

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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# **West Kent College**

**September 1997**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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**THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
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 every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to the FEFC's quality assessment committee.*

*College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.*

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## **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

*The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.*

*The descriptors for the grades are:*

- grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

*By June 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.*

### **College grade profiles 1993-96**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Inspection grades</b>				
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Programme area	9%	59%	29%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	14%	50%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	12%	54%	30%	4%	<1%

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 119/97

**WEST KENT COLLEGE**

**SOUTH EAST REGION**

**Inspected September 1996-June 1997**

## Summary

West Kent College offers a broad range of further and higher education programmes. It has an extensive international curriculum and franchised programmes throughout England. The college is responsive to the needs of its local community and has good links with Kent TEC and with employers. The governing body is effective and increasingly well informed about the college. The college has remedied a financial deficit which it inherited at the time of incorporation. A new organisational structure is well conceived and senior staff are united and enthusiastic. Guidance given to applicants is impartial and student services are well managed. The support for students with disabilities who are on mainstream courses is outstandingly good. Staff are well qualified. Equipment available for teaching television and video work is of an industrial standard. The college has adjusted to incorporation with difficulty and aspects of the implementation of new staff contracts and appraisal arrangements are incomplete. Tutorial practice is inconsistent across the college and is poor in some areas. Standards of teaching are below the average for the sector and examination results are marred by low retention. The college should: complete the reorganisation of its management; improve management information systems; develop its marketing; ensure that tutorial practice is consistent across the college; take steps to improve standards of teaching and examination results in some areas; establish a more comprehensive and consistent quality assurance system; and improve some accommodation.

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

<b>Aspects of cross-college provision</b>		<b>Grade</b>
Responsiveness and range of provision		1
Governance and management		3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		3
Quality assurance		4
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	3
	accommodation	3

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science, mathematics and computing	3	Art, design and performance studies	3
Engineering	4	English and languages	2
Business and office administration	2	Social sciences	3
Catering, leisure and tourism	3	Basic education and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2
Health and social care	2	Franchised provision	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3		

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 West Kent College was inspected in four stages. Enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term of 1996. In March 1997, an inspector spent 15 days evaluating franchised provision. In May 1997, 12 inspectors spent 39 days inspecting the curriculum areas. They visited 189 classes and examined students' work. In June 1997, seven inspectors spent 28 days assessing aspects of cross-college provision. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, the senior management team, teachers, staff with cross-college responsibilities, support and administrative staff, and students. Inspectors consulted employers, two representatives of the Kent Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), members of community groups, head teachers and parents of students at the college. They also attended college meetings and examined policy statements, minutes of committees and working papers.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 West Kent College is a medium-sized general further education college located on two main sites: the Brook Street campus in Tonbridge and the St John's Road campus in Tunbridge Wells. It runs children's nurseries in Southborough and Tunbridge Wells and rents a number of rooms in the Territorial Army centre in Tonbridge. The St John's Road site is to be sold shortly as part of the college's consolidation in Tonbridge. The college draws most of its students from Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks. The college's main catchment area has a population of nearly 310,000. Unemployment, which is at 4 per cent, is below the national average. A high proportion of the working population travels to jobs outside the area, many of them in London.

3 The college itself is one of the largest local employers; over 90 per cent of local firms have less than 25 employees. Employment in the area is varied with distribution services, hotels, banking, and financial services providing most of the growth. The college is conveniently placed for mainland Europe and London, and the growing economic opportunities associated with the Channel Tunnel. Communications by road, rail and air are good. The college is in an area which has considerable natural beauty and many significant sites of cultural interest.

4 Kent has a selective system of secondary education and most of its schools have sixth forms. The college has to compete for students. There are five other further education colleges, including an agricultural college, within a 30-mile radius. In Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells and Sevenoaks there are two major public schools and many other private institutions, six grammar schools, 11 secondary schools with sixth forms and three adult education centres. In the past three years, many schools have developed general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses alongside their general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) programmes.

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The proportion of young people staying on in full-time education or training after the age of 16 is high in West Kent: 84 per cent attend school sixth forms or further education colleges.

5 At the time of the inspection, the college had 2,856 full-time and 3,942 part-time enrolments on its own premises and a further 2,000 enrolments franchised to other organisations. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. The college employs 345 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 236 full-time equivalents teach or support learning. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6 Since incorporation, the college has had to deal with a significant financial deficit which was inherited from Kent Local Education Authority (LEA), difficult industrial relations and falling enrolments. After painful and highly-publicised restructuring, the college has now stabilised. Student numbers at the college are about half the level forecast at the time of incorporation. Modest growth is expected in 1997-98. The development of franchised provision throughout the country has enabled the college to meet the growth targets agreed with the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). A major programme to improve the college's buildings and equipment will start in autumn 1997. The college's mission is to provide education and training of high quality to the community it serves.

#### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

7 College managers respond to government targets and policies for education and training. They are developing a portfolio of courses which has the flexibility to meet the changing needs of students, particularly those who were formerly under represented in further education and training. There is a wide range of programmes for both school-leavers and adults. The college offers two-year courses in 29 GCE A level subjects, 20 of which can also be taken in one year, and eight GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects. There is a one-year course of five general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects with English and mathematics at its core. The college provides more than 150 full-time vocational programmes, most leading to GNVQs, national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and equivalent awards such as the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diplomas validated by the Edexcel Foundation. GNVQ programmes are available at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels in leisure and tourism and health and social care. In addition, seven other GNVQ subjects may be taken at intermediate and advanced levels only. There are BTEC national diploma programmes in art and design, beauty therapy, care, computer studies, construction, hospitality and catering, music technology and performing arts. The exceptionally wide range of secretarial and administration programmes includes professional courses such as those leading to qualification for legal work and European personal assistant awards which require the study of two foreign languages. Full-time access to higher

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education programmes are available in humanities, behavioural sciences, cultural studies, and business studies and finance.

8 West Kent College is an associate college of the University of Greenwich, which validates the majority of its higher education courses. This well-established relationship assists the college to offer higher national certificate courses in care and care management, electronics, graphic design and television production technology. A new higher national certificate in craft, design and production will be available later this year. Higher national diplomas are available in building studies, business studies, care, motor vehicle engineering management, tourism and health studies. From September 1997, the college will also offer higher national diplomas in television production technology, graphic design and leisure management. The college teaches the first two years of a full-time honours degree in media and communications. Two new degrees which will be available through distance learning and other flexible modes of study, are awaiting validation.

9 There are many part-time day and evening programmes which lead to academic and vocational qualifications or cater for leisure interests. Vocational programmes range from pre-foundation to NVQ level 4. Although the college has not yet developed a modular curriculum, it has made considerable efforts to help individual part-time students to study elements of full-time programmes, by planning their timetables carefully.

10 The college has a number of special programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is an accredited centre for the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network 'towards independence' course. It runs an 'access to vocations' programme which enables students to study for the Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network youth award as well as improving their basic skills and sampling a range of vocational subjects. Every student in this programme has work experience and the opportunity to achieve at least three other qualifications. Through the college's links with special schools and mainstream schools, 90 pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are able to study at West Kent College. In addition, 40 students from Dorton College for Further Education, a college for visually-impaired people, take a substantial part of their studies at West Kent College. With the help of funds from Kent TEC, the college has developed a basic skills for adults programme which is offered to employees at work. There is a small initiative in family literacy, based in two community centres.

