

Worcester Sixth Form College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
2000-01

THE
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FUNDING
COUNCIL

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) 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 according to a four-year cycle. It also inspects other further education provision funded by the FEFC. In fulfilling its work programme, the inspectorate assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

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

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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1999-2000, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	6	44	44	7	0
Cross-college provision	9	45	38	8	0

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Sample size: 112 college inspections

Note: percentages subject to rounding

Student Achievements

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

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1996, would appear in the results for 1997-98 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not included.

Summary

Worcester Sixth Form College

West Midlands Region

Inspected October 2000

Summary

Worcester Sixth Form College is a sixth form college to the south east of the city of Worcester. It provides full-time courses for students aged mainly 16 to 18 and a range of part-time courses for adults. It has a collaborative arrangement with Worcester College of Technology to develop courses in the community. It also provides access to higher education courses, a foundation year for degree courses franchised from University College, Worcester and higher national diploma courses in sport. The self-assessment report provided for the inspection was supported by an extensive range of appropriate evidence. All staff and governors were involved in the self-assessment process. The report was externally validated.

The college runs courses in eight of the FEFC's programme areas. Most of the provision is in sciences and humanities. The inspection covered three programme areas. Most teaching is good. The provision in classical civilisation, government and politics, and history is outstanding. Most students who complete their courses are successful and many achieve high grades in examinations. Overall retention rates are in line with national averages and improving, although there are some areas of low

retention. Students receive good support throughout their time at the college and students' levels of satisfaction with the college are high. Tutors carefully monitor students' progress. The quality of careers advice and guidance is outstanding. It includes a well-planned work experience programme. A wide range of enrichment activities helps to enhance students' experience. Close links between staff in the learning resources centre and curriculum areas ensure that students have a good range of relevant resources at their disposal. The provision of IT resources has weaknesses. Despite improvements to the accommodation since the last inspection, there is a lack of social space for students and significant overcrowding in some areas. Managers are readily accessible to staff and students and pay close attention to the academic performance of the college. Productive links with other organisations have enabled the college to expand its provision and widen participation. Quality assurance arrangements are effective. Governors are committed and knowledgeable about the college but some aspects of clerking arrangements and governance procedures are unsatisfactory. The college should improve: the low retention rates on some courses; IT resources; the overcrowding in some areas and the lack of social space for students; the rigour of its lesson observation programme; and aspects of financial management and governance, including clerking arrangements.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Computing and information technology	3	Support for students	1
Physical sciences	2	General resources	3
Art, design and media studies	2	Quality assurance	2
Classical civilisation, government and politics, and history	1	Governance	3
English	2	Management	2

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Worcester Sixth Form College was founded in 1984 on the site of the former girls' grammar school in a residential area to the south of the city. It occupies a 1960s building surrounded by modern sports facilities and extensive playing fields.

2 Worcester is a rapidly growing city. In the last 15 years, 8,000 privately owned houses have been built, bringing the total population to 97,000. Worcester has the rural industries associated with a county town and a West Midlands tradition of engineering. It has a larger proportion of its employment in manufacturing and public sector organisations than is found regionally or nationally. Unemployment, at 2.5%, is below the West Midlands and United Kingdom levels.

3 The college recruits more than half of its students aged 16 to 18 from six 11 to 16 partner schools in the city and in Martley, a rural area to the west. The number of school-leavers from these schools is projected to grow over the next eight years by nearly 30%. One-third of the college's students aged 16 to 18 come from county high schools and a significant number from independent schools. In July 2000, the college had 1,222 full-time and 873 part-time students. Of the total number, 62% were aged 16 to 18. There were 873 adult students on general and vocational courses, mainly at evenings and weekends, and predominantly in information technology (IT). Just over 5% of the full-time students at the college are from ethnic minorities, compared with 2% in the population of Worcester as a whole. The college has developed a number of community programmes in order to widen participation.

4 The college's mission is to provide high-quality general education for students aged 16 to 18 and to widen access and extend opportunities to those returning to education. The rates of participation by 16 year olds in full-time education have doubled in Worcester

over the life of the college. Almost all full-time students follow advanced level courses, together with a key skills programme. About 80 students follow a one-year programme, with increasing numbers choosing courses at general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate level. Access to higher education and foundation degree courses for adults have operated successfully for many years.

5 Partnerships with other education providers include joint working with the 11 to 16 partner schools at both middle management and senior management levels. The further education and sixth form colleges in Herefordshire and Worcestershire have developed a consortium for sharing good practice and the implementation of jointly funded projects. This has led to initiatives with Worcester College of Technology to develop provision in local communities which have had little tradition of participation in education. Through its links with University College, Worcester, the college provides a foundation year for degree courses and higher national diplomas in sport.

6 The college has 13 academic departments, whose work is overseen by the deputy principal responsible for the curriculum. The tutorial and guidance system is co-ordinated by four senior tutors and the deputy principal (students). Each senior tutor also has a major cross-college responsibility. These staff, together with the principal and the administrative manager, make up the senior management team. The college employs 135 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 98 are engaged in teaching, 13 in supporting learning and 24 in administrative support.

The Inspection

7 The college was inspected during the week beginning 9 October 2000. Inspectors had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other directorates of the

Context

Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). This included data on students' achievements for 1998 and 1999 derived from the individualised student record (ISR). The college submitted its own data on students' achievements for 2000, which inspectors checked against class registers and pass lists issued by awarding bodies. The college was notified approximately two months before the inspection of the sample of its provision to be inspected. The inspection was carried out by nine inspectors and an auditor, working for a total of 44 days. Inspectors observed 64 lessons, including some tutorials, and examined students' work and documentation about the college and its courses. Inspectors held meetings with governors, college managers, staff and students. They also consulted the local training and enterprise council (TEC) about its relationships with the college.

