

West Cumbria College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98**

**THE
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COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council 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 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.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision, curriculum areas and lesson observations, for colleges inspected during 1996-97, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	59	30	2	–
Cross-college provision	18	51	27	4	–
Lesson observations	19	42	31	7	1

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report.* Grades were awarded using the guidelines in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*.
Sample size: 122 college inspections

Retention and Pass Rates

Where data on students' achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in two ways:

- as a retention rate, which is the proportion of students who completed a course in relation to the number enrolled on 1 November in the first year of the course
- as a pass rate, which is the proportion of students which passed examinations in relation to the number entered. Pass rates for GCE A level are quoted for grades A to E unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for GCSE courses are quoted for grade C or above unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for vocational and professional awards are for successful completion of the full award.

Summary

West Cumbria College

North West Region

Inspected May 1998

West Cumbria College is a small to medium-sized general further education college serving a large geographical area. It is based on four sites in Workington, Whitehaven and Lillyhall. The college's self-assessment report was concise and evaluative though it was not based on routine quality assurance arrangements. The college used both internal evaluations and the evaluations of external consultants in drawing up the report. Inspectors were in broad agreement with much of the report but found that the college had overestimated some of its strengths. There was little reference to national benchmarks and aspects of performance identified as strengths were no more than what is normally to be expected in the national context. Inspectors agreed with four of the six curriculum grades and two of the cross-college grades awarded by the college.

The college offers a wide range of provision spanning all 10 of the FEFC's programme areas. There are a variety of opportunities for prospective students to gain information about courses. School pupils are able to attend vocational courses and gain some qualifications. Support for students with personal problems is good. College administration services have effective quality assurance procedures. Staff development policies and procedures are well developed. Both governors and managers pay

close attention to financial planning and monitoring. Governors respond well to auditors' reports. Managers have made progress in implementing the accommodation strategy. There are some attractive learning environments in the college, most notably the independent learning centre at Workington and the technology, conference and management suites at Lillyhall. Resources in college libraries are generally good. The college has been preoccupied with two major issues since incorporation; the move of the college to one purpose-built site and a protracted industrial relations dispute. It has been slow to move forward on other initiatives including its response to the previous inspection. The grades awarded to lessons observed were well below the average for colleges inspected in the previous year. Attendance rates and class sizes were also below those for the sector. There was good provision in engineering and beauty therapy. These areas also had the best retention and achievement rates. In some other areas, retention and achievement rates are low. The college should address: the management of cross-college services; the variable quality of tutorial support; the ineffective systems for identifying and meeting needs for additional learning support; the slow progress in improving quality assurance procedures; governors' inadequate level of involvement in strategic planning and their limited monitoring of students' performance.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science, mathematics and computing	4	Support for students	4
Engineering	2	General resources	3
Business	3	Quality assurance	4
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	2	Governance	4
Art and design	3	Management	4
English, history, psychology and sociology	3		

Context

The College and its Mission

1 West Cumbria College is a small to medium-sized general further education college. It has sites in Workington, where three-quarters of the students are currently based, Whitehaven and Lillyhall. Plans to bring the college together on a purpose-built site at Lillyhall have been approved by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and tenders for building were being considered at the time of the inspection. Most students come from the Allerdale and Copeland boroughs, which cover an area of about 750 square miles. The population of the boroughs is 167,000. About half the inhabitants are between 16 and 65 years of age; about a third live in either Workington and Whitehaven and the remainder are thinly scattered in the hinterland which forms part of the north and western Lake District. There is not much public transport in outlying districts. The college offers courses in several community locations including village halls and public houses.

2 Manufacturing industry dominates the economy, accounting for some 43 per cent of the workforce. Service sector employment has increased despite job losses in distribution. Overall, full-time employment is falling; part-time employment is increasing. In 1997, the unemployment rate was above the national average; it was 9.7 per cent for the travel-to-work area around Workington and 8.4 per cent for the travel-to-work area around Whitehaven. A recent survey undertaken by the Cumbria Strategic Partnership shows high levels of lone parent households, claimants of job seekers allowances, households without cars and local authority rented housing in parts of the college's community. The proportion of 16 year olds in Cumbria staying on in full-time education is lower than that in England as a whole. According to the Department for Education and Employment statistics, 45.5 per cent of year 11 pupils in Cumbria gained five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE)

subjects at grades A* to C, which is the same rate as for the whole of England. Eight of the 10 schools in the local area, however, had a rate below this figure.

3 There is no other further education college within easy travelling distance of the college. The nearest college is 34 miles away at Carlisle. Eight of the 10 local secondary schools have sixth forms and there are several local private training providers. The college offers courses in all of the FEFC programme areas on a full-time, part-time, day-release and block-release basis. In many curriculum areas, there are opportunities for study extending from foundation to degree level.

4 The college's mission has remained fundamentally the same since it was adopted in 1990: 'The purpose of the college is to serve the educational, social, cultural and economic needs of West Cumbria, achieved through encouraging and enabling the development of individual potential and a commitment to continuing quality improvement. We will do so by providing a stimulating environment in which the widest possible range of learning activities will be pursued, in particular through the discharge of our function and responsibilities as the principal provider of publicly and privately funded vocational education and training in West Cumbria'.

Context

The Inspection

5 The college was inspected during the week beginning 11 May 1998. The college inspector and the reporting inspector had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other divisions of the FEFC. The college's data on students' achievements for the three years 1995 to 1997 were checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The college was notified of the sample of work to be inspected about two months before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by 12 inspectors working for a total of 46 days and an auditor working for five days. Inspectors observed 74 lessons. They also examined samples of students' work and a variety of college documents. There were discussions with governors, managers, staff and students, and a representative of Cumbria TEC.