11 It has not proved possible to develop productive networks with secondary schools because of their competitive relationship with the college. College staff are able to attend careers events in some schools and to provide opportunities for pupils and their parents to visit the college, but the links with schools are not as close as the college would wish.

12 College staff have excellent working relationships with Kent TEC. The college is seen as an innovative partner in the development of



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TEC-funded initiatives. The college is very active in the modern apprenticeship scheme, which currently involves 125 students and a wide range of employers.

13 The college has a particularly full programme for European and other overseas students. The European Social Fund contributes to the full-time, one-year European personal assistants programme which attracts 40 students each year from England, France, Spain and Germany, all of whom have overseas work placements. The European Social Fund also supports two short full-time courses each year for women returning to work in business administration. The college has a link with the Lille Chamber of Commerce to help it prepare students for employment in business and commerce. The college is the only English member of the *Institut Européen de la Qualité Totale* which, with the co-operation of the universities of Clermont-Ferrand and Greenwich, accredits a quality training programme at the college. Through the Kent Colleges' Network, West Kent College has a long-standing relationship with the education directorate for the *Nord-Pas de Calais* region of northern France. This results in an annual conference for staff and local employers and an extensive programme of exchanges and work experience for students. Modern languages staff keep in contact with educational establishments in France, Spain and Germany and European students attend mainstream courses at the college and a summer school for 10 to 14 year olds. A pre-university programme for Greek students resulted in a 95 per cent rate of progression to higher education courses. Through a contract with a Sussex College, West Kent College runs a five-year programme for engineering students from the United Arab Emirates which includes technical English and diploma courses in mechanical and electronic engineering.

14 In a short period, the college has developed franchised work which now accounts for over a third of its work. It has agreements with 14 training concerns, located mainly in Kent and Surrey but including some as far away as Cornwall and Durham. There are training programmes in information technology, electronics, electronic servicing, desktop publishing, basic skills, first aid, customer care, food hygiene, and English as a foreign language (EFL). The college also has a range of international programmes, which produce an annual income of over £350,000.

15 The college has a number of ways of determining the nature and future development of its provision. To supplement published labour market data, heads of faculty draw on information from advisory boards, industry lead bodies, their own staff and employers. The college's marketing unit has been primarily concerned with promotional activities and the achievement of a more positive perception of the college among local people, while the market intelligence aspect of its work remains underdeveloped. The unit co-ordinates production of the college's brochures and other printed materials. The prospectus has been criticised

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within the college and work is now in hand to consult more widely with staff and produce better copy and new designs. The college does not yet have a marketing policy and some staff do not understand that marketing the college and its courses is everyone's concern.

16 The college has a policy and a committee for equal opportunities. Staff have had training recently in equal opportunities issues. Care is taken to eradicate any inadvertent discouragement to minority groups in publicity material. The college has produced its prospectus in Braille and has a promotional video which includes signing for students with a hearing impairment.

## **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

17 The corporation board has 15 members. They comprise 10 independent members, one co-opted member, two elected college staff and the chief executive. At the time of the inspection, there was a vacancy for a representative of Kent TEC. The deputy chief executive attends all meetings of the board and its committees. In May 1995, the chief executive presented a paper to the board which was critical of its performance and which proposed substantial changes. Six new members joined the board during 1996, reducing the average age from 61 to 49. Current members have experience of industrial and public service management at a senior level, the law, accountancy, construction, personnel management and leadership in further and higher education. Four of the present 14 members are women. The board has a code of conduct and a register of members' interests. In the past year, members have undertaken an extensive programme of training and familiarisation with the college. Governors support college activities and they are increasingly well informed about its operations. They have had several opportunities to think speculatively about the future of the college, and they influence its strategic direction. Whilst governors have toured the college and are members of advisory committees, they are not yet well known among staff.

18 The college's director of resources is clerk to the board. The board has an operating plan and sets an attendance target of 80 per cent for each member. The board as a whole achieved a 74 per cent attendance rate for the five meetings held in the last year. Two members attended only 40 per cent of the meetings in the same period. Agendas and minutes are clear and well kept. Minutes give a succinct account of the passage of debate and include an action column which identifies who is responsible for achieving results. Agendas often include lengthy lists of matters arising from the previous meeting. The efficiency with which governors conduct their business at meetings of the board and its committees would be improved by the separation of agenda items into those concerned with information and those which require action. Governors' minutes are normally confidential. This prevents staff developing a better understanding of the work of governors.

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19 The corporation board has six committees: audit; finance and general purposes; remuneration; curriculum and quality; a search committee, concerned with the recruitment of new governors; and a special committee which deals with the dismissal of designated senior post holders. An appeals committee is established when required and there is an estates working party dealing with the current building programme. Committees have clear terms of reference and they work well without duplicating the business of the main board. The governors' curriculum and quality committee is new, reflecting the intention of the board to strengthen its oversight of the college's academic performance. A governor who attends the academic board is not a member of the curriculum and quality committee, which represents a missed opportunity for co-ordination. The college has a comprehensive range of policies which includes equal opportunities, health and safety, and disability. Policies are carefully indexed and a number are in the course of revision.

20 Relations between governors and senior managers are good. The chief executive, the chairman and the vice-chairman of the board meet fortnightly for informal discussion of current issues. The chief executive is appraised by the chairman of the board twice a year. The college executive consists of the chief executive, the deputy chief executive and the director of resources. They have formal meetings about once a fortnight and records of these are clear. The senior management team also meets fortnightly. In order to ensure that well-informed decisions are taken, the college has decided that the senior management team and other important committees should be large and broadly representative. The senior management team has 14 members who also serve on two subcommittees: the operations committee and the curriculum and quality committee. The senior management team works well and it has taken decisions on the most significant matters affecting the college. The minutes of the senior management team are confidential, which, in most cases, is inappropriate.

21 At the time of incorporation the college had five teaching divisions. Shortly after the appointment of the new chief executive in January 1994, it was reorganised as 12 programme areas and a number of support departments. The need to reduce costs and further strengthen aspects of cross-college provision prompted the college to reorganise again in the summer of 1996. The new structure comprises four teaching faculties and six cross-college departments: curriculum development and enterprise; student services; marketing; quality; personnel; and finance. An operations manager provides administrative support to these units. In each faculty, there are three co-ordinators who are responsible for business and adult programmes, curriculum and quality development, and the tutorial system and student records, respectively. Two faculties have additional co-ordinators for higher education and there is a cross-faculty co-ordinator for GCE A level, GCSE and access to higher education programmes. The co-ordinators report to their respective head

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of faculty, with whom they form the faculty's senior management team. Co-ordinators also have a functional responsibility to the appropriate head of cross-college department and for this aspect of their work they form teams with their counterparts from other faculties. The structure is well conceived and, with the exception of some anomalies associated with its novelty, it is beginning to work well. Some tangible achievements are now evident and the staff who hold the main positions of responsibility are confident and enthusiastic.

22 In each faculty there are curriculum leaders, each of whom is responsible for a number of courses. This year, these positions have attracted a salary supplement, varying according to the scope of responsibility. The arrangement is being reviewed for next year. Curriculum leaders are responsible directly to heads of faculty. They are not responsible for the staff who deliver their courses, all of whom report to the head of faculty. More than half the teaching staff in the college have not accepted new contracts of employment, and conditions of service among curriculum leaders vary. Below the level of curriculum leader there are course and subject leaders. The responsibilities which accrue to these posts continue to attract remission from teaching for those still working to the previous conditions of service. Some curriculum leaders are also course leaders and they may receive both a financial allowance for curriculum leadership and remission from teaching for course leadership. These anomalies reflect the conflict which stemmed from reorganisation and the college's need to maintain its viability by shedding staff. The inequity in staff salaries causes resentment and some disinclination to make a wholehearted commitment to the college's future. This is manifest most obviously in an unwillingness among some staff to apply for curriculum leaders' jobs, four of which remain vacant. The college has been reluctant to confront these issues during a period of financial uncertainty, but continued delay will undermine completion of the new structure.

