

REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE

Woodhouse College

April 1994

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a statutory duty to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements to assess the quality of provision in the further education sector. It discharges the duty in part through its inspectorate, which inspects and reports on each college in the sector every four years. The Council's inspectorate also assesses and reports on a national basis on specific curriculum areas and advises the Council's quality assessment committee.

College inspections involve both full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have specialist knowledge and experience in the areas they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member from outside the world of education and a nominated member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are described in the Council Circular 93/28. In the course of inspecting colleges, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also summarise their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses using a five-point scale. 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 26/94

WOODHOUSE COLLEGE

GREATER LONDON REGION

Inspected September 1993 - February 1994

Summary

Woodhouse College in the London Borough of Barnet is run by a closely-knit management team, well supported by an active governing body. The college provides GCE and GCSF programmes of study for students recruited from a wide area, together with vocational courses for students from its partner schools. The majority of students take programmes comprising two GCE A and two AS level subjects. Their programmes are further broadened by a wide choice of enrichment modules, by the opportunity to participate in musical and dramatic productions and by work experience. Students receive strong pastoral support and high-quality teaching. Standards of work are high in all academic subjects, and most vocational subjects. Students are generally required to have good grades at GCSF in order to study for GCE A/AS level courses. Their achievements in external examinations are outstanding and there is a good record of progression to higher and further education. Resource planning and staff development should be linked more directly to college objectives, and quality assurance should be developed further. Other weaknesses are that much of the accommodation is in need of refurbishment; equipment and other learning resources are not fully meeting the requirements of the curriculum; technician support is required for information technology; the range of teaching and learning strategies employed in some subject areas is not sufficiently broad, and there is a lack of inter-departmental collaboration on curricular issues.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Accounts, business studies, economics & laws	1	Geography, history & government & politics	2
Computing & information technology	2	Mathematics, biology, chemistry & physics	2
Art, music & design	2	Modern languages	1
Diploma in vocational education	3	Sociology, psychology, classical civilisation, Latin	2
English	2		

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INTRODUCTION

Woodhouse College in the London Borough of Barnet was inspected in the autumn and spring terms of the academic year 1993-94. The inspection team of eight full-time inspectors and six part-time inspectors, including a lay inspector, spent a total of 67 days in the college. The college's provision for induction and guidance was observed early in the autumn term. Specialist subjects and cross-college issues were addressed in the weeks beginning 6 December 1993 and 31 January 1994. Inspectors visited 130 learning sessions and examined a representative sample of students' written and practical work. Almost all of the teaching staff and most of the students were observed in classes. There were meetings with governors, including the operations director for the North London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), college managers, teaching staff, support staff, students, parents, head teachers of partner schools, and a local education authority representative for the Training and Vocational Education Initiative Extension.

The inspection was carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. The framework describes a four-year inspection cycle. When this cycle becomes fully established, colleges will have the opportunity to respond to the findings of earlier inspection visits before their quadrennial inspection and the subsequent published report. As this inspection occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response was not available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

1 Woodhouse College is a sixth form college occupying a single green field site in North Finchley on the eastern side of the London Borough of Barnet. The college occupies a central geographical position in the area covered by the North London Training and Enterprise Council, and is the only sixth form college in this area. At the time of the inspection, the college employed 75 full-time and part-time staff (figure 1). Some 670 students were on roll, all of whom were attending full-time day courses. Almost all were within the age range 16-19. Fifty-four per cent were from the London Borough of Barnet, 22 per cent from Haringey and 11 per cent from Enfield. The remaining 13 per cent travelled from further afield in London and counties to the north of London. This year, the college achieved its planned increase in enrolments of 8 per cent.

2 The college was established in 1978 to serve the needs of its two original partner schools in the London Borough of Barnet. There is an agreement between the college and its three current partner schools that the college will continue to provide post-16 education for their students. Two of the partner schools provided 34 per cent of the new students in 1993-94. Students from a third partner school, which opened in 1992, will join the college in 1997 when the first cohort of pupils reaches 16 years of age.

3 The college has six faculties. Five of these provide General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and advanced supplementary

(AS) courses. The sixth faculty offers 10 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects and the diploma in vocational education. There are plans to replace the diploma with General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) over two years starting from September 1994. The percentages of students taking different course combinations is shown in figure 2; percentage enrolments by level of study in figure 3.

6 Barnet is the second largest London borough, with a population of 298,000. Employment is mostly in small businesses and service industries. The largest employer is the borough council. A substantial proportion of the workforce commutes to the City for their employment. The unemployment rate in Barnet is 9.6 per cent; in neighbouring Enfield the rate is 11.8 per cent and in nearby Haringey 20.6 per cent (London Research Centre, December 1993). The proportion of residents from ethnic minority backgrounds is 18 per cent in Barnet, 14 per cent in Enfield and 29 per cent in Haringey (1991 census data).

7 There are four further education colleges in the area, two of them in the London Borough of Barnet. All offer GCE A level, GCSE and vocational courses. There are also 44 schools in the North London TEC area which have sixth forms, although only 40 per cent of these have sixth forms with 60 or more students. Among the independent schools in the area there are four with very small sixth forms or no sixth form provision. The college recruits 26 per cent of its students from independent schools.