6 Of the lessons inspected, 47 per cent were good or outstanding which is well below the average for colleges inspected in 1996-97, recorded in *Quality and Standards in Further*

Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected was 70 per cent which is below the sector average of 77 per cent according to the same report. The highest attendance rate (94 per cent) was in engineering; the lowest (46 per cent) was in art and design. The average class size for the lessons inspected was eight. The following table shows the grades given to the lessons observed by inspectors.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE AS/A level	0	2	3	0	0	5
GCSE	1	2	3	0	0	6
GNVQ	0	1	5	2	1	9
NVQ	0	6	5	2	1	14
Other vocational*	11	12	8	8	1	40
Total	12	23	24	12	3	74

*includes C&G, Entra, BTEC and business information technology courses

Curriculum Areas

Science, Mathematics and Computing

Grade 4

7 The inspection covered a wide range of provision in science, mathematics and information technology (IT). Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report. However, in its evaluation of teaching and learning, the report failed to make best use of the information derived from lesson observations conducted by college staff and external assessors. Inspectors identified some important weaknesses which were not sufficiently emphasised in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- the individual tuition for students in practical sessions and workshops
- high levels of achievement on two-year vocational courses
- courses responsive to local employers' and students' needs

Weaknesses

- much poor teaching
- some very poor rates of attendance and retention
- low levels of achievement
- insufficient written feedback to students on some assignments
- poor management of split-site working
- science resources which are outdated

8 As stated in its self-assessment report, the college provides a broad range of vocational programmes in science and information technology designed to meet the needs of students, employers and other members of the local community. Students are offered opportunities for progression from foundation

level to higher education. By providing laptop computers, the college has successfully extended its IT provision to eight community centres within a 30-mile radius of the college.

9 The self-assessment report states that students are taught and assessed in ways designed to encourage the development of practical skills. However, much of the teaching was poor. Students were not always working profitably. For example, in a science lesson devoted to a series of experiments to support previous theory work on surface tension there was too little for students to do and two of them were not involved in any of the activities. Teachers often failed to check what students had learned and students who were experiencing difficulty sometimes had to wait for long periods before receiving attention. Students' collaborative skills were generally poorly developed. There were a few instances of inappropriate behaviour in lessons. Five of the 16 lessons observed were considered unsatisfactory by inspectors.

10 Some schemes of work are insufficiently detailed and, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report, teachers do not always produce lesson plans. Teachers fail to provide adequate comments on the assignments they mark. Some work is simply graded and there is no correction of spelling, grammatical, arithmetical and factual errors. In one case, an external moderator was critical of internal verification standards.

11 Students are not developing the skills and knowledge required to achieve success on their courses. In one biology revision lesson towards the end of their course, students worked in pairs to answer examination questions from past papers. They had difficulty solving logical problems and interpreting graphical information, and their writing skills were underdeveloped. Most students on two-year vocational programmes in science and computing achieve good results and many computer literacy and information technology

Curriculum Areas

students achieve the qualifications for which they are aiming. GCSE and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) results, however, are below the national average and achievements on Open College North West courses are lower than would be expected. Attendance on courses is often low, a weakness not identified in the college's own assessment. The timetabled classes observed by inspectors often had attendance rates of below 50 per cent. Retention rates are poor.

12 Specialist IT equipment is up to date, but at the time of the inspection, there was only one printer for 25 workstations in the independent learning centre, there were too few access points for the internet and the networking of sites and machines was underdeveloped. IT equipment is replaced regularly as part of a rolling programme. Inspectors agreed that the mathematics learning centres are good facilities. Together with the college's independent learning centre they provide good opportunities for students to study effectively on their own. However, students failed to make full use of the facilities. Much of the science equipment is out of date and it is not efficiently used. In a practical lesson involving titration techniques, there was a shortage of apparatus. Some groups did not have the equipment they needed

and this adversely affected their learning. Some laboratories are poorly furnished and untidy.

13 There is poor management and co-ordination of work across the sites. Teachers and technicians have to commute between sites and teachers often end up carrying out inappropriate technical tasks. Technicians are not always available to give direct support to lessons in science and computing. There have been a number of recent changes affecting teachers and course leaders. Briefings and training for these staff have been inadequate.

Examples of students' achievements in science, mathematics and computing, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level	Retention (%)	55	80	75
	Pass rate (%)	52	70	44
Advanced vocational (two-year courses)	Retention (%)	76	74	92
	Pass rate (%)	83	79	86
GCSE	Retention (%)	88	77	32
	Pass rate (%)	35	36	33

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 2

14 The inspection covered all aspects of engineering provision. Inspectors agreed with much of the self-assessment report, although some strengths were underestimated and some weaknesses were not included. By the time of the inspection, the college had taken action on many of the issues raised in its self-assessment report and the quality of provision had been improved.

Key strengths

- good schemes of work and well-planned lessons
- effective methods of teaching and learning
- demanding learning activities including good use of industrial projects
- good learning materials
- the high level of skill which students have achieved
- good retention and achievement rates for part-time courses
- staff with good teaching experience and experience of industry

Weaknesses

- the low level of practical work in some courses
- no standardised system for internal verification
- some outdated or non-functioning equipment

15 The wide range of engineering courses meets the needs of local employers. Most of the provision is part time, comprising day-release or block-release courses. There are good, regular informal links with employers. Course reviews involving employers occur twice a year. There is a disciplined approach to students' attendance and punctuality which employers support.

16 Schemes of work and lesson plans are good and follow a standardised format. Both long-term and short-term aims and objectives are shared with students. The good rapport between teachers and students creates conditions in which work and assessment plans can be successfully negotiated. Handouts and other learning materials are of a good standard. In an electronic engineering class, well-produced guides enabled students to program a personal computer to illustrate complex wave forms and to analyse and confirm their shape. The positive impact of such resources on students' learning was not identified in the self-assessment report. There is much good teaching. Ten of the 13 lessons observed by inspectors were judged to be good or outstanding. There were many instances of work which extended students and helped them to learn, and teachers were skilled at tailoring work to meet the different needs of students in the same class. In an engineering mathematics lesson on calculus, students were enjoying the challenge of the subject. The teacher gave extra support to those who needed it and set additional tasks for those who were ready to move on. Science-based engineering units do not have enough practical or laboratory work of an investigative nature to reinforce the theory which students are expected to learn. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

17 Achievement and retention rates are above the national average. In a course serving unemployed students there is a high partial completion rate, although full completion rate is low because students leave to take employment. Students' written work is of a good standard. Their answers to questions in class and their presentational skills are also good. In one lesson, groups of students were learning to manage 'high technology' engineering projects with the teacher acting as a facilitator. Students worked well in teams and were given opportunities to practise their personnel management skills. There is no formal

Curriculum Areas

development or monitoring of key skills on some courses.