23 College managers have put substantial effort into improving communications. The chief executive offers staff in each faculty an opportunity to meet him each term. He holds informal 'surgeries' two or three times a term, when individual staff may meet him by appointment. There is a regular newsletter which contains important information, social news and introductions to new staff and governors. Nevertheless, some staff interviewed by inspectors complained of receiving too little information about the college's circumstances, and of a lack of informal contact between staff on the one hand and governors and some senior managers on the other which they say reduces their sense of involvement and motivation. However, many staff do not take up the opportunities that are offered to meet senior managers. Whilst much can be done by the college authorities to improve communication by minimising the number of issues that are regarded as confidential and resolving the remaining structural issues, for example, it is clear that the whole college community has to play its part in improving communication.

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24 The academic board was reconstituted in September 1996 with 27 members, including 16 elected staff and students. The board meets at least termly and at least one member of the governing body attends each meeting. It receives reports from its two subcommittees which deal with higher education and validation issues, respectively. Faculty boards of study were established in September 1996, but only two of the four faculties have put them into operation and student representation is incomplete. It is unfortunate that this delay has occurred at a time when the development of consensus and coherence in the new faculties is a priority for the college.

25 The college inherited a deficit of over £500,000 from Kent LEA at the time of incorporation. The deficit increased as a result of retrospective pension contributions and falling student enrolments in 1994-95, when the college achieved only 84 per cent of its funding agreement with the FEFC. Despite continuing difficulty with student recruitment and retention, the college achieved 98.5 per cent of its funding agreement in 1995-96 and it estimates that it will achieve it fully in 1996-97. As a result, and because of the effective steps that have been taken to raise efficiency, the college forecasts that it will have cleared its accumulated deficit by the end of the financial year 1996-97 and produced a surplus. Faculties did not receive their full-time staffing and materials budgets until February 1997. The college intends to proceed with delegated budgets next year. Governors are provided with clear information on the college's finances, including information on cost centres. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £16.22 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

26 West Kent College was a pioneer of computerised management information systems, but its systems have not kept pace with developments in some other colleges since incorporation. Information available to managers has often had to be checked manually with the result that it is slow to arrive. The college has a poor record in providing timely information for the FEFC. The situation is improving only gradually. The college has instructed consultants to produce the specification for a new system which will meet its needs for the foreseeable future. With the associated need for staff training, the design and introduction of a new system is likely to take some time.

#### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

27 There are clear policies for the various aspects of guidance and support for students. Procedural documents, such as those regulating initial assessment and guidance and the code of practice for learning support staff, relate explicitly to these policies. Student services are well managed and the presence of the head of student services on the college's senior committees ensures that they are given due weight. The more

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effective planning covers the earlier phases of a student's career through college. The student services unit co-ordinates admissions and welfare, learning support, counselling and the development of sporting activities. The faculties are responsible for tutorials. The student services structure was introduced in September 1994 but some aspects of the guidance and support that depend on the work of the recently-appointed faculty co-ordinators are at an early stage of development. Well-defined and consistently-implemented standards across the college have yet to be reached.

28 A centralised admissions system was introduced three years ago. Admissions and welfare officers are the first point of contact for any prospective applicant and they respond promptly to enquiries. They work closely with the faculties and keep them informed. Applicants and parents find college open days and other information sessions helpful and appreciate the openness of staff. Every applicant to a full-time course is interviewed thoroughly by a teacher in the appropriate faculty. Staff development and the provision of clear guidelines on interview practice have raised the quality of guidance. An advice centre is available during the summer for late applicants and for those applicants whose examination results have made them change their plans. Enrolment is well organised and further advice is available at that time to ensure that students enter the right course.

29 Most full-time students go through well-designed induction programmes which help them to settle down quickly. They understand their rights and responsibilities but they are ill informed about the student charter. The better induction programmes introduce students to ways of managing their work and to setting learning targets which help them to improve the quality of their work. Students sign a learning agreement at the end of the induction period to confirm finally that they are sure about the course they have chosen. Induction programmes on health and social care courses include residential sessions which promote teamwork and the early adoption of professional values. Link courses for special schools give students with learning difficulties a longer introduction to the college.

30 During the induction period all full-time students are assessed for literacy and numeracy. The college holds the Basic Skills Agency quality kitemark for the high standard of its work in assessment. In 1995, however, only 68 per cent of students who were identified as needing help took up the learning support that was offered to them. As a consequence, more refined tests were developed which bear a more direct relationship to the skills needed on each course. Students see this type of assessment as more relevant and more of them now seek support as a result. Students on courses at level 3 and above are assessed using a range of aptitude tests. Advice is also provided by careers consultants. The outcomes of the assessment are given to students and their tutors, but they are not aggregated so that the overall learning support needs of students across the college can be evaluated and planned. The help provided for students

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with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on mainstream courses is outstandingly good. Assessment of their needs is thorough and the support which is provided enables these students to join normally with other students in the college's activities. Signers, scribes and learning support assistants are much in evidence throughout the college.

31 Full-time students and part-time students who attend the college for a substantial period are allocated a personal tutor. There are regular consultation evenings for parents to inform them of their son's or daughter's progress. One hour each week is timetabled for tutorials and the responsibilities of personal tutors are outlined in the college charter. Courses in office practice, in health and social care, and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are notable for good practice in tutorial work. Tutorial provision across the college, however, is uneven and, on some courses, it falls below acceptable standards. There were examples of poor use of timetabled tutorial time.

32 Monitoring of progress is irregular on many courses. Class records have not been kept or are inaccurate and the new co-ordinators have had to devote much of their time to checking registers, securing stricter registration of attendance, and ensuring that procedures for the follow-up of absentees are implemented. This remedial work has been successful but it has eroded the time available for co-ordinators to develop more effective tutorial practice.

33 Kent Careers Services provides two full-time equivalent careers consultants to work in the college, one of whom is present for the whole week. There is a formal agreement on the level of service to be provided and the consultants have established good working relationships with the college. Guidance for students on progression to higher education is thorough and comprehensive. The extent and quality of the advice given to those who are looking for jobs is less good.

## **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

34 Of the 189 sessions inspected, 58 per cent had strengths which outweighed weaknesses, a figure 5 per cent below the average for all colleges inspected during the 1995-96 inspection programme, according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. Five per cent of lessons had weaknesses which outweighed strengths. The average level of attendance was 76 per cent and the average class size was small at 9.6 students. The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

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**Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE A level	5	19	17	1	0	42
GCSE	2	2	1	1	0	6
GNVQ	0	9	9	2	0	20
NVQ	1	9	9	2	0	21
Higher national certificate and access to higher education	0	6	2	0	0	8
Basic education	3	5	6	0	0	14
Other vocational	8	24	23	4	0	59
Franchised	9	8	2	0	0	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>189</b>

35 There are schemes of work for most courses. The better examples, such as those used in business studies and in health and social care, ensure that the syllabus is fully covered, identify objectives and list appropriate learning activities and associated resource requirements. There is poorer planning in science, mathematics and humanities where schemes of work are often rudimentary. In a number of areas teachers do not share schemes of work with students. Sometimes, they also fail to share their schemes with each other. As a result, there are discontinuities between lessons or work is duplicated. In a lesson on the interpretation of technical drawing, for example, the teacher was unaware of a previous workshop session where students had been making up objects from blueprints.

