

# Weston College

REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
**1999-00**

THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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## Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	10	53	30	7	–
Cross-college provision	14	54	23	7	2

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*  
Sample size: 104 college inspections

## Student Achievements

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

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not included.

# Summary

## Weston College

### *South West Region*

#### **Inspected May 2000**

Weston College is a medium-sized general further education college in Weston-super-Mare serving the communities of North Somerset. Following tertiary reorganisation in Weston-super-Mare, the former Broadoak School sixth form centre became a division of Weston College under the name of Weston Sixth Form College in September 1999. The college's self-assessment process is thorough and involves all staff and governors. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report, but judged that some strengths were overstated. They also found weaknesses the college had not identified, particularly those relating to the quality of teaching and learning and students' achievements. Inspectors mainly agreed with the college's judgements about cross-college provision but disagreed with some judgements about curriculum areas. At the time of the inspection, the college had made good progress in addressing many of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

The college offers a wide range of courses in nine of the 10 programme areas funded by the FEFC. Provision in five of these areas and in basic skills was inspected, together with aspects

of cross-college provision. There has been significant improvement in many aspects of the college's provision since the last inspection. The college is well managed and well governed. Managers and governors have successfully steered the college through a period of considerable change. Prospective students are well informed about the range of courses and opportunities available. Students benefit from some good teaching and good individual support from tutors. Particular progress has been made in improving provision for students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The college has a good and well-managed accommodation strategy. There is a rigorous system of internal audit that mirrors the FEFC inspection process. The student retention and achievement rates on some courses are below the national average. The college should further improve: teaching and learning and students' achievements in some subjects; student tutorials in some curriculum areas; sharing of best practice in teaching and learning; learning resources at the sixth form college; and the collection and reliability of management information on students.

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cross-college provision</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Science and mathematics	3	Support for students	2
Business	3	General resources	2
Health and care	2	Quality assurance	2
Social science	3	Governance	1
English	3	Management	2
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2		
Basic skills	3		

## The College and its Mission

1 Weston College is a medium-sized general further education college serving the communities of North Somerset. Its main campus is at the Knightstone site in Weston-super-Mare, but it also has sites in Nailsea and Portishead some 12 and 20 miles to the north. The population of the North Somerset Unitary Authority area is 187,000, of whom 71,000 reside in Weston-super-Mare.

2 The nearest further education colleges, at a distance of approximately 20 miles, are City of Bristol College to the north east and Bridgwater College and Cannington College to the south. There are 10 secondary schools in North Somerset. Four in the Weston-super-Mare urban area are 11 to 16 schools. The other six are 11 to 18 schools each of which serves a distinct town or village and surrounding rural areas. Weston Sixth Form College, the former Broadoak School sixth form, became a division of Weston College on 1 September 1999 as a result of a tertiary reorganisation in the town of Weston-super-Mare. The overall educational achievements of school-leavers in North Somerset are above the national averages. In 1998, 52% of year 11 pupils, compared with 46% nationally, achieved five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects at grade C or above. The post-16 participation rate in full-time education is 10% higher than the national average of 78%.

3 The college offers a broad range of programmes in nine of the 10 programme areas funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). In several programme areas, courses range from pre-foundation to higher diploma level. The college provides a small number of higher education programmes and some are run in conjunction with Bath Spa University College. The college is also a provider of programmes sponsored through the Western Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) including those for modern apprentices and

national trainees. It also runs a community education programme. The college anticipates that this programme will double in size next year when it assumes responsibility for all community education provision on behalf of the local education authority (LEA).

4 On 1 March 2000, the college had enrolled 7,887 students, of whom 1,970 were full-time students and 5,917 were part time. This represents a 15% growth in full-time student numbers and a 5% growth in part-time student numbers, compared with enrolments at the same date in 1998. In 1998-99, there were 10,869 students at the college excluding those on full-cost courses for commerce and industry. The college employs 258 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 187 are involved in teaching and learning. Persons from minority ethnic communities represent less than 1% of the local population. The proportion of students from minority ethnic communities in the college is between 1.5% and 2%.

5 The local economy is heavily dependent on service industries. The civil and military aerospace industry is well represented in the neighbouring city of Bristol. Although North Somerset is a relatively affluent area, it contains many areas of social deprivation where the unemployment rate is as high as 9.2%. In July 1998, the unemployment rate across the area was low at 2.6%, compared with the national rate of 4.9%.

6 The college is involved in many well-established local partnerships. It works in partnership with the LEA on provision of education for disaffected pupils aged between 14 and 16 and community education programmes have been transferred to the college. The college is also involved in two local single regeneration budget projects, the Weston Education Action Zone and the North Somerset Lifelong Learning Partnership.

# Context

7 The college's mission is 'to be the first-choice provider of quality education and training'. The college's corporate aims are:

- 'to maximise customer potential
- to serve the community
- to develop Weston College'.

## The Inspection

8 The college was inspected during the week beginning 8 May 2000. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and reviewed information held about the college by other directorates of the FEFC. The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately three months before the inspection. The inspection included an inspection of the scope of basic skills provision below level 2. The college acknowledged prior to the inspection, that the data it held on students' achievements for 1997 and 1998 contained inaccuracies. It provided revised data for inspectors. College data for 1999 were checked by inspectors before the inspection and found to be largely accurate. Achievements for general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) courses provided at the former school sixth form centre were not calculated on the same basis as that used by the FEFC and could not be used by inspectors.

9 The inspection was carried out by 15 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 65 days in the college. An inspector spent one day inspecting local franchised provision. Inspectors observed 93 lessons, examined students' work and inspected college documents. They met with governors, managers, staff, students and representatives of external groups and organisations. Three inspectors from the Training Standards Council (TSC) worked with the inspection team during the inspection. The TSC inspectors concentrated on the work-based training in

hairdressing. They spent 12 days based in the college. They observed instruction sessions and interviewed trainees, employers and college staff. Where it was appropriate to the FEFC inspection framework, evidence gathered by TSC inspectors was taken into account when grading college provision.

10 The following table shows the grades given to lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the 93 lessons inspected, 58% were judged to be good or outstanding. This figure represents an improvement since the last inspection, but is still below the national average of 65% recorded for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. The percentage of less than satisfactory lessons was 9%, slightly above the average of 6% recorded for all lessons observed during 1998-99.

# Context

## Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	4	14	14	3	2	37
GCSE	1	5	5	0	0	11
GNVQ/NVQ	4	4	3	1	0	12
Other vocational	4	2	2	1	0	9
Other*	5	11	7	1	0	24
Total (No.)	18	36	31	6	2	93
Total (%)	19	39	33	7	2	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

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

11 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99.

