

# Widnes Sixth Form College

**REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE**  
**1997-98**

THE  
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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.

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

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

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

## Retention and Pass Rates

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

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

# Summary

## Widnes Sixth Form College

### *North West Region*

#### **Inspected November 1997**

In assembling its self-assessment report, Widnes Sixth Form College in Cheshire relied heavily on findings from the previous inspection and points emerging from reviews of subject areas at the end of 1996-97. The college is implementing its revised quality assurance policy for the first time this year and arrangements for self-assessment are still evolving. Inspectors found that the college's judgements were realistic and usually accurate, but they were not derived from a sufficiently thorough and comprehensive process involving all sections of the college.

The college caters for 16 to 19 year old full-time students. It offers a wide choice of GCE A/AS level and GCSE subjects and six GNVQ courses. About 89 per cent of students follow advanced level courses, mostly in humanities and science. The inspection focused mainly on GCE A level and GCSE provision in these and two other programme areas. Inspectors also formed judgements about aspects of cross-college provision. Standards of teaching are good. In most subjects, levels of students' achievements in 1997 GCE A level examinations show significant improvement on recent years. Retention rates for one-year courses are high but rarely rise above 80 per cent for two-year courses. Some specialist resources are good. The overall quality of provision in English is outstanding. In all subjects, teachers are well

qualified and offer their students high levels of pastoral and academic support. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities. Senior managers are clear about the key strategic issues facing the college and communicate them well to staff. Staff development is effective. Governors bring a wide range of experience and expertise to their role, but they are not sufficiently involved in strategic planning and the self-assessment process. If the college is to continue to improve the quality of its provision it should: develop further its arrangements for learning support; improve the quality of some tutorials; continue to improve the quality of learning resources and accommodation; make greater use of its wealth of accurate data relating to students; rectify identified shortcomings in curriculum management; and develop further its quality assurance arrangements to include a rigorous self-assessment process.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science	2	Support for students	2
Mathematics and computing	3	General resources	3
Business	2	Quality assurance	3
Art, media and theatre studies	2	Governance	3
English	1	Management	3
History, geography and politics	3		

## The College and its Mission

1 Widnes Sixth Form College is situated in a semi-rural location on the edge of the borough of Halton in Cheshire. Unlike the rest of the county, Halton is urban and industrialised. Three-quarters of the college's students live in the towns of Widnes and Runcorn, which form the borough. The remainder live in Warrington, other parts of Cheshire or the surrounding Merseyside districts of Knowsley, St Helens and Liverpool. Levels of deprivation in these Merseyside areas and Halton are broadly similar. In May 1997, the rate of unemployment in the borough was almost 8 per cent, one of the highest in the North West. According to figures provided by the local training and enterprise council (TEC), the level of youth unemployment in Halton is nearly 33 per cent.

2 Within the borough, the college competes for students aged 16 to 18 with six schools and a general further education college. Three sixth form colleges, a tertiary college and three general further education colleges outside the borough are also easily accessible to residents of Halton. In 1997, 34 per cent of school-leavers in Halton gained five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above compared with 45 per cent for the whole of England.

3 On 1 November 1997, the college had 889 full-time students on roll. Almost all were aged 16 to 19 and about 89 per cent were following advanced level courses. Student numbers have risen by about 13 per cent over the last three years. The college's portfolio of courses includes 34 general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), 14 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) and 12 GCSE subjects. Three advanced and three intermediate level courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) are also offered. A new principal was appointed in September 1996 and a revised management structure was introduced a year later. There are four faculties: business

and vocational studies; communications and performing arts; humanities and social sciences; and mathematics and science. The management team comprises the principal, two vice-principals, two assistant principals and the four faculty heads. The college employs 80 full-time equivalent staff; about 27 per cent are support staff.

4 The mission of the college is 'to strive for excellence for all, enabling each individual to reach her or his full potential'. In pursuit of this aim, the college promises a curriculum sufficiently flexible to cater for students whose needs are best served by academic and general vocational courses. It undertakes to provide rigorous and challenging teaching combined with sensitive and supportive pastoral care, and it is committed to developing systematic learning support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

# Context

## The Inspection

5 The inspection took place in the week beginning 24 November 1997. In June 1997, the inspection team evaluated a first draft of the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other divisions of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). At the beginning of September 1997, the college was notified of the sample of its provision which was to be assessed by inspectors. Later that month, the college submitted a full analysis of data on students' achievements for the three years 1995 to 1997 which were validated by two inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. Before the inspection, the college updated its self-assessment report to take account of students' achievements in 1997.

6 The inspection team comprised nine inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 31 days. Inspectors observed 73 classes, examined samples of students' work and scrutinised a variety of college documents. Members of the inspection team observed a meeting of the corporation and held discussions with six of its members and the clerk. There were also meetings with managers, college staff and students and discussions by telephone with representatives from the local TEC and the local education authority (LEA).

7 Of the 73 lessons inspected, 63 per cent were good or outstanding. The corresponding

average for colleges inspected in 1996-97, recorded in *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*, was 61 per cent. Fewer than 3 per cent of lessons observed were less than satisfactory compared with the national average of 8 per cent in 1996-97 according to the same report. Attendance rates in the classes inspected averaged 80 per cent and ranged from 76 per cent in mathematics and computing to 83 per cent in business and English. During the inspection some students were undertaking work experience. College data show that the average attendance for the first half of the autumn term was almost 90 per cent. According to the chief inspector's report the national average attendance rate for sixth form colleges in 1996-97 was 84 per cent. The following table shows the grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

### Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	11	27	19	1	0	58
GCSE	2	4	4	1	0	11
Other	1	1	2	0	0	4
Total	14	32	25	2	0	73

# Curriculum Areas

## Science

### Grade 2

**8 The college offers GCE A level and GCSE courses in physics, chemistry, and biology and GCE A level courses in human biology, environmental science and geology.**

**Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering all subjects except geology. Inspectors concluded that the college accurately judged the major strengths of teaching and learning in science. However, the four subject review summaries which inform the report are not sufficiently evaluative. Although strengths are usually clearly stated, weaknesses have to be deduced from the action plans. The college's self-assessment report includes grades for individual subjects as well as a single grade for science.**

#### Key strengths

- effective and safe practical work
- thorough assessment of coursework and homework
- helpful additional support for students' learning
- good retention on one-year GCE A level courses
- in most subjects, good overall pass rates in GCE A level examinations
- above average achievements in GCSE biology and chemistry examinations
- well-resourced and effectively serviced laboratories
- careful consideration of curricular issues

#### Weaknesses

- isolated examples of ineffective teaching and classroom management
- some poor retention rates
- some GCE A level pass rates at the higher grades A to C which are below national averages

- poor design of much of the specialist science accommodation

**9** Inspectors agreed with the college that well-conducted practical work underpinned the teaching of theory in all subjects. Carefully-planned classes were well resourced and effectively serviced by efficient technical support staff. Most teaching was lively and succeeded in stimulating students' interest in the topics studied. Skilled questioning probed students' knowledge, developed their reasoning powers and provided opportunities for revision. In a few instances, teachers did not ensure that all students contributed to discussions.

Occasionally, lessons moved at too slow a pace for the more able students. Homework and coursework of an appropriate standard are set frequently. Staff make sure students hand in work, even if it is late. Marking is done carefully and fairly, and includes formative and evaluative written comments to help students to improve. Some staff frequently test students to motivate them to learn and to check their understanding. Physics and biology students benefit from additional classes in mathematics and chemistry, respectively. The science learning resource centre and subject clinics provide further opportunities for students to clarify their understanding of techniques and topics.

**10** Students' achievements were not covered fully in the self-assessment report. Students on one-year GCE A level programmes, who are usually seeking to improve their grades, generally complete their courses and do well in examinations. For the last three years, pass rates in chemistry have exceeded 85 per cent; at least 60 per cent of students achieved grades A to C. In 1997, the pass rate in environmental science was 91 per cent. On two-year GCE A level courses, students' retention rates are poorer, usually around 70 per cent. All 10 students who completed the environmental science course in 1997 were successful. Over



# Curriculum Areas

the last three years, pass rates in physics and biology have improved and are now within 5 per cent of national averages for 18 year olds in sixth form colleges. The percentage of students achieving grades C or above in GCSE examinations is decreasing but in biology it still exceeds the national averages for 16 to 18 year olds in sixth form colleges. GCSE pass rates at grades C or above have declined over the last three years.

11 The science curriculum is carefully considered, and changes have been made to the benefit of students. Modular courses are now offered in physics, chemistry and biology. Staff have prepared good learning resources and purchased new books to support the changes. The self-assessment report indicates that other resources are gradually improving. There is sufficient specialist equipment to enable students to carry out practical work on their own, though teachers also encourage students to co-operate and collaborate with each other when appropriate. All science classes take place in specialist accommodation. Two new science laboratories have been brought into use in recent years, and are better designed than the five older laboratories.

## Examples of students' achievements in science, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A/AS level	Retention (%)	73	84	81
	Pass rate (%)	82	79	84
GCSE	Retention (%)	86	98	100
	Pass rate (%)	61	49	39

*Source: college data*

# Curriculum Areas

## Mathematics and Computing

### Grade 3

**12 The inspection focused on GCE A/AS level and GCSE provision in mathematics and computing and included observation of 14 lessons. In the individual subject reviews, the college identified areas for improvement. However, in drawing out the key strengths and weaknesses, inspectors considered that insufficient attention was paid to teaching and learning, and students' achievements.**

#### Key strengths

- well-planned lessons which enable students to undertake a variety of activities
- homework and assignments which are regularly set and appropriately marked
- good examination results in GCE A level pure and applied mathematics and in GCE AS computing and information technology
- above average GCSE mathematics results
- effective teamwork within each subject area
- easy access to high-quality resources

#### Weaknesses

- in some classes, insufficient attention to individuals' needs
- low attendance in GCSE mathematics and GCE A level computing classes
- some poor retention rates for two-year GCE A/AS level courses
- poor examination results in GCE A level computing and GCE AS mathematics
- poor responses by some students to work set by their teachers
- some students who are ill-suited to the GCSE mathematics course

13 There is a good range of courses in mathematics and computing. The introduction of modular schemes in mathematics and an intermediate GNVQ course in information technology have increased the options available to students. Staff meet regularly. Roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and there is a commitment to teamwork. For example, staff share schemes of work and use common teaching materials. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, work is set regularly and marked carefully so that students know how they can improve. Record-keeping is good. Teachers are appropriately qualified and well able to meet the demands placed upon them. Staff and students have easy access to high-quality resources. In computing, technician support is adequate and up-to-date hardware and software are available for students to use during timetabled lessons and at other times which suit them. In mathematics, all students are provided with textbooks.

14 Generally, lessons were well planned and effective but none were outstanding. Good relationships between staff and students helped to foster a purposeful learning environment. In both subjects, students were usually taught as a group before working individually. In computing, students worked on projects which aimed to provide solutions to problems encountered by local businesses. Some GCE A level mathematics lessons also involved practical work. Teachers did not pay sufficient attention to the particular needs of students who were repeating GCSE mathematics courses to try to improve their grades. This point was not included in the self-assessment report. Attendance was poor in GCSE mathematics and GCE A level computing lessons, and in lessons which aimed to improve students' awareness of computers and develop their information technology skills.

