improvements in teaching. The proportion of lessons graded 1 and 2 by inspectors rose from 57% at the last inspection to 71% in 1999. There is an established system of course review.

Some reviews incorporate comments from staff and students, analyse data on students' achievements and establish actions for the following year. However, a number of reviews are incomplete. Most course review action plans are monitored through the self-assessment process. There is no system for producing a report that draws together the main findings from the reviews for the benefit of the whole college.

50 The college systematically seeks views on its performance from students and others with an interest or involvement in its life. There are regular student surveys within courses and across the college. Many curriculum areas bring students together in focus groups to identify areas of concern. Evaluations are made of other aspects of college provision and services, for example student induction and open evenings. The results of these evaluations are analysed and disseminated throughout the college. Improvements have been made in a number of areas as a result, for example, in approaches to teaching, in textbook provision, and in cleaning services. On one GNVQ course, feedback from students led to a decision to change the staffing arrangements. There are effective internal verification procedures and reports from external verifiers and moderators are positive. Staff working on GNVQ courses in different curriculum areas meet together to share good practice and thus encourage a consistent approach to standards.

51 The college produced its first self-assessment report in 1998. All staff were involved. A positive feature of the self-assessment process is an internal validation system whereby each curriculum area presents its findings to an internal audit group for scrutiny. The self-assessment report was largely evaluative but in many sections what inspectors judged to be standard practice had sometimes been identified by the college as strengths. This tendency in the report contributed to overgenerous grading of some curriculum areas.

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A systematic programme of lesson observations is used to provide evidence for the self-assessment report. The grades awarded in the college were more generous than those given by inspectors. Curriculum managers undertook an analysis of key issues emerging from the observations. Their reports were discussed by course teams and some initiatives for staff development were undertaken as a result. Teachers reported that the system of lesson observation and subsequent consideration of findings gave them a welcome opportunity to share good practice.

52 Quality assurance procedures and target-setting are not fully established in service areas. In some sections, for example administration and finance, staff have worked together to identify standards and procedures have been put in place to obtain feedback from customers on levels of performance. In other areas, including technician and IT services, the process of establishing standards is at an early stage and no clear means of measuring levels of performance exists at present. A variety of mechanisms, including student surveys and the monitoring of tutorial provision, are used to assess the effectiveness of student support services. These evaluations provide the college with a clear indication of the effectiveness of provision in this area.

53 Benchmarking data and performance indicators from the FEFC help to inform management views and decisions about college performance. A system of value-added analysis, using minimum grades as targets for students based on their qualifications at the start of their course, is used to help monitor performance in GCE A level subjects. Some steps have been taken to develop a similar system for GNVQ courses. However, as the college's self-assessment recognised, there is insufficient use of management information and statistical analysis fully to support the quality assurance systems which has reduced the rigour of some curriculum assessments.

54 The college recognises that there is no formal system of staff appraisal and is taking action to address this issue. All full-time staff have a review meeting with their manager each year for their training and development needs. Staff report that they value the opportunity this review provides to discuss their work and explore their training needs. Issues arising from these meetings, from the college's operational plans and from the quality assurance system are all used to help to determine an annual staff development programme. The staff development budget represents just under 1% of the college's payroll expenditure. The college was the first in Waltham Forest to obtain an Investor in People award and has subsequently been successfully reassessed. A link with the TEC has provided 38 teachers with short work experience placements during the last four years.

Governance

Grade 1

55 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the college's own assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of governance. However, they considered that some weaknesses were overstated.

Key strengths

- close attention to the strategic direction of the college
- good clerking arrangements
- benefit to the college from governors' skills and experience
- conscientious scrutiny by governors of college performance
- the close involvement of governors in the working of the college

Weaknesses

- there are no significant weaknesses

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56 At the time of the inspection the board of governors had a determined membership of 17, comprising eight independent governors, a TEC nominee, two co-opted governors, two parent governors, two staff governors, a student governor, and the principal. A recent resignation had increased the number of vacancies to two. Of the 15 current governors, seven are women and four are from minority ethnic groups. As identified in the self-assessment report, the college benefits from the governors' wide range of relevant expertise in areas such as the law, banking, audit and accountancy, and personnel, as well as teaching and lecturing. This expertise is used to very good effect within the college through governors' work with curriculum areas of the college and on committees. There is a search committee to provide advice on the appointment of governors. The composition of the board in the light of the revised categories of membership is scheduled for discussion at a governors' conference in June, as is a review of the skills which governors bring to the board.

