Winstanley College

THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to FEFC's quality assessment committee.

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 71/95

WINSTANLEY COLLEGE
NORTH WEST REGION
Inspected August 1994 - March 1995

Summary

Winstanley College in Wigan is a sixth form college catering mainly for full-time students aged 16-19. It offers an extensive choice of GCE A level subjects, two GNVQ courses, an art foundation course and a broad range of leisure activities. There are productive relationships between students and staff. Systems for student admissions, guidance and support are well established and effective. Teaching is of a high standard. Staff are well qualified, energetic and enjoy working at the college. High priority is given to their training and development needs. Students are well motivated and respond positively to their varied learning activities. Examination results are good. The carefully-developed charters are integral parts of a comprehensive system for assuring the quality of provision and services across the college. Other strengths include the purposeful leadership and participative management styles of the senior management team. The governors have a strong commitment to the college and a wide range of experience. They operate effectively but should strengthen their channels of communication with students and staff. The college should ensure that all programmes of study have the vocational dimension declared in its mission statement and that they include opportunities for students to develop their information technology skills. The quantity and quality of computer workstations should be improved. The college should develop a central record of its learning resources, continue to improve its use of accommodation and provide better access for wheelchair users. It should also consider broadening its provision to cater for a wider cross-section of students.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Sciences	1	English	2
Mathematics and computing	2	Modern languages	1
		History and geography	1
Art and design, drama and music	1	Economics, philosophy and religion, politics and psychology	1

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INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of Winstanley College in Wigan took place in three stages. Arrangements for enrolment and induction were inspected at appropriate times in late August and September 1994, and specialist subjects and aspects of cross-college provision during the periods 12-18 January and 27 February to 3 March 1995. Fifteen inspectors, including one person with current business experience, spent a total of 55 inspector days in the college. They visited 115 classes, examined representative samples of students' work and held discussions with members of the board of governors, senior managers, staff and students. Meetings were also held with the chief executive and staff from the local training and enterprise council (TEC), a personnel adviser from a national company which is a large local employer, the head of Wigan careers service, the headteachers of three high schools, and parents. Inspectors had access to a wide range of documentation relating to the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Winstanley College was established as a sixth form college in 1978 by the amalgamation of the sixth forms of two grammar schools dating from the sixteenth century. It occupies a site of 8.5 hectares in a semi-rural location, five miles from the centre of Wigan and close to the boundaries with St Helens and Lancashire. Lack of public transport means that most students travel to and from the college in private vehicles or college buses. There are parking spaces for up to 400 cars. The buildings are a mixture of old and new. Some date back to 1953 and were built to house one of the grammar schools. In the 1980s, extensive remodelling of the hall and gymnasium created facilities for performing arts, a two-storey library, tutorial rooms and modern laboratories. Within the last 10 years, new buildings have been constructed to provide art and design studios, a music suite, more science laboratories, a sports hall and study, dining and social areas for students. Extensive playing fields are available for team sports.

3 The population of metropolitan Wigan is 306,000. Less than 1 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. The coal and cotton industries in the area have long since disappeared. Canned food processing, light engineering, packaging, mail order companies and the new regional headquarters of a national bank are now major sources of employment. Many people living near the college work in Manchester and Liverpool. Twelve per cent of the population of Wigan is unemployed but in the wider area, from which the college draws almost a third of its students, the figure is nearer 15 per cent. In 1994, 59 per cent of 16 year olds in Wigan stayed on in full-time education. Forty-two per cent of this year group obtained five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) passes at grades A-C.

4 Seventy per cent of the college's students are drawn from ten 11-16 high schools in Wigan. Of the remainder, 10 per cent come from the

borough of St Helens and 20 per cent from Lancashire. This year, students are drawn from a total of 41 different schools. Normally the college is over subscribed. The entry requirements for General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) or General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) advanced level are four GCSE subjects at grade C and one at grade B, or a good performance at GNVQ intermediate level. Students who do not achieve these results may be admitted after interview if there are places available.

5   Several other providers of post-16 education lie within a six mile radius of the college. There are two 11-18 high schools, a Roman Catholic sixth form college and a general further education college in Wigan; a Roman Catholic sixth form college and a general further education college in St Helens; and two tertiary colleges, Runshaw and Skelmersdale, in Lancashire.

6   Enrolments have increased by 32 per cent since 1990. In January 1995, there were 1,147 students on roll. There were roughly equal numbers of male and female students and less than 2 per cent of the student population was from minority ethnic groups. All but four students were aged 16-19. Most were following GCE A level courses, 70 students were following advanced level courses leading to GNVQs and seven were following an art foundation course. The college offers courses in the programme areas of science, business, health and community care, art and design and humanities. Ten students are classified as part time. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 1.

7   There are 77 full-time and 9 part-time members of the teaching staff, including the principal and two vice-principals. A further 10 full-time and 18 part-time members of staff provide the support functions of finance and administration, personnel, teaching support and property maintenance. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 2. In addition the college employs a number of instructors and tutors for specific purposes including, at the time of the inspection, 10 musicians, two artists-in-residence, a dance instructor, two modern languages assistants and a rugby coach.

8   Its mission states that the college is dedicated to:

• the provision of high-quality continuing academic and general vocational education for full-time students aged 16-19

• the welfare of students and their continuing personal and social development

• the enhancement of students' careers and training opportunities and the preparation of those seeking entry into higher education at age 18 and over

• the development of a college environment which encourages a sense of community amongst staff and students.

9   Opportunities for students to participate in sport, music, drama and a wide range of social and cultural activities, over and above the requirements of examination courses, are fundamental to the way in which the college seeks to fulfil its mission.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

10   The college has made a carefully considered response to national targets for education and training. In developing the college's mission statement, governors and staff engaged in a thorough consultative process with parents, employers, the TEC and the local education authority. As a result, it was decided to concentrate on academic and general vocational education for full-time students aged 16-19. Although this gives the college a limited range of work, it builds upon the traditions and achievements of the past and takes into account the wide range of courses available to young people and adults in general further education colleges nearby. General vocational education involves the introduction of GNVQ courses and of vocational aspects to GCE A level programmes.