### Attendance rates in lessons observed

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

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



# Curriculum Areas

## Science and Mathematics

### Grade 3

**12 Inspectors observed 25 lessons covering the range of mathematics and science subjects offered by the college. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They also identified additional weaknesses in teaching and learning and students' achievements.**

#### Key strengths

- much well-planned and enthusiastic teaching
- students' good achievements in GCSE mathematics
- broad range of science and mathematics provision
- good laboratory facilities at the sixth form college

#### Weaknesses

- students' low achievement rates on many courses
- insufficient use of information technology (IT) in teaching and learning
- insufficient recognition of some students' individual needs
- students' lack of punctuality for lessons
- some poor laboratory practice

13 The college offers a broad range of provision in science and mathematics. GCE A level and GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses are available in physics, chemistry, biology, human biology, environmental science, mathematics and further mathematics. There are GCSE courses in mathematics and human physiology and health. An access to higher education course is provided. A course in mathematics has been designed for adults, which they may follow through private study. This wide range of provision is recognised in the college's self-assessment report.

14 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that most lessons are well planned though some schemes of work lack detail and some do not specify the teaching methods and learning activities that will be adopted in lessons. Most teaching is satisfactory or better, but there is also a minority of unsatisfactory teaching. In the best lessons, the teachers are enthusiastic. They ensure that students are given stimulating learning activities that exercise a wide range of their skills. In a biology lesson students examined specimens to identify the main features of the respiration system. They then drew air cells from a microscope slide and worked in pairs to describe the heart-lung respiration system. The theory was comprehensively drawn together by directed questioning and colourful board work. In a poorer lesson, the objectives were not explained. Three students worked on their own from the textbook. Three more students arrived late and were not asked to explain their lack of punctuality. The formal teaching which took place over half an hour later than planned was difficult for the students to follow and included illegible boardwork by the teacher.

15 In a few lessons, teachers failed to ensure that all students contributed to discussions. In the weaker lessons, teachers failed to check students' understanding of key points. In a mathematics lesson students were introduced to the calculation of the volume swept out by rotation of a curve. Good use was made of overlaid transparencies and students were challenged to draw the objects created by rotating two-dimensional shapes. A minority of students were unable to carry out simple algebraic transpositions and teachers did not help them to understand the process.

16 There are good specialist laboratories and preparation areas for science teaching at the sixth form college. However, those on the main college site are outdated and their deficiencies were not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. In a minority of practical lessons, work is carried out without

# Curriculum Areas

sufficient regard for health and safety. For example, in one lesson teachers paid insufficient attention to safety requirements which necessitate students to wear laboratory coats and goggles. Risk assessment is poorly developed. There is little use of information learning technology in teaching and learning despite the availability of modern computers in most laboratories and specialist IT learning centres.

17 Team meetings for mathematics staff are infrequent and minutes do not include action points. Course reviews for mathematics are incomplete and fail to identify weaknesses. There are good procedures for course planning, but the monitoring of part-time staff performance is inadequate. Arrangements for

## **A summary of retention and achievement rates in science and mathematics, 1997 to 1999**

reporting to parents of students aged 16 to 19 are good. The identification of opportunities for accreditation of key skills within the GCE A level curriculum is underdeveloped. The college self-assessment report did not identify these strengths and weaknesses.

18 Students' achievements for GCSE mathematics are well above national average for the sector, particularly in 1999, whilst those for GCSE science are at the national average. However, students achievements at GCE A level are generally below the average. In 1998, students' achievements in science subjects were particularly poor. The self-assessment report recognises the need to improve student achievement rates in GCE A level sciences. Student retention rates are in line with national averages except on human biology courses where they are 10% above the national average.

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE science (one-year course)	2	Number of starters	71	74	53
		Retention (%)	77	76	75
		Achievement (%)	82	84	90
GCSE chemistry (one-year course)	2	Number of starters	26	10	7
		Retention (%)	62	70	100
		Achievement (%)	56	86	57
GCSE mathematics	2	Number of starters	221	166	179
		Retention (%)	73	75	69
		Achievement (%)	78	76	83
GCE A level mathematics	3	Number of starters	*	*	15
		Retention (%)	*	*	60
		Achievement (%)	*	*	67
GCE A level human biology	3	Number of starters	*	*	16
		Retention (%)	*	*	88
		Achievement (%)	*	*	50
GCE AS sciences	3	Number of starters	*	*	26
		Retention (%)	*	*	65
		Achievement (%)	*	*	41
GCE A level science (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	*	*	40
		Retention (%)	*	*	60
		Achievement (%)	*	*	63

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

\*data unreliable

# Curriculum Areas

## Business

### Grade 3

**19 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in business studies. They agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses given in the self-assessment report, but found some weaknesses in teaching and learning the college had not identified.**

#### Key strengths

- effective learning support in lessons on general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) foundation courses
- students' good achievements on foundation and advanced courses
- good links with local business
- strong curriculum leadership

#### Weaknesses

- failure of some teachers to ensure the full involvement of students in lesson activities
- students' poor retention and achievement rates on the GNVQ intermediate programme
- insufficient development of numeracy skills of some GNVQ intermediate students
- inadequate planning and preparation of some GCE A level lessons
- inadequate learning resources at the sixth form college

20 The college offers a wide range of business courses. These include courses leading to: GNVQ in business at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels, and GCE A levels in accounts and business. It also provides a range of part-time business and professional courses leading to: the Association of Accounting Technicians national vocational qualification (NVQ) in accounts at levels 2, 3 and 4, the Institute of Legal Executives qualification, Edexcel national and higher national certificates and the diploma in management studies.

21 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the majority of lessons are well planned and involve a variety of appropriate learning methods. In the better lessons, students are able to learn at their own pace and they receive help and encouragement from teachers. In some weaker lessons, the teacher talked too much and failed to give the students enough to do. Although teaching is pitched at an appropriate level, opportunities are missed for students to work together in groups and learn key concepts through enquiry and discussion. Teachers do not check regularly that students understand what is being taught.

22 The GNVQ foundation business course caters for students with a range of moderate learning difficulties and support needs. Planning and preparation of lessons are particularly thorough and detailed. Teachers and learning support staff work together effectively. They identify students' needs and ensure that learning methods meet these. Student retention and achievement rates are above the national average and reflect the substantial time and energy teachers put into making sure students enjoy the course.

23 Many students enrolled on the GNVQ intermediate course have weak skills in English and/or mathematics. In a tutorial session, individual students were shown how to compile their portfolios. The teacher made everything appear straightforward and achievable, gave the students encouragement and helped them to gain confidence in their use of key skills. In some cases, students are given extra tuition to enable them to acquire the numerical skills required to complete the course successfully. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report, student retention and achievement rates on this course in 1999 were significantly below national averages.

24 Students on the GNVQ advanced course are often exuberant, but are encouraged to remain focused on their work through firm and effective classroom management. Students spoke highly of their learning experiences and inspectors

# Curriculum Areas

agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that students are well satisfied with this course. The two periods of work experience students have are particularly relevant and useful. Students benefit from the contact with local employers and the realistic assignments linked to their experience in the business community. Those who complete the GNVQ advanced course achieve the qualification. The student achievement rate on this course has been consistently higher than the national average. The student retention rate, however, has been below the national average. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the work students carry out using the key skill of number is insufficiently demanding and it does not enable many of them to extend their mathematical skills.

25 Students on GCE A level courses are committed to their studies and the atmosphere in most lessons was conducive to learning. The more able students, however, found some of the work insufficiently demanding. In a minority of instances, the teachers had failed to plan and prepare lessons properly and these were poor. Learning resources at the sixth form college are not adequate, with no access to the Internet on this site.