15 The quality of students' work is variable. Some GCE A level mathematics and computing students and some GCSE mathematics students

# Curriculum Areas

fail to hand in work regularly to be marked. Work which is completed often reveals a lack of understanding about topics and techniques. Inspectors concurred with judgements in the reviews of subject areas which related to examination results. Since the introduction of modular courses, GCE A level pure and applied mathematics results have improved whereas those for pure mathematics and statistics have declined. Over the last two years, pass rates for GCE A level computing have improved by almost 30 per cent to 71 per cent, but they are still below the national average for 18 year olds in sixth form colleges. Retention rates fluctuate on two-year GCE A/AS level courses and are declining on GCSE courses. In 1997, only 51 per cent of students who initially enrolled for GCE AS information technology passed the examination. In GCE AS mathematics, the equivalent figure was 25 per cent. The college has now discontinued the practice of insisting that GCE A level students broaden their programmes of study by choosing an additional GCE AS course. For the last three years, the percentage of students gaining grades C or above in GCSE mathematics has been about 50 per cent. This figure is about 5 per cent above the national average for 16 to 18 year olds in sixth form colleges.

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

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level	Retention (%)	83	74	74
	Pass rate (%)	62	75	84
GCE AS	Retention (%)	49	87	58
	Pass rate (%)	62	75	80
GCSE	Retention (%)	95	91	84
	Pass rate (%)	52	54	49

Source: college data

# Curriculum Areas

## Business

### Grade 2

**16 The inspection included observation of 11 classes including GCE A level, GCSE and second-year advanced GNVQ. Although students from intermediate GNVQ courses and the first year of the advanced GNVQ courses were undertaking work experience, their work was scrutinised as part of the inspection. In its self-assessment report, the college identified many strengths endorsed by the inspection. Weaknesses were included within an overall college action plan. Inspectors considered that subject and course reviews did not give sufficient prominence to the evaluation of teaching and learning.**

#### Key strengths

- a variety of activities used appropriately to promote learning
- a businesslike and professional approach to classroom activities
- the industrial experience of teachers
- improving GCE A level examination results and good GNVQ results
- well-produced GNVQ assignments set in a vocational context
- thorough marking of students' work

#### Weaknesses

- poor lesson plans
- some classroom teaching which failed to motivate students
- declining GCSE examination results and variable retention rates
- lack of sharing of good practice among teachers
- some poor specialist accommodation

17 Among the strengths, the self-assessment report highlights the variety of teaching styles used by staff to sustain students' interest. This

variety was evident in many of the lessons observed during the inspection: teachers combined presentations with effective question and answer sessions and group work to promote students' learning. A professional and businesslike approach helped to emphasise the standards of performance to which students should aspire. In a minority of lessons, conducted in a more relaxed and informal atmosphere, teachers failed to ensure that all students benefited from the lesson. Although all GNVQ students undertake work experience and some participate in outside visits, the self-assessment report justifiably recognises the need to provide more opportunities for students to relate their theoretical knowledge to current vocational practice.

18 GCE A level results have improved from 61 per cent in 1995 to 88 per cent in 1997. However, in two of the last three years, retention rates have been below 80 per cent. In the last three years, proportions of students achieving grades C or above in GCSE business declined; in 1997 only three out of 11 students completing the course gained the higher grades. The retention rates for the last two years have been 100 per cent. Pass rates and retention rates on the intermediate GNVQ course have been generally good over the last three years. Although the advanced GNVQ pass rate declined from 82 per cent in 1996 to 64 per cent in 1997, it still compares favourably with the national average.

19 In all courses, staff use a common format for their schemes of work. Each scheme sets out the topics to be covered and the calendar to be followed. Staff may also choose to record learning strategies and associated resources. The best schemes are detailed and serve as useful planning documents but not all are up to this standard. In assessing GCE A level and GNVQ students' assignments, staff provide clear written comments to indicate the standards attained and how they can be raised. Each student is provided with a useful 'progress

# Curriculum Areas

profile' which includes a course outline and sections for notes, action plans and results. Other documentation, such as mark books, and procedures relating to students' absences, are not consistently used or applied.

20 Staff are well qualified. About half have recent industrial experience which they use well to illustrate their teaching. In the self-assessment report, staff acknowledge that they need to improve further their information technology skills. Learning resources such as handouts and assignment sheets are often of good quality but there is not enough sharing of good practice and pooling of staff expertise to produce them. Students have poor access to computers when they are not in lessons. Software on different machines is not always compatible. The library stock for business subjects is well used but many press cuttings are outdated and in need of replacement. The college recognises that many classrooms used for business courses are either of poor quality or are too small for larger groups. Wall displays go some way to brighten the learning environment.

## Examples of students' achievements in business, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A/AS level	Retention (%)	78	84	77
	Pass rate (%)	61	77	88
GCSE	Retention (%)	70	100	100
	Pass rate (%)	71	50	27
Advanced vocational	Retention (%)	+	69	73
	Pass rate (%)	+	82	64
Intermediate vocational	Retention (%)	90	100	92
	Pass rate (%)	89	91	75

Source: college data

+college did not begin the course until 1994, and the first results were achieved in 1996

# Curriculum Areas

## Art, Media and Theatre Studies

### Grade 2

**21** Inspectors observed nine lessons intended to prepare students for GCE A/AS level and GCSE examinations in art, media, theatre studies and drama. In its self-assessment report, the college graded each subject before determining a single grade for the programme area. Inspectors agreed with the assessments of media and theatre studies, but felt that too much emphasis was placed on the strengths in art.