18 The quality of internal verification is variable. In some areas there is scrupulous checking of samples of assignments, assessments and the work produced by students. However, procedures were not standardised across courses. The targets which the college has set for staff to achieve assessors and internal verifiers qualifications have not been met. There are no systematic procedures for reviewing the curriculum. The college has been slow to examine the opportunities for national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses in engineering.

19 Specialist resources are of a variable quality. Some teaching rooms are equipped with up-to-date high technology equipment which enables students to work on their own and to engage in experimental activities. Other specialist resources are out of date or equipment does not function. In some cases, poor resources adversely affect students' learning.

Examples of students' achievements in engineering, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Higher vocational	Retention (%)	90	90	90
	Pass rate (%)	100	89	86
Advanced vocational	Retention (%)	80	82	89
	Pass rate (%)	87	79	79
Intermediate vocational	Retention (%)	76	86	100
	Pass rate (%)	94	45	100
Craft qualifications	Retention (%)	82	85	87
	Pass rate (%)	73	58	81

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 3

20 The inspection covered courses in business and administration. Inspectors agreed with the college's general assessment of the provision, but considered that insufficient prominence was given to the evaluation of teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- good support from teachers for students working on their own
- the wide range of opportunities to acquire business administration skills
- excellent learning packs to support student learning
- some improved pass rates

Weaknesses

- the failure to disseminate good practice in teaching
- some ineffective teaching
- poor planning of lessons and courses
- some poor attendance, retention and achievement rates

21 The college provides a wide range of opportunities to acquire business administration skills. Courses are offered at all levels and there are opportunities to study during the day or evening at two sites. Excellent learning packs are provided for those who wish to follow courses on their own and at a pace which suits them. Students can book equipment at the Workington site at times and frequencies to suit their needs. Inspectors agreed with the college that teachers offer good individual support for students working on their own. Students' progress is monitored effectively and their work is marked with care. There are few business courses for students with low levels of attainment before entry.

22 Although all courses have written learning schemes, several of these are simply lists of topics. In some cases, staff who share the teaching of a unit, or who teach the same unit to different classes, develop learning schemes independently of each other. While lesson plans are usually available, some of these are unrealistic and others are not followed. Learning objectives were shared with students in only a few of the lessons observed and some lessons ended without a clear idea of how the work would be developed subsequently. Five of the 11 lessons observed were graded 1 or 2. The best lessons give students plenty of opportunity to contribute their own ideas, teachers give clear presentations, learning is reinforced and there are regular checks on students' understanding. In some lessons, a number of students were not focusing on their work or were even using the time to complete other work. Little use is made of handouts and visual aids. Students are sometimes expected to spend far too long simply listening to the teacher. Learning is not consolidated. Teachers fail to ensure that students have made progress or that they have some useful notes to keep for future reference. The college recognises that students are not always sufficiently stretched by the work. Some students spend time waiting for topics to be explained to others. Some students are confronted by material which is too difficult. In an intermediate level class on finance, the college's financial statement was issued to students. Most were unable to identify the parts of the statement they might have been expected to understand and no supplementary guide was offered.

23 The self-assessment report highlights the good working relationships between teachers and their students. On several courses, students were clearly committed to their work and able to achieve high standards. Other students, however, demonstrate little such commitment. Attendance on some courses is poor. Some students come to class without the necessary

Curriculum Areas

equipment. Some students leave their lessons early, often with the teacher's agreement.

24 On some courses, retention and pass rates have improved. Achievement rates on several secretarial and administration skills courses now match or exceed the national average and the retention rate for full-time general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) advanced courses has risen by 25 per cent since 1995. In 1997, most students following BTEC continuing education programmes completed their course and in three of the programmes all those who completed achieved the award. On several courses, however, achievement and retention rates are low. Only 55 per cent of students who started the part-time GNVQ advanced course in 1995 completed it. On higher national certificate courses, both the proportion of students completing their courses and the proportion gaining their qualifications fell between 1995 and 1997.

Examples of students' achievements in business, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
NVQs	Retention (%)	93	82	88
	Pass rate (%)	82	60	67
Other vocational (two-year courses)	Retention (%)	63	72	65
	Pass rate (%)	97	97	96
Other vocational (one-year courses)	Retention (%)	99	99	99
	Pass rate (%)	74	78	78

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy

Grade 2

25 The inspection covered both hairdressing and beauty therapy programmes. Twelve lessons were observed by inspectors. Inspectors concluded that the self-assessment report identified most of the strengths of the provision, but overstated the fact that these strengths applied to all areas. Some weaknesses were not identified in the report.

Key strengths

- the wide range of courses
- well-planned and well-organised lessons
- good teaching on beauty courses
- good retention rates and levels of achievement on beauty courses
- constructive feedback to students
- good specialist accommodation and resources for beauty courses

Weaknesses

- poor-quality curriculum planning, teaching and learning in hairdressing
- some low attendance, retention and achievement rates on hairdressing courses
- the inadequate number of clients in college salons

26 The curriculum area of hairdressing and beauty therapy offers a wide range of courses. The vast majority of students are following beauty therapy courses. As the self-assessment report asserts, programmes are enhanced by the opportunities for work placements, additional studies and students' participation in the annual hairdressing competition. The beauty therapy curriculum is being developed effectively. New courses have extended the range of studies open to students and the opportunities for

progression. In hairdressing, curriculum planning has been weaker and methods of assessment are more restricted.