57 The board of governors meets at least once each term. In addition, during the 12 months preceding the inspection there were two weekend governors' conferences at which papers on relevant issues were presented by members of the college's senior management. The work of the board of governors is assisted by appropriate and effective committees which are responsible for finance and business, audit, and the remuneration of senior postholders. Monthly management accounts are considered at meetings of the finance and business committee. The most recent set of these accounts is amongst the papers distributed for board of governors' meetings. The audit committee effectively monitors the plans and reports of the internal and the external auditors. The remuneration committee sets and monitors targets for members of the strategic management team. These committees ably assist the full board in closely scrutinising the performance of the college.

58 The work of governors is assisted by a code of conduct and standing orders for the conduct of corporation business. The self-assessment report identified as a strength the good clerking arrangements. Agendas and well-presented reports are distributed to governors at least one week in advance of meetings. Draft minutes, providing a clear record of proceedings, are available within two weeks of meetings. Minutes of governors' meetings are available for inspection in the college library. A register of interests of governors and college staff who have significant financial responsibilities is available through the clerk to the board of governors. Governors are kept well informed of national developments in further education. Policies and procedures for openness and accountability, including 'whistleblowing', are scheduled for consideration at the governors' annual conference in June 1999.

59 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. The board of governors 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.

60 Governors are closely involved in determining the college's mission and strategic direction. They provided effective support for the principal in the implementation of a management restructuring in 1998. They set and conscientiously monitor strategic targets for the college's senior managers. Governors scrutinise critically the frequent reports presented by senior managers on the college's performance. These reports include analysis of performance measured against targets for recruitment, retention and achievement as well as financial performance. Data used in these reports are reliable. Heads of faculty annually present to governors an analysis of student retention and achievement for their area of responsibility. Governors also receive reports on

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aspects of quality assurance. As stated in the college's self-assessment report, governors are clear about the extent of their roles and responsibilities. Governors are frequent visitors to the college and support students in a range of ways, for example by providing work experience and funding for projects. Individual governors are linked to curriculum areas and meet regularly with heads of faculty to discuss issues or to participate in events, a professional relationship that is valued as much by staff as by governors. Staff spoke positively about the involvement of governors in the life of the college. Governors have critically evaluated their own performance through the process of self-assessment. The self-assessment report had a clear analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of governance. Procedures for evaluating the performance of the board through formal self-appraisal against performance indicators have been developed and are scheduled to be implemented shortly. Governors attend an annual one-day conference each June to consider strategic issues. These conferences enable a detailed examination to take place of the college's performance, strategic direction and policies. Training is provided for all governors and existing informal induction procedures are being revised and formalised. Governors attend a range of external training events and provide full reports to the board on the issues covered at these events and their implication for the college. The appraisal of the principal and the four directors is conducted by the governors' remuneration committee.

Management

Grade 2

61 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the college's own assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of management.

Key strengths

- strong leadership and effective management
- effective systems of communication and consultation
- strong links between strategic and operational planning
- sound financial management
- good equal opportunities practice
- strong links with the local community and external organisations
- strong commitment to the college mission at all levels

Weaknesses

- some inaccuracies in management information data

62 The strategic management of the college is the responsibility of the principal and her four directors who meet weekly. This strategic team is the major decision-making body of the college and has strong links with governors. The college management team, comprising the strategic team, the six heads of faculty and other key cross-college managers, meets monthly and is responsible for the implementation of the strategic plan. The current management structure was introduced in April 1998, is already proving effective and is widely supported across the college. The replacement of a large number of heads of departments and the reorganisation of the college into six faculties was conducted sensitively, and achieved with a minimum of disruption. Managers working within the new structure are more

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easily able to achieve the college's objectives, can make more effective use of resources and are improving cross-curricular co-operation. The terms of reference of the key management teams are clear. A small number of cross-college groups, for example the key skills group and the continuing education group, complement the work of these teams. Budgets are devolved and heads of faculty meet monthly with the finance director to discuss any budget issues. The training needs of managers have been systematically assessed. Weekly news bulletins and weekly staff briefings by the principal, together with the accessibility of all senior staff, help to maintain good communications and win staff commitment to the college's mission.

63 Line management arrangements are effective at all levels. Heads of faculty meet individually with teaching staff weekly and with their teams every three weeks. All meetings are minuted and all staff with management responsibilities have job descriptions. Support staff are well integrated with the academic life of the college and share a common staffroom with teaching staff.