8 The mission of the college is to provide the highest quality educational experience for students aged 16-19 within the North London TEC area and its immediate surroundings, enabling them to develop intellectually and socially and to progress to higher education, further education or employment.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 There is a wide range of advanced level provision. Students can choose from 24 GCE A level subjects and 26 AS level subjects. The college is strongly committed to providing a broad, balanced programme of academic sixth-form studies. Students are required normally to combine two GCE A levels with two AS subjects. Currently, some 88 per cent of the lower sixth students are taking a combination of GCE A and AS subjects. Students welcome this arrangement which they maintain is well regarded by most of the higher education institutions to which they apply.

10 There is a one-year programme leading to the diploma in vocational education, validated by the City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI). This broadens the college's curriculum into vocational areas and helps it to fulfil its commitment to the partner schools. As well as providing the opportunity to study in occupational areas such as care and media, the diploma in vocational education allows students the opportunity to improve their GCSE grades in mathematics and English and to take additional GCSE subjects such as child development and media studies. A new GNVQ programme in business at intermediate level, is to be offered from

September 1994. This is intended to replace the diploma in vocational education, which will be phased out.

11 As part of its aim to produce rounded individuals with wide interests, the college has a programme of enrichment modules which is compulsory for all lower sixth and diploma students, and voluntary for those in the upper sixth. It allows students to choose from a menu of modules to be studied for two hours each week over a period of 10 weeks. Modules include individual and team sports, music, drama, social and political issues, scientific issues and community service. The programme, which is popular with students and their parents, is to be accredited from 1994 by the Youth Award Scheme, a scheme developed through the Training and Vocational Education Initiative and, in turn, accredited by the University of the West of England.

12 The college has an active Christian Union which provides a weekly act of worship for those students and staff who wish to attend. It also has an active Jewish Society. At present there are no religious education courses. In 1992-93, a course on religious awareness ran as one of the options on the enrichment programme. It was offered again this year but, in the view of the college, the numbers choosing the programme were insufficient to make it viable.

13 The students' experience at the college is further enriched by the opportunity to participate in or attend other extra-curricular activities, particularly in the fields of music and drama. A musical production is staged annually in the autumn term and a dramatic production every spring term. Large numbers of students are involved in these productions. For instance, 70 students took part in the musical play *High Society* during the autumn term of 1993, for which the music was provided by the student orchestra. The students provide regular lunchtime concerts.

14 The GCE A/AS level modern language courses are geared to the needs of the academically most able and committed students. The college also provides opportunities for all students to study a language through the enrichment programme, although these could be more vigorously marketed to encourage a greater take-up. Links with organisations in Europe have been used to allow some students to have work experience abroad. For example, a study exchange has been arranged with a technical school in Germany.

15 All students undertake either two or three weeks of work experience. This has enabled the college to establish links with a variety of industrial, commercial and public sector organisations. The college should explore the extent to which this rich variety of links could be used to enhance the practical relevance of courses.

16 Each year there are four applicants for each place at the college. As a consequence, the college does not see the necessity for a policy to promote its courses, other than to provide an open day for potential students. Great value is placed on the close relationships with the partner schools, whose

pupils are guaranteed places. Good arrangements exist to ensure that these pupils are placed on courses appropriate to their achievements at school.

17 A number of local groups make use of the college's facilities for evening and weekend lets Organisations using the college include schools funded by the local Greek and Indian communities for language and cultural studies, and a dance group for people with physical disabilities. These activities serve to strengthen community links as well as providing revenue for the college.

18 There are productive relationships with other educational institutions in the region, including Middlesex University and local further education colleges, through the principal's membership of the Standing Committee of North London Principals. At least a dozen of the college's students join Middlesex University's art foundation programme annually and students from Hendon College have attended German and French courses at Woodhouse College.

19 Some preliminary discussions have taken place between the college and the North London TEC to explore the possibility of securing funding for aspects of the college's planned GNVQ provision. Currently, there is no TEC-funded work-related further education in the college.

20 Detailed and effective arrangements exist to keep students' parents and guardians informed about their progress and to involve them more fully in the life of the college. The Friends of Woodhouse, the parents' association for the college, has effective arrangements for liaising with teaching staff. Open evenings are held twice yearly to discuss the progress and general welfare of students and these are well attended by parents. There are sound systems to ensure that parents are fully consulted about any difficulties which their sons or daughters may experience.

21 There is an equal opportunities policy and a working group to promote its implementation. Identified priorities include improving the awareness of staff towards equal opportunities issues and monitoring students' progress according to gender and ethnicity. Currently 55 per cent of students at the college are female and 32 per cent are from ethnic minority groups. The college has been particularly successful in attracting female students onto science courses. In chemistry, for example, almost 50 per cent of GCE A level and over 80 per cent of AS level students are female. In physics, the figures are 25 per cent and 55 per cent, and in biology, 71 per cent and 68 per cent, respectively.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

22 The college is efficiently run by an active governing body, many of whose members devote a great deal of time to college business. Governors are fully involved in policy decision-making and strategic planning. The board consists of 16 members, including the principal. Eight of the governors are from industry, providing experience in the areas of

management, planning, finance, marketing, personnel, law and surveying. The board also includes representatives of the North London TEC and of nearby Middlesex University. There are two parent governors, two staff governors and one student governor. The college makes good use of the skills of its governors.

23 The full governing body receives regular reports from four of its committees which deal with finance, premises, personnel and employment, curriculum and student services. The chairs of these committees, together with the principal, form the chairman's committee of the governing body, which provides an important link between the college management and the governors. The chairman's committee identifies the issues and possible courses of action for discussion by the governors' other committees. In addition, there is an audit committee, and a remuneration committee which meets annually to review the salary of the principal and vice-principals. The governing body receives an annual report from the principal which includes information on enrolment numbers measured against targets; admissions from partner schools; examination results; numbers of students entering higher education and other destinations of students. One omission is that the governors are not provided with a report on quality assurance in the college.