36 Most lessons are well prepared. In the better sessions, teachers make clear the objectives of the lesson and develop topics logically. They change the learning activities regularly to maintain students' interest and to develop ideas in the most effective way. In one successful GCE A level art history lesson, the teacher asked students to work in pairs to review what they had learned previously about American pop art. They discussed the movement briefly, made notes of the main points and then each pair reported back to the group. The teacher expanded on some points. Then she moved on to British pop art using well-chosen slides and making reference to the historical, social and political context of the movement and its images. The session was informal and productive.

37 There are good working relationships between staff and students. The enthusiasm of many staff contributes significantly to the quality of their teaching. In a lesson where evening class students were learning to use a new wordprocessing package, the teacher created an easy environment in which every student felt confident enough to make progress at their own pace and to ask questions without fear of appearing foolish. The teacher gave support to individual students and a good deal of



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encouragement. At the beginning of a dance lesson, while the students warmed up energetically, the teacher praised each one individually and helped them to look at ways of improving their work. The teacher ensured that the tasks set were demanding and insisted rigorously that work was of a high standard. The session was good humoured and students responded well, displaying high levels of skill, personal control and concentration.

38 In a number of lessons teachers used teaching aids including computers, handouts, case studies, videos, textbooks and models to good effect. Practical work on refraction in a GCE A level physics class was illuminated by use of a computer simulation of the same experiment. Students used it to check their results and to help them to understand the relationships between the variables. In a lesson on a Shakespeare play concerned with the modes and manners of love, Valentine cards were used to cast a modern light on the central issues in the text.

39 A number of lessons were badly planned and some were made still worse by students who were also ill-prepared. In a lesson for GNVQ intermediate students in art and design which was part of a regular sequence of drawing lessons, students were asked to bring along objects that they wanted to draw. Over half the group did not do so, and those that did so often brought in visually unremarkable objects which they happened to have with them, such as personal stereos and cans of drink. Others were given objects found in the room by the teacher. There was no general discussion of aims, objectives or techniques and the teacher's intervention was so minimal that the work could equally well have taken place at home. A second-year group of computing students had to use alternative operating systems and software which their teachers had brought from home in order to set up the small local network which was required for the work. The level of expertise in the class varied; there were those who had considerable experience of network software and those who had none at all. The teacher failed to provide clear objectives for individuals or groups of students and the session soon deteriorated into a muddle. Some students ignored the activities suggested by the teacher and others merely played with the systems. Though relationships between teacher and students were good natured, the lesson was largely unproductive.

40 Teaching methods are unsophisticated in a number of areas. In engineering, many teachers rely on writing notes on the board for students to copy. In some lessons in mathematics, science and humanities, and for students with learning difficulties, teachers' excessive emphasis on working with the whole class meant that insufficient account was taken of individual students' differing abilities and learning needs. In many lessons, the range of teaching methods was too narrow or the ways in which students were required to work were inappropriate. Teachers often neglected visual aids completely when they would have helped in developing students' understanding. In an information technology evening

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session, which was primarily intended to develop students' practical skills, the lecturer spoke uninterruptedly on the *Data Protection Act* for 40 minutes. There was no opportunity for students to ask questions or to become involved in any way. Most listened politely, but after a while they started to play with the computers in front of them. What could have been a lively session on a relevant subject was so dull that many students left the teacher to talk on ignored.

41 Practical work is carried out competently with due regard for health and safety. Practical teaching is better where instructors help students by giving clear demonstrations of the tasks to be undertaken and providing help to individual students as it is required. There are good standards of craftsmanship to be found in most areas of work, including engineering and catering. In weaker practical lessons in hairdressing, organisation is poor and professional standards low. There are too few clients in hair and beauty to give students the opportunity to complete the planned range of work. In catering, the production kitchen and restaurant offer a potentially realistic working environment but, at present, there is little sense of the pressure involved in catering because there are too few customers.

42 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported on mainstream courses. They participate fully in all aspects of the curriculum, including residential visits and work placements. In the separate specialist courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there are productive working relationships between staff and students, and the students are generally well taught. Students on a vocational access programme were asked to give a short presentation to describe their experiences at work. Many gave lively accounts which, in some cases, were illustrated with photographs. At the end of each presentation, the rest of the group assessed its interest, clarity, delivery and content. In some poorer sessions, teachers offered students too few opportunities to show their initiative or failed to make allowance for their differing abilities. The progress that each student makes is not monitored or recorded with enough care.

43 Work is set and marked regularly in all curriculum areas. Assignment briefs and the criteria for assessment are normally described clearly. The quality of the feedback on completed work, however, is less consistent. Detailed records of students' progress are kept for most courses.

44 Most franchised courses are well planned. Although there are variations between the standards of the various training agencies, a significant proportion of teaching is good. The better courses provide students with opportunities to draw on past experience and to learn from one another. Some franchisees have invested heavily in learning packs and appropriate visual aids. Students' work is marked accurately and returned swiftly. Teachers are supportive and have good working relationships with their students. A minority of franchisees offer too narrow a curriculum; the concern is solely with the achievement of

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qualifications and teaching is minimal. In a lesson for unemployed students who were taking a computer programming course, for example, the students worked their way in silence through course manuals. When they asked for help because they were unable to make any further progress, the teacher then explained the next step. The jargon used, however, was often so obscure as to be incomprehensible to students.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

45 West Kent College has a larger number of young and mature students taking GCE AS/A level courses than most general further education colleges in the South East region. The 417 students aged 16 to 18 who were entered for at least one GCE AS/A level examination in 1996, scored, on average, 3.7 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2), according to data published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). This places the college in the middle third of further education colleges on this performance measure. In the previous year, the average points score per entry was 3.3. On the two-year GCE A level programmes, pass rates in most years have been well above the national average in business studies, English, Spanish, film studies, media studies and dance. Pass rates in biology, sports studies and mathematics have mostly been below the national average over the last three years.

#### **GCE A level examination results for students aged 16 to 18 (two-year course)**

	<b>1992-94</b>	<b>1993-95</b>	<b>1994-96</b>
Number of student entries	871	724	719
Number of subjects for which students were entered	25	30	32
College's average pass rate	80%	74%	74%
National average* pass rates	72%	72%	74%
Number of subjects above national average*	10	11	10
Number of subjects below national average*	8	11	12

*\*for general further education colleges.*

46 About 400 students who are 19 years old or over take GCE A level courses each year, most after one year of study. Their average pass rates during the past two years were almost identical to those achieved by the 16 to 18 year old students on two-year courses. The 72 per cent pass rate for 1996 compares favourably with the national average pass rate (64 per cent) for students 19 years or over in general further education colleges.

47 Students' achievement data supplied by the college indicate that retention is poor in many subjects. The pass rates shown above are expressed as a percentage of those students who were entered for the examination. When success rates are calculated as a percentage of those who began the course, it becomes clear that many areas of the college's

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provision fulfil students' aspirations less well than the pass rates suggest. Some courses which have high pass rates are poor at retaining their students and therefore have low success rates.