26 There is strong leadership and good curriculum management in business studies. Course teams set and monitor the achievement of targets, using appropriate performance indicators. Communication between team members is, in general, effective. Some communication is less effective where course organisation involves collaboration across different sites and between departments.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ business	1	Number of starters	8	10	8
		Retention (%)	38	80	100
		Achievement (%)	100	50	88
GNVQ business	2	Number of starters	21	21	26
		Retention (%)	90	71	50
		Achievement (%)	84	87	54
GNVQ business	3	Number of starters	*	*	36
		Retention (%)	*	*	61
		Achievement (%)	*	*	91
GCE A level business studies	3	Number of starters	*	26	19
		Retention (%)	*	85	74
		Achievement (%)	*	59	42
Institute of Legal Executives (part 1)	3	Number of starters	33	52	82
		Retention (%)	82	73	83
		Achievement (%)	48	45	54
NVQ accounts (Association of Accounting Technicians intermediate)	3	Number of starters	*	37	32
		Retention (%)	*	89	85
		Achievement (%)	*	35	21

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

\*data unreliable

# Curriculum Areas

## Health and Care

### Grade 2

**27 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in health and social care and childcare. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They found some strengths and weaknesses the college had not identified. They considered that the self-assessment of this curriculum area was insufficiently comprehensive.**

#### Key strengths

- much stimulating teaching
- students' high retention and achievement rates on some courses
- effective use of specialist resources
- effective and innovative curriculum management
- students' high attendance rates

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to meeting the individual learning needs of some students
- little integration of key skills with the content of vocational courses
- underdeveloped process for setting individual students' targets

28 The college provides a broad range of care courses including early years care and education courses at levels 2 and 3, and those leading to GNVQ health and social care at all levels, and NVQ in care and childcare at levels 2 and 3. A course is offered leading to the diploma in management of care services at level 4. The college responds to community needs and in September 1999 introduced courses leading to the diploma in pre-school practice and a certificate for registered childminders.

29 There is much good teaching. Teachers prepare lessons well and use detailed lesson plans. Many teachers are skilled at ensuring

that students find lessons stimulating and they encourage them to work effectively on their own. Teachers successfully relate theory to professional practice. In most lessons extensive use is made of students' relevant work experience. In a care management lesson on grievance procedures, teachers encouraged every student to recall and discuss a relevant interesting experience at his or her place of work. In another lesson on good practice in feeding the elderly, all students joined in a class discussion with enthusiasm and they learnt from one another's contributions. In some lessons, group activities were not carefully organised and structured. Some students completed their tasks quickly and were given nothing worthwhile to do whilst waiting for the others to finish.

30 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that well-managed work placements are an integral part of all full-time courses. The college uses its strong links with health, social and childcare providers to good effect. Providers' representatives sit on the college's care consultative committee, give advice on the curriculum and provide valuable work experience and employment opportunities for students. There are good opportunities for students to work with visiting specialists and to visit specialist provision. A care agency consultant visits the college to advise students who are about to apply for work. A group of students visited the special care unit in the maternity wing of a local hospital.

31 Courses are managed effectively. Team and department meetings are held regularly and all staff are involved in planning and decisions which affect the programme area, including the setting of targets for student retention and achievement rates. There are regular, effective course reviews. The process for setting targets for individual students is not well developed. Students' action plans are not specific enough. Managers have introduced some new practices and these are proving effective. The attendance and progress of students are carefully monitored.

# Curriculum Areas

Those students identified as having significant problems with their work or at risk of dropping out of their course, are given appropriate support. Retention rates on some courses have increased.

32 Students' written work is of a high standard and they receive regular supportive feedback from teachers about their work and progress. Assessment is closely monitored and clearly recorded. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the provision of teaching and learning in key skills is not fully developed as an integral part of all courses. On many courses, student retention and achievement rates were above, and on NVQ courses in care and childcare they were in line with, the national average for the sector. In 1999, there was a significant improvement in students' achievements on the GNVQ advanced

course, but students' achievements on the GNVQ intermediate course were poor. Many students progress to other courses in the college, and to relevant employment or higher education.

33 Students benefit from excellent learning resources. Teaching accommodation is good and contains attractive displays of students' work. There are abundant supplies of demonstration materials in the specialist classrooms. An IT room is timetabled for care courses and it is well used as a 'drop-in' facility. Staff are appropriately qualified and suitably experienced for the courses they teach.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ health and social care	1	Number of starters	17	*	21
		Retention (%)	65	*	90
		Achievement (%)	82	*	84
GNVQ health and social care	2	Number of starters	11	*	9
		Retention (%)	82	*	78
		Achievement (%)	89	*	57
CACHE certificate in childcare and education	2	Number of starters	20	17	14
		Retention (%)	80	100	79
		Achievement (%)	100	94	100
GNVQ health and social care	3	Number of starters	*	*	19
		Retention (%)	*	*	84
		Achievement (%)	*	*	75
CACHE diploma in nursery nursing	3	Number of starters	75	*	44
		Retention (%)	92	*	82
		Achievement (%)	100	*	91
BTEC national diploma in childhood studies	3	Number of starters	14	6	13
		Retention (%)	93	100	92
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100

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

\*data unreliable

# Curriculum Areas

## Social Science

### Grade 3

**34 Inspectors observed 12 lessons on GCE A level and GCSE courses in psychology, sociology, law, history and geography. They agreed with some of the strengths stated in the self-assessment report but found several weaknesses, particularly in relation to teaching and learning and student achievement and retention rates, which the college had not identified.**

#### Key strengths

- improved GCE A level pass rates
- well-planned teaching and learning in some subjects
- effective assessment and marking of students' work
- well-developed key skills programme

#### Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on GCE A level courses
- insufficiently demanding work for students in lessons on some GCE A level courses
- most teachers' failure to take sufficient account of students' different ability levels
- insufficient sharing of good practice

35 In the better lessons, teaching is well planned and carefully managed. The lessons have clear objectives which give students a sense of purpose. Teachers provide a balanced range of teaching methods to develop different skills. In a GCSE sociology lesson, students requested examination practice under formal conditions. Before writing their answers, they discussed examination techniques which they could then practise. In reviewing their performance, they gained confidence from sharing the lessons they had learned. All first-year GCE A level students develop key

skills, mainly in GCE A level general studies. In GCE A level geography, key skills are integrated with other elements of the course. For example, during residential fieldwork, students improve their skill in data collection and recording by practising a range of fieldwork techniques. In some GCE A level lessons, the teacher talked too much, did not encourage the students to ask questions or attempt to find out whether they understood the lesson. Students were not invited to express their own views or explore concepts. In these poorer lessons, learning methods were extremely restricted in their scope and they failed to arouse the students' interest or enthusiasm. In some subjects, teachers promote the use of IT for private study. Working with library staff, they identify relevant sites on the Internet and enable students to gain access to them. Most teachers show insufficient flexibility in their teaching to meet the students' different levels of ability. In some lessons, a few articulate students dominate discussion whilst others are silent and the teacher does not check their understanding of the issues under debate. These weaknesses in teaching and learning were overlooked in the self-assessment report.