24 Management of the college is effective. The management team consists of the principal, two vice-principals and four directors. The directors are responsible to the vice-principals for student services, administration and admissions, curriculum and personnel. Management roles were recently re-organised. This has led to a redefinition of the job descriptions of senior staff and to a clarification of roles and functions. At present, all members of the management team teach, although this is currently under review given the new pressures of managing a corporation. The senior staff have taken advantage of the college's relatively small size to develop a closely-knit management team which is well-informed on the college's operations. Direct communication between the senior staff and the whole staff is possible because of the small numbers involved. The principal meets all teaching staff twice each week during morning break. In addition, there is a weekly, timetabled period set aside for meetings which has been used to involve all teaching staff directly in consultations on the college's key values, as a preliminary to re-defining the mission statement.

25 The curriculum board, which meets weekly, comprises the six heads of faculty and is chaired by the director of curriculum. It has a consultative role and is responsible for devising the academic development plan. Communications within faculties are good. There are frequent faculty meetings, where matters relevant to the faculty are discussed, and the faculties are responsible for implementing senior management decisions. Within the faculties, 16 heads of department lead subject teams, although some departments consist only of a single member of staff. Departments are generally well managed but there is scope for more liaison between

departments, for example in the sharing of teaching methods and materials. The weekly meeting period is regularly used to enable groups such as tutor group teams to carry out their business.

26 Financial procedures and control systems are currently under review in response to the demands made by incorporation. The governing body is provided with monthly cash flow information. Over 98 per cent of the college's income is derived from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), with the remainder from lettings and the Technical Vocational Education Initiative Extension. Funding from the Technical Vocational Education Initiative Extension will end in 1995. The Friends of Woodhouse have helped the college by raising money for specific purposes. For example, £11,000 was raised for the refurbishment of the students' refectory.

27 Summaries of the college's estimated income and expenditure are shown in figures 4 and 5. Resources are distributed across the faculties through a combined system of bidding by faculty heads and of allocations weighted by course cost on the basis of FEFC weightings. A more coherent system, embracing all aspects of strategic planning, is now needed to link resource planning more directly to college objectives. This would enable senior management to conduct more detailed monitoring and review. There is, for instance, no formal strategy for the allocation and use of staff development funds in relation to the academic development plan. Work has begun to develop this. Within each department's plans is a consideration of the resources required to deliver the subject. In addition, proposals for the purchase of new equipment over the next three years have now been developed by each department. The college's unit of funding for 1992-93, inherited from the local education authority, is recorded in the FEFC report, *Funding Allocations, 1993-94*, as £2,541 per weighted full-time equivalent student. The median for sixth form colleges is £2,647.

28 The quality and availability of management information is adequate. The college has devised its own management information systems for student information. The Schools Information Management System (SIMS) financial package has recently been brought into use. A computerised management information system is being developed but further work is needed to develop databases for personnel and room utilisation.

29 The main performance indicators currently employed by the college are examination results, data on student destinations and the Advanced Level Information System (ALIS). The reasons for students leaving their courses are also collated, although the students involved are few.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

30 Policies governing the recruitment and induction of students are clearly presented and pragmatic. Effective systems have been established to implement them. Enrolment and induction activities are well organised and show the college to be a caring and efficient institution. Students from

the partner schools receive thorough, helpful information and advice on the programmes of study available at the college. The guidance received by other applicants is necessarily more limited, but the level of information provided on the subjects to be studied at GCE A and AS level is generally satisfactory. All the applicants from the partner schools, and all entrants from other schools, are interviewed. Interviewers adhere to a comprehensive set of guidelines which ensure consistency across the college. Careful account is taken of individuals' overall suitability for a programme of study. Their non-academic interests and achievements are considered, as well as their examination results. Students are normally expected to have achieved a B grade in a GCSE subject in order to study it at GCE A/AS level, but this requirement is applied less rigorously in the case of partner school applicants.

31 The methods used to induct GCE A/AS level students are, generally, effective. At an early stage, students are made aware of the focus of each course and the demands it is likely to place on them. Teachers are sensitive to the insecurity which some students feel when confronted by new, more advanced courses and some have devised successful teaching strategies to cope with this. Diploma in vocational education students are provided with a series of 'taster' sessions which introduce them to the course modules on offer and enable them to make informed choices.

32 Students receive high-quality pastoral support. Tutorial arrangements are managed by the director of student services and five senior tutors. When they enrol at the college, students are allocated a personal tutor to whom they are attached for their entire course. Personal tutors are provided with clear notes of guidance on how to fulfil their pastoral role. Each tutor leads a group, comprising a mix of first and second-year students following vocational and academic courses which meets normally for one hour each week. As well as providing tutors with the opportunity to review students' progress, there is a programme of workshop activities on topics such as personal finance, interview preparation, careers decision-making, health and leisure. Where there are issues of particular interest to diploma in vocational education students or to GCE A level students, tutorial groups are re-organised accordingly. For example, the tutorial programme for GCE A level students provides comprehensive guidance on coping with the challenges associated with higher education. This offering is based on a series of practical exercises which staff at the college have prepared and used and which have been subsequently published and distributed to a large number of other colleges. The tutorial programme for diploma in vocational education students focuses sharply on preparations for working life.