**Pass, retention and success rates for selected GCE A level subjects in 1996 (two-year courses)**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Pass rate<sup>1</sup> (%)</b>	<b>Retention rate<sup>2</sup> (%)</b>	<b>Success rate<sup>3</sup> (%)</b>
Media studies	100	43	43
Film studies	100	40	30*
English language	87	54	46
Art and design (painting and drawing)	81	59	39
Computing	73	44	30

<sup>1</sup> the pass rate is the percentage of students passing the examination in relation to the number entered for examination.

<sup>2</sup> the retention rate is the percentage of students present on November 1 of the first year of the course who subsequently completed the course.

<sup>3</sup> the success rate is the percentage of students passing the examination in relation to the number enrolled on 1 November in the first year of the course.

\* some students completed the course but were not entered for the examination.

48 For students taking two or more GCE A levels over the two years 1994-96, the 'dropout' between the start of the first year and the start of the second year of the course was over 40 per cent. The college has taken action to improve retention rates. In April 1997, college data showed a marked improvement in retention rates in both academic and vocational courses when compared with the previous year. These improvements should produce an increase in the success rate for one-year courses by the end of the teaching year 1996-97, although the outcome of two-year courses will not be known until 1998.

49 Retention rates for most GCSE subjects are good. The proportion of students aged 16 to 19 years old achieving grade C or above in 1996 was above the national average for general further education colleges. In human physiology and health, music and French, pass rates were particularly good. In chemistry, German and sociology they were poor. Students who follow a one-year GCSE retake programme achieve poor results. Of the 49 students who completed four GCSE courses in 1996, only one achieved four grades at C or above, six gained three, and over half did not achieve any grades C or above at all.

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**GCSE examination results for students aged 16 to 19**

	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>
Number of entries	812	749
Number of subjects	28	25
College's percentage of entries achieving grade C or above	49%	44%
National average* percentage of entries achieving grade C or above	37%	39%

*\* for general further education colleges.*

50 Approximately 200 students over 19 years of age take GCSEs in the daytime or in the evening. Data supplied by the college for these students are incomplete but they suggest that the more mature students achieve better results than the younger students, particularly in human biology, English and mathematics.

51 In 1996, of the 379 students who completed advanced vocational programmes, 88 per cent achieved the full qualification, according to data published by the DfEE. This places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. In the same year, 256 students completed intermediate vocational programmes of whom 62 per cent achieved the full qualification according to data published by the DfEE. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

52 The number of students on advanced and intermediate courses increased significantly between 1993-94 and 1994-95 but has remained constant since. In the three years to 1996, student success rates have declined steadily, as the following tables show.

**Student numbers and success rates summarised for advanced programmes (GNVQ and national diplomas)**

	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>
Number of students	533	657	662
Number of courses	13	18	19
Student success rate	70%	57%	49%
Number of courses with over 70% success rate	8	3	4
Number of courses with below 50% success rate	3	3	7

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**Student numbers and success rates summarised for intermediate programmes (GVNQ and first diplomas)**

	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>
Number of students	144	220	219
Number of courses	6	10	11
Student success rate	67%	61%	47%
Number of courses with over 70% success rate	4	3	2
Number of courses with below 50% success rate	1	1	4

53 The number of courses which had high success rates declined in 1995 and 1996, particularly at advanced level and the number of advanced and intermediate courses with success rates below 50 per cent increased significantly in 1996. The poor retention rate in 1996 was a significant factor, but there were also poor pass rates on a number of courses. At advanced level, the better success rates were found consistently in health and social care and in nursery nursing. The following table compares pass, retention and success rates on a sample of courses with success rates below 50 per cent.

**Pass, retention and success rates for a sample of courses with success rates below 50 per cent, 1996**

<b>Course</b>	<b>Pass rate (%)</b>	<b>Retention rate (%)</b>	<b>Success rate (%)</b>
<b>Advanced</b>			
GVNQ in leisure and tourism	58	56	32
National diploma in computer studies	59	44	26
National diploma in engineering (motor vehicle studies)	35	59	21
National diploma in engineering	33	58	19
<b>Intermediate</b>			
GVNQ in health and social care	50	84	42
First diploma in information technology applications	36	70	25
First diploma in engineering (motor vehicle studies)	16	53	8

54 As the following table shows, results on NVQ programmes are variable, but success rates are generally higher than those for GVNQ and diploma programmes. Results in health and social care, business studies, secretarial administration and beauty therapy are mainly good, but those in hairdressing are poor. The college's results on catering and hospitality

courses fluctuate widely from year to year and they often fall below the national average.

**Percentage success rates for a sample of NVQ (or equivalent) programmes, 1994-96**

	1994	1995	1996
<b>NVQ level 3 (or equivalent)</b>			
National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare Ltd advanced certificate in childcare and human development	74	100	100
London Chamber of Commerce and Industry private secretary's certificate	81	83	85
Beauty therapy (NVQ level 3)	*	67	82
Diploma in welfare studies	*	*	76
Advanced professional cookery (NVQ level 3)	*	75	55
<b>NVQ level 2 (or equivalent)</b>			
C&G motor vehicle competencies level 2	*	75	83
Theatrical and media make-up (NVQ level 2)	60	100	83
National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare Ltd diploma in nursery nursing	87	71	71
Engineering manufacture foundation (NVQ level 2)	*	*	64
Hairdressing (NVQ level 2)	50	32	63
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education certificate in childcare	*	71	59
Association of Accounting Technicians foundation (NVQ level 2)	*	54	52
Professional cookery (NVQ level 2)	*	100	36

*\* data are not available or the programme not offered.*

55 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on separate specialist courses enjoy their studies and speak enthusiastically about their work and the level of help they receive. Attendance and retention are good. Most students develop appropriate skills in literacy, numeracy and information technology. Among those students who seek accreditation through external examinations the pass rate is high but in the past few years only about a quarter of students who originally enrolled have entered. A significant proportion of students progresses to other further education courses or find employment.

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56 The college makes too little effort to track the destinations of its students and almost 60 per cent of these were unknown in 1996. The statistics thus provide an imperfect representation of students' ultimate achievements.

**Students' destinations 1995-96**

	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>
Total number of full-time students completing their courses	1,435	1,643
Progressing to higher education	25%	19%
Progressing to other further education courses	10%	4%
In employment or training	38%	17%
Other	4%	2%
Unknown	23%	58%

57 Many students have gained regional or national recognition in vocational or sporting fields. In the past year, catering students have won five gold, five silver and one bronze medal at the Kent Festival of Catering. Two students were runners up in the Institute of Marketing student of the year competition, and a computing student won a programming competition organised by the British Computer Society. A GCE A level music student won a prestigious prize at the last Kent Music School Festival and a former catering student won the regional heats of the young chef of the year competition organised by the Restaurant Association of Great Britain. College students have represented Kent in national events in cross-country running, rugby and athletics.

**QUALITY ASSURANCE**

58 A course review and evaluation system was introduced in 1991-92 and it has been in use every year since without substantial modification. Course teams are required to complete a course review form at the end of each year. When they receive the form, data from the college information system have already been entered on it showing students' enrolments, age and ethnicity as well as achievements, destinations and retention for the year. These data cover one year only, so that students' retention, for example, cannot be summarised for the whole of a two-year course and year-on-year comparisons of students' success rates cannot readily be made. This form of presentation has given staff too favourable a view of the performance of their courses and has therefore reduced the potential of the course review system to prompt continuous improvement. Staff are required to evaluate the year's work and take into account the information derived from questionnaires which students complete at the beginning, middle and end of their courses. They are also required to produce an action plan addressing the issues they have identified and assessing the progress they have made in achieving the previous year's objectives.