64 The college's three-year strategic plan sets targets for specific objectives, for example widening participation through part-time courses and improving retention rates. It provides a clear framework within which the college can develop. Consultation takes place on the annual operational plan, which specifies targets in more detail. The college's operational plan is used when faculty and subject plans are being developed. The extent to which operational plans are achieved is closely monitored through management meetings and as part of the annual staff review process. Inspectors agreed with the college that the monitoring process is well managed and effective. Inadequacies in the management of college information before 1997-98 resulted in the college being unable to provide accurate data on students' achievements to the FEFC for

1996-97. As a result there were some inaccuracies in the data presented to inspectors on retention rates and students' achievements. Among staff there has also been a lack of confidence in centrally generated management information. This issue has been addressed by the college which has appointed a management information system manager and a registry manager. Current data are generally sound and the majority of the college data for 1997-98 were validated by inspectors, with the exception of science and mathematics and GCSE English. The college's current data provide a reliable basis on which its performance can be judged. It is planned that by the end of the year all staff will have computerised access to management information. A comprehensive programme is in place that seeks to ensure year 2000 compliance.

65 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The college's financial position has been improving. There is an appropriately qualified and experienced finance team. Comprehensive monthly management accounts are available soon after the end of each month. These are distributed to members of the college's strategic management team, and are considered at the team's meetings. Adequate information is available to budget holders to enable them to manage their budgets effectively. Comprehensive financial rules and regulations were considered by the board of governors in May 1999, and were approved subject to consultation with the college's auditors. No serious weaknesses in the college's internal control system have been reported by the college's internal or external auditors.

66 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that it has effective links with a wide range of external organisations. Representatives of outside bodies speak positively about the college's outward looking style and its involvement with schools, voluntary

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organisations, local employers and the LEA. The principal represents further education on the board of the local careers service and the college is active in partnership arrangements with other colleges in east London. The youth service plays an active role in the college, and the provision of evening adult education helps to strengthen links with the local community. Although its policy would benefit from review, the college's commitment to equal opportunities is evident in a range of measures, for example the dedicated prayer room and the female students common room. There are female-only tutor groups and there is a good representation of minority ethnic groups on the college's staff and governing body. The college is regarded highly by the local community.

Conclusions

67 The college produced a comprehensive and evaluative self-assessment report. The report served as a useful basis for planning and conducting the inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. Some additional strengths and weaknesses were noted by inspectors. The college gave insufficient emphasis to data on students' achievements. The grades awarded in the curriculum areas by the college were confirmed in one area during the inspection; in another area the grade awarded by inspectors was higher than the grade which the college had awarded itself and in three areas the grades awarded by the inspection team were lower than those awarded by the college. In the cross-college areas, four of the five grades awarded by inspectors matched those in the self-assessment report and one grade was higher.

68 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 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	67
19-24 years	11
25+ years	21
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	27
Intermediate	13
Advanced	58
Higher education	0
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	2
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	419	191	30
Agriculture	0	27	1
Business	197	92	14
Hotel and catering	70	0	3
Health and community care	129	40	8
Art and design	186	31	11
Humanities	340	188	26
Basic education	17	129	7
Total	1,358	698	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 87% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	68	19	0	87
Supporting direct learning contact	11	0	0	11
Other support	35	0	0	35
Total	114	19	0	133

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£3,891,000	£4,011,000	£4,010,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£17.92	£17.45	£16.51
Payroll as a proportion of income	77%	78%	78%
Achievement of funding target	110%	112%	108%
Diversity of income	4%	4%	6%
Operating surplus	£25,000	£137,000	£73,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996), Performance Indicators 1996-97: April 1999 Supplement (1997), Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998)

Payroll – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996), Performance Indicators 1996-97: April 1999 Supplement (1997), college (1998)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), audited financial statement (1997), college (1998)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1995	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
1	Expected completions	161	282	49	84	222	301
	Retention (%)	84	86	90	87	100	100
	Achievement (%)	93	93	54	79	95	75
2	Expected completions	427	937	886	98	164	157
	Retention (%)	85	92	90	95	100	99
	Achievement (%)	78	93	91	38	70	66
3	Expected completions	–	1,531	1,351	–	142	103
	Retention (%)	–	98	82	–	99	98
	Achievement (%)	86	90	83	63	57	58
4 or 5	Expected completions	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Retention (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Short courses	Expected completions	52	13	29	240	409	792
	Retention (%)	10	92	100	81	100	100
	Achievement (%)	100	n/a	50	84	82	95
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	134	78	42	6	12	55
	Retention (%)	87	91	86	83	100	100
	Achievement (%)	86	95	100	100	100	100

Source: ISR

–ISR data not collected

n/a not applicable

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