33 Comprehensive careers guidance and information on further and higher education courses is provided by the careers team and by tutors. Activities include individual guidance, careers conventions, visits from a large number of university admissions tutors and careers-related sessions within the tutorial programme. The college has a well-organised and well-equipped careers resource area which provides literature on higher

education institutions and potential employers. There are also useful interactive computerised databases which allow students to obtain detailed information on higher education courses and to explore various career opportunities.

34 Good systems exist to monitor students' levels of attendance and the progress they are making in their studies. Where teachers perceive that a problem is developing with an individual student a 'cause for concern' notice is issued which alerts both the student's personal tutor and the senior tutor. The matter is then formally discussed in the weekly pastoral group meetings of personal and senior tutors and a solution sought. The college readily seeks the assistance of parents where appropriate.

35 Prior to incorporation, the college was not in a position to respond to the needs of students requiring English language support and had little experience of coping with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Senior managers have recognised the deficiencies and appointed a teacher to co-ordinate these aspects of provision. In the few months since the appointment, much of the teacher's time has been taken up in providing language support to diploma in vocational education students, as and when a need has been identified. If the college is to offer comprehensive support for all students, including those studying for GCE A level, it should develop a clear policy on providing for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who require language support.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

36 The quality of teaching is high and learning is promoted effectively. Of the 130 sessions inspected, two thirds had strengths which clearly outweighed the weaknesses. Work of a very high standard was observed in all subjects, particularly in modern languages and business-related subjects. The following table summarises the grades given to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
A/AS level		22	55	31	1	0	109
GCSE		2	6	7	1	0	16
Other		0	1	2	2	0	5
Totals		24	62	40	4	0	130

37 Planning for GCE and GCSE subjects is thorough and effective. Programmes have been designed to ensure clear progression, and logical sequences of activities are linked to the examination syllabuses. The work for the diploma in vocational education is also well planned, and the work experience elements well integrated. In many subjects, the schemes of work are full and informative. For example, the schemes of work in

chemistry offer detailed guidance on content, together with suggestions for teaching and learning strategies, aids and materials, experiments to be carried out and assessments to be undertaken. In art, there are well-thought-out programmes which encourage experimentation in a wide range of media. Schemes of work in a minority of the subjects are less thorough. In mathematics, for example, the scheme of work is simply a list of topics to be covered. In many cases, the information provided to the students consists of no more than a course outline.

38 There is little inter-departmental planning with regard to schemes of work. In the arts and in mathematics and the sciences in particular, this would enable a re-ordering of topics and emphasise the links between subjects.

39 In subjects where practical work plays a part, such as information technology and the sciences, there is a good balance between theory and practical work. The practical work supports and illuminates the theory.

40 In all subjects, there were significant strengths in the planning and delivery of many of the lessons which were observed. Most were well prepared, effectively managed and clearly focused. Progression from earlier work covered by the student was evident. Good relationships between staff and students often provided a powerful stimulus to effective learning. Teachers, generally, employed appropriate and suitably-varied methods of teaching and were successful in maintaining students' interest and attention. The standard of teachers' exposition was high but teachers were sometimes too reliant on this form of teaching. In some lessons, opportunities for learning could have been improved by the imaginative use of teaching aids or by introducing alternative learning strategies such as small group discussion, role play, and student presentations.

41 The teaching of languages was generally good and, at its best, outstanding. The methods employed were effective in developing the students' language and study skills. Errors in oral work were sensitively dealt with, and often used as the basis for new learning. Teachers' expectations were generally high and the pace of work was often challenging. Staff and students showed an obvious enjoyment of the work and this helped to create a successful environment for effective communication. The course materials used were well chosen to keep students up to date with developments in the countries where languages were being studied. Three foreign language assistants were used to good effect, especially in the development of oral fluency.

42 In all courses in the business studies faculty, teachers strongly emphasised the need for a thorough knowledge of theory to support effective decision-making and problem-solving. They insisted that students analysed situations in a rigorous manner. A feature of many of the classes inspected was the extent to which theory was applied to practical problems found in the real world. In all subjects within the faculty, but notably in economics and law, students were encouraged to debate issues and defend positions using knowledge and skills gained on their course. Teacher

used their skills effectively in catering for the differing ability levels of students in the same class.

43 In art, students were encouraged to respond imaginatively. In design, there was a strong emphasis on practical work supported by good reference material. In music, the teaching style was generally interactive and teachers successfully addressed the need to differentiate between students' abilities. In the sciences, the pace of work was maintained by varying the learning activities, and through the skilful use of questions and well-planned practical work. In sociology, students were provided with a strong theoretical framework and teachers introduced good materials to support the learning process. In the best sessions observed in geography, history, and government and politics, students were challenged to think and debate, and their knowledge and understanding was tested through questioning. In English, teachers displayed skill in explaining and interpreting texts, and stimulating teaching materials were in use for AS level work. In some of the GCE classes in English, mathematics, history, and government and politics the range of learning activities was limited.

44 In the diploma in vocational education programme, there was some good teaching in care and in media studies modules. Much of the material was challenging and students experienced an appropriate range of activities and were expected to extend their knowledge and understanding through regular coursework. The approach taken in business and information technology modules was, at times, less effective. In some of these sessions, lack of variety in the organisation of work and the uncertain direction of activities led to a loss of interest and motivation. In contrast to other courses, there was some absenteeism and late arrival at classes in these programmes.

45 Teachers are aware of the need to improve the study skills of students and to help them to develop a capacity for working independently. A handbook on study skills is provided for students in the humanities faculty. Students are encouraged to research topics and to apply their knowledge to new situations. The extent to which information technology has been integrated into most of the courses is limited. Students should be made more aware of the role of information technology in a range of applications, such as systems control, musical composition and design, as well as the analysis and presentation of information.