8 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000. Of the lessons inspected, 72% were good or outstanding and only 3% were less than satisfactory, compared with the national averages of 62% and 6%, respectively. The comparable figures for sixth form colleges in 1999-2000 were 72% and 3%.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	10	25	7	2	0	44
GCSE	0	3	4	0	0	7
GNVQ	0	3	3	0	0	6
Other vocational	2	1	1	0	0	4
Other	1	1	1	0	0	3
Total (No.)	13	33	16	2	0	64
Total (%)	20	52	25	3	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000 (%)	17	45	31	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Note: percentages subject to rounding

Context

9 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Worcester Sixth Form College	15.0	86
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000	10.3	76

Source for national average: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report

Curriculum Areas

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 3

10 Inspectors observed 19 lessons in computing, IT and key skills in IT. They agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report and identified additional weaknesses. They considered that the grading of teaching by the college for self-assessment purposes had been overgenerous.

Key strengths

- the good teaching and learning at level 1
- high achievement rates for general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and GCE advanced supplementary (AS) IT and computer literacy and information technology
- good course material and monitoring of students' progression at level 1
- good provision of courses at level 1

Weaknesses

- some uninspiring teaching
- insufficient and inadequate specialist resources
- underdeveloped departmental planning and recording
- significant gaps in the full-time curriculum offer

11 The range of part-time courses for adults at levels 1 and 2 in basic IT is good. This is an expanding and vibrant part of the provision, which includes a growing number of courses held in centres in the community. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Large numbers of twilight and evening classes are offered, together with Saturday morning classes. The college offers full-time GCE A/AS level computing and IT. The proportion of

female students on these specialist courses is small. There are no specialist computing and IT courses at level 2. Until this year, full-time students from across the college could take computer literacy and information technology courses. These have now been replaced by key skills in IT. However, no activities have yet been developed to enable specialist computing and IT students to extend their skills beyond level 3. There are good curriculum links with local partner schools.

12 The level 1 courses for adults are well taught; teachers use a variety of appropriate teaching methods which take account of students' different learning styles. Key skills IT lessons for students on other vocational courses are effective. In the most successful lessons on the specialist courses in computing and IT, students were active participants, using technology appropriately. In some weaker lessons, students simply copied notes from an overhead projector transparency. Although teachers had clearly identified the range of ability within their classes, lesson activities did not always cater for the students' differing needs. Practical work in computing and IT is impeded by the lack of up-to-date specialist hardware and software. Additional support sessions are provided for students who are experiencing difficulties. Most students' work is of an appropriate standard. Teachers return marked work promptly and provide suitable comments to help students to improve their performance. However, there is no departmental assessment policy and teachers do not set and mark students' work consistently.

13 Achievement rates in GCE A/AS level IT have been above the national averages for sixth form colleges for several years, as recognised in the self-assessment report. The pass rate for GCE A level computing fell in 2000. Retention rates for these courses were around the national average. The achievements in computer literacy and information technology were well above the national average for 1998 and 1999 but

Curriculum Areas

retention rates for short courses were below. Results for 2000 were unavailable at the time of the inspection. The progression of adult students to other courses is good. Value-added indicators show that full-time students are performing in line with predictions based on their prior attainment.

14 A departmental review is produced annually. Student retention and achievement rates and the results of surveys of students' views are used to inform the process but the reviews do not incorporate information from external moderators' reports and detailed course reviews in order to improve the quality of provision. Teachers are well qualified and support each other well in the teaching of courses. Regular meetings are held for full-time staff but there are difficulties in organising meetings with part-time staff. Minutes of meetings do not adequately identify action points and timescales for action. The amount of staff training on recent developments in IT has been limited.

15 The accommodation is satisfactory and there are some appropriate display materials. Some rooms are cluttered and have unsuitable chairs. Some of the paper-based resources used by the department are of poor quality. Part-time teachers of computer literacy and information technology often usefully supplement college materials with their own learning resources. A developing departmental intranet gives students access to files of notes, schemes of work and assessment materials. However, it does not contain interactive learning materials or links to external resources. There are insufficient specialist resources for the advanced level courses. For example, there are no networking facilities, control equipment and computer hardware for advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) students. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Technician support, especially in the evenings, is sporadic.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in computing and information technology, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
Computer literacy and information technology	1	Number of starters	365	768	508
		Retention (%)	77	84	83
		Achievement (%)	99	91	*
GCE A level computing	3	Number of starters	32	11	25
		Retention (%)	63	73	80
		Achievement (%)	89	100	65
GCE A level IT	3	Number of starters	40	53	45
		Retention (%)	75	68	80
		Achievement (%)	82	97	94
GCE AS IT	3	Number of starters	8	52	64
		Retention (%)	50	79	78
		Achievement (%)	75	83	93

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

*data unavailable

Curriculum Areas

Physical Sciences

Grade 2

16 Inspectors observed 10 lessons. They agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but considered that the report had overstated the quality of teaching.

Key strengths

- much effective teaching and learning
- high examination pass rates for students completing courses
- well-planned teaching
- well-integrated practical work
- good progression to higher education in science subjects

Weaknesses

- retention rates below national averages on some courses
- failure of teachers to take sufficient account of the wide ability range in some classes
- late arrival of students for the first lesson of the day

17 The inspection of the physical sciences department included general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and GCE A/AS level courses in chemistry and physics. Nearly all the students are aged 16 to 18 and attend the college full time.

18 There is much effective teaching and learning. In an outstanding chemistry lesson, a keen and attentive group of students received an effective introduction to periodicity. The teacher's evident enthusiasm for the subject stimulated the students. The teacher's effective questioning helped the group to extend their understanding. In another lesson, physics

students criticised and commented on a prepared outline for an extended investigation. The teacher carefully included them all in the discussion. This was supported by a practical exercise which students carried out well. The handbooks and textbooks used are of good quality. Teachers know their students well and have effective working relationships with them. They set sufficient work and mark it fairly, although some teachers are more thorough in correcting students' work than others. Most classes included students with a very wide ability range. Some students struggled to understand the topic or complete the work set and not all of them received enough help from the teacher, while others could have coped with further work and been pushed to work harder. There are workshop sessions where students can receive individual help but not all the students who need help attend them. Those who do attend speak highly of the support that they receive. The quality of lessons at the start of the day is often adversely affected by the late arrival of students. In two lessons, students were still arriving up to 25 minutes after the start. They had missed important explanations and the context of the lesson.