27 Most teaching on beauty therapy courses is of good quality. There are positive working relationships between teachers and students. Teachers set clear aims and objectives. Students experience an appropriate variety of teaching methods and methods of working. They work well together and are able to manage some of their own learning. All teachers make good use of questioning techniques to assess the competence of students. Beauty therapy courses have well-organised assessment procedures. Assessment on hairdressing courses is not as effectively organised. Hairdressing students are not always appropriately challenged. They are not encouraged to take notes and poor practical techniques are not always corrected. On both hairdressing and beauty therapy courses, teachers failed to use visual aids as a means of stimulating students' interest. Learning packages are used very effectively in beauty classes but this good practice has not been extended to those working in the hairdressing section. The self-assessment report identified many of the same weaknesses as inspectors, but did not specify the particular courses to which these weaknesses applied.

28 Students clearly enjoy their studies and speak positively about the help they receive from teachers. Many students are developing good practical skills although this was often by using each other rather than members of the public as clients. Failure to observe professional standards was observed in two of the practical lessons in hairdressing. Students' assessment portfolios are generally well organised and students are clear about what is required to produce an appropriate record of their work. All work is accompanied by a briefing sheet with clear assessment criteria which all teachers use. Students' portfolios in complementary therapies are of a high standard and there are constructive written comments from teachers.

Curriculum Areas

In some instances, teachers' comments are too brief; for example, they fail to indicate how students might improve their work, including their spelling. The college identifies this in its self-assessment. Retention and achievement rates on beauty therapy courses are good. On hairdressing courses, however, achievements are often poor. In many of the lessons observed, attendance levels were below 70 per cent, and in about a half of the lessons students arrived late.

29 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that staff are knowledgeable and skilled in their area of expertise. However, the self-assessment report underestimated the standards of resources and accommodation for beauty courses. These are good: they are new and of industry standard. The hairdressing accommodation is in need of renovation and little use is made of displays or students' work to produce a more creative environment. The self-assessment report identified the lack of IT equipment as a weakness for the area. Inspectors agreed but found that students were keen to develop their IT skills and that many wordprocessed their work at home. The lack of clients for practical work often resulted in students wasting time. They were missing out on the opportunity to develop customer care skills and assessment opportunities were more limited than they might have been. The college recognised this as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

Examples of students' achievements in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
NVQ level 2 and 3 beauty courses	Retention (%)	*	87	85
	Pass rate (%)	*	90	95
NVQ level 2 and 3 hair courses	Retention (%)	*	95	70
	Pass rate (%)	*	37	52

Source: college data

*data not available

Curriculum Areas

Art and Design

Grade 3

30 The inspection covered GNVQ intermediate and foundation courses, a BTEC national diploma course, provision for students with learning difficulties and GCE A level media studies. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that there has been a move towards innovatory practice to cope with a challenging market. They concluded, however, that strengths were sometimes overestimated. On occasions, the college exaggerated the significance of what in most colleges would be considered normal practice. Some important weaknesses were not identified in the report.

Key strengths

- increasing flexibility in methods of teaching and learning
- the amount and quality of the core of students' creative work
- frequent and effective tutorials to guide, check and support learning
- good provision for students with learning difficulties

Weaknesses

- insufficient awareness by students of learning objectives and assessment criteria
- poor attendance
- lack of appropriate planning for lessons
- declining retention and pass rates
- inadequate equipment

31 Most of the provision is in general art and design. There is growing provision in art for students with learning difficulties and a small GCE A level media studies course. Student numbers are low; in March 1998, there were 39 full-time students and 63 part-time students. Some discrete part-time classes have had to be

closed due to low enrolments. There are few specialist programmes and options. The college is moving to more flexible methods of teaching and learning to try to cope with these difficulties. Students speak highly of the support they receive from teachers.

32 Much of the work is conducted through group tutorials. There are relatively few formal lessons. The self-assessment report identified these tutorials as a strength. Most are good, though a few are not. Students work mainly through assignments, in college and at home. Lesson plans lack structure and detail and this was reflected in some badly structured lessons in which the work was insufficiently demanding. Of the 10 lessons observed only three were better than satisfactory. In one lesson students were not given enough encouragement to use more than one medium in their work and some poor drawing techniques went uncorrected. On some occasions, teachers were not present in work areas, were tied up in one-to-one teaching while other students were relatively neglected, or were not available because they were taking telephone calls. Students, as a result, were not always working to task. Procedures for monitoring and recording students' progress are being developed, but they are not yet fully in place. Teachers' planning of work is not thorough enough to ensure that the requisite skills are being developed. Provision for students with learning difficulties has been thoughtfully developed. Work is carefully tailored to their needs.

33 The college did not identify low attendance as a weakness. The average attendance at lessons observed was 46 per cent. Some students are not developing the full range of skills which courses require. Although a core of students are producing a large quantity of highly creative work, much of the work seen by inspectors lacked appropriate understanding and levels of skill. Teachers' feedback to students is generally effective and helps to encourage creativity, but teachers sometimes

Curriculum Areas

failed to identify and remedy key problems. Some students had done little writing, drawing or IT work even though many of them were well into the third term of their course. The self-assessment report does not mention this. There is a general decline in retention and pass rates which the college report refers to briefly. Recorded progression to employment or to relevant further education or training is low.

34 There is adequate space for the numbers of students. Rooms have an untidy appearance. Areas are often used for more than one activity and require more careful management as one activity sometime interferes with another. Equipment is not sufficient to meet students' needs and is sometimes of an unsatisfactory quality. On many occasions whole groups cannot undertake the same activity because of the shortage of equipment. Some equipment is very basic and some of it is outdated.

Examples of students' achievements in art and design, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Advanced vocational	Retention (%)	100	65	67
	Pass rate (%)	79	82	67
Intermediate vocational	Retention (%)	93	75	100
	Pass rate (%)	69	100	71
Other part-time courses	Retention (%)	100	74	79
	Pass rate (%)	43	38	72

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

English, History, Psychology and Sociology

Grade 3

35 The inspection covered provision in English, history, psychology, sociology and a course to prepare students for entry into the armed services. Inspectors agreed with many aspects of the college's self-assessment report, but found that it did not reflect all of the strengths and weaknesses they identified.