46 Students received regular homework assignments which were closely related to course objectives. Assessment was generally well planned to give a continuous review of students' learning and progress. There were, however, some weaknesses. In the diploma in vocational education course, the assessment of competence took place at the end of some modules rather than being continuous, and grammar and spelling mistakes in students' assignments often went uncorrected. There is no internal moderation of coursework in mathematics to ensure that common assessment standards are being operated by staff teaching the same course to different groups.

47 Art students' project work is closely monitored. At the start of each assignment every student is given a sheet of clear instructions setting out the aims of the exercise, the various stages of achievement and guidance on how to complete the task. Staff respond to individuals' progress and modify the specification if necessary. The overall approach to project work is highly successful and could usefully be extended to other subjects.

48 Written work is set regularly. It helps to prepare students for the examinations they will be taking and is used in the careful monitoring of their progress. The marking of work is consistently rigorous. In some subjects the quality of teachers' written comments is high. In others, the written comments give little guidance to students on how their work might be improved.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

49 The achievements of students at Woodhouse College are outstanding. The overall pass rate in GCE A level has been above 90 per cent for many years and is well above the national rate, as is the proportion of grades A and B gained. The majority of students are well motivated and enjoy their studies in an atmosphere which supports purposeful learning. Appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding are developed. High standards of student work were observed in all subjects. In 1993, 226 students entered for A level examinations in 24 subjects. There were 544 examination entries with 95 per cent achieving grades A-E, compared with a national figure of 81 per cent. Grades A and B were achieved by 54 per cent, compared with a national figure of 31 per cent. There was a 100 per cent pass rate in 13 out of 24 subjects across the arts, sciences, business studies, languages and humanities. The lowest success rate in any subject was 81 per cent.

50 There were also high levels of achievement in the GCE AS examinations. There were 237 entries in 27 subjects, with students achieving 93 per cent passes at grades A-E and 44 per cent at grades A or B. Again, a 100 per cent pass rate was achieved in 13 subjects.

51 The college ranked third among all institutions in the further education sector in the recently-published table of students aged 16 to 18, entered for two or more A levels. The average point score for each student entered was 19.3 (where A=10, E=2). The college's achievements compared favourably with those of schools within the borough, only two of which achieved a higher average points score.

52 Of the 70 students entered for the diploma in vocational education in 1993, 65 completed the course with 79 per cent of those completing achieving the diploma. Students on the diploma in vocational education programme are able to combine up to four GCSE subjects with their vocational studies. Students from partner schools on the GCE A/AS programme may also be studying for one or more GCSE subjects.

53 There was a total of 226 entries for nine GCSE subjects in 1993, 188 of these from the 70 students following the diploma in vocational education

programme. Grades A-C were achieved by 58 per cent of entrants. All candidates achieved grades A-G. A significant achievement is that 41 out of 66 students improved on their previous grades in mathematics and 43 out of 60 improved their grades in English language. Over the last three years, an average of 61 per cent of those entered for GCSE subjects achieved grades A-C.

54 Students also take additional qualifications. In 1993, 36 students entered for the Community Sports Leaders Award, where there was an 83 per cent success rate. Students on the diploma in vocational education course also entered for Pitmans Examinations Institute tests in wordprocessing, spreadsheet processing and data processing. Out of 37 entries in 1993, 31 achieved certificates.

55 In 1993, 195 of the 226 students who took GCE A level and AS subjects applied for courses in higher education. At the time the survey was conducted, 159 of these had been offered places on degree courses, five on Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) Higher National Diploma (HND) courses; a further seven were still in the clearing system; four were entering employment and 20 were to re-apply after re-sitting their A levels to improve their grades. Sixteen of the 17 students who studied art were offered places on foundation courses. Of the 70 students who began the diploma in vocational education course, 65 completed, 40 per cent of them progressing to BTEC national diploma programmes, 17 per cent to BTEC first diploma programmes, 15 per cent to GCE A/AS courses, 15 per cent to GCSE or other courses elsewhere, and 10 per cent to employment and training schemes. Three per cent were still seeking employment in September 1993.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

56 Quality matters are managed through the management group, which comprises the principal as chairperson, the two vice-principals and the four directors. At present, quality assurance is focused mainly on examination results, progression data and ALIS. Within most departments, quality assurance has been informal. A new system of course development and review, making use of a pro forma to be completed by heads of department, has been set in place but is not yet fully operational. The system identifies targets and performance indicators but not the process through which outcomes will be achieved. Action plans are drawn up as a result of the review.

57 A comprehensive review of the college's policy for GCE AS courses has been carried out. It incorporates the views of students, staff and higher education institutions. The student induction programme, which received its initial impetus through the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative Extension, has been reviewed and developed after a survey of students' views. Feedback from students has also had an impact within subject areas. However, not all students have an opportunity to comment on their courses. For instance, modern languages students do not contribute to course evaluation.

58 Data from ALTS are available to all departments and are used to inform departmental policies. As yet, there is no detailed college analysis. The intention is to wait until there is a base of three years' evidence.

59 The appraisal scheme for teaching staff is progressing more slowly than scheduled, but has covered more than 50 per cent of teachers. The scheme is not clearly linked to a staff development plan and does not include support staff. Support staff and cross-college services such as student services do not at present have defined targets or standards against which their work can be reviewed.