19 Students who complete their courses perform well in external examinations. GCE A level pass rates are high and students perform significantly better than predicted by their GCSE qualifications on entry. Pass rates for GCSE and GCE AS courses were below the national averages for sixth form colleges in 1999 but improved in 2000. Retention rates for GCE A level courses have been usually close to the national averages. In GCE A level physics the retention rate has improved but in chemistry it has fallen and is now 11% below the national average. An analysis of early leavers in 1999 shows that most of the students who left early were those for whom teachers were predicting lower grades at GCE A level. These weaknesses in retention and achievement were not included in the self-assessment report. Most students

Curriculum Areas

display good practical skills, understand the work they are completing and can explain it clearly. Students' written and number skills are good and there is some high-quality written work in extended investigations. Some students use computers effectively. Many physical science students progress to a wide range of science-related subjects in higher education.

20 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the department is well organised. The small team works together closely. Detailed schemes of work provide well-planned learning programmes. Staff development is readily available. Teachers analyse students' achievements and retention rates and have identified retention as a problem on some courses. The action that they have taken to improve retention has been effective in some courses but not on all.

21 Resources to support physical sciences are adequate. Laboratories provide large working

spaces but are past their prime. All laboratories have video and overhead projector facilities but do not have enough computers. The learning resources centre holds sufficient science books but some are outdated. There is some CD-ROM material but few opportunities for its use in lessons.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in physical sciences, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE science (including physics)	2	Number of starters	30	52	54
		Retention (%)	80	75	77
		Achievement (%)	67	44	63
GCSE chemistry	2	Number of starters	7	8	12
		Retention (%)	57	75	90
		Achievement (%)	75	50	89
GCE AS physics	3	Number of starters	13	12	25
		Retention (%)	77	58	82
		Achievement (%)	83	50	70
GCE A level physics	3	Number of starters	48	49	35
		Retention (%)	67	76	88
		Achievement (%)	97	95	97
GCE A level chemistry	3	Number of starters	76	49	46
		Retention (%)	72	76	68
		Achievement (%)	94	100	100

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Curriculum Areas

Art, Design and Media Studies

Grade 2

22 Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report, but considered that some of the aspects which were identified as strengths were not exceptional practice. They identified additional weaknesses in teaching and learning. The self-assessment report was overgenerous in its judgements about the quality of teaching.

Key strengths

- much good teaching, including effective development of theory and research methods
- learning activities giving students scope for individual creativity
- high examination pass rates
- effective use of students' views to inform teachers' judgements and planning
- the good standard of students' practical work

Weaknesses

- some poor classroom management
- deficiencies in accommodation and resources
- poor retention rates on film and media courses

23 The college offers GCE A/AS level and GCSE courses in art, design and media studies. Students are encouraged to take additional qualifications in photography and film studies and a few courses are offered to adults. There is a good range of specialist options in art and design. There has been a rapid growth in the numbers of students on media courses in the last two years. Courses are appropriately

structured and schemes of work are well documented. Students receive good support for their studies, both within and outside the classroom. Teachers make good use of achievement and value-added data to assess students' overall performance. They use surveys of students' views effectively to set targets for improvement.

24 Much of the teaching is good. Teachers use contemporary examples and the work of other students to stimulate students in the production of their own work. Art teachers prepare interesting materials, encouraging students to experiment with fabrics, wood, junk materials, textiles and printmaking as well as paper and paint. Media teachers effectively use images from photographs, film and magazines to help students develop their analytical skills. For example, in one lesson the teacher used well-chosen film clips to explain how complex film editing techniques help viewers to avoid becoming confused about what they see on the screen. Teachers pay careful attention to developing students' use of specialist terminology and their understanding of research techniques. As stated in the self-assessment report, project tasks are well specified and include clear instructions and assessment criteria. Visits to galleries and exhibitions deepen students' knowledge and interest in their specialism. In a few lessons, the management of teaching was less effective. Teachers did not state the learning objectives clearly, the pace of work was too slow and students took too long to get started on tasks. Not all teachers adapted their teaching methods and materials to take account of students' different learning needs. Some students did not take notes of complex points during lectures. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

25 Student achievement and retention rates have improved over the last three years. Pass rates on all the courses inspected were at, or above, the national average in 2000. The proportion of high grades awarded to GCSE

Curriculum Areas

students who complete their studies is well above the national average but retention rates are well below. Retention rates on GCE A level film and media courses have been well below national averages since 1998, as stated in the self-assessment report. There were improvements on the full-time GCE A level media course in 2000. Retention rates on most art and design courses are high. The standard of most students' practical work is good. Portfolios of work show that students have engaged in thoughtful investigation and the creative exploration of ideas. Their written work varies considerably in quality. Most students work effectively in groups.