#### Key strengths

- much good teaching
- well-structured lessons which include a range of assessment opportunities
- good GCE A level results at grades A to C
- purposeful students who speak confidently about their projects
- constructive feedback to students indicating targets for improvement
- good use of a broad range of specialist resources in media studies

#### Weaknesses

- poor lesson planning and time management in a few lessons
- poor attendance in some classes
- a narrow choice of syllabus options for GCE A level art students
- underdeveloped collaborative links between subject areas

**22** Staff are well qualified. They set high standards and work hard to ensure that students understand the demands of courses. Most lessons are well organised. Work done at home and in college is assessed frequently. Assignments cover interesting topics and most have clear learning outcomes which students are aware of. Students contribute to

assessments by discussing each other's work and asking and responding to questions. As the college acknowledges, teachers provide constructive feedback so that students understand the criteria for success and know how to improve the standard of their work. In theatre and media studies, there is a suitable balance of practical and theoretical work. Inspectors agreed with the college that improved resources in the media area enable students to study a broad range of topics. The range of specialist resources in art is narrow. As a result, GCE A level students concentrate mainly on fine art, painting and drawing. There is no three-dimensional work, graphics, photography or ceramics, and restricted study of textiles. Links between subject areas are not yet sufficiently developed to make best use of available resources, particularly in information technology.

**23** In all subjects, teaching was of a good standard. More than three-quarters of the lessons observed had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. Lessons were well organised and carefully structured. Working relationships between staff and students were good. The best sessions were rigorous and challenging and enabled students to develop their own ideas and techniques. Students enjoyed their work and were stimulated by the tasks. In the weaker sessions, poor organisation and time management by teachers prevented some students from making sufficient progress. In three of the lessons observed, attendance levels were below 80 per cent.

**24** Students clearly enjoyed their studies and spoke confidently about their work. In art, they regularly spend private study periods working in the studio on their projects. The standard of students' work is high. In both media and theatre studies, students worked well in groups and demonstrated good levels of competence for their stage of development. For the last three years, GCE A level examination results have been good. Everyone who was entered for GCE

# Curriculum Areas

A level art was successful and more than two-thirds of students achieved grades A to C. In media studies and theatre studies, the proportions of students achieving grades A to C have increased over the last three years to 80 per cent and 69 per cent, respectively. In GCSE examinations, results are usually good but the percentage of students achieving grades C or above fell sharply in 1997. In that year, fewer than 10 students were entered for each subject. Only two students were entered for art and both were successful. The self-assessment report recognises that GCSE students require more support to achieve good examination results in media and drama. Changes in teaching strategies are being implemented.

## **Examples of students' achievements in art, media and theatre studies, 1995 to 1997**

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A/AS level	Retention (%)	67	89	84
	Pass rate (%)	93	100	98
GCSE	Retention (%)	89	100	100
	Pass rate (%)	96	93	63

*Source: college data*

# Curriculum Areas

## English

### Grade 1

**25 The inspection covered GCE A/AS level and GCSE English courses. Thirteen lessons were observed. Inspection findings endorsed the strengths identified in the college's subject review. Weaknesses identified in the review had been partly remedied before the inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- effective management of the subject area
- enthusiastic, high-quality teaching
- well-planned, well-constructed lessons often delivered at a demanding pace
- a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere in lessons
- a good mixture and balance of independent, small group and whole class work
- lively, co-operative students who achieve high standards in oral and group work
- good and improving GCSE examination results
- good GCE A/AS level results
- excellent wall displays in classrooms and corridors

#### Weaknesses

- over the last three years, falling retention rates at GCE AS
- a small minority of students who make few contributions to class and group work

**26** As the subject review states, the subject area is managed effectively and efficiently. Regular meetings are carefully minuted and roles, responsibilities and timescales for taking forward actions are clearly recorded.

Departmental files are exemplary in clarity and detail. Good-quality handbooks provide students with information about choice and content of courses, assessment and homework policies. In response to students' criticisms, staff have produced attractive resource packs to remedy deficiencies in library provision. Students' work is carefully marked and frequently furnished with helpful comments. Staff constantly monitor students' progress, both formally and informally. Higher-attaining students as well as those who struggle are catered for in extra sessions. A wide range of enrichment activities is offered to students. For example, staff regularly organise visits to theatrical productions and invite guest lecturers into college so that students can benefit from their expertise. Some students help to produce an interesting student newspaper. Others write stories and poems which they present to junior school children.

**27** Almost without exception, classrooms were busy, active places where prior learning was successfully integrated with new ideas and topics. As indicated in the self-assessment report, students benefited from exposure to a variety of teaching and learning styles. The standards of oral and written work were high. Students worked well together and showed interest beyond the confines of the set tasks. Many volunteered answers and relished defending their views in discussions. This was particularly evident when the trailer to Luhrmann's film of *Romeo and Juliet* was analysed. In another class, students worked in small groups to prepare a short piece of creative writing in a style suited to a particular audience. Each group passed its work to another to continue the story. The students worked enthusiastically and co-operatively and the completed, joint narratives were imaginative and entertaining. Punctuality and behaviour were generally good so that class time was fully utilised. In a few classes, the pace was too leisurely and teachers were content with only brief responses from some students.



# Curriculum Areas

28 Inspectors concurred with the college's assessment of examination results. In English language and English literature, GCE A level results are mostly good. For the last three years, pass rates in GCE A level English language have exceeded 90 per cent and the proportion of grades A to C has been in line with national averages for 18 year olds in sixth form colleges. Except in 1996 when the pass rate dropped to 79 per cent, GCE A level results in English literature also compare favourably with national averages. Staff were not expecting this drop in pass rate and took corrective action speedily. In 1997, the pass rate improved to 91 per cent and the proportion of grades A to C rose to 73 per cent. In 1997, the percentage of students achieving grades C or above in GCSE English was nearly 20 per cent higher than the 1996 national average for 16 to 18 year olds in sixth form colleges. In at least two of the last three years, retention rates in GCE A level and GCSE courses have been 80 per cent or higher. Over the last three years, retention rates in GCE AS courses have gradually declined.