11   Provision is restricted to GCE A level courses, advanced GNVQs and an art foundation course which is intended for post-A-level students. Within this range, students are able to follow broad and balanced programmes of study. Currently there are 35 GCE A level subjects and two advanced level GNVQs in business, and health and social care. In addition, students are expected to choose short courses which prepare them for the GCE A level general studies examination. Excluding general studies, most GCE A level students are taking three subjects. The most popular fourth subject is further mathematics which is taken by over 70 students. The timetabling arrangements allow almost all combinations of subjects to be accommodated. Over 50 of the 70 GNVQ students have chosen to combine their courses with the study of a GCE A level subject. Courses leading to GCSE examinations in English and mathematics are available for those who wish to improve their grades. In the past more GCSE courses were available but these have now been withdrawn. The GNVQ portfolio also includes intermediate levels in business and in health and social care. In 1993 there were enough students to form economically viable groups for both courses but in 1994 the college failed to recruit sufficient students.

12   The range of GCE A level subjects is reviewed regularly, new courses are introduced and examination boards and syllabuses are changed to match students' needs. For example, GCE A level psychology was introduced in 1991 and, in 1994, GCE A level performing arts recruited its first cohort of students. Over the last two years modular syllabuses in mathematics and physics have replaced those which required students to be assessed entirely by examination at the end of the course. Some syllabuses are chosen to widen students' choice of studies. For example, some students may follow in their first year a combined course of earth and environmental sciences and opt in their second year for either GCE A level geology or GCE A level environmental science. The philosophy and

religion course allows students to combine this subject with Christianity or with world religions, assessment being either by examinations or by a combination of coursework and examinations. It is also possible for students to complete this course in one year, although most take two years. After considerable debate, the college decided not to offer discrete GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses; the modular courses give students the opportunity to gain GCE AS qualifications.

13   There has been a cautious approach to the introduction of GNVQs. The advanced courses in business, and in health and social care, are in their second year and it is not intended to introduce others before 1996. Science courses have been investigated carefully and will not be introduced until the national framework is firmly established. Art and design courses are under consideration. The college should promote recruitment to its intermediate courses so that more students make positive choices to follow them. At present, only students who do not meet the entry requirements for advanced level courses are encouraged to opt for intermediate courses.

14   The general studies programme is wide ranging. Twenty courses are grouped evenly into the four domains of science, art, social science and current affairs. In the first year, students choose four courses of which two are taken in the first half of the year and two in the second. Two further courses are followed in the second year. Most students are able to study courses of their choice over the two-year period. Coursework is assessed and these marks count towards the final assessment in the GCE A level general studies examination. Courses in modern languages, mathematics and English comprehension are available in the second half of the second year to prepare students for relevant sections of the general studies papers. Students who are following four GCE A level subjects, excluding general studies, have full timetables and may not be able to attend general studies lessons. However, they can opt to take the examination.

15   An extensive choice of leisure activities forms an enrichment programme. Most take place in the middle of the day when students are not timetabled to attend other classes. There are 30 options to choose from, mainly in sport, music, dance and drama. Students are able to join aerobics, badminton, basketball, football, trampolining or tennis groups as beginners, or to develop the skills that they have already. Each of these activities typically attracts over 25 students every week. College teams for football, hockey, netball, badminton and rugby league play regularly against other colleges and schools. There is a comprehensive programme of activities for students who are interested in the performing arts. In the current academic year there has been a production of the musical 'Grease' and a performance of Faure's Requiem is planned. Other features of the enrichment programme include: the weekly 'question time/debate' session, which also attracts staff; courses for students who want to learn a new language or to develop information technology skills; and opportunities

for voluntary work in the community. Over 100 students are working as volunteers in primary schools, hospitals and homes for the elderly.

16   The college meets the requirements of sections 44 and 45 of the Further and Higher Education Act, 1992. The GCE A level courses in philosophy and religion are popular and 155 students were following them at the time of the inspection. Within the general studies programme, courses which focus on moral and spiritual issues include medical ethics, philosophy and the arts, and nature and supernature. About 120 students follow one of these courses in an academic year. There is a weekly act of collective worship which is led by people from the local community or by members of the college. During the inspection week 10 people attended. There is also a Christian union group which meets weekly.

17   Links with local industry and commerce are increasing. The college is a member of the local chamber of commerce and has compiled a list of 600 employers who are prepared to offer placements to students. Work experience is an integral part of GNVQ programmes but, for most GCE A level students, work shadowing and work placements are voluntary. Students who are taking courses in design technology, performing arts and physical education are encouraged to accept placements which are relevant to their courses. As part of the enrichment programme, 40 students from a range of courses worked with the local newspaper for a short period before writing pieces for the college year book and 20 were involved in the production of the student magazine. About 400 students participate in the work placement scheme during an academic year. Although students in chemistry supplement their theoretical studies by visiting a local chemical plant to observe practical applications, in general, there are few curricular links with industry. There is no systematic mapping of programmes of study to ensure that all students gain an awareness of commercial and industrial issues. An annual business and community conference, which all students attended, has been discontinued in response to students' adverse comments on its value.

18   There are productive links with the TEC. The college's bid for substantial funding, through the work-related further education programme, was successful and will provide teacher placements in industry during the summer term. Consultancies and staff-development activities have also been provided by the TEC. Recent events have focused on the development of quality assurance systems and the training needs of middle managers. In 1993, it was intended to research the feasibility of providing a programme of adult and continuing education at the college but this was delayed by a lack of funding. It has been completed very recently by a former student of the college with funding from the TEC but it has not yet informed developments. Currently there is no provision for adults, although community groups are able to use the sports hall facilities.

19   International links are developing well and 158 students took part in a wide range of activities during 1993-94. The programme for 1994-95

includes exchanges with students in Chicago, St Petersburg, Spain, France and Germany. Work placements for Winstanley students studying French and German are included in the exchanges. Last year, 20 students worked in France and 17 in Germany. Individual departments also arrange visits related to particular courses. For example, art students visited Paris in October 1994, and medieval history students are planning to visit Normandy in April 1995.