60 The college first became responsible for staff development upon incorporation in April 1993. The staff development programme is managed by the director of personnel. A sum of £20,000 was allocated for staff development in the period from April 1993 to July 1994 which represents less than 1 per cent of the college budget. Half of this sum was set aside for faculty use, although there has been only a limited response from faculty heads in the use of these funds for departments. The rest of the funds were earmarked for cross-college and support staff training, although no specific proportion of the budget is reserved for the latter. The college has five in-service training days each year, the topics for which are linked with stage one of the strategic plan. There has been useful training on GNVQs, strategic planning and the Youth Award Scheme. There is no formal induction policy for new staff. Induction is left to each individual department to arrange.

61 Whole college in-service training days are evaluated but there is little systematic evaluation of the courses attended by individual members of staff, which limits the value of such training to the college. There has been some evaluation of the industrial placement scheme for staff, developed through the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative Extension, which shows that the scheme has broadened staff perspectives and enhanced the quality of learning materials.

62 Students are made aware informally of the complaints procedure within the college. If they have problems, these can be raised initially with the personal or senior tutor and subsequently with a member of the senior management. Tutors keep a record of contact with students and how any complaints are dealt with. A student forum was recently established to provide students with an opportunity to raise issues through a student representative. In the light of requirements contained in the Charter for Further Education, the college is examining ways in which students can be enabled to make the best of what the college offers. Work is in hand to develop the college's own charter by summer 1994.

RESOURCES

Staffing

63 Teaching staff are well qualified in their specialist subject areas. Most have a teaching qualification and many have higher degrees. Most teachers have considerable experience of academic teaching at GCE A level but

more limited experience in other course areas which are planned by the college. Two teachers in charge of diploma in vocational education have recent and relevant work experience. Each year some teachers gain valuable experience of work outside the college through the teacher placement scheme. Eleven have been involved in the scheme in the past three years. These placements should be more closely related to college or departmental strategic plans.

64 Of the 58 teaching staff, 24 are women. One of the seven staff at director level or above is female, one third of the heads of faculty and just over one third of the heads of department are also female. About 10 per cent of the staff are from ethnic minority backgrounds.

65 There are six technicians who provide a contribution well beyond supporting practical work. Three of these are graduates, including one who holds a doctorate. The level of support in science is good: there are two full-time and two half-time technicians. Art and design each have a half-time technician and these provide adequate support for teaching. However, the majority of departments lack technical or administrative help. In some subjects, such as media studies, teachers are required to carry out technical tasks. This is not an efficient use of resources. There is an urgent need for a technician to support information technology.

66 A process for deciding levels of staffing is in place. Needs are analysed by the curriculum board and decisions made by the senior management team. A detailed appointments policy for all staff, teaching and non-teaching, has operated successfully for a year and is being evaluated by the personnel director.

Accommodation

67 The college inherited an eighteenth century building with many impressive period features, twentieth century buildings designed for a grammar school and several temporary classrooms. The buildings are set in an 11-acre site. Much of the accommodation has had little investment and has been poorly maintained prior to incorporation. The college has taken initiatives to resolve the resulting difficulties by commissioning a comprehensive conditions survey and undertaking its own room utilisation survey. A development strategy linked to curriculum plans has been generated through close and productive work by governors and senior managers, and staff have been involved in these discussions. A sound strategy to improve the regularity and quality of maintenance, repair and redecoration has been developed and has begun to be implemented.

68 The main building has an elegant facade, and the foyer, staircase and rooms of the original house have great character. Works of art are displayed in the public areas and there is a bright, newly-refurbished student refectory. The students' entrance is spacious and attractive, although the space allocated for students' social activities is insufficient. There are extensive sports fields on the site. The library and the adjoining

resource room provide an attractive environment for study but, for an expanding college, the study space is inadequate.

69 Most teaching accommodation is of adequate quality and some is good. Languages, for instance, are taught in a newly-refurbished departmental base and geography is taught in attractive, well-equipped rooms. Much of the accommodation is in need of refurbishment. In many instances staff have made valiant efforts to make the best of poor accommodation. The science accommodation is in need of modernisation. The accommodation for mathematics is dispersed, and some rooms are too small to house current classes. Art and music are taught in poor quality demountable accommodation, and several subjects lack a departmental focus. The teaching environment would benefit from greater use of wall display. Some aspects of staff accommodation are unsatisfactory. For example, the chemistry preparation room is also used for staff accommodation.

Equipment/learning resources

70 The provision of equipment and learning resources fails fully to meet the needs of the curriculum. In science, there is an adequate supply of consumables but an insufficient stock of more expensive equipment items such as chemical balances. The music department lacks play-back facilities to support teaching and there is a very limited library of recordings. In design, most resources are good, but there is no convenient photocopier and no printer for the recently-acquired computer. There are not enough computers to implement the policy for information technology across the curriculum. The college provides basic textbooks for all students but problems result from the way in which the funds available for the purpose are allocated. For example, in English most of the budget is used to provide examination texts for GCE A level groups, whereas GCSE English and learning support provision are under-resourced.

71 The library is open during the day in term-time, although not after classes have finished. Funding for the library was increased to a budget of £8,000 for April 1993-July 1994. There is a bookstock of approximately 8,000 volumes. The range of books has been extended recently. For example novels have been purchased for students on the diploma in vocational education course and also some new works of fiction by writers from ethnic minority backgrounds. Nevertheless, the book stock is poor in many subject areas and the number of journals on display is very small.