## Examples of students' achievements in English, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A/AS level	Retention (%)	79	90	84
	Pass rate (%)	96	83	92
GCSE	Retention (%)	82	94	100
	Pass rate (%)	54	63	73

Source: college data

# Curriculum Areas

## History, Geography and Politics

### Grade 3

**29** The inspection included observation of 14 classes which covered all aspects of the college's provision in history, geography and politics, which consists mainly of GCE A level courses in the three subjects, some GCE AS provision in history and politics, and a GCSE course in geography. The self-assessment report drew heavily on findings from the individual subject reviews. Inspectors considered that these did not focus sufficiently on key strengths and weaknesses and included too much commentary. Judgements were sound but the process through which they were arrived at lacked rigour.

#### Key strengths

- sound teaching
- clear guidance on study skills
- careful marking of essays including pointers for improvement
- purposeful leadership by heads of department
- high-quality learning materials

#### Weaknesses

- lack of challenge for students of higher ability
- some students who are not sufficiently involved in class activities
- insufficient use of data to set targets and spot trends
- insufficient use of information technology
- poor accommodation for most classes

**30** Most courses are carefully planned and managed. Homework is set regularly and marked and returned promptly. Marking is thorough and indicates to students how they can

improve the quality of their work. The college's self-assessment report suggests that teachers work well together and share resources and ideas but it provides an overoptimistic view of the quality of schemes of work. For example, they do not include extension units for the more able students, and some fail to identify the best teaching approaches for a particular topic. In all subjects, there is insufficient use of data to set specific targets for individual students and course teams, and to spot trends. In geography and politics, the subject heads are newly appointed. Already their purposeful leadership, experience and fresh ideas are benefiting the work in their subject areas.

**31** Teachers are well qualified, knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. In all the lessons observed, relationships between staff and students were good and the teaching was sound; one geography lesson was judged to be outstanding. The better sessions were carefully planned, had clear objectives and included opportunities for students to work together and by themselves. In some lessons students were helped to develop their study skills. For example, in history, to help students to prepare and write an essay, the teacher provided excellent notes which outlined the key concepts, offered advice on how to make judgements and suggested sources of evidence for students to explore by themselves. Some lessons lacked flair and failed to enthuse students. In nearly all lessons, there was insufficient emphasis on the development of oral skills. Teachers missed opportunities to involve students in discussions. Question and answer techniques were not used effectively to challenge the more able students or to check students' understanding of topics.

**32** Over the last three years, in each subject, there has been at least one year when GCE A level results were poor. For example, in 1997, the pass rate in GCE A level history was more than 20 per cent lower than in the previous year, whereas in politics and geography, the results showed an improvement of more than

# Curriculum Areas

20 per cent on the previous year's figures. The college's self-assessment offers only a partial analysis of why these swings occur. In most years, in all subjects, the proportions of students obtaining grades A to C in GCE A level examinations are below national averages for 18 year olds in sixth form colleges, and below college targets. Retention rates for individual GCE A level subjects are broadly similar. GCSE achievements have been good in most instances with all those completing in 1997 gaining grades C or above.

33 Many classes take place in substandard accommodation. The mobile classrooms provide an unattractive teaching environment; wall displays are unimaginative and rooms are in a poor state of decoration. This judgement is reflected in the college's self-assessment report. The quality of students' learning experiences is further impaired by restricted access to information technology and video equipment in these rooms. By contrast, the quality of paper-based learning materials is high.

## Examples of students' achievements in history, geography and politics, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A/AS level	Retention (%)	79	80	79
	Pass rate (%)	73	72	75
GCSE	Retention (%)	85	100	100
	Pass rate (%)	91	50	100

*Source: college data*

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### *Grade 2*

**34 The college's self-assessment report describes existing arrangements to support students and indicates areas for further development. It includes few evaluative comments other than those extracted from the previous inspection report. In discussions with inspectors, students spoke highly of the quality of academic and pastoral support they received from their teachers. As well as formal arrangements to provide learning support and tutorials, staff give up their own time willingly to help students who struggle with their work or have difficult personal circumstances.**

#### **Key strengths**

- effective admission and induction procedures
- a well-planned tutorial programme
- effective procedures to support students' progression to higher education
- good careers education and guidance
- a broad range of enrichment activities

#### **Weaknesses**

- slow development of literacy and numeracy support for students
- the variable quality of tutorials
- uneven implementation of procedures to monitor students' attendance

35 Good liaison with partner schools provides pupils with accurate information about college courses. These contacts also enable the college to make appropriate provision for students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities. College staff support students well throughout the admissions process. They work painstakingly to make sure students choose

subjects and courses wisely. This approach continues during the induction period. Only after careful counselling are students able to transfer from one course to another. Most students value their induction to the college. A few students found it too long, and for those returning to college after completing intermediate level courses, it was repetitive.

36 As the self-assessment report indicates, arrangements to support students who need extra help to enable them to raise their levels of attainment are not yet fully implemented. Subject teams provide opportunities for some higher ability students to undertake more challenging work but support for students who need extra help with literacy and numeracy is less well developed. Fifteen staff have been identified to work with such students. About 20 students are currently working with the few staff who are fully trained. Recently, the college developed clear procedures for the diagnosis and support of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Partially-sighted, hearing-impaired and dyslexic students are catered for.

37 Students benefit from close and regular contacts with their personal tutors. Formal tutorial arrangements include daily registration and a weekly period for group activities. Some tutorial groups are large with as many as 20 students. Materials prepared centrally to support personal tutors and students in tutorial time are of a good quality. The range of activities for both first-year and second-year students is appropriate. The quality of group tutorials is variable. Some are well planned, have clear objectives and allow students to share ideas and information before making personal decisions. Others fail to interest students either because the content is of little relevance or because activities are poorly managed. Students value the individual support they receive from personal tutors when they make their applications to higher education institutions.

# Cross-college Provision

38 Careers education and guidance are good. Through the tutorial system, the college aims to broaden students' horizons and provide material to inform decision-making. Students on intermediate courses receive guidance on advanced level courses, training programmes and employment opportunities. All first-year students have individual careers interviews with college staff. In addition, students can seek professional and objective advice from specialist careers officers who spend part of each week in the college. About 275 students took up this opportunity last year. The careers library is welcoming and well equipped.