36 Students understand the purpose of their assessments and what is expected of them. Teachers mark accurately and give students detailed comments on their work. GCE A level pass rates in two-year courses in history, law and sociology improved between 1997 and 1999 and students' high levels of achievement in GCE A level psychology were maintained. Whilst most pass rates on two-year courses in sociology and geography were below the national average for the sector in 1997 and 1998, those for history, law and psychology matched or were above. In 1997 and 1998, approximately half the pass rates on one-year GCE A level courses were above the national average. In 1999, pass rates on one-year courses in history, law and geography were higher than in any of the previous three years. A high proportion of

# Curriculum Areas

students achieved grade C or above in GCSE psychology but the proportion obtaining comparable grades in GCSE law began to decline in 1998.

37 Inspectors did not agree with the finding in the self-assessment report that retention rates on most courses improved between 1996 and 1997 and constituted a strength. Although retention rates on all but two one-year courses improved, they fell on all but one of the two-year GCE A level courses during the same period. Retention rates on two-year GCE A level courses between 1997 and 1999 remained poor and are mainly below the national average.

38 Courses are well organised. There are regular team meetings at the main college site, but no equivalent meetings take place at the sixth form college. Part-time staff are invited to meetings, but few attend. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that there is little sharing of good practice by staff.

39 Most teaching accommodation is good, although many rooms lack stimulating display materials. On both sites, the bookstock for some subject areas is poor. At the sixth form college the bookstock itself is insufficient. Some books, for example, in history and geography are out of date and little used. Students at the sixth form college are not yet able to use the Internet or the college's intranet.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in social science, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE psychology	2	Number of starters	75	55	62
		Retention (%)	63	82	85
		Achievement (%)	81	76	79
GCSE law	2	Number of starters	37	15	22
		Retention (%)	70	80	64
		Achievement (%)	60	47	40
GCE A level psychology	3	Number of starters	*	*	21
		Retention (%)	*	*	43
		Achievement (%)	*	*	88
GCE A level law	3	Number of starters	*	*	32
		Retention (%)	*	*	75
		Achievement (%)	*	*	96
GCE A level sociology	3	Number of starters	*	*	21
		Retention (%)	*	*	67
		Achievement (%)	*	*	57
GCE A level geography	3	Number of starters	*	*	11
		Retention (%)	*	*	73
		Achievement (%)	*	*	71

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

\*data unreliable



# Curriculum Areas

## English

### Grade 3

**40 Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering the range of provision in English. They mainly agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that some of the strengths had been overstated.**

#### Key strengths

- much effective and well-planned teaching
- students' good achievements on GCE A level English literature and GCSE English courses
- well-organised teaching of key skills for full-time GCE A level students
- the good quality of students' written work

#### Weaknesses

- low retention rates on GCSE English literature and GCE A level English language courses
- students' low achievement rate on GCE A level communication studies courses
- underdeveloped monitoring of teaching and learning
- unsatisfactory accommodation and resources at Weston Sixth Form College

41 The college offers a wide range of English courses including GCSE English language and English literature, GCE A level English language, English literature and communication studies. GCE A level subjects can be studied by 16 to 19 year olds on two-year full-time courses at Weston Sixth Form College, or on full-time one-year courses at Weston College. They may also be studied on part-time evening courses. GCSE English language is offered on both sites and GCSE English literature is available at Weston College. There is currently a small number of students studying GCSE full time.

The GCE A level English language course has continued to recruit well but enrolments for one-year and two-year GCE A level English literature, and for GCSE English language courses have declined. Some other courses enrol low numbers of students.

42 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that much of the teaching is good and constitutes a strength. Some teaching is outstanding. In the best lessons, students were given demanding tasks. Teachers drew on their own expert subject knowledge and used varied and appropriate teaching methods. In one GCE A level English language lesson, students were given a wide variety of carefully chosen examples of religious language in order to analyse linguistic changes and emotional impact. The activity was well planned and well managed and clearly stimulated students' interest in the subject. In another GCSE English language lesson, students were helped to prepare for the examination by close scrutiny of a prose passage. This lesson was lively and purposeful with students participating in an activity closely tied to final examination requirements. Lesson materials are well produced and effective. In some lessons, the teaching is undemanding and students are not challenged enough to think perceptively, explore ideas and exercise their skills. Teachers often relied on one inappropriate teaching method and the students lost interest in the lesson.

43 Most courses are well managed with full documentation including schemes of work. The best lesson plans are detailed and precise, but others are poor and lack learning objectives to present to the students at the start of lessons. Assessment is prompt and students' work is marked thoroughly and accurately. Course teams use different methods of recording assessment, including various forms. Some of these are well designed and give details of assessment criteria with space for tutors' comments and students' responses.

# Curriculum Areas

Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning and course documentation is currently underdeveloped. The self-assessment report acknowledges that students' poor timekeeping and lack of punctuality constitute a weakness. In several instances, lessons were disrupted by latecomers.

44 The student achievement rate is high in GCE A level English literature and above the national average for the sector in GCSE English language. Whilst the student achievement rate is good in GCSE English literature and GCE A level English language, retention rates on these courses are poor. In 1998, the student achievement rate on GCE A level communication studies was poor and considerably below the national average. The decline in the number of students progressing to higher education has been recognised as a weakness in the

self-assessment report. Students' written work is often of a high standard showing a mature use of critical vocabulary, evidence of wider reading and good literacy key skills. GCE A level English language projects displayed effective use of personal interests and language analysis. The assessment and accreditation of key skills for students at the sixth form college are well organised and thorough. Students can submit work from any subject during general studies lessons and maintain logbooks in which to record their progress. They understand the process and submit a wide variety of subject work for accreditation.

45 Teaching rooms and specialist resources at the main college site are satisfactory. The learning centre at the sixth form college has insufficient texts and no access to the Internet. Accommodation there is unsuitable and uncomfortable. Staff are appropriately qualified.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE English language (one-year course)	2	Number of starters	205	96	109
		Retention (%)	68	74	71
		Achievement (%)	58	68	59
GCSE English literature (one-year course)	2	Number of starters	14	11	15
		Retention (%)	57	73	67
		Achievement (%)	75	88	60
GCE A level English language	3	Number of starters	34	19	35
		Retention (%)	38	63	60
		Achievement (%)	92	83	90
GCE A level communication studies (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	*	*	+
		Retention (%)	*	*	+
		Achievement (%)	*	*	+
GCE A level English literature (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	*	*	20
		Retention (%)	*	*	85
		Achievement (%)	*	*	94
GCE A level English literature (one-year course)	3	Number of starters	*	*	22
		Retention (%)	*	*	68
		Achievement (%)	*	*	93

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

\*data unreliable

+course not running

# Curriculum Areas

## Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

### Grade 2

46 Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering the full range of provision in this curriculum area. They broadly agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report, but considered that the college had underestimated strengths relating to teaching and learning and students' achievements.