20 A high priority for the college is its links with schools. There is a well-established cycle of liaison activities with most high schools in Wigan but the governors of two Roman Catholic schools have formally rejected the college's requests to visit the schools to speak directly to potential students about its courses. The principal attends meetings of Wigan's secondary headteachers. Other contacts with local high schools are forged through the college's membership of professional groups, such as those concerned with records of achievement, transition at 16 and careers teaching. Curricular links in science, modern languages and performing arts are effective in easing the transition of students from school to college. Closer links with schools outside the immediate catchment area are developing as the enrolments from these schools increase.

21 There is a comprehensive marketing plan which contains information about admissions for the previous six years, identifies the sources of existing students, sets targets for admissions for each high school and records appropriate marketing strategies and associated timetables for liaison activities. The marketing plan is informed by a thorough analysis of data and consideration of the competition from other providers of post-16 education and transport arrangements in the area. Publicity materials are of high quality.

22 The equal opportunities policy is well understood by staff and students. Departments have chosen to focus mainly on gender issues and there has been some success in attracting students to courses in which men or women are traditionally under-represented. For example in German, out of 31 students 16 are male while in further mathematics, out of 73 students 29 are female. Students with physical disabilities are encouraged to apply for places, although there are difficulties of access to some areas of the college for wheelchair users. Currently there are 10 students with physical disabilities, two of whom have mobility problems. The college has contacted local high schools and identified eight students with physical disabilities who are in the penultimate year of compulsory education and may wish to apply for places at the college.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

23 The governors have a strong commitment to the college and serve it well. They understand their statutory responsibilities, are mindful of national policies and local initiatives and have a clear view of the direction in which the college should develop. There are 18 governors of whom the

chair and three others are women. Eleven are independent members who bring a wide range of experience to the corporation, including expertise in banking, accountancy, personnel, property development and building. One of the independent members is the headteacher of a local high school. The remaining places are taken by the chief executive of the TEC, two parents, the principal, a member of the teaching staff and a member of the support staff. In addition, the borough's training co-ordinator is a co-opted member. There are no student governors. The chair and two others were college governors prior to incorporation. Eight members are parents of present or former students. There is no formal code of practice for governors and no register of their interests.

24   The board and its sub-groups operate effectively. Members are well briefed and speak highly of the level of support they receive from college managers. Meetings are purposeful, challenging and well managed. One meeting of the board takes place in each half term. There are seven sub-groups for finance, estates, personnel, quality, audit, appeals and complaints, and remuneration. They have clearly-defined terms of reference and cycles of meetings which are appropriate to their functions. Attendance at board meetings averages 85 per cent and all of the board or sub-group meetings have been quorate. There are records of all meetings, although they vary in format and quality.

25   Governors have a clear perception of their role and were fully involved in determining the mission statement, shaping the strategic plan and developing the college charters. Systems are in place for monitoring progress towards strategic objectives, checking the financial health of the college and ensuring it is well managed. As yet, there is no system to evaluate the effectiveness of the board's work. There is, however, a commitment to develop one which links with the quality assurance system in use in other parts of the college.

26   There is a good working relationship between the chair and the principal whose weekly meetings combine consultation on important topics with updating on operational issues. Governors know some staff who are associated with the work of sub-groups or who are invited to attend board meetings for specific purposes. They come into contact with others through their attendance at college events. There is no formal channel of communication with students. Governors are aware of, and are considering, issues related to these matters.

27   Governors, senior managers and staff share a common understanding of the college's mission which steers strategic planning. There is a well-established planning and review cycle which, taking account of external budgetary and other timetables, identifies tasks for each month. The strategic plan itself clearly identifies objectives, proposed developments, timing, persons taking responsibility and targets. Departmental plans for teaching areas and for support services are realistic and reflect college-wide objectives. However, some are not as fully developed as others.

28 The management structure is well understood by staff. It seeks to empower individuals and effectively brings together the academic, pastoral and administrative work of the college. The senior management team consists of the principal and two vice-principals. One of the vice-principals has responsibility for curriculum and quality of provision. She manages 22 heads of academic departments and nine teaching staff who have cross-college responsibilities directly related to the curriculum. These include the information technology co-ordinator, the records of achievement co-ordinator, the management information systems manager and a curriculum administrator whose responsibilities include analysing individual students' performance. The other vice-principal is responsible for student services which includes the guidance system. He manages five section heads, each of whom is responsible for about 230 students, the college counsellor, and the guidance administrator who is also the head of careers. The marketing manager, six staff responsible for cross-curricular activities, such as sport, performing arts and international visits, and the member of staff attached to the student council also report directly to him. The staff training and development officer, the personnel administrator, the support services co-ordinator, the finance and administration manager and the property manager report directly to the principal. All staff have job descriptions.

29 The senior management team provides highly effective leadership and earns the respect and co-operation of staff. All three members share a sense of purpose, have participative management styles, are accessible to staff and students and promote a strong feeling of community. They meet daily and none of them has a regular teaching commitment. Appropriate delegation of tasks and effective use of support staff enable the vice-principals to manage the large numbers of teaching staff for whom they are responsible.

30 Heads of academic departments and support services respond well to the management responsibilities which are devolved to them. Regular, formal, departmental meetings, which involve teaching and support staff, emphasise the value of effective team work. Individuals are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Co-ordinators for science, performing arts and modern languages are effective in promoting the development of common policies and the sharing of good practice across groups of related subjects. In mathematics and English the heads of departments have not delegated much of the administrative and management work to staff who hold responsibility allowances. Given the large size of each of these departments, this lack of delegation results in heavy burdens on two individuals. Throughout the college, teaching staff speak highly of the support they receive from technicians and administrative staff. Support staff feel valued by teaching staff and are fully integrated into all aspects of college life.

31   Policies on health and safety, training and development, and equal opportunities are well established. Responsibilities for implementation and monitoring are clearly allocated. Governors have recently considered and approved an information technology policy, subject to financial constraints. There is no environmental policy, although the charter includes a section entitled 'The college environment rights'. The responsibility for the college environment as a whole has not been assigned to an individual.