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The system does not demand that quality improvement targets be set at course or faculty levels. Feedback to students on the outcome of the questionnaires is limited.

59 The course review system is clear and simple to operate. However, last year only about 25 per cent of course teams completed their reports thoroughly. Many staff who were interviewed by inspectors said that they had little confidence in the system as a means of improving the quality of their work.

60 A new quality assurance manager was appointed in September 1996 to reinvigorate academic procedures and to add other college services to the review system. He works with the four faculty quality assurance co-ordinators and the co-ordinators for BTEC/GNVQ and higher education. This team meets fortnightly. The work of the co-ordinators is valued by their colleagues and there are some early indications that they will be able to improve the system and its influence on the quality of courses. As yet, it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness fully.

61 Little progress has been made in bringing college services into a quality assurance framework. The work which is being done in areas such as student support and the library is unco-ordinated; it depends on the initiative of individual members of staff rather than the application of a system. In the past, there have been a number of valuable initiatives in quality assurance, including a project on the value added to students' achievements as a result of their time at the college. These initiatives have not matured into a comprehensive and coherent structure of standards and control. The committees which exist to deal with curriculum quality and development provide an appropriate forum for both staff and governors, but they are new. It is intended that the validation and standards committee will consider course review documents and will report to the academic board. Within faculties there are meetings of faculty heads and co-ordinators, and of course teams and faculty boards. Governors are represented on the academic board and a subcommittee of the corporation board has recently been established to consider curriculum and quality issues. It is not yet clear what part these committees will play in regulating quality in service areas.

62 There are well-established quality assurance procedures for the higher education courses which are run in association with the University of Greenwich. They are subject to both the university's academic controls and those of the college. The arrangements include student representation at college course committees. The university authorities have commended the college for the quality assurance measures it applies and the standard of this work in higher education should provide a basis from which to build effective controls for the further education provision of the college. The franchised programmes are subject to quality assurance applied both by those who deliver the courses and by the college's own staff. Procedures vary from one provider to another and the college has had little impact on

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them. More consistent monitoring is needed if the college is to be sure that its franchised work is of an appropriate standard.

63 New arrangements for staff development have been introduced this year. A training needs analysis was carried out based on a questionnaire which was issued to all staff. It was carefully analysed and the outcomes considered alongside training requirements identified by the senior management team. Each faculty and service department is given a budget to support individual professional updating. In future years, staff-development requirements for individuals will be clarified during appraisal. After any training activity, staff are asked to evaluate it to inform future work. An annual report is made to governors assessing the effect of the college's investment in staff training. The budget for staff development is unusually low at £51,000 or 0.4 per cent of the college's income.

64 At the time of incorporation, there were two appraisal schemes; one for support staff and one for teachers. Both of them lapsed in 1994. Gradual reintroduction of appraisal began in September 1996, using an adapted version of the teachers' scheme for all staff. Appraisal takes place every other year and classroom observation every four years. Both appraisal and work observation are less frequent than is found in many other colleges. Training for senior managers as appraisers and training for teaching staff on being appraised, began in the autumn, but only about half the teachers took part. Appraisal meetings for senior staff started in January 1997 and it is predicted that all teachers will have been appraised by the end of the year. Training for support staff will begin during the summer, and appraisal sessions are planned to take place from September 1997. The college is working towards the Investor in People standard and aims to achieve the award during 1998.

65 The college produced its first self-assessment report for the inspection. The process which was used to gather information was thorough and it involved staff at many different levels in the college. The report provided background information that inspectors found helpful, together with evaluative judgements in the form of strengths and weaknesses under each section of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Action points indicate how the weaknesses are to be addressed. Evidence for the judgements is not included in the report. In most sections, judgements generally accord with those of inspectors.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

66 There are 133 full-time and fractional permanent teachers, and 306 part-time teachers (76.4 full-time equivalents). Sixty-four per cent of teachers are women. Women are well represented in senior management positions. Most permanent teachers have up-to-date job descriptions. Staffing costs as a percentage of college expenditure have fallen from

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64 per cent in 1994 to around 60 per cent in 1996-97. Some curriculum areas rely heavily on part-time teachers, who account for approximately 37 per cent of the staffing budget. The part-time teaching budget has proved difficult to control and it has been overspent in the last two years. New contracts with simplified pay scales are being considered to alleviate the problem. There are 168 full-time and part-time support staff. Seventy-five per cent of the full-time support staff are women. A job evaluation scheme has started to inform a review of support staff contracts. Job descriptions for support staff are up to date.

67 Teachers are appropriately qualified for the courses they teach. Seventy per cent of permanent teachers have a first degree or an equivalent qualification and 21 per cent have a higher degree. Eighty-one per cent have a teaching qualification. All newly-appointed teachers who do not hold a teaching qualification are required to study for one. Nearly 100 staff have obtained the assessor and verifier awards of the training and development lead body since May 1996. Information on the qualifications of part-time teachers is not readily available. For the half for whom it is available, 50 per cent have a first degree and 35 per cent a teaching qualification. Most teachers on vocational courses have industrial experience, but some in design and media do not. There is little professional updating among hairdressing and beauty, and health and care teachers. Most support staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, and they make a valuable contribution to the work of the college.

68 The work of the personnel department is developing. A qualified personnel manager has been appointed recently and she is assisted by three partly-qualified staff. Before January 1997, there had been no manager for some months. Most personnel policies and procedures are out of date and are being rewritten, including those for equal opportunities, grievance and discipline. Recruitment of full-time staff is handled well, using guidance notes which are shortly to be codified in a full policy and procedure. There is a recently revised staff handbook for full-time staff, and one for part-time staff. The computerised personnel database is of limited value. All full-time staff who leave the college are given an exit interview by senior personnel staff.

### **Equipment/learning resources**

69 The college has an appropriate range of classroom equipment, including overhead projectors and whiteboards. There is a small audio-visual aids unit which is responsible for servicing equipment. Most curriculum areas have adequate specialist equipment for their courses. Sponsorship has provided excellent equipment in the television and video area. The equipment used for franchised courses in computing and electronics is of a high standard. There are deficiencies in the equipment for textiles and three-dimensional design and sculpture, and in hairdressing and beauty there are insufficient couches and electrical

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equipment. In catering, the equipment in the kitchens and the restaurant and, in engineering, the computer-aided design software is out of date. Major purchases are planned as part of a three-year programme which is reviewed annually.

70 The college is developing an information technology policy. The director of operations co-ordinates purchases of computers. Two hundred new computers were bought in 1996 and, in the current year, a further £100,000 has been spent on information technology. There are 436 computers for students' use. The ratio of full-time equivalent students to computers is 9:1. About 70 per cent of the computers are of modern specification. Some specialist computing courses are constrained by the equipment which is available to them and the computers with high graphics capacity, which are used by higher education students, are not easily available to further education students.

71 The college's library service manages both the library and the learning resource centres. There is a professionally-qualified head of library services, two full-time professional librarians and nine full-time equivalent unqualified assistants. Students and staff speak well of the service they provide. The library occupies 868 square metres of accommodation and the three learning resource centres a further 160 square metres. Together they provide sufficient space for students' needs, including 250 individual study places. There are around 38,000 recent books, subscriptions to more than 200 journals and newspapers, over 500 videotapes, and 40 compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases. There are few books for students with learning difficulties and many science books are out of date. There is an extensive range of computerised journal extracts. Two Internet connections are available. The library is open until 19.00 hours but the learning resource centres close at 17.00. The annual budget for the library service is £48,000 or about £16 for each full-time equivalent student. Links between library service staff and teachers in the curriculum areas are underdeveloped.