#### Key strengths

- well-planned, enthusiastic and effective teaching and tutoring
- effectiveness of courses in preparing students for work
- increased confidence and improved competence of students with learning difficulties
- students' success in progressing to training, further courses and employment
- well-presented portfolios of students' work

#### Weaknesses

- failure to set students specific learning targets
- some poor reviews of students' learning
- inadequate individual learning plans for adults on part-time courses

47 Students include young people and adults with moderate to severe learning difficulties, autism, and emotional and behavioural difficulties. Full-time programmes are designed to improve students' standard of basic education, develop independent living skills and prepare them for the world of work using a range of craft and creative activities and vocational options. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the majority of

students have a period of well-managed work experience. Short courses are also available for adults who wish to learn new skills or try college for the first time. Students enjoy a range of extra-curricular activities and are given the opportunity to show their work in festivals and public displays. Teachers have good links with external agencies. The links with schools and social services enable students to progress smoothly into college. Student retention rates and attendance are good.

48 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that teachers know students' individual learning needs. Careful attention is paid to initial assessment on full-time courses. The educational psychologist and speech therapist identify specific learning support needs if appropriate. All full-time students have individual learning plans which prioritise learning needs and strategies to achieve agreed objectives. All teachers are made aware of these. However, the setting of targets is not always sufficiently detailed for teachers to plan individual programmes effectively. The college has not yet extended the provision of individual learning plans to adults on part-time courses.

49 Most teaching is good. The best lessons are well planned and have clear aims and objectives appropriate to students' needs. Students are clear about the tasks expected of them. Teachers provide numerous opportunities for them to plan their own learning through practical activities. They ensure that students learn to work independently. Most teachers set high standards which they encourage students to achieve. They pay particular attention to the development of skills which will enable students to gain and keep employment. For example, students learn safe working practices in lessons on cycle maintenance. Whilst undertaking simple maintenance tasks, students develop good working habits such as working tidily and taking responsibility for their own toolkit. Role-play is used effectively to teach students how to challenge unsafe working practices.

# Curriculum Areas

In some less successful lessons, teachers teach all the students together and do not let them work at their own pace. In these lessons, some students are not given sufficiently demanding tasks or they repeat work they can already do. At the end of some lessons, teachers do not summarise what the students have learnt or set clear objectives for the next lesson.

50 Students' portfolios contain good work and are well presented. Students can have their attainment recognised through appropriate certification. Students receive regular reviews of their progress. Most students are aware of the extent of their progress. They are, however, set targets that are too general to allow their progress towards reaching them to be monitored properly. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the recording of students' progress is not carried out with consistent thoroughness.

51 Most students make steady progress and achieve their primary learning goal. Those with severe learning difficulties develop confidence and competence as they learn to cope with the college environment. Many increase their independent living and communication skills and feel encouraged to try new experiences. The self-assessment report has identified that students are successful in progressing to further courses, training and employment. In 1999, 80% of full-time students completing their course went into paid work, training or a more advanced course.

52 Students learn their practical and vocational skills in well-equipped specialist accommodation. The IT facilities are good with hardware and software suitable for use by students with a range of disabilities. However, there are no IT facilities in the classrooms. Most teachers produce good teaching resources adapted to the needs of individual students. The provision is well managed and the staff have a commitment to improvement. They are aware of current good practice and are given opportunities to further their own professional development.

# Curriculum Areas

## Basic Skills

### Grade 3

**53 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses stated in the self-assessment report, but they found some strengths and weaknesses the college had not identified.**

#### Key strengths

- well-planned lessons and good teaching in most areas
- effective assessment of basic skills in learning support
- good progression opportunities for students in adult basic education
- effective recording of students' destinations

#### Weaknesses

- ineffective recording and monitoring of students' achievements
- insufficient links between tutors' assessments and individual learning plans
- underdeveloped planning of basic skills provision across the college
- lack of specific targets for basic skills provision

54 Inspectors observed 10 lessons and two study support sessions across the range of provision on the main college site and at two community centres. In May 1998, the college established a basic skills working group. This has increased liaison between departments involved in the teaching of basic skills, promoted the sharing of resources and improved information on the choice of courses. The strategic plan identifies widening participation as an issue to be addressed, but the college has no current policy specifically on basic skills. The college has set targets for widening participation but not for the extent and take-up

of basic skills provision. The provision includes basic skills courses on the college's main site and at centres in the local community, key skills as an integral part of courses in two vocational areas and basic skills as part of learning support. Provision includes 'First Step' courses available at centres in the community. The college monitors students' progress and destinations effectively. There are increasing opportunities for adults from First Step courses to progress to GCSE courses provided in college and in the community.

55 Most teaching is well planned. There is much effective teaching, a strength not identified in the self-assessment report. Following the identification of weaknesses through internal quality audit in November 1998, one department became responsible for all basic skills courses. Basic skills provision is now broader in its scope and teaching and learning methods have been modified to provide students with more opportunity for group work. Initial assessment is well structured. Tutors do not always record their assessments of the students' work or relate these to the students' individual learning plans. Students are sometimes unclear of the purpose or objectives of their learning activities. Assessment of students with reading and spelling difficulties is focused and well recorded in the 'ARROW' centre of learning support. Students follow an intensive short programme based on a multi-sensory approach using a tape recorder. One student on a basic skills course used the lessons to supplement his work with the ARROW centre and has progressed from being a non-reader, to become competent and confident with reading. The college aims to provide students with an appropriate balance between basic skills work related to a specific topic or context, and specific learning activities designed to meet their individual needs. Group activities and tasks are well presented. There is some poor marking of students' work, particularly at entry level. Where work does not lead to certification,

# Curriculum Areas

students' files have little structure and contain few evaluative comments by tutors. Teachers make good use of learning resources and encourage students to wordprocess their work. Library staff encourage and support students to use resource material and work on their own in the library.

56 The college is developing effective links with community-based organisations and offers First Step courses on their premises. Successful courses are run in a residential home for vulnerable young mothers and in areas of social and economic deprivation. A crèche is available for students who have young children. The number of students receiving support with basic skills is growing. In 1998-99, 102 students received support and 136 were receiving it at the time of the inspection. There are effective arrangements for referring students for support. Teachers often work across the college providing adult basic education and general learning support. Qualified part-time staff carry out most teaching.

57 Student retention and achievement rates are unclear. A table of students' achievements has been omitted from this section of the report as the data available do not give a true representation of achievements. Students' attendance at lessons is good and any absenteeism is well monitored. The college has, however, identified the need to improve students' attendance further on some basic skills courses. The college acknowledges past difficulties with data and has taken steps to record the student's primary learning goal accurately. Staff recognise that when planning courses, they need to ensure they are meeting the requirements of those who are under-represented on some programmes, such as women with significant domestic commitments, or persons who are socially disadvantaged. They are aware of the importance of ensuring that students are placed in a group where they feel comfortable, and that they receive help and encouragement to complete their course successfully.

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 2

**58 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They considered, however, that some weaknesses in tutorial support were understated.**

#### Key strengths

- effective pre-entry guidance and admissions procedures
- particularly good induction to courses and support functions
- much good support for students from personal tutors
- effective identification of students' needs for learning support
- good careers advice and guidance
- accessible and well-publicised advice on welfare and financial matters

#### Weaknesses

- a few instances of weak tutorial support in some areas
- insufficient staff development training for tutors
- unsatisfactory careers education in a few areas

59 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that some significant improvements have been made to the services and support provided to students. The overwhelming majority of students receive effective guidance and support. Members of the student services team work together well to provide advice, guidance and learning support. The college monitors the quality of its work in this area effectively.