32   Channels of communication between the senior management team and staff are clear and allow information to flow in both directions. Every morning the senior management team conducts a short briefing for all teaching and support staff. On the days after governors' meetings the principal reports the key decisions to staff, usually during the morning breaks. Formal staff meetings are held every half-term. Regular meetings of section heads and of heads of departments allow pastoral and academic developments to be planned, monitored and reviewed separately.

33   Strands of opinion across the college are brought together effectively through the college development committee. This consists of the senior management team and the seven most senior tutors. These are the curriculum administrator, the guidance administrator, three section heads, the training and development officer and the head of general studies. Six of them are also heads of teaching departments and the other is head of careers. This committee advises the senior management team. It is a sounding board for the development of policy and procedures, and a helpful device for keeping senior management informed of staff views and morale. Informal meetings are held weekly and formal minuted meetings once a month. These are productive and are conducted in a climate of trust. Despite its informal position in the college structure, staff consider that the committee serves a useful purpose. Staff opinions and views are also communicated to senior management through monthly meetings with union representatives of teaching and support staff.

34   The college is on course to exceed its unit target for this year. Its average level of funding for 1994-95 is £19.99 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.81. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) provides almost 97 per cent of the total income, the remainder coming from the technical and vocational education initiative and from the TEC. Summaries of the college's income and expenditure accounts for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 3 and 4.

35   There is a clear strategy for the allocation of financial resources. Expenditure is divided into six main categories: staffing costs, premises, curriculum, student services, external relations, which includes marketing and transport, and administration. Budgets for individual departments are drawn from the curriculum allocation according to a clear formula which is weighted to match student numbers and the differing demands of subjects. The system of allocation is fair. It was developed in consultation with heads of department, is reviewed annually with them and is well

understood. Statements of expenditure from the finance and administration manager are provided for heads of department every month. The principal and the finance and administration manager work closely with the chairs of the finance and audit sub-groups of the board to monitor the college's budget.

36   Considerable progress has been made in the development and use of computer-based management information systems. These include a registration system, an extensive student database and a finance system. Senior management and staff are confident about the accuracy of the data generated and use the systems to predict, for example, enrolments and corresponding staffing levels. The integration of existing systems would enable other useful performance indicators to be generated. There is no network, which means that students' records have to be updated on individual computers and few members of the teaching staff have direct access to such information.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

37   Well-established college systems ensure that prospective students receive helpful information and impartial advice before applying for places. Every year the marketing manager and the vice-principal responsible for student services visit high schools to talk to potential students about the college and its courses. During the first half of the autumn term 1994, 19 schools were visited. Three college open evenings provide further sources of information for prospective students. Later in the year college staff, drawn from a team of 25, visit high schools, interview individual students and offer preliminary advice about courses. Where this is not possible, interviews are held in the college. An attractive college prospectus contains details of courses and information about the successes of recent students. It is well written in appropriate language and calculated to appeal to prospective applicants. The college evaluates the effectiveness of its recruitment procedures by tracking individual students and by collecting and analysing relevant data. For example, the number of applications, the number of early acceptances, the number of students beginning courses at the college and the number still attending two months later are useful performance indicators.

38   Enrolment procedures are well organised and implemented consistently. The senior management team, seven senior tutors, the marketing manager and two other senior members of staff interview students to discuss their GCSE results and agree programmes of study. Students spoke appreciatively of these interviews and of the interest in their applications taken by the principal and senior staff. Useful, clearly-presented information is contained in the students' and parents' guides which are given to students when they enrol. These attractive booklets are modified from year to year to take account of the views of people who are using them.

39   An effective one-day induction programme welcomes students to the college, introduces them to key staff and allows them to find their way around the building. Organised visits to the library show students the range of facilities available to support learning. Induction to individual GCE A level subjects is well planned and takes account of students' earlier experiences. For example, in GCE A level mathematics and modern languages courses there is an emphasis on developing skills to bridge the gap between GCSE and GCE A level requirements. However, in GCSE mathematics and English there is insufficient diagnosis of individuals' strengths and weaknesses to enable a suitable response to individual requirements.

40   The guidance system is distinctive, provides sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of individual students and is well resourced. For timetabling purposes, GCE A level subjects are arranged in five blocks; students select one subject from at least three blocks and are allocated to a fourth block for guidance. This determines when the student has access to tutors and to which of the five sections of the college the student belongs. Each section head manages a team of four personal tutors each of whom have responsibility for about 55 students. Section heads, personal tutors and students are able to meet whenever their corresponding guidance block occurs in the timetable. There are weekly section meetings which are led by section heads and attended by staff and students. Each section meets at a fixed time and on a different day of the week. Group tutorials and individual tutorials take place after section meetings or in other timetabled guidance periods. Close to the library there is a student reception desk which is staffed during college hours. Section heads and personal tutors have offices nearby.

41   Despite its complexity, the guidance system works effectively. Students and their parents speak highly of the quality of support they receive from section heads, personal tutors and the support staff who work in student reception. The weekly section meetings provide general information and allow students to develop a sense of identity with a cross-section of the college. Individual tutorials may be requested either by students or by personal tutors. A minimum of six individual tutorials each year is expected but in practice students may have as many as 20. The guidance handbook provides detailed information for personal tutors and section heads and helps to ensure that a consistent service is provided for students.   The support staff who work in student reception are approachable and well informed about the work of sections. They act as a point of contact between staff and students. The accessibility of personal tutors, and the computer-based registration system which alerts students to messages, enhance communication. Student attendance at college is monitored effectively. Poor levels of attendance in classes are reported to personal tutors on a monthly basis by subject tutors.

42   Careers education and guidance are well organised, comprehensive and integrated effectively with other aspects of the guidance system. Within

each section there is one personal tutor who specialises in careers guidance. The five careers tutors meet regularly with the head of careers to plan the programme of careers guidance, which is common to all sections. The programme provides opportunities to listen to guest speakers from universities or local companies, as well as group activities and advice-giving sessions, particularly for the completion of application forms for higher education courses. Personal tutors match activities to the needs of individuals. Students spoke well of the level of support they receive from tutors, particularly when they are selecting higher education courses. At the time of the inspection, 452 students had completed higher education application forms. Links with the local careers service are strong. Careers officers are in the college for up to three days each week and interview students who request guidance. In 1993-94, 198 students made appointments. In August, when GCE A level results are released, students who are still uncertain about their progression routes are well supported by the senior management team, guidance staff and the careers service.