26 There are appropriate facilities for art and design and media courses, although some rooms, particularly in media, are overcrowded. This adversely affects the quality of teaching and

learning and sometimes there is insufficient space for effective group work. There is a suitable range of equipment for media courses. However, video-editing facilities are now inadequate for the growing number of students. This has been recognised in the college's action plan. Students do not have enough access to specialist IT software for print production outside lessons. Art and design rooms are suitably equipped to cover a broad range of specialist activities but there is little storage space for coursework. The graphics room has equipment of industrial standard but is too small for the number of students. There are impressive displays of work in art and design rooms. Levels of technician support are adequate. The learning resources centre holds a good stock of books and other learning materials for both media and art and design.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in art, design and media studies, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE communication/ media	2	Number of starters	28	19	21
		Retention (%)	64	74	48
		Achievement (%)	72	64	67
GCSE art techniques	2	Number of starters	*	9	15
		Retention (%)	*	67	67
		Achievement (%)	*	83	80
GCE A level art studies/ fine art	3	Number of starters	54	43	40
		Retention (%)	72	81	90
		Achievement (%)	97	100	94
GCE A level communication/ media (including film)	3	Number of starters	88	57	48
		Retention (%)	63	63	75
		Achievement (%)	96	83	97
GCE A level design	3	Number of starters	19	10	15
		Retention (%)	68	90	80
		Achievement (%)	100	100	100
GCE AS art studies/fine art (three-dimensional design)	3	Number of starters	*	10	36
		Retention (%)	*	90	89
		Achievement (%)	*	100	88

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

*data unavailable

Curriculum Areas

Classical Civilisation, Government and Politics, and History

Grade 1

27 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering GCE A/AS level in classical civilisation, government and politics, and history, and GCSE in history. They agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- good teaching and learning
- thorough procedures for marking students' work
- high levels of achievement
- the rich variety of educational visits
- effective departmental management
- the wide range of well-used resources

Weaknesses

- some weaknesses in students' retention
- the adverse impact on teaching of overcrowded classrooms

28 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that teaching is good. Lessons are well prepared. Lesson plans are well devised and schemes of work give clear outlines for each course. Teachers use a wide variety of appropriate teaching methods, including group work, textual and documentary analysis, oral presentations and the effective use of audiovisual aids. For example, in a classical civilisation lesson, students' understanding of a passage from Euripides' *Medea* was enhanced by observing a video excerpt from the play. In a politics lesson on the future of the monarchy, some students brought relevant resources from the learning resources centre while another had

on-line access to a website on public opinion on the monarchy. Teachers use a wide variety of handouts. These are always accompanied by well-devised questions, which help students to analyse the sources being used. Students' learning, for example their understanding of complex issues in early seventeenth century religious history or the mythology within classical epic poetry, is carefully checked. In some lessons, a few students struggled to understand complex ideas. Teachers' efforts to assist them were hampered by the very large size of some first-year groups, as it was not possible for them to circulate freely in the classroom to check individual students' learning. The majority of students in most lessons participated well. In some lessons a minority did not and teachers did not always ask them questions directly to test their understanding.

29 The department is carefully managed, as the self-assessment report states. Departmental meetings are held regularly and consider many matters relevant to effective teaching and learning. The complex issues surrounding the introduction of the new GCE A/AS level courses have been carefully considered. Departmental targets are set and monitored. Although the number of students in history and government and politics has grown, this is not true of classical civilisation. The various teams within the department work well together. In all three subjects, students undertake visits that extend their understanding. These include visits to Berlin and Prague by history students, to the British Museum by students of classical civilisation and to conferences by government and politics students. The careful planning of these visits ensures that students gain much of educational value. Inspectors considered that this was a particularly distinctive feature of the department's work.

30 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that students' achievements range from good to outstanding. Pass rates overall and at higher grades are mostly above the national

Curriculum Areas

average. Retention rates are often good but retention on the GCE A level history course, which has the largest group in the department, has exceeded national averages in only one of the last three years. The department has analysed the reasons for this and is taking action to improve retention. This was noted in the self-assessment report. Most students' written work is good. In both history and government and politics, the use of detailed coversheets by teachers gives students precise guidance on how their work might be improved. Assessment criteria are fully shared with students. In classical civilisation, students' oral presentations are judged using a well-devised assessment sheet. Students' written work is meticulously marked and contains much guidance to enable students to improve their performance. Teachers also assess the quality of students' notes and make suggestions about how they might be improved. The quality of

many students' work is high and, on occasions, outstanding; many are able to combine crisp analysis with good writing.

31 Students benefit from the rich collection of resources held in both the learning resources centre and the department. There is very close liaison between staff in the department and the resources centre. The department has developed some useful information websites on the college intranet. Students are beginning to use the Internet as a source for research materials. However, apart from wordprocessing, there has been relatively little use of IT in students' work. Classrooms have good displays and most are well furnished and well equipped.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in classical civilisation, government and politics, and history, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCE AS classical civilisation	3	Number of starters	24	13	17
		Retention (%)	79	100	100
		Achievement (%)	84	100	78
GCE AS history	3	Number of starters	11	8	11
		Retention (%)	82	75	44
		Achievement (%)	78	100	100
GCE A level classical civilisation	3	Number of starters	39	36	31
		Retention (%)	77	94	84
		Achievement (%)	94	97	100
GCE A level government and politics	3	Number of starters	19	19	11
		Retention (%)	58	74	89
		Achievement (%)	91	93	100
GCE A level history	3	Number of starters	83	66	63
		Retention (%)	77	86	76
		Achievement (%)	90	88	91

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

English

Grade 2

32 Inspectors observed 11 lessons. They agreed with some of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that it overestimated the quality of teaching. They identified some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- effective and well-planned teaching
- good levels of achievement
- above average retention on GCE A level courses
- effective individual support for students
- the high standard of students' coursework

Weaknesses

- some poor classroom management
- insufficient development of students' IT skills

33 The college provides courses in GCE A/AS level English language and English literature and in GCSE English language, mainly for students aged 16 to 18. The allocation of teaching time is the same for GCSE and GCE A/AS level lessons. Despite this, the GCSE English language course fails to meet the needs of students with low levels of prior attainment and there is no alternative provision available. Enrolments on adult GCSE and GCE A level evening courses are small.