Key strengths

- a broad range of courses
- much good teaching
- good and improving pass rates on Open College North West stage B and some GCE A level courses
- effective organisation and management of the curriculum
- well-qualified staff, keen to develop their skills
- good-quality classrooms

Weaknesses

- insufficiently varied learning methods
- low and declining retention rates and low attendance rates
- poor pass rates on Open College North West stage A courses
- little setting of targets and monitoring of performance
- lack of attention to the development of key skills, especially IT
- uneconomic use of learning resources

36 The college offers a broad humanities curriculum designed to meet the varied needs of students. Some courses have been started as a direct response to local demands. The college's self-assessment report identifies this strength, but creates the impression that there are more opportunities to mix types of accreditation than

really exist. The curriculum is effectively managed. There are comprehensive course files, many of which contain detailed learning schemes. The course file for GCSE English literature is particularly good. There are some well-produced handbooks for humanities courses, most notably for the Open College North West stage A psychology course which includes a 'self-study' pack and a guide to methods of learning and assessment. Students' views are considered when planning courses. These strengths are not identified in the college's self-assessment report. The report also fails to identify a number of weaknesses: the lack of standardisation in lesson planning, the limited dissemination of good practice, the absence of performance targets and the failure to monitor students' performance effectively.

37 There is much good teaching. Seven out of 12 lessons observed were good or outstanding and none were less than satisfactory. All had clear aims and objectives and, in most cases, these were shared with students. Students had the opportunity to contribute their own ideas, but there was too much reliance on one form of learning. Teachers made little use of learning aids to enrich students' experiences. An exception to this was a local history class where a video produced by students was well used to stimulate discussion. The content of lessons was generally appropriate but, as the self-assessment report identifies, there was little reinforcement of learning and teachers were not doing enough to find out what students had learned. Working relationships between teachers and students are productive. The self-assessment report identifies the poor levels of attendance, but does not look at the impact this has on students' learning. The average attendance rate at lessons observed was only 67 per cent. Many classes, in consequence, were very small. Eight out of the 12 lessons observed had five or fewer students present. Registers indicate that patterns of irregular attendance are common.

Curriculum Areas

38 Students' achievements are not covered in detail by the self-assessment report. Strengths and weaknesses are therefore understated. Many students produce work of a good standard. In some classes, they respond well to teachers' questions. In one psychology class, a quiz-style revision lesson generated a high response from the students. Pass rates are good and improving on Open College North West stage B and some GCE A level courses. Achievements in psychology are particularly good. Pass rates on Open College North West stage A have declined. In 1997, they were poor. Retention rates have declined. In 1997, they were poor on all but Open College North West stage A courses.

39 Teachers are well qualified and keen to develop their skills. They have appropriate subject and teaching qualifications. All teachers have participated in at least one staff development activity in 1997-98 and the majority have attended two or more training events. No record is kept of information disseminated as a result of staff development activities and there is no assessment of the value of such training. Learning resources such

as handouts, books and overhead transparencies are not held centrally and there is no catalogue to allow teachers and students to locate them easily. A limited collection of reference materials is available in classrooms, though their use is not effectively monitored. These weaknesses were not identified by the college. The self-assessment report does not make enough of the good-quality accommodation. Classrooms are clean, tidy, and well furnished and some have subject-related wall displays. In all but one instance, rooms were well matched to the size of the class and the activities in which students were engaged.

Examples of students' achievements in English, history, psychology and sociology, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level (two-year courses)	Retention (%)	65	70	41
	Pass rate (%)	64	83	73
GCE A level (one-year courses)	Retention (%)	67	71	64
	Pass rate (%)	75	63	85
GCSE	Retention (%)	70	59	60
	Pass rate (%)	64	82	57
Open College North West courses stage A	Retention (%)	93	83	98
	Pass rate (%)	74	57	58
Open College North West courses stage B	Retention (%)	68	61	52
	Pass rate (%)	74	86	88

Source: college data

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Support for Students

Grade 4

40 Inspectors found that the college had made little progress since the last inspection in improving its arrangements for the support for students. A number of significant weaknesses were not acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- an effective, developing student services section
- a variety of opportunities for prospective students to gain information
- good support for students with personal problems

Weaknesses

- inadequate co-ordination and monitoring of support for students
- the variable quality of tutorial support
- underdeveloped systems for monitoring students' progress and setting them targets
- no overall strategy for careers education and guidance
- ineffective systems for identifying and meeting additional learning support needs

41 Management of support and guidance processes is fragmented. Course teams have a high level of autonomy in most aspects of enrolment, induction and tutorial provision. The guidelines and expectations set out by the college are very broad and often insufficiently precise. The mechanisms for monitoring students' progress are unclear. Many aspects of student support services are individually well managed, but there is no co-ordination of the work of these groups. No formal mechanisms are in place for communication between curriculum managers and the student services

section. No-one has a cross-college responsibility for managing learning support. These important weaknesses were not acknowledged in the college's own assessment.

42 There are good opportunities for prospective students to obtain information about courses. The college enables approximately 250 year-10 and year-11 pupils to gain experience of vocational courses and for older pupils to gain vocational qualifications. It also provides effective support for a few disaffected school pupils every year. Information and enrolment events take place in the local community and within local companies. For the most part publicity materials provide appropriate information and are attractively produced. However, courses for students with learning difficulties do not appear in the college prospectus and there is no reference to the availability of learning support in publicity materials. Course teams interview and enrol the full-time students and, as outlined in the self-assessment report, the college is currently looking at ways of monitoring this process to ensure equality of opportunity. The range of advice services offered by the student services section is growing; for example, it has started to become involved in health promotion. Financial advice is available to students. Students are well supported in handling their personal problems. There is a qualified team of counsellors. The service is well publicised and there is a quick response to requests for counselling interviews.

43 All students are assigned to a personal tutor. The college's personal tutorial policy describes students' entitlement to a system of support based around individual action plans and a series of reviews. There is some excellent tutorial practice. In leisure and tourism, for example, students attend a carefully planned weekly tutorial and, in catering and in hairdressing and beauty, there is effective monitoring and recording of students' progress. Students on other courses have a less positive

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experience of tutorial support. For example, some do not have designated tutorial time and others did not receive the tutorials which were scheduled. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the quality of students' individual action plans varies considerably. Many are simply a brief record of a discussion, and there is little evidence of the setting of learning targets. A member of the local careers service is based at the college for two days a week and there is a good careers resource area in the library. Higher education advice is available from a member of the teaching staff on request. There is no overall strategy for the provision of careers guidance, in particular for adult students. Some students are unaware of the facilities that are available.