43   Confidential support for students is available from a trained counsellor who is present in college for the equivalent of half the week and does not have a teaching timetable. Students arrange appointments through the student reception desk but may be seen on a drop-in basis as well. The numbers using the counselling service and the nature of students' needs are monitored closely. Between August 1994 and February 1995, 76 counselling interviews were registered.

44   Regular monitoring, reviewing and recording of students' progress is an integral part of the guidance system. At certain times of the year, for example after internal examinations, formal tutorials are held and the key points which emerge are recorded. Personal tutors use these records to compile summaries of progress for each of their students. Parents receive copies of these summaries at regular intervals: November, January and July, for first-year students, and March for second-year students. Although the process of recording achievement is well established, few students leave college with a summative document which incorporates a record of their relevant experiences both in and outside college. The college claims that higher education institutions do not place a high enough value on completed records of achievement to encourage students to assemble summative documents.

45   There is a student council. Its purpose is to encourage students to arrange activities which reflect their interests and enthusiasms and to act as a pressure group for college-wide improvements. At present it has no formal constitution. Instead, interested students are able to attend regular lunchtime meetings which generate their own agendas and working parties. A member of staff works closely with the council. About 14 students, working in three groups, are likely to be active members of the student council at any one time. Examples of recent activities include contributing to the development of the college charter and raising £1,500 for cancer research. Student council opinion has been successful in

bringing about significant changes within the college, such as an extra car park, a study area and a compact disc loan service based in the library.

46   There are effective, informal channels of communication between the senior management team and the student body. For example, senior managers attend student council meetings, host information-gathering sessions, dine with students and make productive use of their day-to-day encounters with students.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

47   The average level of attendance for the 115 teaching sessions which were inspected was 88 per cent which matches the figure for the college, as a whole, over the same period.

48   The teaching observed was of a high standard. Of the 115 classes, 46 per cent were judged to have many strengths and very few weaknesses and a further 41 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed the weaknesses. The work in science, history, and geography was consistently of a high standard. Weaker sessions were spread over a range of other subjects. The following table summarises the grades awarded.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	49	44	12	0	0	105
GCSE	0	1	1	1	0	3
Other	4	2	1	0	0	7
Total	**53**	**47**	**14**	**1**	**0**	**115**

49   The teaching provided a variety of activities which were stimulating and encouraged student participation. Opportunities to reinforce understanding and consolidate learning were integral parts of many lessons. For example, in biology students used paper representations of chromosomes to model the stages of cell division. They were then given photographs of the different stages and asked to arrange them in chronological order so as to highlight the key features of chromosome activity. In modern languages, when students were preparing the vocabulary and background information to discuss immigration, those students who were also studying politics and geography were used effectively as a resource for others. Significant points in the discussions were expressed in the language the students were studying and appropriate statements were written on the board. Grammatical exercises followed the theme of the lesson.

50   Effective use of challenging questions led to lively discussions which allowed most students to take part and built upon their responses. For example, English language students worked in pairs to classify the linguistic features of a legal document and then, in a plenary session,

discussed their findings. The teacher's high expectations and probing questions sustained students' interest. Key points from the discussions were highlighted on the board, a technique which gave a visual representation to the learning and was effective in supporting weaker students. In one physics session, a student's response to a question led to a productive discussion on the extent to which the circular motion of a small object, tied to the end of a string, might be affected by the mass of the string.

51   In most subjects, students were expected to take responsibility for some of their own learning. For example, in art and design and performing arts students were encouraged to develop skills through experimentation and innovation. In history, prior to a European visit, students were provided with a well-planned booklet with illustrated details of the history, architecture, art and weaponry for the country and period being studied. The booklet contained a range of tasks which the students were expected to undertake independently, using the resources available to them during their visit. In philosophy and religion the teacher's stimulating and perceptive commentaries on topics being studied succeeded in developing students' own research skills. By contrast, in science and mathematics students relied heavily on their teachers for information and there was insufficient use of the library to develop investigative skills.

52   Teaching which lacked clear objectives, or relied too much on one strategy and failed to meet the learning needs of individual students, was observed in some sessions. For example, in mathematics GCE A level students were in the last stages of preparation for modular examinations. They attempted a range of questions set in previous years and worked in small groups, or individually. There was insufficient intervention from some teachers to ensure adequate coverage of a range of topics, to check students' understanding of key issues and to reinforce basic principles. In GCSE mathematics, not enough attention was paid to the needs of individuals, who in some cases were taking the examination for the third or fourth time to improve their grades. In some English classes, the pace of work was too slow and the range of activities was narrow. In art, there was an over emphasis on working in pencil which prevented students from experimenting with a variety of other media.

53   There were productive working relationships between staff and students which were often characterised by good humour. Teachers were supportive of students. The excellent rapport between staff and students in art and design, and performing arts, helped to generate mutual support and develop a strong sense of group identity. Teachers were energetic, enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subjects. Learning-resource materials, designed and developed by teachers for specific purposes, were up to date, relevant and of high quality.

54   All subjects had schemes of work which were clearly documented. The majority contained learning objectives, planned assessment schedules

and an indication of available resources. Some schemes contained a wider range of information. For example, in philosophy and religion there was an excellent section on teaching strategies while in geography there was an explicit focus on the development of scientific skills of enquiry. In general, there was insufficient planning for the integration and development of information technology skills in individual subject areas. In English and mathematics the schemes of work did not include an overview of the range of teaching and learning strategies within each course.

55   There were regular, appropriate assessments of students' work in all subjects. In computing, art and design and performing arts, projects were realistic and challenging. Arrangements for standardising and moderating coursework, where appropriate, were systematic. Marking schemes were clear and took account of the assessment criteria and weightings used by examination boards. Work was marked thoroughly and promptly. In the best examples, teachers provided suitable written comments and offered advice to students for future work. In English, some marking was not sufficiently diagnostic and, in science, supportive comments, to encourage students of all abilities, were sometimes lacking. In all subjects there were detailed, current records of students' progress.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

56   Students enjoy their studies, are well motivated and respond positively to the variety of learning activities. They approach their work with good humour and are able to work independently. In small group or paired activities they support and co-operate with each other. For example, in art and design, and performing arts, students are able to offer constructive, objective assessments of each other's work.