39 In its self-assessment report, the college claims that it places a strong emphasis on setting attendance targets and monitoring attendance levels. For the college as a whole, the attendance target is 90 per cent: this target is not always achieved. The procedure to follow up non-attendance is clearly defined but it is operating unevenly across the college. Individuals' attendances are recorded manually and the system to enable personal tutors to spot trends and unexplained absences is cumbersome. Some teachers are unaware of why students are not attending lessons until well after the event. In a few cases, teachers are uncertain if students are still on the college roll. Late arrivals for classes or tutorials are sometimes condoned.

40 There is a strong community spirit within the college. A wide-ranging programme of enrichment activities attracts students from different tutor groups and courses. It includes sporting activities and clubs, help with the development of information technology and other skills, and preparation for GCE A level general studies examinations. The student council and faculty councils are effective in enabling students to raise and resolve areas of concern, although they are not perceived as formal channels of communication between college managers and students.

## General Resources

### Grade 3

41 The section on resources in the college's self-assessment report covered staffing, learning resources and accommodation. Each section contained an analysis of developments since the last inspection and indicated areas for further improvement. The report noted where financial constraints had prevented the college from remedying weaknesses. In arriving at a grade, the college included consideration of staffing in its self-assessment.

#### Key strengths

- improving information technology facilities
- some good specialist facilities, particularly in media studies and sport
- effective use of the college day to overcome shortages of accommodation
- good use of wall displays in most classrooms

#### Weaknesses

- a small library with a narrow range of resources
- the size and shape of some teaching areas
- some poor-quality accommodation
- congested social and communal areas for students

42 Information technology facilities in the college are improving. Since the last inspection, the number of computers has risen from 40 to 100; the ratio of students to computers is now 9:1. Most machines are networked, and are available in classrooms for students' use. The rooms are heavily used by teaching groups, but other students can use spare machines. The college has undertaken a review of its information technology policy and has set out a

# Cross-college Provision

proposed strategy to improve facilities over the next two years. As the self-assessment report recognises, some subject areas have yet to make use of information technology as a curricular resource and tool. When they do, more computers in teaching rooms and elsewhere will be required. At present, there is only one computer which gives students access to the Internet. This computer is in the library. Controlled access from terminals in all computer rooms is soon to be provided.

43 The college library is small. It contains mainly books although there are some audiovisual items and computing software. Stocks of texts and resources are also kept in subject areas. Apart from those in English, teachers do not work sufficiently closely with library staff to make sure that resources are available to students at appropriate stages in their courses. Under the supervision of library staff, students can undertake private study in an area adjacent to the library. Inspectors agreed with the conclusion in the self-assessment report, that accommodation constraints hinder the further development of the library as a central learning resource centre.

44 The college is committed to extending and improving the quality of its accommodation. At the time of the inspection, governors were considering a consultant's report on the effectiveness of the accommodation strategy to provide extra teaching space and better communal facilities. Since the last inspection, the college has made some improvements to accommodation. For example, a lecture theatre has been converted into an attractive media suite with up-to-date equipment, and, in 1997, the art and design area was refurbished. In 1994, a new two-storey block was opened. It includes rooms which can accommodate comfortably some of the larger teaching groups. To alleviate pressure on accommodation, the college has taken appropriate steps to improve timetabling of classes and extend the working day. Nevertheless, there remains a shortage of

suitable teaching accommodation. Most rooms have attractive, subject-related wall displays. The exceptions are eight temporary classrooms which provide a poor learning environment for students.

45 The extent to which communal and social areas meet the needs of students varies considerably. The sports hall and drama studio are valuable assets. They are used not only by students during the day but also by local community groups in the evenings. Refectory and social facilities for students are clean and pleasant but are too small. The criticisms made in the last inspection report concerning the crowded corridors, tiny reception area and lack of accommodation for visitors remain valid and are acknowledged as weaknesses by the college in the self-assessment report.

## Quality Assurance

### *Grade 3*

46 Since the last inspection in November 1994, the quality assurance framework has been strengthened, but the new arrangements have not yet been fully implemented or evaluated. The accuracy with which staff and governors graded the curricular areas and aspects of provision inspected suggests that the college is well aware of the work it still has to do to reach the higher standards to which it aspires.

#### Key strengths

- clear links between quality reviews and strategic and operational planning
- an improved course review process
- full consideration of students' views
- a responsive and proactive approach to staff development

#### Weaknesses

- lack of evaluation of the quality assurance framework

# Cross-college Provision

- a self-assessment process which is not sufficiently comprehensive and rigorous
- inconsistent application of quality assurance procedures
- patchy use of value-added data to set targets, monitor performance and spot trends

47 In September 1997, the college began to implement a revised quality assurance policy. The new arrangements link strategic planning to a system of subject and team reviews which was strengthened after the last inspection. The procedures set out clearly staff responsibilities for monitoring and reporting performance against targets. The college intends to focus its monitoring and review activities on a set of quality characteristics applied to its curriculum and organisational structure. In the policy, there is no requirement for teams to derive standards from these characteristics, nor are there common standards for teaching and learning activities. The quality assurance policy makes no provision for stakeholders such as parents and heads of partner schools, to comment on the rigour of the quality assurance arrangements.

48 Though there has been a sharper focus on subject reviews since the last inspection, inspectors agreed with the college that most reviews are not yet sufficiently analytical and evaluative. However, some subject teams have seized the opportunity to celebrate achievements and face weaknesses frankly. In the better reviews, achievements are rigorously compared with national standards and agreed performance indicators. Clear action plans setting out responsibilities and timescales indicate how improvements will be made. Other subject reviews pay scant attention to data associated with key performance indicators and give only vague hints of action that might be taken to remedy weaknesses. Only a few subject areas make use of value-added data to assess achievements and to set targets for

improvement. This is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Arrangements whereby subject heads and members of the academic board discuss issues and action plans arising from subject reviews work well. Subject heads appreciate the time and interest taken by college managers to discuss academic matters.