60 Courses and facilities at the college are well publicised using a wide range of attractive and informative prospectuses and leaflets.

Through its links with local schools, the college provides substantial advice and guidance to year 11 pupils. Pupils can also attend college to sample a range of courses to improve their understanding of the opportunities available. College staff attend careers conventions in schools and there are open days for potential students. Sessions have been held in schools to explain curriculum 2000. Surveys of students' views show that they have high regard for the quality of pre-course information, application and interview processes. Of the students, 94% say they are on the right course, supporting the judgement in the self-assessment report that students are guided well and choose appropriate courses.

61 Students are equally positive about their introduction to their course and the college. Standards for induction programmes are set. Teaching teams are required to produce detailed induction programmes which cover the important aspects of their courses and the college services and facilities.

62 A comprehensive handbook for tutors acts as a good source of reference and provides a wide range of guidance to help tutors support their students successfully. Students' progress is well recorded. Parent evenings are held when parents of students aged 16 to 18 can discuss the progress of their son or daughter with staff. In general, students' attendance is monitored effectively and students who miss lessons are contacted. In some instances, however, there is unnecessary delay in contacting absentees. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that some aspects of tutorial provision are poor. Overall, the grades inspectors gave for tutorial sessions were lower than those awarded by the college. Tutorial sessions vary significantly in effectiveness and some are poor. There is ineffective use of some tutorial time, especially at the sixth form college. There has been some staff development for new tutors. The college has not, however, initiated a

# Cross-college Provision

programme of staff development which aims to lead to an improvement in the overall quality of tutoring in the college.

63 Links with Learning Partnership West are well established. Careers guidance from tutors and careers advisers is well publicised and easy for students to obtain. Careers education programmes, based on a GNVQ careers unit, are a required element of tutorial programmes for full-time students. As the self-assessment report identifies, careers education programmes are more effective in some parts of the college than in others. Completion rates for the GNVQ careers unit have been low in many areas. Careers advisers now spend more time on specific courses at level 2 which enrol many students who are undecided about their future careers.

64 As the self-assessment report states, close attention is paid to identifying students who need extra support to help them to succeed and to providing them with effective learning support. The college's learning support co-ordinator is informed of pupils in partner schools who are receiving extra support. The college receives high levels of FEFC funding for the provision of extra support. It uses this funding well. A 'drop-in' support workshop is provided and individual students receive help from additional teachers in lessons. Analysis of retention rates for students receiving learning support shows that they are higher than the overall college retention rate.

65 A good range of advice and guidance services on personal and welfare issues is available to students. These services are well publicised and most students know that they are available. Students based on the main college site find them more accessible than students based elsewhere. The college dedicates significant funding to supporting students who need to meet childcare or travel costs in order to attend and succeed at college. Students are enabled to make childcare arrangements near

their home if they feel these are more suitable for their children and they value the opportunity to do so. Students with specific welfare problems may be referred to a range of local agencies.

## General Resources

### Grade 2

**66 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but considered that some had been overstated or understated. They identified additional strengths and weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- extensive and effective maintenance and refurbishment of accommodation
- good library and learning centre at the main college site
- easy access for students and staff to suitable information learning technology resources
- popular, pleasant and reasonably priced cafeterias
- good communal facilities for students

#### Weaknesses

- the inadequate library at the sixth form college
- some poor accommodation still awaiting refurbishment and improvement
- the under-utilisation of accommodation

67 The college is accommodated on three main sites. The original site is the Hans Price Building, a Victorian grade II listed building on the Knightstone campus. The main nine-storey Knightstone block was built in 1969. It is much the largest of the college's sites. Westcliff, 0.5 miles from Knightstone, comprises five linked late-Victorian grade II listed houses.



# Cross-college Provision

Weston Sixth Form College, 2 miles from Knightstone, was built in the late 1950s as a two-storey school block. In addition, the college owns half of a nearby Victorian primary school and rents two small sites in Nailsea and Portishead, mainly for IT courses.

68 A major external improvement project has greatly enhanced the appearance and weatherproofing of Westcliff and much of the Knightstone site. This project is due for completion in 2000. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that an effectively planned maintenance programme has substantially enhanced the quality of the estate. College sites are kept clean. Maintenance problems remain. The sixth form college suffers from a backlog of structural faults. The single-storey engineering building at Knightstone is in poor external condition. General teaching accommodation has improved since the last inspection. Many classrooms at Knightstone and some at the sixth form college have been redecorated and furnished to an improved specification. A few classrooms at Knightstone and parts of the sixth form college are scheduled for upgrading, but at the time of the inspection, still presented a poor quality learning environment. An excellent atrium, reception area and student services now welcome students and visitors to Knightstone.

69 The college is fully committed to improving access for people with physical and sensory disabilities. A working party advises on disability issues and governors involve themselves in monitoring progress. Consultants' advice has been sought on ways of making the sixth form college more accessible to the physically disabled, where the upper storey is at present inaccessible to them. Most of the Knightstone campus is accessible. Ramps, chair-lifts and appropriate toilets have been installed. Measures have been taken to improve access at the Victorian properties, but many parts of them remain difficult for people with restricted mobility.

70 The college submitted an updated accommodation strategy to the FEFC in April 2000. The strategy makes it plain that at present, accommodation is not fully utilised. The design of Knightstone and nature of the Victorian buildings hinder efficient utilisation. The accommodation strategy addresses these problems as well as the poor condition and unsuitable nature of some areas. Under-utilisation is not identified in the self-assessment report.

71 There are large well-furnished student common rooms at Knightstone and the sixth form college. Provision of a small smoking room at Knightstone helps to enforce the college's no smoking policy. At Knightstone, students can choose between cafeteria or restaurant meals in pleasant surroundings. Prices are reasonable and the food is good. There is also an Internet café and a well-stocked shop. Westcliff and the sixth form college also offer good catering services. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the catering and common room facilities are a strength of the college's resources.

72 There is a good library and learning centre at Knightstone. The study environment is pleasant and spacious. There is a well-resourced careers section. Printed and audiovisual resources for curriculum areas are adequate and some are good. There are learning resource packs, regularly updated, for various subject areas. Students can book one of 22 computers, and 20 of these give access to the Internet. Library and learning resources are well managed and staff are well qualified. The sixth form college library has improved since it has been part of Weston College. However, some curriculum areas are still inadequate and too many books are outdated. Items from the main library can be ordered by students and delivered daily. The inadequacy of the sixth form college library is acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

# Cross-college Provision

73 There is a well-managed strategy for the development of information learning technology. Provision in this area has been rapidly improved recently. In 1998, there were 291 computers in the college for students to use. By September 1999, there were 425 suitable computers for students to use, giving a ratio of students to computers of 7:1. Staff have ready access to computers in or near workrooms.

74 Inspectors did not agree with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the provision of sporting and leisure activities for students is underdeveloped. There is a wide range of sports, games and other activities available on and off site. The college fields teams in many sports.