34 Most teaching is thoughtfully planned and effective. Students receive detailed guidance on the requirements of their course. In a GCE A level English language lesson, handouts outlined the content of each lesson, a homework assignment and suggested reading. GCSE English language students are encouraged to improve their coursework through a range of

well-structured activities. In some GCE A/AS level lessons, teachers guided students through a complex subject in carefully planned stages. Students work effectively in groups. In a GCE A level English language lesson, groups of students identified key points taken from five sources before sharing their findings with the whole class. Some teachers make skilful use of sensitive but sustained questioning. In a GCE AS lesson on Iris Murdoch's *The Bell*, the teacher encouraged students to elaborate their views in discussion and this led to well-considered answers. In some less successful lessons, teachers did not check learning, involve students sufficiently, or take account of their different abilities. These weaknesses in classroom management were not identified in the self-assessment report. The first lesson of the day was often disrupted by the late arrival of some students. Assignments are carefully planned. Teachers provide thorough feedback on students' written work. There is an effective system for the regular monitoring of students' performance. Students value the extra time that teachers offer for individual discussions about coursework. The self-assessment report recognised as a weakness that little use is made of IT in English. Whilst many students use wordprocessing to produce their coursework, schemes of work do not include reference to the development of students' IT skills.

35 Students' work is of a good standard and well presented. Many of the studies undertaken as coursework are of high quality. The best work displays a good grasp of the material combined with an independent response to it. Many students make articulate and well-informed contributions to class discussions. Pass rates in GCSE English language and GCE A level English literature have improved significantly since 1998, when they were below the national average. On the two-year GCE A level English language course, pass rates and the percentage of higher grades obtained fell in

Curriculum Areas

2000, having previously matched national averages. Contrary to what was stated in the self-assessment report, retention rates have improved steadily and are at, or above, the national average. Pass rates are consistently high for the few students on one-year courses in GCE A level English literature and English language. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that students' experience is enriched by opportunities for theatre visits, outside speakers and conferences. An advanced extension award in English language is offered to able students. Many students of English benefit from a period of work experience relevant to their choice of career.

36 The department is well managed. Teachers hold regular meetings to share ideas and

materials. There are strong curricular links with local secondary schools. Teaching takes place in a set of adjoining classrooms equipped with books, plentiful handouts and sufficient audiovisual aids. There is an extensive collection of video recordings. These resources are easily accessible to staff and students. Some classrooms are overcrowded, so that students have insufficient space to work and teachers have difficulty in circulating around the classroom to respond to students' needs. As the self-assessment report states, teachers work closely with the learning resources centre staff. The book collection in the learning resources centre is well used and has been reorganised to make it easier for students to find reference works on specific topics.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in English, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE English language	2	Number of starters	83	103	92
		Retention (%)	77	75	78
		Achievement (%)	48	70	60
GCE A level English language	3	Number of starters	121	103	79
		Retention (%)	71	85	84
		Achievement (%)	89	92	85
GCE A level English literature	3	Number of starters	137	111	105
		Retention (%)	82	84	86
		Achievement (%)	87	98	96

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

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Support for Students

Grade 1

37 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- thorough pre-entry guidance arrangements
- effective enrolment and induction
- meticulous attention to monitoring students' progress
- high take-up of additional learning support for students identified as needing help
- high-quality careers guidance
- a varied and successful enrichment programme

Weaknesses

- the uneven quality of tutorials

38 Students are well supported throughout their time at the college. As the self-assessment report recognises, the college's recruitment methods are effective. They include a well-established programme of visits to local secondary schools and attendance at local careers conventions. The college ensures that students and their parents are well informed about the content of courses through visits to schools, 'taster' events, publicity materials and interviews. Arrangements to inform students and parents about the changes involved in curriculum 2000 included a well-attended evening event that was also open to members of the public. Entry criteria and admissions arrangements are clear. All potential students are interviewed. Tutors make every effort to guide students onto a suitable course and they suggest provision available elsewhere, if it is appropriate.

39 Staff are provided with clear guidance throughout enrolment and induction. During enrolment the college makes additional checks and gives further guidance to ensure that students have chosen an appropriate programme of study. Induction is supported by helpful documentation on college facilities and services, including a guide for students and parents, leaflets from student services and further explanations of courses and their content. Students are informed of their rights and responsibilities. Most students consider that enrolment and induction are efficient and informative and help them to settle into college successfully.

40 Students value highly the help and support that they receive from their tutors. There is a detailed handbook for tutors and briefings and written materials for tutorials. The self-assessment report action plan acknowledged the need to review the tutorial system. The quality of tutorials was uneven. Although materials had been prepared, inspectors found that some tutors did not use them effectively and that students' attendance was not high. Tutors pay careful attention to monitoring and reviewing students' progress and are meticulous about maintaining clear records of students' performance. They make effective use of minimum target grades for GCE A level based on students' GCSE grades. Students are encouraged to aim for grades above the expected minimum and overall achievements are high.

41 The useful and appropriate services for additional learning support include help with communications, numeracy, study support and IT. Materials are adapted and specialist equipment and support services are provided to meet students' individual learning requirements. Students can obtain support as part of their programme of study, through individual appointments or by calling at student services. All full-time students now receive an assessment for literacy, numeracy and IT. The take-up of

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additional support by students who have been identified as needing it is high. Written records of the progress of students receiving help from additional learning support tutors are kept, but there are no individual learning plans.

42 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that careers guidance and education is of a very high standard, a strength identified in the last inspection. The well-organised careers area contains up-to-date information. A comprehensive careers programme for full-time students includes guidance on higher education, 'gap' years, employment and further training. Students can receive an individual careers interview with the careers advisers. A substantial programme of well-planned work placements includes opportunities for GCE A level students to gain experience and knowledge of potential careers. For example, students have worked in broadcasting and the health service. One student's work shadowed a member of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Further useful services include talks from higher education providers and local employers and support from the careers service. The college holds an annual careers fair supported by employers and universities and specialist events for particular areas of employment. Careers guidance for part-time students is available through appointments with the careers adviser or the local careers service.

43 The college offers a number of other services to students. A well-used personal counselling service is available. Students are referred to external agencies where appropriate. Health counselling is provided and there is a chaplaincy. Prayer rooms are available for different faiths. The college does not have its own childcare facilities but provides support, if it is needed, through the access fund for students who wish to use childcare providers.