57   In all subjects, students develop the skills, knowledge and understanding appropriate to their courses. Science students carry out practical work safely and competently. Sketch books full of lively drawings, imaginative design sheets and innovative solutions, in both two and three-dimensional media and materials, are features of the work in art and design. In the art foundation course, students develop a range of complex skills and produce work of a high standard. In science, history, geography, modern languages, politics, philosophy and religion, economics and psychology many essays and assignments are well presented, clearly written and reveal a good understanding of the subject. In English most students write accurately and, over time, improve the organisation and quality of their work. In the best examples, students are aware of the audience for whom they are writing, offer evaluative comments and reveal flashes of flair and originality. By contrast, others do not have a secure understanding of difficult ideas and some of their written work is superficial.

58   There is effective development of speaking and listening skills in most subjects. In modern languages classes, for most of the time, students speak fluently in the language they are studying and demonstrate high levels of ability. In a good proportion of English lessons, discussions are purposeful and valued by students as learning activities. In mathematics and computing, students are able to describe their work clearly and are encouraged to discuss solutions to problems with each other.

59   The extent to which students develop information technology skills varies from subject to subject. In English and modern languages there are many examples of students using wordprocessors to produce essays and assignments and in history, information technology is regularly used as a tool to support learning. In science, mathematics, art, design technology, music, theatre studies and performing arts there are few opportunities for students to use computers. Within the enrichment programme there are several courses to develop information technology skills but there is no requirement for students to choose at least one of them. At the time of the inspection, 106 students were following these one-year courses. The college should monitor individuals' programmes of study systematically to ensure that all students develop information technology skills.

60   The following table summarises the results for the GCE A level examinations over the last five years.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Number of students	415	413	457	489	473
Number of subject entries	1,399	1,420	1,543	1,610	1,506
Percentage pass rate	74	78	76	81	87

61   In 1994, the provisional average pass rate for all 18 year olds in sixth form colleges is 83 per cent.

62   The college's GCE A level examination achievements show significant improvement over the five year period and for 1994 they are of a high standard. In 26 of the 31 subjects the percentages of students achieving grades A-E were at or above the national averages. In the previous year, two of the remaining five subjects were also in this category. In five subjects all students who took the examination passed: art and craft (17 entries), French (29), music (13), politics (17) and Spanish (8). Pass rates of 90 per cent or over were achieved in art and design (43 entries), biology (77), business studies (31), chemistry (64), design technology (14), English language (49), earth science (11), history (100), physical education (52) and physics (42). The pass rate for the 252 students who took the general studies examination was 85 per cent compared with the provisional national average of 77 per cent. At least 50 per cent of the students in music, physics and Spanish gained grades A or B. In economics, English literature, and philosophy and religion, the percentages of students gaining grades A or B were about 10 per cent below the corresponding national

averages. However, 33 of the philosophy and religion students had completed the course in one year. In further mathematics, where most students were taking the subject as a fourth GCE A level, the proportion of A and B grades was 20 per cent lower than the national average. Students aged 16-18 entered for the GCE A level examinations in 1993-94 scored, on average, 4.9 points per entry. This places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. The average points score per candidate, which takes into account that over half the candidates were entered for at least four subjects, was 16.6. The national average is 15.3. This places the college in the top 10 per cent of all colleges in the sector.

63   The proportion of students completing GCE A level courses is over 90 per cent. Some students begin a course of four GCE A level subjects and drop one of them. In July 1993, for the first time, about 40 students whose overall performance at the end of their first year was giving cause for concern, or who wanted to change one or more of their subjects, were allowed to adjust their programmes of study. Some chose entirely new subjects and created new programmes of study. Others retained an existing subject and chose two new ones. A few retained one subject and began a GNVQ advanced course. In practice, this means that some of these students took some GCE A level examinations in 1994, but none will complete their GCE A level or GNVQ programmes before 1995. A detailed analysis of these students' achievements at the end of the academic year 1993-94 shows that most completed the year, improved their overall performance and went on to the final year of their GCE A level programme.

64   For five years the college has collected data to compare predicted performance, based on average GCSE grades at entry, with actual performance in GCE A level subject examinations. The data for students completing courses in 1992 and 1993 were analysed also by the Advanced Level Information Service to provide national benchmarks against which internal benchmarks could be compared. The entry requirement for students completing courses in 1994 was four GCSEs at grade C. In 22 subjects students' performance in the GCE A level examinations matched or exceeded their predicted grades. Across the five-year period there is no pattern of under performance in any one subject area. The college should analyse, with the same rigour, the performance of GCSE students who are re-taking subjects.

65   In 1993-94, there were 151 subject entries for GCSE examinations in English, mathematics, French, psychology and Spanish. Fifty-two per cent achieved grades A-C compared with the provisional average of 50 per cent for sixth form colleges nationally. With the exception of psychology and Spanish, students were resitting examinations to improve their grades. In French (7 entries) and Spanish (4 entries) all students who took the examination achieved grades A-C. Five of the 11 psychology students were similarly successful. Of the 31 entries for the English examination,

77 per cent achieved grades A-C, compared with the provisional national average of 55 per cent for sixth form colleges. Thirty-nine per cent of the 98 entries for mathematics achieved grades A-C compared with the provisional national average of 33 per cent for sixth form colleges.

66   There was a 100 per cent pass rate in the art foundation course and of the 12 students who completed the course five gained distinctions and six credits. Ten of the 15 students who enrolled for the intermediate GNVQ courses in business and in health and social care completed them. Eight gained the full qualification, one with distinction. Four of these GNVQ students continued in further education but at a different college and two gained employment. The remaining four students are following GNVQ advanced level courses at the college.