44 The college's systems for identifying students in need of extra support with their studies are not effective, an issue not identified in the self-assessment report. The policy that all full-time students be assessed in literacy and numeracy is followed by most but not all course teams. The outcomes of this process are not monitored and there are no systematic strategies for meeting individual learning needs. Limited support is available to help students with literacy. Students requiring help with numeracy are advised to attend the mathematics learning centre. In 1997-98, only five did so. Course teams indicate that there is little response to requests for additional support for their students. Some course tutors assume the responsibility for supporting students themselves. Inspectors came across several students who identified themselves as having dyslexia but whose needs had not been identified through enrolment and induction procedures.

45 The college has made progress in providing support for part-time students with learning difficulties on some vocational courses. Students' needs are carefully identified before entry and the subsequent support is effective. These students value the help they receive and

indicate clearly how it has enhanced their progress. There are not as many opportunities for full-time students with learning difficulties to join vocational courses. Some of the accommodation used by students with learning difficulties isolates them from the rest of the college.

General Resources

Grade 3

46 Inspectors generally agreed with the college's assessment of its resources although in some respects the college's self-assessment did not match the inspection framework. The college's assessment of resources covered areas of human resources which are not in the framework for inspection for general resources.

Key strengths

- some good accommodation
- clean, light and suitably-equipped classrooms
- good library resources

Weaknesses

- the amount of unused accommodation
- the drab appearance of college buildings and surrounding areas
- poor access to some learning facilities for students with restricted mobility

47 The college has significantly more accommodation than it needs. Since the last inspection, it has developed an accommodation strategy to reduce the number of sites and use space more cost effectively. Slow progress in implementing the strategy has resulted in the college continuing to operate on four sites: Workington, Whitehaven, Lillyhall main centre and the Lillyhall construction unit. Some accommodation at Whitehaven and Lillyhall main centre is rarely used. The college's

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strategic objective, to move into purpose-built accommodation at Lillyhall, affects its approach to developing, maintaining and refurbishing existing buildings.

48 As the self-assessment report indicates, most buildings are old and in need of substantial improvement to bring them up to an acceptable standard. The different styles of building and the poor state of paintwork, windows, car parks and grounds do not create a good impression. Signposting on all sites is confusing, a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report. For example, at Whitehaven, signs appear in different styles and formats and most are out of date. At Workington, routes to help students to cope with the complicated layout of accommodation are not sufficiently explicit. Since the last inspection, the college has made little progress in improving access to college facilities for students with restricted mobility. All sites still present difficulties for wheelchair users, though there are fewer problems at the Lillyhall construction unit and at Whitehaven than elsewhere. At Workington, the complexity of the buildings and the absence of lifts in all but one block hinder the college's ability to respond to the needs of students with restricted mobility. Wheelchair users are not able to gain access to the facilities at Lillyhall main centre. The college includes these weaknesses in its self-assessment report.

49 Some accommodation, such as the independent learning centre at Workington and the technology, conference and management suites at Lillyhall main site provide attractive learning environments. Most classrooms and other learning areas used by students are clean, in reasonable decorative order and suitably furnished. Many rooms are carpeted; they have modern furniture and are equipped with whiteboards and overhead projectors. Some rooms are less attractive, suffer from extremes of temperature and have damaged blinds and curtains. These judgements are in line with the college's own findings. The quality of communal

and social areas varies considerably between sites. At Workington, the large entrance hall is used imaginatively to create an area where staff and students can meet. During the day, the refectory and coffee bar close to the main entrance are well used and help to compensate for the lack of common room facilities. Students at other sites are less well served. The newness and attractiveness of the refectory at Whitehaven contrasts sharply with the uninviting common rooms provided for smokers and non-smokers. At Lillyhall main site, the only social area is the refectory which offers a restricted service. There is no refectory at the Lillyhall construction unit. Apart from a well-equipped fitness suite at Workington, mentioned as a strength in the self-assessment report, there are few facilities to enable students to participate in sporting activities.

50 Inspectors agreed with the college that the quantity and quality of computer hardware and software is adequate. Since the last inspection, the college has invested more than £400,000 in improving its IT facilities. There are about 280 computers including 12 laptops which are used extensively in venues away from the main college sites. Most computers are housed in rooms used for teaching but, at Workington and Whitehaven, those in the libraries and the independent learning centre are available for students to use at times which suit them. At all sites, students may use computers housed in teaching rooms if space is available, but this opportunity is not widely publicised. For example, at Lillyhall main centre, students were unaware that they could use the IT facilities in the technology suite by prior arrangement.

51 Libraries at Workington and Whitehaven are well stocked. A wide range of books, periodicals, audiotapes and CD-ROMs are readily accessible to students. Resources are up to date but, in some subject areas, there are not enough copies of books to cope with demand. This weakness is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. At Lillyhall there is no

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library but curricular areas have a small collection of books and other materials which students can borrow if they wish. The library catalogue is not computerised and it does not include details of the stock held in curriculum areas.

Quality Assurance

Grade 4

52 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that progress had been slow in realising the college's commitment to improve its quality assurance arrangements. They confirmed that a self-critical approach has yet to be established in the college.

Key strengths

- staff ownership of a relatively accurate and evaluative self-assessment report
- effective quality assurance procedures for the college's administrative services
- well-developed policies and procedures for staff development

Weaknesses

- slow progress in improving the college's arrangements for quality assurance
- the lack of procedures to enable the college to build a reliable overview of its performance
- no comprehensive course review and evaluation procedures
- few performance measures or performance targets
- the failure to develop a sufficiently self-critical approach to quality assurance
- little use of statistical information in the self-assessment process
- no staff appraisal system

53 The college makes a commitment to the continuous improvement of quality in its mission statement. However, it has been very

slow to improve its quality assurance procedures since it was last inspected. As the college partly recognised in its self-assessment report, its procedures for assuring quality are not fully effective because it has not yet set standards or established performance indicators or targets against which improvement can be measured. The development of policies and procedures has been fragmented. The emerging framework contains elements which have been established only recently. It is too early to comment on whether they can provide an effective and reliable overview of college provision. Although the college has a clear commitment to improve quality, key elements are missing from its quality assurance systems. It does not have comprehensive procedures for course review and evaluation and it lacks systematic procedures for obtaining the views of students, parents and employers. The self-assessment report recognises these weaknesses.