49 The college changes its practices in response to findings from surveys of students' opinions. A standard questionnaire seeks to gauge levels of students' satisfaction with courses and to identify areas for improvement. Students speak positively about changes in art, English and mathematics that have resulted from their suggestions. Excellent practice in collecting and responding swiftly to students' views occurs in English. In October, the subject area conducted an additional survey of second-year students. A sample of students were sent written invitations to participate in the event. To avoid overloading students with pieces of paper, staff collected information orally. Changes in practice resulted, to the immediate benefit of students.

50 The self-assessment process relies too heavily on findings from the subject and team reviews. Some sections of the college are not yet involved in the process. For example, governors do not assess their own performance and teams responsible for premises, financial and clerical matters were not sufficiently involved in the production of the self-assessment report. In drawing out key points from subject reviews to formulate their self-assessment reports, some subject heads were unclear about the task and the resultant reports were insufficiently rigorous. Because there are no specific standards against which to measure performance, many judgements were bland and superficial. The college's self-assessment report includes extracts from the previous inspection report and commentaries describing the extent to which the judgements are still valid. Some additional judgements are interwoven with these commentaries but not all points are explicitly

# Cross-college Provision

referenced to evidence. Assessments of the quality of teaching and learning are unsupported by evidence from lesson observations. Although the report identifies issues to be addressed, the action plan does not provide sufficient detail to determine whether the college is on course to achieve its objectives.

51 As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the staff development policy operates effectively in response to both institutional and individual training needs. Procedures to link staff development priorities to the requirements of the strategic plan work well. There is good practice in preparing staff for training and in subsequently evaluating its effectiveness. Individuals meet their line managers to discuss the purpose and likely outcomes of training and, two months later, to assess its usefulness. Those involved appreciate the carefully-considered induction and monitoring programme for newly-appointed and newly-promoted teaching and support staff, and the thorough arrangements for supporting newly-qualified teachers. The appraisal scheme is managed efficiently. All support staff eligible for appraisal and 92 per cent of teaching staff have been appraised in a process which involves the setting of targets and the identification of training needs. In August 1997, the college achieved Investor in People status.

## Governance

### *Grade 3*

**52 Inspectors considered that the college's self-assessment report was more descriptive than evaluative and failed to include some key points. Governors recognise that weaknesses in their arrangements need to be remedied quickly to take account of the changing circumstances in which the college is operating. Already, some decisions to effect improvements have been taken but most have not yet been implemented.**

#### Key strengths

- effective deployment of governors' wide range of experience and skills
- a committee structure and arrangements which substantially accord with statute
- effective arrangements to give governors a closer understanding of the college's work

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement of governors in strategic planning and self-assessment
- significant omissions in records of meetings
- some complex committee and board papers which fail to bring out key points
- a limited induction and training programme for governors

53 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC. However, some aspects do not fully comply with what is deemed to be best practice. For example, although the corporation has established a register of members' interests, governors are not required to disclose their current, paid employment. The register has not been extended to include staff who have significant financial responsibilities in the college. The existing committee structure enables governors to discharge most of their responsibilities efficiently. The corporation meets termly and receives regular reports from all its committees: audit; finance and estates; remuneration; employment; and strategy and curriculum. The employment committee rarely meets and there is no established search committee to identify possible new governors.



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54 Governors have a strong commitment to the college and support its mission and ethos. Most governors have good levels of attendance at meetings. Many also attend prize-givings, plays and other events held at the college. To help governors to gain a fuller understanding of the college's work, more formal links with staff and students have been established recently. These include lunchtime meetings of small groups of governors and subject teams. Two meetings have already taken place and more are planned. Governors also receive minutes of student council meetings. Collectively, governors have knowledge and skills gained from working in business management, public sector management, quality assurance, voluntary services, local government and education. As the self-assessment report states, their skills and experience are well deployed in carrying out corporation business. Of the 15 members, seven are independent, two are co-opted, two are parents and two are members of staff. The remaining places are filled by the principal and the TEC nominee, who is the chief executive of a local national health service trust. Eleven of the 15 members have been reappointed for terms of between two and four years. An assistant principal is clerk to the corporation.

55 About a week beforehand, governors receive a comprehensive set of papers to prepare for board and committee meetings. Financial and audit reports are clear and well presented. Governors value the information they receive but sometimes feel overwhelmed by its complexity. Some agenda papers fail to draw out key points and issues for governors' attention. For example, data relating to students' achievements are not presented in a format which allows governors to form judgements about the quality of the college's provision or make immediate comparisons with the performance of other sixth form colleges. Papers for meetings are not always explicitly referenced to agenda items. Minutes are clear but they do not record all agreed action; nor do

they include many references to strategic and curricular issues discussed in meetings.

56 Governors discuss strategic issues but they have not been directly involved in developing and reviewing the strategic plan. Recently, they have established a strategy and curriculum committee for this purpose. There is no formal induction and training programme for governors, although some training has been provided by the clerk. For example, a seminar was held on the FEFC's funding methodology which governors found useful. An analysis of training needs has been completed. Governors have not been sufficiently involved in self-assessment, nor have they identified ways in which they could improve their practice. The principal compiled the first draft of the governance section of the self-assessment report which was circulated to governors. The final version was finalised by the principal in discussion with the chairman. In considering the college's self-assessment report, governors discussed ways in which they might assess their own performance in future but they have yet to decide on a methodology.