### **Accommodation**

72 The college is largely on one site on the southern outskirts of Tonbridge. It intends to dispose of a smaller site in Tunbridge Wells. The main Brook Street campus of 6.4 hectares is situated on a pleasant hillside. There are nine permanent buildings and 31 huts. Huts account for 12 per cent of the college's floor area and a much higher proportion of its classrooms. The college's accommodation has suffered from many years of neglect. The original buildings are typical 1960s' structures with steel frames, panels, metal-framed windows and flat roofs. They are showing their age. Most of the huts are old and dilapidated. The college has a detailed accommodation strategy. Demolition of most of the huts and improvement of the permanent buildings will start in autumn 1997, at a cost of £4 million. A new three-storey block is to be built, providing 2,395 square metres of teaching space. The college uses its

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accommodation efficiently but it cannot measure space utilisation. On the basis of information held by the FEFC, the college achieves a space utilisation factor of 40 per cent, with rooms being used for 70 per cent of the week to 60 per cent of their capacity. This is well above average for the sector.

73 Most classrooms are pleasantly decorated and reasonably well furnished. In some areas, however, there are no displays of students' work. Much of the accommodation for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, and provides a stimulating environment. There are some good practical areas: a spacious and well-planned hairdressing salon; good accommodation for graphics, television and video and photography; a modern language laboratory; and a newly-refurbished chemistry laboratory. Some practical areas are unsatisfactory: the design of the biology and general science laboratories prevents them being used flexibly by teachers; some computing rooms are cluttered with furniture and equipment; the music rooms have poor sound insulation; there are no sprung floors for dance; and the beauty salons are too small. Much of the college is accessible for students with restricted mobility, although the sloping site is difficult for wheelchair users. Improvement of access is a priority in the new building plans.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

74 The major strengths of West Kent College are:

- its wide range of courses
- its extensive international activities
- active governors who are increasingly well informed about the college
- its management of recovery from financial deficit
- impartial admissions guidance
- support for students with physical and sensory learning difficulties
- the quality assurance of higher education programmes
- teaching equipment for television and video courses
- high room utilisation.

75 If the college is to improve further the quality of its provision it should address:

- the incomplete implementation of the new organisational structure
- poor management information systems
- underdeveloped marketing
- inconsistent tutorial support
- standards of teaching which are undistinguished

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- poor success rates in a number of subjects, especially engineering
  - the lack of comprehensive arrangements for quality assurance and the inconsistency of existing practice
  - its huttred accommodation.

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## FIGURES

1	Percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1996)
2	Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)
3	Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1996)
4	Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at June 1997)
5	Income (for 12 months to July 1996)
6	Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

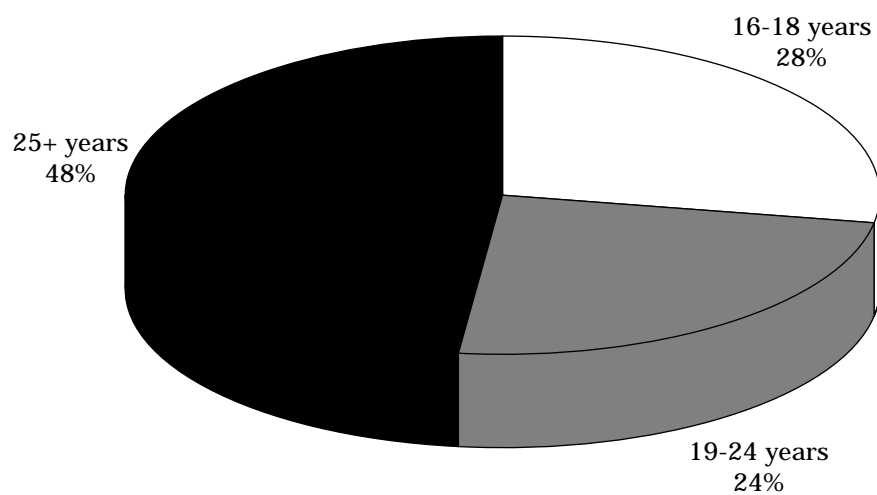
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**Figure 1**

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**West Kent College: percentage student numbers by age (as at July 1996)**



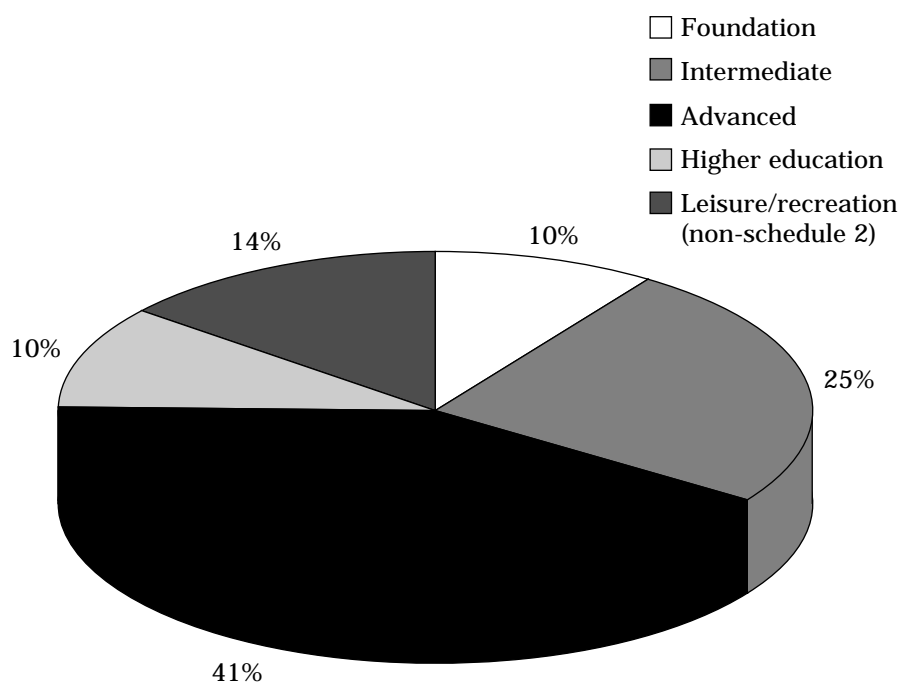
Student numbers: 6,798

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**Figure 2**

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**West Kent College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at July 1996)**