67   Destination data of students following two-year courses are collected systematically and analysed in detail. In 1994, 420 students left the college after completing GCE A level courses or the art foundation course. Of these, 79 per cent went on to higher education, 4 per cent continued in further education, 6 per cent gained employment, 4 per cent intended to find work, 3 per cent took a year out and the destinations of 4 per cent were unknown. A further 58 students chose to stay at the college to re-take or complete GCE A level subjects and seven began the art foundation course.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

68   The college is committed to the provision of high-quality education for its students. Evaluation of the work of departments, including the use of questionnaires to find out students', parents', and other users' perceptions of the college has developed over a period of 12 years. In 1988 the first college charter was produced. In February 1993 the college recognised a need to draw the different strands of its activity into one quality assurance system and the quality group was established. Membership is drawn from senior and middle managers and teaching and support staff from across the curriculum and service areas. Two governors attended the inaugural meeting. The terms of reference of the group are: to monitor and validate the quality of all activities, to encourage continuous improvement, to ensure congruence with corporate concerns and to support the college mission by establishing a policy for quality. Significant progress has been made towards the achievement of these aims.

69   There is a comprehensive system for assuring the quality of provision and services across the college. Frameworks which identify quality characteristics, standards and measures, and targets for improvement have been developed for most college activities. They cover the work of all teaching departments, the guidance system, marketing, support services, property services and the performance of senior management. There is scope for making some of the quality standards and measures more specific.

70   The work of departments and service areas is reviewed regularly so that performance can be evaluated against quality measures. Completion rates, examination results and students' achievements compared with their qualifications at entry are scrutinised carefully. Questionnaires are used extensively and systematically to collect the views of students, staff, parents and governors. The outcomes allow the college to measure levels of satisfaction and to identify areas for improvement.

71   The quality of teaching in departments is assessed carefully. Last year each member of the senior management team worked with a cluster of departments, visited classes and observed all teaching staff. These individual observations were not recorded formally but a verbal debriefing was conducted with each member of staff. In most cases, the members of the senior management team aggregated their findings from departmental observations and reported back to the whole staff.

72   College charters are clearly structured and staff and students are familiar with them. There are four charters which are collated and published as one booklet. They encapsulate the rights of applicants to the college, students, parents and guardians of students, and of the local community.   Links between the quality frameworks and charter commitments are clear. Internal systems for improving services and provision have been translated into statements of users' rights which the college intends to honour. Each section of the charter booklet contains realistic statements of what users can expect from the college and, in many cases, these statements are matched to specific, quantitative targets. Responsibilities within the college for monitoring the implementation of each element are clearly designated. In addition, four students, four parents, senior staff, a governor and representatives from the TEC and local community monitor the extent to which their individual rights are honoured, and provide regular, individual feedback to one of the vice-principals. It is intended that this users' group should meet twice a year to share their findings with each other and suggest changes to charters for the following year.

73   The college's self-assessment report was structured in the same way as the Council's inspection reports using the headings in the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It identified strengths and areas for further development in sequences of short statements. These were matched to descriptions of evidence or actions and quantitative data were included where this was appropriate. Numerical grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas were not included. The report was generated from information provided by governors and by staff in departments and service areas. All were given copies of the final version of the self-assessment report. There was a close match between the college's assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and the findings of the inspection team.

74   There is a well-established, comprehensive induction programme for new staff. In addition to routine administrative procedures, it deals with matters relating to departments and the whole college. One session, for example, focuses on understanding the implications of the college's mission statement. For staff who are newly qualified there is effective support from teacher tutors, who disseminate good classroom practice through a series of workshops. Recent topics include 'the stimulation of discussion in group work' and 'handling conflict'. New staff spoke appreciatively of the level of support they receive from colleagues.

75   Staff training and development are high priorities and are funded appropriately. There is a system of staff review which enables the needs of individuals to be identified. Teaching and support staff are interviewed by the people to whom they are responsible, and may have more than one interview. Personal tutors have interviews with section heads and with heads of department. The effectiveness of professional development activities is evaluated thoroughly. Individuals identify the skills and knowledge gained from activities and, at a later stage, evaluate the use they have made of them. There is no formal system of staff appraisal.

76   In November 1994, the college achieved the designation of Investor in People. This is a national award to companies or organisations who have satisfied independent assessors that they have put into practice effective strategic planning, a comprehensive identification of training needs, training for staff to meet organisational objectives and a thorough evaluation of investment in staff development.

RESOURCES

Staffing

77   Staff are well qualified and enjoy working at the college. Almost all teachers are graduates and more than a quarter have higher degrees. Eighty-six per cent have qualified teacher status. Staff have a range of teaching experience which is mainly in the schools sector. Almost 20 per cent are examiners for GCE A level and GCSE examinations and three are principal examiners. Less than 10 per cent of teaching staff have recent industrial or commercial experience. Support staff have a wide range of relevant qualifications and several are following accredited courses related to current responsibilities. In spite of a low turnover of staff, there is a good blend of experience and new blood. There are approximately equal numbers of women and men.

78   Teachers and support staff are appropriately deployed to cover the present range of courses and provide support services. The increase in enrolments has been well managed to achieve gains in efficiency. Currently the ratio of teaching staff to students is 1:14.24. Support staff provide effective administrative and technical support for departments, although the level of technician support for existing resources in information technology is barely adequate. The ratio of support staff to teaching staff

is monitored carefully. Between September 1993 and September 1994, it has increased from 0.28:1 to 0.31:1.

Equipment/learning resources

79   There is sufficient equipment to support most teaching and learning. Most teaching rooms are provided with appropriate teaching aids such as overhead projectors. Video equipment is easily accessible. Good use is made of the latest learning technology in languages, including the use of satellite television and video and audio cassettes. Some specialist equipment in science has recently been updated. The college recognises that it should plan systematically for the replacement of equipment and has begun to formulate its strategy.

80   The bookstock in the library is up to date. There has been a recent purge of old stock. The computer-based system for issuing books provides statistical information on usage and there are two workstations which give staff and students access to the computerised library catalogue. There is an increasing number of compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database titles, including encyclopedias and newspapers. Departments hold considerable stocks of specialist subject books, slides and materials for individual study but the library holds no central record of all the college's learning resources. Students are consequently not aware of the full range of resources available to them. In the library, there are not enough texts to support the GCE A level English language course and there is a restricted range of science books to encourage wider reading.