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 2

**75 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but identified additional weaknesses. Most of the weaknesses identified in the report had been addressed by the time of inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- well-established quality assurance policy and effective procedures
- good integration of quality assurance with strategic and operational planning
- thorough self-assessment process involving all staff and governors
- rigorous internal audit system
- well-developed use of targets by most course teams
- effective monitoring of franchised provision

#### Weaknesses

- wide variation in the quality of teaching and learning
- underdeveloped standard setting and monitoring in some service areas
- insufficient sharing of good practice in teaching and learning

76 Since the last inspection, the college has made steady progress in improving quality assurance procedures. The college has a clear quality assurance policy and framework that is fully understood by all staff. The quality assurance process is well planned to enable its outcomes to be taken into account in strategic and operational planning. The quality assurance committee and the governors curriculum and quality committee effectively monitor quality assurance compliance and developments. Senior managers review issues related to the quality of provision each month.

77 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the college has developed good internal quality audit processes. In November 1999, five curriculum areas were audited. The system of internal audit is rigorous and mirrors the FEFC inspection process. Grades are awarded using the FEFC grade descriptors and a detailed report is produced for each area. The quality assurance committee, the academic board and the corporation consider reports. The quality improvement group pays close attention to courses where retention or achievement rates are more than 5% below the national benchmark. For each of these courses, an action plan is then required. The group has worked successfully with several courses. For example, the achievement rates on one creative art and design course were particularly poor but in one year they have increased to 100%. Teaching and learning styles on some courses have been changed with the aim of improving student retention rates. On occasions courses have been withdrawn when no improvement has been shown.

# Cross-college Provision

78 There is an annual cycle of course reviews. The use of targets is well developed in the college and most course teams use targets effectively. Key strengths and weaknesses of courses are identified and action plans are produced. Programme team leaders and heads of department monitor the implementation of these plans. The senior manager responsible for quality assurance also audits the reviews and regularly monitors progress in carrying out action plans. The quality of the majority of course reviews is good.

79 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the college has an extensive lesson observation programme. The college graded more lessons 2 or above than inspectors did. The lesson observations form part of the internal quality audit reviews and are carried out by a team of trained observers. Teachers who are graded 4 or 5 receive appropriate support from their line manager, including more observations of their lessons. They continue to receive support until their teaching reaches a satisfactory standard. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge the lack of sharing of good practice in teaching and learning in some curriculum areas. In some lessons, the quality of teaching and learning was outstanding. Teachers who receive high grades are not used effectively as a staff development resource to help other teachers and their methods and good practice are not disseminated to staff across the college. Inspectors graded 58% of lessons 2 or above. In 1998 and 1999, the college graded 75% and 65% of lessons 2 or above, respectively. Inspectors observed a wide range in the quality of teaching and learning between departments with three of the six areas below sector average. In recent years, student retention and achievement rates have improved in some areas.

80 The college produced its third self-assessment report for the inspection. The self-assessment process was a thorough and consultative process involving all staff and governors and which draws upon a wide range of evidence. The self-assessment report is clearly set out and each section includes an action plan. The report was prepared before the college incorporated the former sixth form centre. The college provided an addendum to the report for inspectors which included judgements on the quality of provision at the new sixth form college. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the report. However, they also identified further strengths and weaknesses and placed greater significance on some of the weaknesses than the college had in its report. Inspectors also considered that the college had overestimated some of the strengths, particularly those relating to teaching and learning and students' achievements.

81 There are separate charters for students and employers. These are reviewed annually. There is a comprehensive complaints system and response to complaints is quick and effective. Students' views are effectively sought in a variety of ways and their concerns are acted upon. The college also seeks the views of parents and employers annually. Summaries of the responses are disseminated widely. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the setting and monitoring of service standards in some areas require further development. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that monitoring of the quality of franchised provision is effective. However, franchise partners are not directly involved in the self-assessment process, a weakness not acknowledged by the college.

82 All staff are now appraised annually. The appraisal of teachers includes lesson observation. Staff development arrangements are good. All staff are encouraged to undertake staff development activities. The annual staff

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development training plan covers short periods in industry, attendance on higher level courses and study for teaching qualifications.

## Governance

### *Grade 1*

**83 The self-assessment report was comprehensive. By the time of the inspection, most of the weaknesses identified in the report had been addressed. Inspectors and auditors agreed with the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. They considered that the weaknesses were not major.**

#### Key strengths

- effective deployment of governors' experience and skills
- positive and productive relationship with college managers
- governors' knowledge and understanding of college and national developments
- productive involvement in strategic planning
- high standard of clerking and efficient conduct of corporation business
- governors' diligent monitoring of the college's performance
- governors' regular and extensive evaluation of the corporation's performance
- governors' involvement in the college's self-assessment process

#### Weaknesses

- low attendance by a few corporation members

84 There have been significant improvements in governance since the last inspection. The corporation has a membership of 16, the majority of whom have been appointed since the

last inspection. Governors have a wide range of appropriate professional and business expertise that is effectively used to the benefit of the college and are well informed about the work of the college. They attend the college frequently on formal and informal occasions and take part in internal and external training events.

The corporation meets monthly and allocates time at the start of each meeting for brisk presentations on current educational topics. Targets and performance indicators are set to monitor governors' involvement in training events. However, as noted in the self-assessment report, there is no formal training plan for governors. The search committee has been effective in appointing new members promptly. New governors receive comprehensive induction.

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

86 Inspectors agreed with the college's view that governors conduct their business efficiently. The corporation operates within a well-structured framework. A comprehensive set of standing orders determines the conduct of meetings. Agendas are clear and comprehensive supporting papers facilitate effective decision-making. Minutes are clear and concise. Progress in implementation of actions recommended by the corporation is monitored at each meeting. Governors have identified essential information they need to enable them to monitor the college's performance effectively. The implementation of key policies is evaluated and their content is reviewed to an annual timetable. The clerk performs his duties to a high standard. Attendance targets are set and progress towards reaching them is monitored. However, as the

# Cross-college Provision

self-assessment acknowledged, the attendance record of a few governors is less than satisfactory. Governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They have confidence in college managers, but on occasions, they challenge their recommendations and do not necessarily accept them without rigorous debate. There are comprehensive procedures for open governance. A detailed annual report is produced.

87 The college has established a range of effective committees and the deployment of governors on committees makes best use of their expertise. Each committee has terms of reference approved by the corporation. Meetings are arranged to ensure that decisions can be made and quickly reported to the corporation. As noted in the self-assessment report, governors are well informed about financial matters and exercise effective oversight of the college's financial position. The finance committee monitors the college's finances closely through the careful consideration of appropriately detailed monthly financial reports. The academic board and the college's internal quality group report to the recently established curriculum and quality committee. Reports on applications to the college and on students' enrolments, retention and achievement rates are now considered at each meeting. Co-opted members with specialist skills serve on the audit committee. The governance advisory committee reviews the effectiveness of the committees and the corporation and disseminates good practice.