54 The overview of quality assurance is the responsibility of the academic board and its three associated committees; the quality assurance committee, the quality standards committee and a committee which oversees internal validation. The latter has not met regularly or operated effectively. These committees have yet to define roles and procedures. There is no comprehensive system covering all of the college's curriculum and business functions. A quality manual, describing procedures, is still only in a draft format.

55 The college has quality teams which report termly to the quality assurance committee. Their terms of reference have been unclear until recently and, as the college's self-assessment report acknowledges, the value of the teams' reports varies considerably. Reports do not always lead to clear and demonstrable actions. In a successful initiative, not noted in the self-assessment report, quality standards and performance indicators have been introduced in the college administration service. Its regular

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audits have proved effective in improving certain services.

56 The quality standards committee meets regularly to review and monitor performance indicators including achievement and retention rates. However, it is difficult to find many examples in which college data have been compared with national data or in which college data have been used to set targets for continuous improvement in academic standards. The college's corporate objectives includes references to specific overall improvements in retention and achievement rates but there is no indication of how these are to be achieved.

57 To date, the college has produced only one self-assessment report. This was the report compiled in preparation for the inspection. The college acknowledges that the process of self-assessment is a new one and that it was unable to draw upon existing quality assurance arrangements when producing the report. A college advisory group was set up to direct the process and a team of consultants was engaged to carry out lesson observations and report on the college curriculum. Aspects of cross-college provision were reported on by senior managers and grading undertaken by the advisory group. The report was presented to the corporation for its approval. Staff took the process of self-assessment seriously and the college has been able to build on this, to begin to involve teaching staff more in quality assurance procedures. This was noted in the self-assessment report.

58 The college's charter is reproduced as a booklet. It outlines the college's commitments to its community, detailing the standards of service which customers can expect. The college has delayed revising the charter until new internal service targets have been set. However, there has been little formal monitoring of the extent to which the college fulfils its charter commitment except through procedures for dealing with complaints.

59 There are well-developed policies, systematic procedures and clearly-stated priorities for staff development. The inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that such arrangements for staff development, together with individual action-planning, were strengths of college provision. All staff, including academic staff on fractional contracts, have an annual staff development interview. The funding available for staff development has remained the same over the last three years. Formal arrangements to determine the overall training and development needs of staff, identified as a weakness in the last inspection report, have been improved. The college does not have a staff performance or appraisal policy.

Governance

Grade 4

60 Inspectors agreed with most of the college's judgements. However, they also identified strengths and weaknesses which had been omitted or had not been given sufficient weight in the college's overall assessment of provision.

Key strengths

- effective financial planning and monitoring
- governors who respond well to FEFC auditors' reports

Weaknesses

- governors' insufficient involvement in strategic planning
- little monitoring and evaluation of the quality of students' experience
- no formal arrangements to appraise senior postholders
- unsystematic induction and training for governors

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61 Members of the corporation acknowledge that major issues concerned with the implementation of the accommodation strategy and resolving a protracted period of difficult industrial relations have deflected the corporation from some aspects of its work. For example, members have not conducted a rigorous review of the college's mission nor played a full part in shaping its strategic objectives. The corporation is not paying enough attention to monitoring and evaluating the quality of the college's provision. Information relating to students' achievements is not sufficiently comprehensive to enable members to form a judgement about the college's performance. For example, the corporation does not receive details of retention rates nor a summary of the performance of curriculum areas. Inspectors agreed with the corporation's judgement that members are not yet sufficiently involved in assessing the effectiveness of governance.

62 The FEFC's audit service concludes, that within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. 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.

63 The corporation has 16 members, including the principal and two staff. At the time of the inspection, there were four vacancies: two in the business category and two in the community category. Some vacancies are long standing. Of the 12 members, three are women and seven were members of the corporation at the time of the last inspection. Collectively, members have a range of skills and expertise in areas such as finance, engineering, training and the development of building projects. A recent skills audit has identified areas where the corporation is under represented; this issue was included in the self-assessment report. The average attendance rate

at corporation meetings is 64 per cent. Attendance at corporation and committee meetings is monitored carefully by the clerk. Vacancies and lengthy absences, some approved by the corporation, have reduced the average attendance at the last five corporation meetings to nine. Attendance targets are not set for individual members nor for the corporation as a whole. A need for members to become more aware of some aspects of the college's business was a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. Although members receive plenty of written material to keep them up to date with national, regional and local developments in further education, there is no systematic induction and training designed to further their understanding of key issues. The corporation does not have systems in place to assess objectively the performance of the principal and other senior postholders. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

64 The corporation is supported by six committees: finance, audit, premises and building, remuneration, employment policy, and student affairs. All have clearly defined membership and terms of reference and they meet regularly according to an annual cycle, as identified in the self-assessment report. Attendance at committee meetings is irregular. Reporting of the proceedings of these committees to the corporation is timely. The finance committee and the corporation are well informed about financial matters. They monitor carefully the college's financial position and exercise appropriate controls to ensure the solvency of the college. Since the last visit from the FEFC's audit service, the performance of the audit committee has improved and it now operates adequately. The effectiveness of the student affairs committee suffers from students' poor record of attendance. Although a search committee is established to fill vacancies, it does not have approved terms of reference nor an established meeting cycle. Within the committee structure, members work effectively with senior managers, a strength identified in the

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self-assessment report. However, members judge as a weakness that there are limited structures to enable them to interact with other staff. Meetings and the formation of working parties are beginning to rectify this.