44 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there is a particularly rich and varied programme of enrichment activities that

contributes significantly to the quality of student life. Students take part in a broad range of performing arts, including musical and theatrical productions. They organise musical groups, bands, ensembles and choirs. The comprehensive sports programme places a strong emphasis on team games. Students from the college have represented their county and country in a number of sports. A former student of the college was an Olympic medallist in the Sydney 2000 games. Other activities include the Duke of Edinburgh awards, a Young Enterprise programme, a debating society and a bridge club. The student council plays an active part in college life.

General Resources

Grade 3

45 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, although some of the strengths identified were not exceptional practice. They identified an additional strength.

Key strengths

- high level of space utilisation
- effective links between the learning resources centre and curriculum areas
- good access to high-quality sports facilities

Weaknesses

- overcrowding in some areas and inadequate social space
- some poorly maintained areas
- poor access to 'drop-in' IT facilities

46 The college is located on a spacious site on the south-eastern edge of the city. The four-storey building is in poor external condition. The four temporary classrooms in

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use are fit for the purpose. A small amount of adult provision takes place away from the main site. Since the last inspection, the college has improved the front entrance and reception area and increased access for students with restricted mobility. It has also enlarged the student services area and created more office space. A comprehensive accommodation strategy sets out proposals to address the shortage of space in the college. The timetable has recently been reorganised to increase the available space in order to meet the requirements of curriculum 2000. Growth in provision for adults has led to greater room utilisation in the evenings. The level of space utilisation is high. Inspectors found that in a significant number of lessons classrooms were of insufficient size and did not have enough furniture for the number of students present.

47 All rooms are accessible by students in wheelchairs but moving around the college is difficult. The lift is not easy to use and some of the corridors on the upper floor are narrow, open walkways. Most rooms are adequately decorated and many are enlivened by interesting displays of students' work or subject-related materials. The college's self-assessment report recognises the need to improve directional signs and acknowledges the poor state of decoration of parts of the building. It did not mention the shabby condition of the students' toilets. There is a lack of recreational space in the building and students congregate in the cafeteria and the hall. These and other circulation areas become very crowded at certain times of the day and the build-up of litter stretches the cleaning services.

48 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there are well-structured and effective links between the learning resources centre and curriculum areas. Each department has a designated link person with a written job description for this work. Minutes of meetings show clearly that the staff in the learning resources centre respond to the needs of

students and teachers. There is a good range of books, periodicals, videos and CD-ROMs. Surveys show that students rate highly the quality and availability of resources. The number of study spaces is inadequate. Many students use other areas, including the hall, to undertake private study.

49 The college is well equipped with networked computers, most of which are of a good specification. There is a ratio of one computer for every five full-time students and a planned programme to replace the entire stock over a three-year cycle. All teaching rooms have at least one computer. The primary function of this machine is to serve the newly installed electronic register system but it also allows Internet access. Several departments have their own computing facilities. At present, the aims in the college's information learning technology policy are far from being realised, partly because of accommodation constraints. Some software needs updating. There are not enough computers for students to use on a 'drop-in' basis. Student surveys confirm that students are dissatisfied about this, as the college's self-assessment report acknowledges. There is no electronic mail facility for students and only 10 of the 30 machines in the learning resources centre have Internet access. The college has firm plans to expand Internet access. Staff can use computers in their work areas and in the staff common room. Audio and video equipment is adequate.

50 Students benefit from excellent indoor and outdoor sports facilities. In collaboration with the city council and the adjacent school, a sports hall complex and outdoor facilities have been built. The college shares the use of a large sports hall, squash courts and a weight training room. A floodlit soccer pitch, cricket nets, a running track and an all-weather playing surface complement the college's own gymnasium, dance studio and tennis courts.

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Quality Assurance

Grade 2

51 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified an additional weakness.

Key strengths

- a detailed and well-structured framework for curriculum quality assurance
- effective quality assurance procedures ensuring high and improving levels of students' achievements
- effective use of performance indicators and targets in curriculum areas
- good analysis of surveys of student, parental and staff perceptions leading to improvements
- productive and well-managed staff development

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped standards for cross-college support areas
- overgenerous lesson observation grades
- inadequate monitoring of college charters

52 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that a strong commitment to quality assurance is reflected in the college's strategic objectives, especially in relation to students' achievements. Staff clearly understand and support the detailed and well-structured quality assurance procedures. A comprehensive quality assurance handbook helps to ensure consistency in departmental reviews. The quality assurance systems have been effective in raising standards. Students' achievements are good. Examination pass rates are above the national average for sixth form colleges and, in 2000, GCE A level

passes at higher grades were above the national average in three-quarters of the subjects entered. Most students achieved grades higher than predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Retention on courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18 has improved to above the national average, although there are some courses with low retention rates.

53 There are two charters, one for students aged 16 to 18, and one for adult students. Both have sections outlining the college's commitments to employers and members of the local community. The charters are clearly presented but do not include the college's mission statement. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that procedures for reviewing and monitoring the standards set in the college charters are inadequate. A system of monitoring has recently been introduced.

54 The college's lesson observation scheme is long established and has been extensively modified. The scheme is well supported by teachers. Heads of department, together with a senior manager, write a report for their department based on the strengths and weaknesses observed in lessons. Individual lessons are not graded but teaching is graded for the department as a whole. The findings from lesson observations are used extensively in self-assessment. The college has, however, been overgenerous in its assessment of the quality of teaching and learning, a weakness not recognised in the self-assessment report. The records of observation show that observers focus on teaching rather than on the quality of students' learning and it is often unclear how judgements have been reached.

55 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that systems for staff development are effective and well documented. Staff development activity is designed to meet the needs of staff and the college's strategic objectives. It is planned following a useful professional development review between

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individual staff and their head of department. All staff value the development activities. Recent staff development has included preparation for the introduction of curriculum 2000, IT training and a whole-college training day for the sharing of good practice. An effective induction programme for new staff is systematically reviewed and evaluated.