72 Audio visual and information technology facilities in the library are limited. The CD-ROM is heavily used by students to guide their choice of higher education courses using the Educational Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service (ECCTIS) database, which limits its use for course-related purposes. There is no formal liaison between faculty or departmental heads and the librarian on course provision and development, although departments advise on library purchases each

year. The librarian seeks feedback from students and energetically promotes the library service. An example of good practice is the promotion of national library week through a varied and lively programme of activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

73 Woodhouse College is making good progress towards achieving its mission. The particular strengths of the college are:

- the broad and balanced programmes of study offered to students
- the enrichment programme, extra-curricular activities and work experience
- the excellent pastoral support
- high quality teaching and the effective promotion of learning
- good staff-student relationships
- high standards of work in all academic subjects and in most vocational subjects
- particularly rigorous and effective work in modern languages and business-related subjects
- outstanding achievements by students in examinations
- a good record of progression by students to higher and further education
- efficient management by a tightly-knit management team with the support of an active governing body.

74 The college has to make improvements in the following areas if it is to consolidate the high quality of its overall offer to students:

- the planning of staff development and resource deployment in relation to college objectives
- the development of a broader range of teaching and learning strategies in some subject areas
- inter-departmental planning and the sharing of teaching methods, materials and approaches to assessment
- the further development of quality assurance procedures
- the quality of accommodation
- the provision of equipment and learning resources
- the provision of increased technician support, especially for information technology

FIGURES

1 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)

2 Percentages of combined first and second-year sixth students by programme of study (1993-94)

3 Enrolments by level of study (at November 1993)

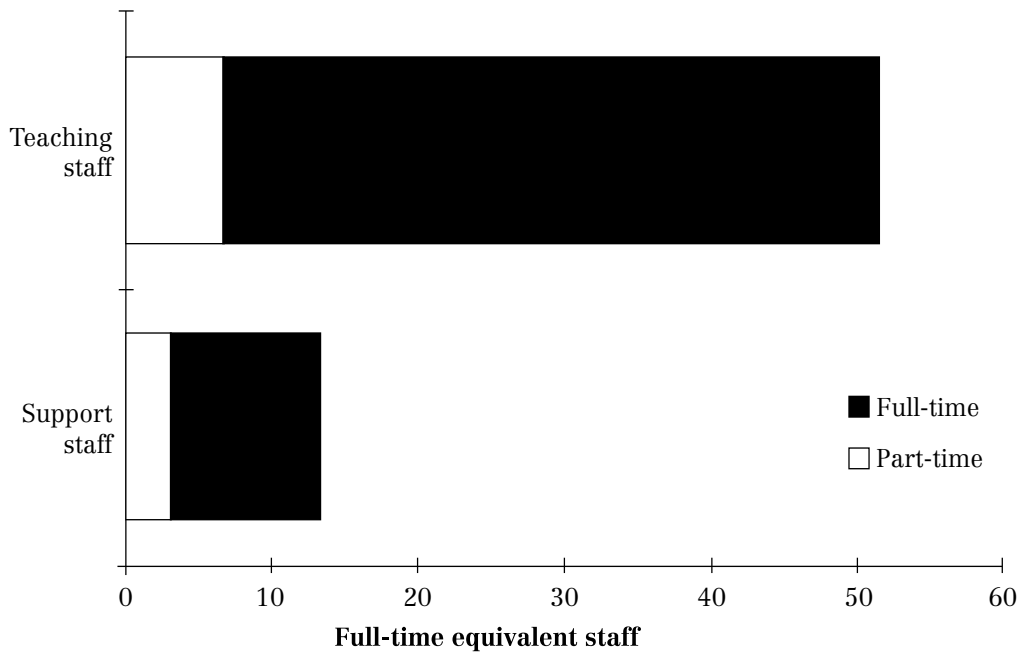
4 Estimated income (April 1993 – July 1994)

5 Estimated expenditure (April 1993 – July 1994)

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

Figure 1

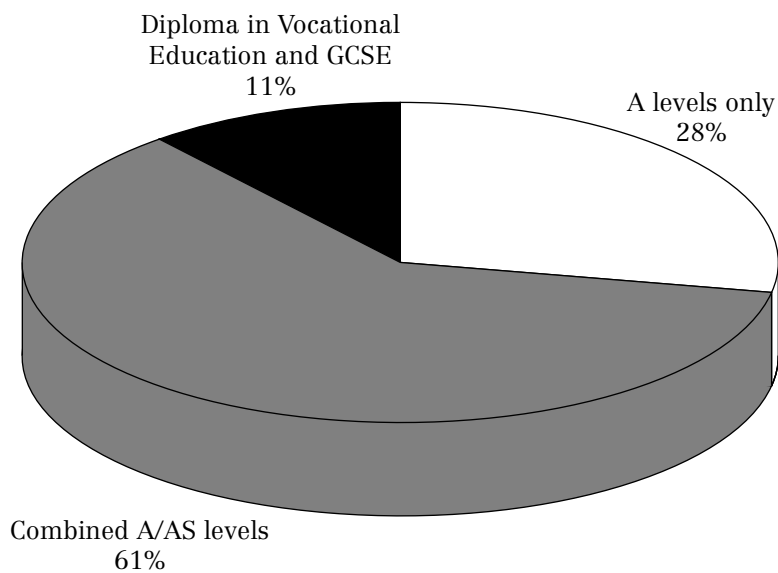
Woodhouse College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 65