65 The inspection team agreed with the college's judgement that clerking arrangements for the corporation and its committees are appropriate. The clerk to the governors has a detailed job description. Corporation minutes clearly identify matters agreed. Standing orders to guide the conduct of the corporation are helpful and subject to continuous review. Corporation and committee minutes, with relevant supporting papers, are available to the public in the libraries at Workington and Whitehaven, but this availability is not openly advertised. A register of interests for members and senior managers was established in 1997. Although a code of conduct for members was approved in 1995 it has not yet been updated to reflect the deliberations of the Nolan committee. A working party is addressing this.

Management

Grade 4

66 The college's self-assessment of management broadly matches the findings of the inspection team. In some cases, the emphasis placed on judgements was different. This difference was frequently the result of the college's assessment of sector norms as strengths.

Key strengths

- close attention to financial performance
- progress in implementing the accommodation strategy

Weaknesses

- absence of a strong corporate culture
- anomalies in management structure

- inconsistencies in management control
- ineffective management information systems
- tenuous links between strategic objectives and business plans
- limited effectiveness in stimulating participation in education and training
- slow implementation of initiatives

67 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The finance team is appropriate for the needs of the college. The college is in a healthy financial position. It has reduced its average level of funding from £23.96 per unit in 1994 to £18.96 in 1997-98. This is still above the median of £16.72 per unit for general further education colleges. Three-year financial forecasts are prepared on a prudent basis. The college's significant cash reserves, which have been accumulated to help finance the new building, are managed in a positive manner to maximise investment income. Management accounts, with appropriate commentary, are prepared on a monthly basis and are reviewed by senior managers. Financial regulations are in place and are currently being reviewed.

68 The college has identified its buildings as a major source of concern since incorporation. Careful analysis of options has taken place. The evaluation has shown that a new building on a single site is the most cost-effective solution over the long term. The development work needed to enable students to gain full benefit from the potential of the new college has been recognised in broad terms, but detailed action-planning has yet to be undertaken. Inspectors recognised the amount of management time needed to implement the accommodation strategy to this point and agreed with the self-assessment that progress made with its accommodation strategy is a strength of the college.

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69 The college is represented on a number of strategic groups within the region. This strength is clearly outlined in the college's self-assessment report. External links have not been evaluated. Information about the environment and labour context informs the needs analysis of the strategic plan. The strategic and business plans refer to marketing information, but operational planning is based more heavily on resource considerations. Although there are examples of individual initiative at all levels, there is no co-ordinated marketing drive.

70 Only a few of the strategic objectives in the college's strategic plan are supported by specific performance indicators. The link between strategic objectives and curriculum business plans is weak. There is no effective conversion of strategic targets into curriculum targets. Support areas do not carry out operational planning in a consistent way. Curriculum managers are required to produce an annual business plan. The college identifies business planning as a strength, but inspectors did not fully support this view. Some curriculum managers use business planning as a bidding process for resources rather than as a true planning exercise. Curriculum teams are not clear about the criteria used to allocate resources. Unit costing is not in place. Monitoring of the strategic objectives and business plans is limited.

71 The college acknowledges that staff lack confidence in the accuracy of the data that the computerised management information system provides for them. The system does not generate pre-enrolment or achievement data. Substantial work is required to enable the college to use management information effectively.

72 Functions, roles and responsibilities of managers are not clear. The roles and responsibilities of senior managers are currently being reviewed. The span of control of some senior managers is too wide. The function of

the extended management team in the organisation is not clear. The role of faculty manager is not understood by many staff. There is no structure to support a systematic exchange of information and debate between curriculum managers and those responsible for cross-college services. Responsibility and accountability for marketing and quality are confused. The college has not acknowledged these weaknesses sufficiently. Inspectors came across examples of ineffective control of policy and implementation of procedures which had a direct impact on the quality of students' experience. The college has identified this weakness.

73 Preoccupation with the building project and the climate of industrial dispute have resulted in slow progress on a number of cross-college issues. Examples include slow implementation of equal opportunities and health and safety policies; absence of an IT strategy and delayed response to the Tomlinson Report. The climate induced by the protracted industrial dispute between the teaching staff and the corporation has meant that corporate initiatives have been difficult to sustain. The dispute has had noticeably adverse effects on the learning programmes of some students, the morale of those employed at the college, the public reputation of the institution and corporate responsiveness. Internal communication has suffered.

Conclusions

74 The self-assessment report is generally concise and evaluative in its presentation of strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors were in broad agreement with most sections of the report. For many sections the strengths, outlined in the report, were supported by evidence although few data were provided on students' achievements or their performance against benchmarks. An action plan had some linkage to strategic and business planning. A

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section entitled 'criterion/expected result' was difficult to interpret. Inspectors agreed with four of the curriculum grades and two of the cross-college grades awarded by the college.

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 (July 1997)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	0
16-18 years	27
19-24 years	70
25+ years	2
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1997)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	28
Intermediate	33
Advanced	30
Higher education	9
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 1997)

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	125	753	22
Agriculture	0	4	0
Construction	122	83	5
Engineering	134	306	11
Business	97	564	17
Hotel and catering	89	57	4
Health and community care	226	149	10
Art and design	61	94	4
Humanities	60	826	23
Basic education	19	151	4
Total	933	2,987	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1997)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	89	24	3	116
Supporting direct learning contact	28	0	0	28
Other support	44	7	0	51
Total	161	31	3	195

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£6,106,000	£5,787,000	£6,153,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£21.97	£20.97	£20.91
Payroll as a proportion of income	68%	74%	70%
Achievement of funding target	102%	102%	102%
Diversity of income	28%	22%	22%
Operating surplus	-£228,000	-£500,000	-£44,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), Funding Allocations 1996-97 (1996-97)

Payroll – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), college (1996-97)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	33	32	29
	Average point score per entry	2.0	2.0	2.5
	Position in tables	bottom 10%	bottom 10%	bottom third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	122	95	90
	Percentage achieving qualification	66%	83%	80%
	Position in tables	bottom third	top third	top third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	62	45
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	69%	76%
	Position in tables	*	top third	top third

Source: DfEE

Note: the majority of the college's students are 19 years of age or older

The achievements of these students are not covered in published DfEE performance tables

*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

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