56 The college undertakes a wide range of useful surveys. There is a well-established range of surveys of students' perceptions which are used at cross-college and departmental levels. Further surveys are conducted with parents and staff. The surveys are carefully analysed and are used as an important part of self-assessment. They show high levels of satisfaction with the college. Where key weaknesses have been identified, they are summarised and form part of the action plan for the area concerned. A number of improvements have been made as a result of weaknesses identified through the surveys, including the provision of specialist equipment for psychology and the extension of the learning resources centre's opening hours.

57 Targets and performance indicators are widely and effectively used in departments and in reviews. The college subscribes to a national agency that provides a comparison of students' examination results at GCE A level with those predicted on the basis of their GCSE grades on entry. These value-added data are extensively used in evaluating course performance and in monitoring individual students' performance through the tutoring process. In the last three years, the college has improved its overall performance in 'adding value' to students' achievements. However, as the college's self-assessment report acknowledged, there is inadequate use and monitoring of service standards in support areas.

58 The self-assessment process was comprehensive, especially in cross-college areas. The report drew substantially upon the findings

of surveys of students' satisfaction as part of its evidence. Lesson observations were used to inform judgements on teaching and learning. All staff were involved in the self-assessment process and received appropriate training and guidance notes. Senior managers and external representatives contributed to the moderation of findings. Action plans to address weaknesses allocate responsibilities and timescales for implementation but some of the performance indicators and targets in the plans are insufficiently precise.

Governance

Grade 3

59 Inspectors and auditors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They identified some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- governors' effective links with curriculum areas
- the detailed monitoring of students' performance
- governors' broad range of skills and commitment to the college

Weaknesses

- some aspects of the clerking arrangements
- lack of a formal governor training programme
- underdeveloped procedures for openness and accountability

60 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles

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of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

61 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that governors have established effective links with staff. Governors are assigned to an area in which they have an interest and with which they have contact through attendance at departmental meetings, departmental reviews and the review of departmental reports. They also attend open evenings and have informal meetings with staff. They have good working relationships with managers and observe the boundaries between governance and management.

62 The corporation has maintained a broad range of skills that are used well for the benefit of the college, as recognised in the self-assessment report. A governance and search committee has been in operation for a number of years. Audits have been carried out to identify skill gaps on the corporation. Governors have used their skills to good effect in consideration of capital schemes and legal issues. Attendance at corporation and committee meetings is good. Many of the governors are longstanding and three are serving a third term of appointment. There is insufficient evidence that the governance and search committee has scrutinised governors' contributions when considering the appointment of a member for a third term. The corporation has not used advertising to identify potential governor appointments. Governors evaluate their own performance through questionnaires and the self-assessment process.

63 The re-determined composition of the corporation is not recorded in corporation minutes. The corporation does not currently comply with its agreed composition, as it has appointed too many independent members. The corporation has established appropriate committees and has agreed a schedule of meetings. The governance handbook identifies

the key items of business likely to be considered at each meeting. Minutes of meetings do not record the approval of some key documents, such as the internal audit annual report and external audit management letter. The minutes include a useful table of action points that identify future action in relation to the items of business considered. However, they do not always clearly identify the document being considered or, in the case of financial information, the period to which it relates. Governors have received some training and have begun to use the recently published governor training materials but a formal training programme for governors has not yet been developed.

64 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that governors take a keen interest in the quality of the education that students receive at the college. They discuss thoroughly students' academic performance, value-added data and non-academic achievement. Information is provided on trends in achievement rates and comparisons are made with other sixth form colleges. Governors have been well briefed about curriculum 2000 and have discussed its implications for the college, particularly in relation to the impact on resources. They are aware of curriculum areas that have not performed as well as expected and the reasons for this.

65 Inspectors and auditors did not agree with the self-assessment report that financial planning and monitoring was a strength. Management accounts are reviewed by the finance committee, which meets four times a year, and at each meeting of the corporation and are only distributed to governors for these meetings. The management accounts do not always include items such as a balance sheet, cashflow statement and financial performance indicators. The corporation approves the annual budget and three-year financial forecast. The introduction of a new financial system for 2000-01 has meant that management accounts

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will not be available for governors until late in the autumn term. Governors have, however, received data on enrolments for 2000-01 to enable some assurance to be gained that units are in line with predictions at this stage of the year.

66 The corporation does not have effective clerking arrangements. The clerk, who is also the college's administrative manager, has primary responsibility for finance but undertakes clerking duties for the corporation, finance committee and audit committee, creating a potential conflict of interest. There is a separate job description for clerking duties but no time allocation to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to those duties. The self-assessment report acknowledged that there is inadequate administrative support for the clerk and that too many papers are tabled, allowing insufficient time for governors to give them due consideration. The committees for planning and development and human resources are clerked by deputy principals, an arrangement that does not provide members with a source of advice independent of management. Governors have appraised the clerk but have not considered his remuneration in relation to clerking duties. Arrangements for clerking the remuneration committee are not appropriate.

67 Procedures for openness and accountability at the college are underdeveloped, a weakness not identified in the self-assessment report. A code of conduct has been adopted but it does not cover all relevant areas. A register of interests for governors and senior staff is updated annually but the declaration form does not identify all the areas for which a declaration should be required. Not all declarations had been made within the last year. Eligibility statements are also sought from governors annually but a number have not been made within the last year. Minutes and papers of corporation and committee meetings are available upon request to the clerk but this availability is not publicised. Copies of

corporation minutes are available in the staff room. The college's policy on attendance at corporation meetings does not include a reference to members of the public, press or other interested parties. A 'whistleblowing' policy has recently been adopted.

Management

Grade 2

68 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the college's self-assessment report but considered that some aspects identified as strengths were not exceptional practice.