88 Governors play a full part in shaping the college's strategic objectives. They have close involvement in the preparation, evaluation and approval of the strategic and operational plans through meetings and training events. This enables governors and college managers to develop a shared view and vision of the college. With clear leadership from the principal and the corporation, the development of the Weston Sixth Form College has been successfully completed. As the self-assessment report identified, governors pay close attention to the

quality of the college's provision. The corporation makes good use of performance indicators and benchmarks in setting targets against which to assess the success of the college generally. Governors systematically monitor students' performance and the outcome of quality assurance arrangements.

89 Inspectors agreed that the corporation has a highly self-critical approach to its performance. Governors have set targets to monitor their own performance. They have commissioned independent consultants to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the corporation's operations. Each committee regularly reviews its work and produces an annual report for consideration by the corporation. The chair appraises individual governors annually. There is good awareness of current best practice relating to governance and clerkship issues. The corporation's action plan for effective governance is reviewed at each meeting. There has been full corporation involvement in the college's self-assessment process. There are effective arrangements for the appraisal of the principal and senior postholders against agreed objectives.

## Management

### *Grade 2*

**90 Inspectors agreed with the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. Most of the weaknesses had been rectified by the time of the inspection. Inspectors identified a few additional minor weaknesses.**

#### **Key strengths**

- successful management of change
- clear management structure and good communications
- staff involvement in strategic and operational planning
- effective financial management
- strong and effective external links
- efficient deployment of resources

# Cross-college Provision

## Weaknesses

- some unreliable data on students' achievements
- underdeveloped management information system

91 Weston College is well managed. Following a poor inspection report in 1995, a reorganised management team has successfully brought about significant change in the college. Clear corporate aims, focusing on college development and service to students and the community, have been effectively pursued. The main centre in Weston-super-Mare has been redeveloped. New centres have been opened in Nailsea and Portishead. In September 1999, sixth form provision in Weston-super-Mare was transferred to the college. A fundamental change in management culture has also been achieved. Management is now open and senior managers make themselves readily accessible to staff. Staff are encouraged to express their views and these are valued.

92 Clear line management and communication structures for both teaching and support staff are easily understood and appreciated by staff. An appropriate range of committees and working groups deals with cross-college issues. The self-assessment report refers to inconsistencies in management practice, but inspectors found little evidence of this. Where inconsistencies are recognised, they are addressed through a management compliance working group, chaired by the principal. There are high standards of personal accountability. There is now greater consistency in course management practices across the college and staff are required to maintain files of standard information on courses. These files are well maintained.

93 Staff are appropriately involved in strategic and operational planning. The strategic plan is clear and comprehensive. Curriculum and

support departments produce annual operating plans that reflect strategic objectives. However, the college lacks a suitable plan for the provision of basic skills across the college. Course teams use benchmarking data and past performance to set targets for students' retention and achievements for each course. Targets for attendance are not set. Progress in implementing actions in operational plans is monitored and recorded twice each year. At the end of the year, teaching and support departments produce useful annual reports and action plans for consideration by the senior management team and the academic board. Although the implementation of the college's action plans is monitored effectively, it is not always easy for managers to maintain a clear overview of all necessary actions because these are set out in too many different planning documents.

94 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The finance team includes an appropriate number of qualified and experienced staff. The college is in a sound financial position and the senior management team and budget holders exercise close budgetary control. Monthly management accounts are appropriately detailed, but lack a balance sheet forecast to the year-end. A full review of financial regulations has not been performed since January 1998. However, some individual policies have been updated during the intervening period.

95 The college deploys resources efficiently. Teaching, management and administrative costs are below sector averages. Potential savings are identified through reviews of the cost of areas of activity. For example, the high cost of motor vehicle provision, combined with unsatisfactory students' achievements, prompted the college to transfer provision to a private provider. In 1998-99, the college did not meet its FEFC funding unit targets. In part this was due to a significant shortfall in planned franchise activity.

# Cross-college Provision

The college nevertheless generated an operating surplus. The college expects to meet its funding unit target for 1999-2000. Approximately 5% of college funds are derived from franchise arrangements. These contracts are efficiently administered.

96 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment judgement that the college has strong and effective external links. Inspectors agreed with the judgement that there is little formal market research, although the college's extensive links with schools, the community and employers give college managers a good general knowledge of the market. Good links with North Somerset LEA and local schools enabled the smooth transfer of sixth form provision to the college to be accomplished. From September 2000, the LEA's adult and community education provision will be transferred to the college. The college has also worked with the LEA to provide education for disaffected pupils aged between 14 and 16. College managers are involved in promoting the educational strategy for the area.

97 The new college management information system provides accurate basic information about enrolments, withdrawals and students' qualification aims. It is easy to understand and use. All senior and middle managers can access the system in their offices. Regular checks are made with managers to ensure that information is up to date. The system does not yet include students' examination results and attendance record as part of the data on students. It cannot yet provide sufficient analytical information to assist management decisions.

98 The college promotes equal opportunities effectively. The college policy on equal opportunities has been updated recently. The equal opportunities committee meets regularly and monitors the extent to which students who drop out of courses are male or female or from one particular ethnic group. A disability equality consultative committee advises the

equal opportunities committee on the accessibility of the college to people with physical disabilities, and other issues.

## Conclusions

99 The college produced its third self-assessment report for the inspection. The self-assessment report is clearly set out and provided a sound basis for planning the inspection. Each section includes an action plan. The report was prepared before the college incorporated the former sixth form centre. The college provided an addendum to the report for inspectors which included judgements on the quality of provision at the new sixth form college. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the report. However, they also identified further strengths and weaknesses and placed greater significance on some of the weaknesses than the college had in its report. Inspectors also considered that the college had overestimated some of the strengths, particularly those relating to teaching and learning and students' achievements. Inspectors agreed with four of the grades for curriculum areas. They awarded one curriculum area a higher grade, and two curriculum areas a lower grade, than that given by the college. They agreed with four of the college's grades for the five areas of cross-college provision but awarded the remaining area a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

100 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 (March 2000)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	1
16-18 years	15
19-24 years	12
25+ years	72
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

## Student numbers by level of study (March 2000)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	32
Level 2 (intermediate)	24
Level 3 (advanced)	26
Level 4/5 (higher)	1
Non-schedule 2	17
Total	100

Source: college data

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	265	2,090	30
Agriculture	13	14	1
Construction	61	126	2
Engineering	29	150	2
Business	223	697	12
Hotel and catering	178	669	11
Health and community care	426	1,193	21
Art and design	382	117	6
Humanities	318	589	11
Basic education	75	272	4
Total	1,970	5,917	100

Source: college data

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 9% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1999)

	<i>Per- manent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	125	2	0	127
Supporting direct learning contact	52	4	4	60
Other support	59	4	8	71
Total	236	10	12	258

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



# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£10,204,000	£10,067,000	£11,566,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£15.04	£15.39	£16.20
Payroll as a proportion of income	50%	51%	48%
Achievement of funding target	126%	99%	96%
Diversity of income	18%	19%	24%
Operating surplus	£4,000	£3,000	£66,000

*Sources: Income - college (1997), Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999)*

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

*Payroll - college (1997), Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999)*

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

*Diversity of income - college (1997), Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999)*

*Operating surplus - college (1997), Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999)*

*\*subject to external audit*

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