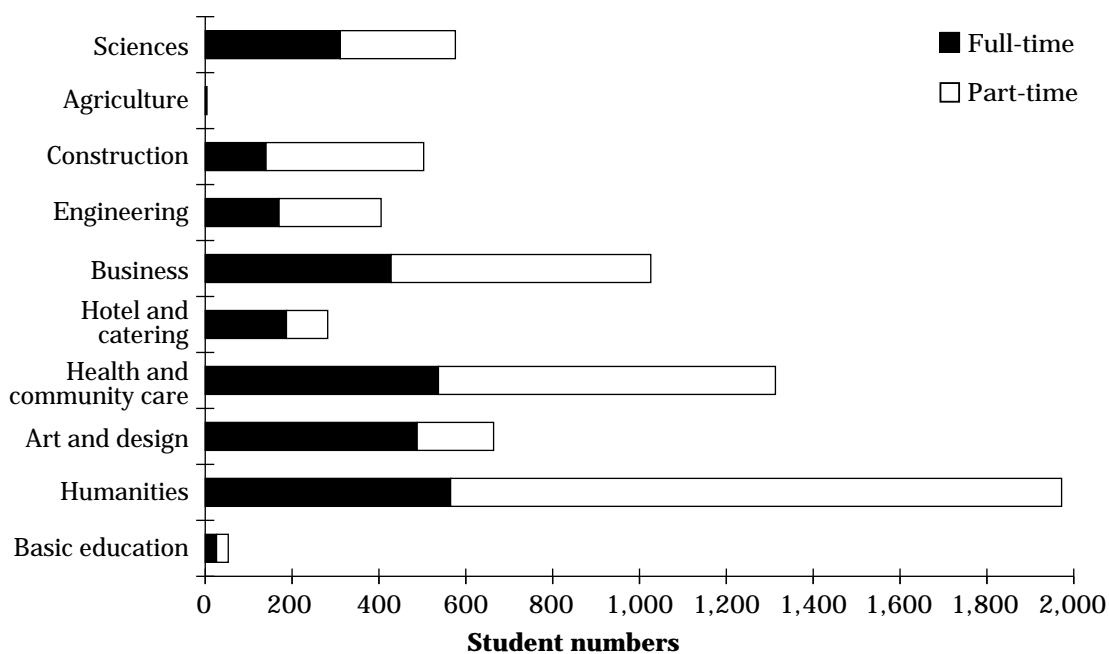
Student numbers: 6,798



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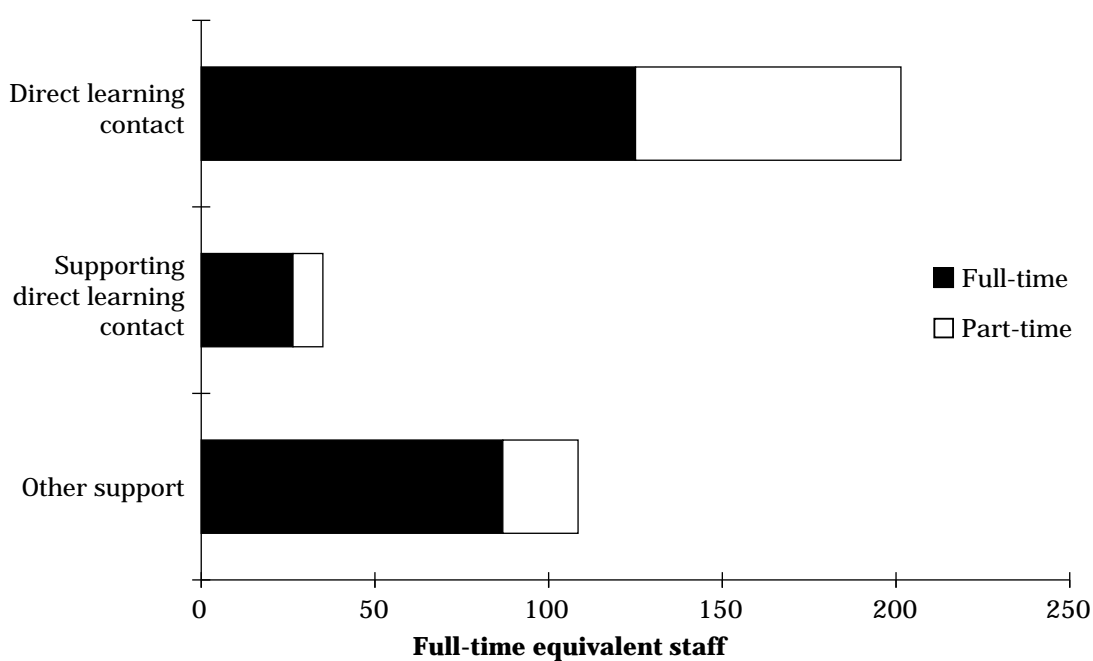
**Figure 3**

**West Kent College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area  
(as at July 1996)**



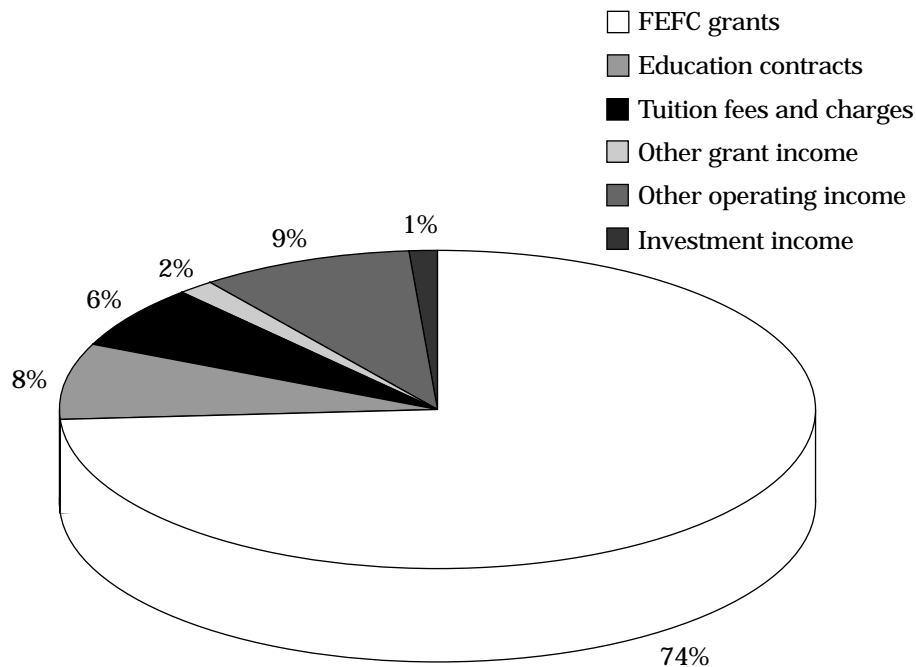
**Figure 4**

**West Kent College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at June 1997)**



**Figure 5**

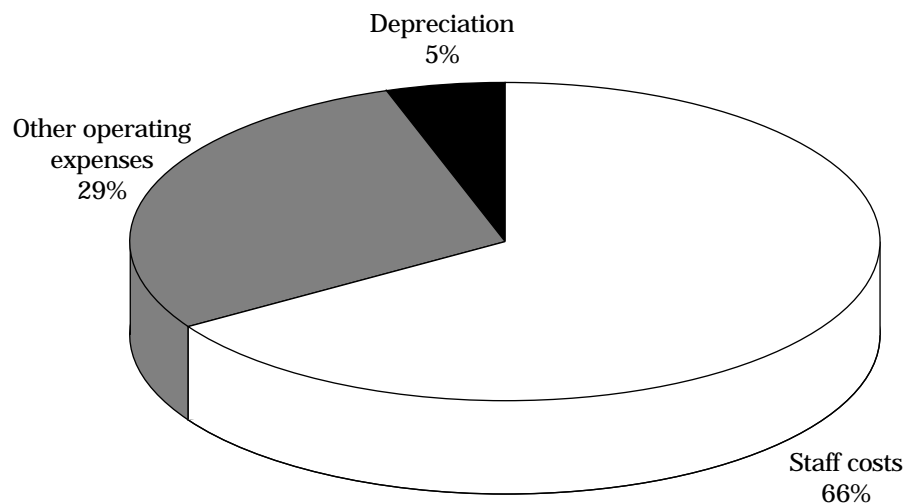
**West Kent College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)**



Income: £12,398,000

**Figure 6**

**West Kent College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)**



Expenditure: £12,918,000