Key strengths

- effective monitoring of performance
- the setting and achievement of realistic targets
- an open management style and effective internal communications
- productive external links

Weaknesses

- lack of a coherent strategy to improve students' retention
- slow progress in achieving some strategic objectives

69 The management structure is clearly understood by staff. The open management style encourages staff involvement in committees and working groups. Managers are easily accessible and information is readily available to staff. Roles and responsibilities are clear and well understood. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that communications in the college are effective. There is a daily staff bulletin and the principal holds weekly staff briefings. College policies are regularly updated and monitored.

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70 Staff are aware of the main objectives of the college. Strategic and operational plans were produced in consultation with staff and take into account well-considered departmental plans and local labour market intelligence. Action plans are regularly monitored through the monthly meetings of the college's quality assurance committee but some targets are not sufficiently precise. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there has been slow progress in achieving some key strategic objectives, for example, the late introduction of an electronic register system.

71 Realistic targets are set and have been mostly met for student recruitment, retention and achievement at course and at college level. Performance is regularly monitored at senior management team meetings and through termly departmental reviews. There has been effective planning for major curriculum changes introduced as part of the curriculum 2000 initiative. An eight-year accommodation strategy indicates future target student numbers and proposes new building development to overcome current overcrowding problems. The marketing of the college is generally effective. A deputy principal has responsibility for marketing and a new marketing policy has been recently produced.

72 Managers have taken effective action to address poor student performance. Some under-performing courses have been discontinued and remedial action has been taken where students' pass rates have not reached their target. The college does not have a coherent strategy to improve some areas of low retention, a weakness that was not included in the self-assessment report. Arrangements for monitoring overall attendance rates are poor. The college intends to use its new electronic registration system to address this.

73 The college has productive links with a range of local external organisations, including schools. It is involved in a number of

collaborative projects, including the joint planning and teaching with Worcester College of Technology of courses for adults at the Shrub Hill workshop. The college has close links with University College, Worcester. An employer and community liaison group contributes to the college's assessment of local education and training needs and considers the college's strategic plan, curriculum issues and potential new development opportunities.

74 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The college has achieved surpluses in all but one year since incorporation, with a relatively low average level of funding, and has financed a significant capital scheme from its reserves. The distribution of financial information to budget holders has, however, been 'ad-hoc' in terms of content and frequency of distribution. The limitations of the previous financial system have resulted in management accounts not being produced every month. The finance system has recently been replaced but is not yet fully operational. The content of financial information provided to the senior management team and governors does not meet a number of good practice requirements. The head of finance is a qualified accountant and a member of the senior management team. A course costing methodology has been developed and used to review the viability of courses. Neither internal nor external audit has raised significant finance or control issues. A new management information system has improved the quality of data available to managers. Management information is reliable and is used by managers as a basis for decision-making.

75 There is an effective equal opportunities policy that is regularly monitored by the quality assurance committee. An equal opportunities co-ordinator helps to ensure that equal opportunities has a high profile among staff and students. A student equal opportunities group is effective in organising a range of awareness-

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raising activities. The college broadly fulfils the requirements of sections 44 and 45 of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992*. The senior management team monitors the college's health and safety policy. The associated action plan was produced only recently and inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that some issues had not been addressed.

Conclusions

76 Inspectors found the self-assessment report a useful starting point for the inspection but considered that some of the strengths identified were not exceptional practice. The data that underpinned the judgements were not always included in the report and there were few judgements about the quality of students' work. The evidence that the college provided during the inspection was extensive. It included detailed analyses of retention and achievement data. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but identified further strengths and weaknesses. They considered that the college had overstated the strengths of teaching in its programme of lesson observations. Some weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report were being addressed by the time of the inspection. Inspectors agreed with three of the five curriculum grades awarded by the college and four of the five cross-college grades.

77 Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of this report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 2000)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	62
19-24 years	5
25+ years	32
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 2000)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation) and entry level	18
Level 2 (intermediate)	18
Level 3 (advanced)	58
Level 4/5 (higher)	0
Level not specified	6
Non-schedule 2	0
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	329	490	39
Engineering	3	0	0
Business	98	166	13
Hotel and catering	47	3	2
Health and community care	68	12	4
Art and design	140	20	8
Humanities	537	164	33
Basic education	0	18	1
Total	1,222	873	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1998-99 ISR data, the college recruited 15% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (October 2000)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	81	17	0	98
Supporting direct learning contact	10	3	0	13
Other support	23	0	1	24
Total	114	20	1	135

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1998	1999	2000
Income	£3,542,000	£3,473,000	*
Average level of funding (ALF)	£16.91	£16.68	£17.00
Payroll as a proportion of income	73%	78%	*
Achievement of funding target	103%	99%	*
Diversity of income	8%	8%	*
Operating surplus	£107,000	-£154,000	*

Sources: Income – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

ALF – Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999), college (2000)

Payroll – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1997-98 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Diversity of income – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

Operating surplus – Council Circular 00/10 (1998), college (1999 and 2000)

*college audited accounts not yet available

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
1	Number of starters	520	353	461	31	63	217
	Retention (%)	72	78	85	65	56	79
	Achievement (%)	98	99	99	100	100	100
2	Number of starters	793	671	576	106	88	84
	Retention (%)	82	74	81	76	60	76
	Achievement (%)	94	97	96	90	91	87
3	Number of starters	2,688	2,402	2,062	99	89	70
	Retention (%)	71	70	81	60	53	54
	Achievement (%)	86	87	90	78	84	82
4 or 5	Number of starters	0	0	0	0	0	9
	Retention (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	67
	Achievement (%)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	88
Short courses	Number of starters	29	33	202	2	7	750
	Retention (%)	69	79	88	100	100	95
	Achievement (%)	92	77	99	100	100	94
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	81	177	16	14	1,402	41
	Retention (%)	78	90	75	93	98	68
	Achievement (%)	83	93	100	100	99	86

Source: ISR

n/a not applicable

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