81   Until recently, information technology has been a neglected area. Some departments have insufficient computers to support their work adequately, others have just obtained their first workstation. Although nearly a third of computers are outdated, newer facilities are of good quality and are able to use a wide range of general-purpose software. The overall ratio of computers to students is 1:12. Taking account only of up-to-date machines, the ratio is 1:15. The college has recognised that use of information technology will be fundamental to learning support in the future and has made a commitment to increase substantially both the quality and quantity of resources.

Accommodation

82   The present accommodation poses a significant barrier to a further increase in student numbers and development of the curriculum. To ease shortages of accommodation in the past, several detached buildings were erected. However, there was no overall, planned development of the site. The quality of accommodation generally reflects the age of the buildings and the extent of refurbishment. New buildings are of a high standard and enhance the site. The dining and study areas are attractive, well used, and able to accommodate large numbers of students at the same time. The appearance of older buildings, however, is mediocre. Teaching for a

few subjects is accommodated in temporary classrooms which are in a poor state of repair, or are unsuitable for their purpose. Some teaching rooms are overcrowded and in history, geography and English rooms are too small for some group work. In art and design and performing arts the limited teaching space restricts the scope of activities.

83   Buildings are generally well maintained. Internal decor is good and rooms are mostly well furnished. Many areas have colourful displays of relevant teaching materials or students' work. Paintings, on loan from a local gallery, are hung in corridors. Cleanliness is of a high order. Students respect their environment. During the inspection, there was no evidence of vandalism or graffiti.

84   There are substantial problems of wheelchair access to several parts of the site. There is no access to the first floor of the main building where most computing and modern languages resources are located. The mezzanine level of the library is also inaccessible. Some corridors are narrow and many doorways are difficult to negotiate. Although several entrances are ramped, there are some parts of the college where steps have to be negotiated. There is no lift and no toilets suitable for people with disabilities.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

85   Winstanley College strives to provide high-quality academic and general vocational education for full-time students aged 16-19. It promotes the personal and social development of its students and a strong feeling of community. The strengths of the college are:

- the extensive choice of GCE A level subjects

- the breadth and choice of leisure activities

- the commitment, wide range of experience and effectiveness of the governors

- the purposeful leadership and participative management styles of the principal and vice-principals

- well-established, effective systems for student admission, guidance and support

- productive working relationships between students and staff

- teaching of a high standard

- good examination results

- a comprehensive system, including procedures which incorporate standards and measures, for assuring the quality of provision and services across the college

- carefully-developed charters which are integral parts of the quality assurance system

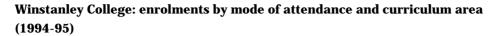- the high priority given to staff training and development

- well-qualified staff, who are energetic and enjoy working at the college.

86　In order to maintain and improve the quality of its provision and the standards achieved by its students, the college should:

- consider broadening its range of courses to cater for a wider cross-section of students

- ensure that all students have a vocational dimension to their programmes of study

- strengthen channels of communication between governors and students and between governors and staff

- ensure that all students have opportunities to develop their information technology skills through their programmes of study

- develop a central record of learning resources

- improve the quantity and quality of computer workstations

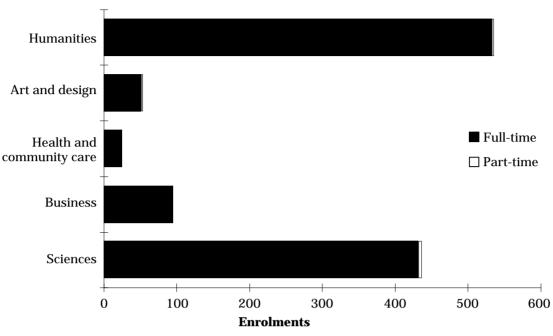- continue to improve its use of accommodation and provide better access for wheelchair users.

FIGURES

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

Figure 1

Winstanley College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)
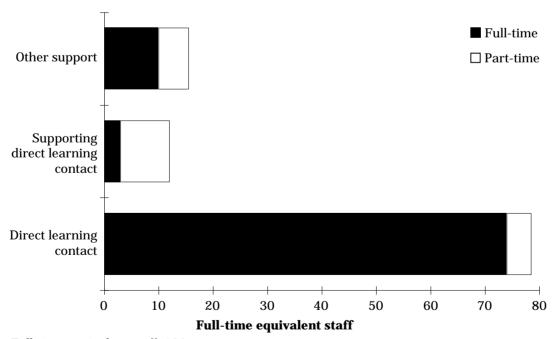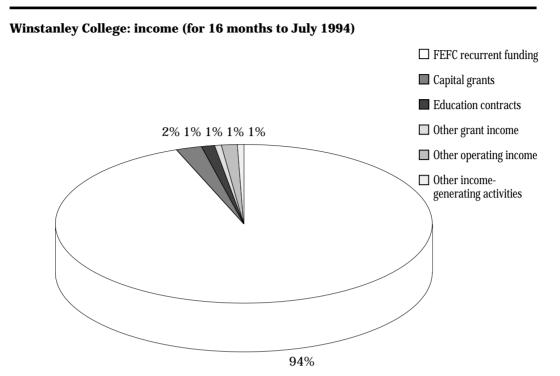

Enrolments: 1,147

Figure 2

Winstanley College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)
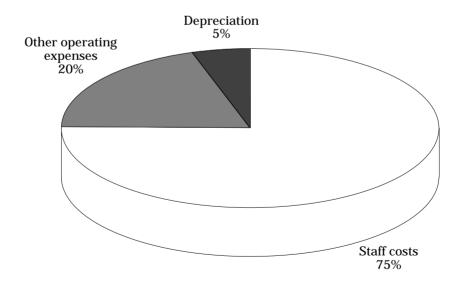

Full-time equivalent staff: 106

Figure 3

Winstanley College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)

Legend:
- ☐ FEFC recurrent funding
- ▨ Capital grants
- ■ Education contracts
- ☐ Other grant income
- ▨ Other operating income
- ☐ Other income-generating activities

2% 1% 1% 1% 1%

94%

Income: £4,186,000

Figure 4

Winstanley College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

Depreciation
5%

Other operating
expenses
20%

Staff costs
75%

Expenditure: £3,940,000