Figure 2

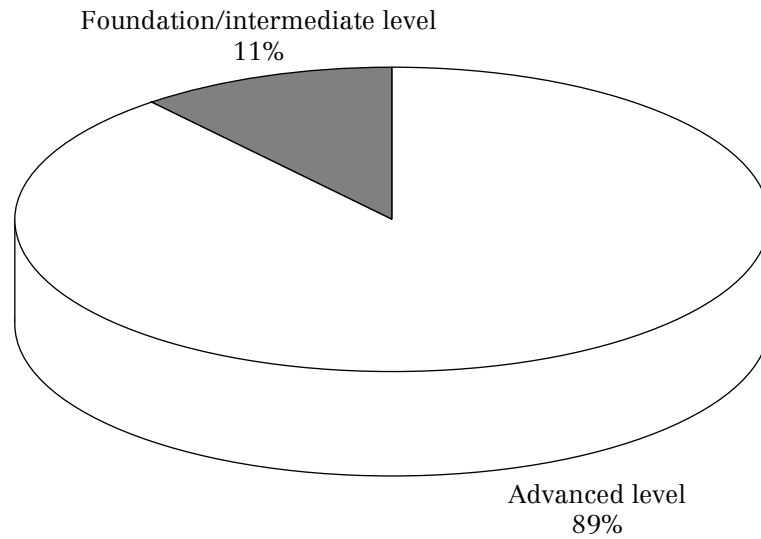
Woodhouse College: percentages of combined first and second year sixth students by programme of study (1993-94)



Enrolments: 667

Figure 3

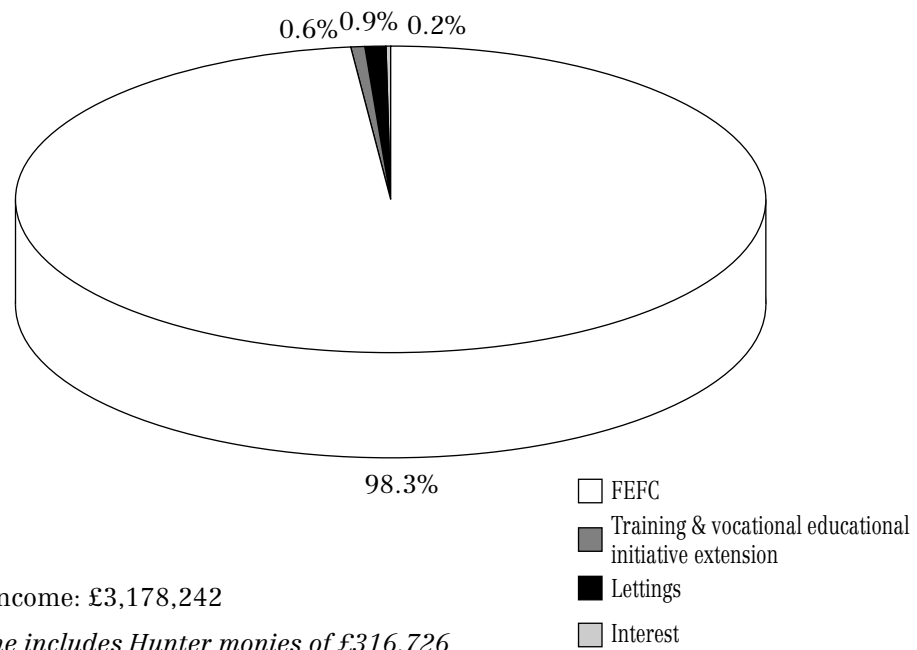
Woodhouse College: enrolments by level of study (at November 1993)



Enrolments: 667

Figure 4

Woodhouse College: estimated income (April 1993 – July 1994)

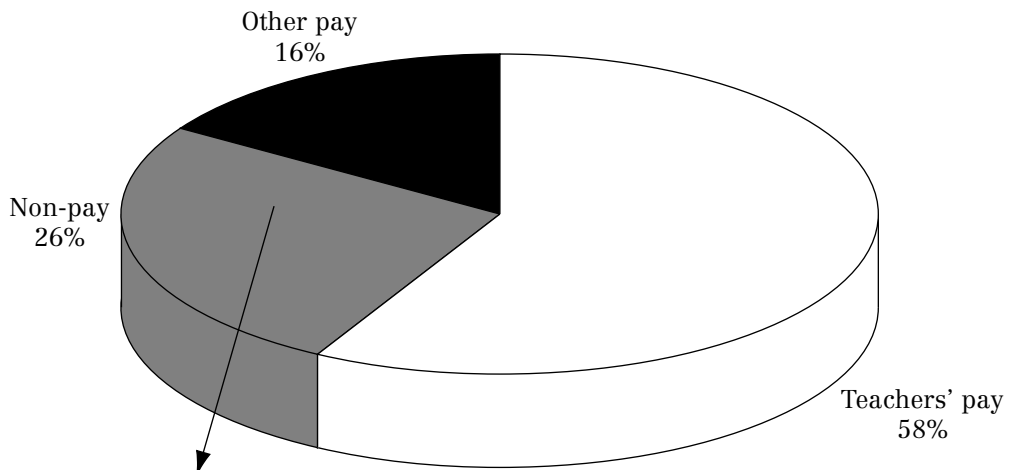


Estimated income: £3,178,242

Note: income includes Hunter monies of £316,726

Figure 5

Woodhouse College: estimated expenditure (April 1993 – July 1994)



Non-pay expenditure	%
Administration	3.4
Premises*	13.7
Curriculum	6.4
Surplus	1.5
Contingency	1.0
Total	26.0

Estimated expenditure: £3,137,462

* *includes Hunter monies*

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