## Management

### *Grade 3*

**57 The college's self-assessment report provides a clear and honest picture of how internal and external pressures have influenced changes to management structures and systems over the last year. Since the last inspection, the college has strengthened its management arrangements but most of these new arrangements have not yet resulted in the college achieving the goals in its new three-year strategic plan.**

#### **Key strengths**

- clear identification of key strategic issues
- good communication systems

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- efficient deployment of staff and resources
- provision of timely and accurate data relating to students
- effective financial management and monitoring systems

## Weaknesses

- variations in the effectiveness of curriculum planning and management
- shortcomings in arrangements to share curriculum developments and good practice
- few strategic partnerships and links with industry and commerce
- insufficient use of market research and data from management information systems

58 In its self-assessment report, the college acknowledges the need to adapt its management procedures and systems so that staff are better able to handle current demands and concerns. It has recently introduced a management system which is more closely aligned to the achievement of strategic objectives. The revised structure formalises lines of accountability and strengthens channels of communication between managers and staff. At all levels, there is an emphasis on teamwork. Cross-college, faculty and subject team meetings are timetabled to enable information to flow easily between different groups. The purpose of each group, and standing agenda items for meetings, are clearly stated but there remain significant variations in the effectiveness with which subject teams plan and manage their courses.

59 Senior managers have identified the key issues facing the college and use effective methods to enable staff at all levels to understand them. The principal leads a weekly staff briefing and this is supplemented by daily and weekly bulletins for staff and students. As well as timetabled meetings, staff attend

occasional planning days so that they can discuss college-wide issues and influence strategic planning. The small size of the college, the central staff room and the high proportion of full-time teachers, make it easy for staff to share ideas and information informally. However, ideas and recommendations stemming from cross-college, faculty and subject meetings are not systematically carried forward and analysed at college level.

60 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The size and skills of the finance team are appropriate to the college's needs. The budgetary process is clearly stated and budgets are linked directly to the achievement of strategic objectives. Financial regulations are comprehensive and aim to ensure that the college achieves value for money. Monthly management accounts are reviewed by senior managers but cashflow forecasts are not prepared. Budget holders receive separate reports. The predicted average level of funding for 1997-98 is £18.22 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges is £17.50 per unit.

61 A well-established and effective computerised management information system provides timely and accurate data relating to students. Data returns to the FEFC have always been submitted within the designated timescales. Comprehensive reports on recruitment, attendance, retention and achievements are issued regularly to heads of faculty and are available to other staff on request or through computer terminals linked to the college system. The system allows staff to track progress, retention and attendance levels for students by subject and tutor groups. Senior managers use the information well to timetable courses, to deploy staff efficiently and to make best use of accommodation. Staff use the information to identify demand for courses but thereafter, most fail to exploit its potential as a management tool. Support to enable individual

# Cross-college Provision

teachers to extract and make better use of data is not provided systematically. The college is not making sufficient use of performance indicators to inform decision-making, particularly at subject and course level.

62 The strategic plan clearly identifies work with 16 to 19 year old students as the college's major activity. Market research exercises focus mainly on this age group. Little work has been done to find out how the college might respond to the wider needs of the local community. In each of the last three years, the college has exceeded its recruitment targets for 16 to 19 year olds, but it was unsuccessful in establishing adult provision in 1994. Strategic partnerships to enable the college to diversify and attract a broader range of students have recently been established, but have not yet borne fruit. For example, senior managers have begun to work with officers of the new unitary authority of Halton which comes into existence in April 1998. The college recognises that, apart from work experience for its GNVQ and GCSE students, connections with local industry and commerce are weak. Links with the local TEC have developed since the last inspection. For the last three years, the college has received money from the TEC's development fund to enhance its information technology facilities.

64 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.

## Conclusions

63 The college's self-assessment report included extracts from the previous inspection report supplemented by information emerging from subject reviews in 1996-97 and evidence provided by senior managers and governors. The report was realistic. It portrayed a college which has benefited from changes in roles and structures. The report also acknowledged that there were areas requiring improvement. Inspectors agreed with all the curricular grades awarded by the college and with the grades for cross-college provision.

# College Statistics

## Student numbers by age (November 1997)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	0
16-18 years	99
19-24 years	1
25+ years	0
Not known	0
Total	100

*Source: college data*

## Student numbers by level of study (November 1997)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	0
Intermediate	11
Advanced	89
Higher education	0
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	0
Total	100

*Source: college data*

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	277	0	31
Business	111	0	12
Hotel and catering	51	0	6
Health and community care	16	0	2
Art and design	90	0	10
Humanities	344	0	39
Total	889	0	100

*Source: college data*

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1997)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	51	7	0	58
Supporting direct learning contact	6	3	0	9
Other support	12	1	0	13
Total	69	11	0	80

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

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£2,372,000	£2,527,000	£2,505,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£20.07	£19.37	£19.73
Payroll as a proportion of income	76%	79%	77%
Achievement of funding target	102%	103%	105%
Diversity of income	2%	2%	3%
Operating surplus	£147,000	£13,000	£49,000

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

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

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

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96)

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

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

### Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	334	344	381
	Average point score per entry	4.3	4.1	4.8
	Position in tables	top third	middle third	top third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	+	7	19
	Percentage achieving qualification	+	71%	42%
	Position in tables	+	middle third	bottom 10%
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	26	30
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	73%	67%
	Position in tables	*	top third	middle third

Source: DfEE

+college did not begin this course until 1994, and the first results were achieved in 1996

\*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends *(continued)*

### Students' achievements

		<i>1994-95</i>	<i>1995-96</i>	<i>1996-97</i>
Advanced academic	Pass (%)	78	78	87
	Retention (%)	77	84	81
Intermediate academic	Pass (%)	57	56	56
	Retention (%)	89	94	92
Advanced vocational	Pass (%)	+	82	53
	Retention (%)	+	69	79
Intermediate vocational	Pass (%)	89	69	67
	Retention (%)	90	100	94

*Source: college data*

*+course not offered*

# **FEFC Inspection Report 30/98**

**Published by the  
Further Education Funding Council  
April 1998**