

# Park Lane College

**REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
1997-98**

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL***

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## Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

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

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

## Retention and Pass Rates

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

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

# Summary

## Park Lane College

### *Yorkshire and Humberside Region*

#### Inspected March 1998

Park Lane College is a general further education college which provides education and training over a wide area in, and around, the city of Leeds. The production of the college's self-assessment report involved governors, managers and staff at all levels. The report was carefully and thoroughly prepared and it was based upon self-assessment reports from curriculum and cross-college areas. Inspectors agreed with most of the grades in the report for curriculum areas. They concluded, however, that the college had underestimated the considerable strengths of much of its cross-college provision when assigning its own grades.

The college offers courses in all 10 of the FEFC's programme areas. The inspection covered six curriculum areas and aspects of cross-college provision. The quality of the college's adult and community education provision is outstanding. The college has been successful in enabling those who would not usually enrol in further education, to gain qualifications and to progress to more advanced education or employment. Governors make a strong contribution to the strategic direction of the college. This large and geographically-dispersed college is particularly well managed and it benefits from strong

leadership and careful planning. The college has extensive and fruitful links with employers and local community organisations. Courses are well managed. Most of the teaching is of an exceptionally high standard. Support for students is of outstanding quality and it includes effective learning support and an extensive and well-integrated careers education and guidance service. Since the last inspection, the college has made significant improvements in its quality assurance systems. The quality of course reviews is consistently high. The college has expanded its learning resource centres and it has invested heavily in IT for students' use. It should: improve poor retention rates on some courses; address some weaknesses in its classroom accommodation; and continue to develop the use of its management information system.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science and mathematics	2	Support for students	1
Business and administration	2	General resources	2
Management and professional studies	2	Quality assurance	1
Travel, tourism and leisure	1	Governance	1
Modern languages and English as a foreign language	2	Management	1
Adult and community education	1		

## The College and its Mission

1 Park Lane College, Leeds, is a large general further education college. It was established in 1966 to provide general, commercial and secretarial education, and is one of the largest providers of business, professional and management courses in the region. It is also a major provider of adult and community education. Its four main sites are situated close to the city centre. The college's adult and community education is dispersed over 60 other sites across the city.

2 Leeds has a population of approximately 750,000. Its economy is growing rapidly. The city is one of the largest centres in the United Kingdom for financial and business services. Other large sectors of employment in Leeds include retailing, tourism, hotel and catering, distribution and leisure and these are growing. The unemployment rate in the city is falling. In January 1998, it was the same as the national figure of 4.9 per cent, and below the regional rate for Yorkshire and Humberside of 5.7 per cent. Despite the growth in the city's economy, the areas served by the college contain substantial districts which are socially and economically deprived. Four of the electoral wards close to the inner-city college sites are among the top 10 per cent of the most deprived districts in England and Wales. Long-term unemployment in these wards is high, particularly among people from minority ethnic backgrounds. Postcode analysis shows that 43 per cent of Park Lane students live in a deprived area, according to the Department of the Environment index of local conditions.

3 The college operates in a highly competitive environment. Leeds has six other further education colleges, a sixth form college and 44 schools with sixth forms. There are also a substantial number of private training organisations. In 1996, the local participation rate in post-16 education was 62 per cent, below the national average of 68 per cent.

In 1997, the percentage of 16-year-old pupils in Leeds gaining the equivalent of five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects at grade C or above was 37 per cent, compared with the average for England of 45 per cent.

4 At the time of the inspection, the college had 15,592 students. Seventeen per cent were aged between 16 and 19. The college has over 350 foreign students, from over 30 countries. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds at the college is 12 per cent, double the percentage in the population of Leeds. The college has doubled its enrolments over the last five years. In July 1997, the college employed 598 full-time equivalent staff, including 50 teachers on a contracted basis.

5 The college offers a wide general education curriculum of 31 GCSE subjects, 30 general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects and 19 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects. Eighty-seven per cent of the college's enrolments are in the four programme areas of science, business, humanities and basic education. Provision ranges from pre-foundation level to higher education. Study is available through a variety of modes of attendance, including distance learning for students who live some way away from the college and need to study at home or at work. A quarter of the college's enrolments are in adult and community education. The college's adult and community education provision is wide ranging and it includes basic skills and caring in the community courses. As part of this provision, the college runs family learning programmes in collaboration with 25 local primary schools. The college has been successful in attracting European funding to promote the Europeanisation of vocational training and education, to support its work with small and medium enterprises and its provision for the unemployed and for disadvantaged groups. In 1997, funding from Europe amounted to £1,700,000.

# Context

6 At the time of the inspection, the college was at an advanced stage of planning for a merger with Airedale and Wharfedale College, scheduled to come into effect from 1 August 1998. The Yorkshire and Humberside regional committee advised the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in January 1998 that the merger proposals meet the FEFC's criteria. Work on the proposed merger has been detailed and thorough and it occupied much of the time of governors and managers during the period leading up to the inspection.

7 The college is organised in four departments: business and management; vocational education; arts and sciences; and adult and community education. The directors of these departments report to the vice-principal. The vice-principal, human resources manager and directors of finance and management information systems, external relations and student affairs report to the principal. The college's management team consists of the principal, the vice-principal, departmental directors and managers of aspects of cross-college provision.

8 The college's mission is 'to empower individuals to learn, develop and achieve their potential to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century'. The college aims to:

- 'promote lifetime learning to enable people to achieve personal growth and development
- assist organisations to be more effective and competitive
- contribute to the achievement of national targets for education and training
- ensure that all sections of the community increase their employment opportunities in order to benefit from economic success'.

# Context

## The Inspection

9 Inspection took place during one week in March 1998. The inspection team had previously considered the college's self-assessment report and the information about the college provided by other divisions of the FEFC. The college submitted data on students' achievements for the three years 1995 to 1997, and these were checked against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. Inspectors found some defects in the presentation of the data, but these were rectified during the inspection week.

10 The college was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately two months before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by 12 inspectors working for a total of 49 days in the college and at other centres in the community. An FEFC auditor was also part of the team, working for five days. Inspectors observed 108 lessons and examined college documents and students' work. They held meetings with managers, governors, staff, students, head teachers of local schools and representatives of external agencies including the local authority and Leeds Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

11 Of the lessons observed, 81 per cent were rated outstanding or good. This profile is considerably higher than the average of 61 per cent for colleges inspected in 1996-97, according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected was 74 per cent, slightly lower than the average of 77 per cent recorded by inspectors in 1996-97. The average class size was 9.3, compared with the average of 10.8 for all types of college recorded in the chief inspector's annual report. The following table shows the grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

### Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	5	6	1	0	0	12
GCSE	2	4	2	1	0	9
GNVQ	5	4	5	1	0	15
Other vocational	13	10	3	0	0	26
Basic education	9	10	5	0	0	24
Other	10	9	3	0	0	22
Total	44	43	19	2	0	108



# Curriculum Areas

## Science and Mathematics

### Grade 2

**12 The inspection covered the major science and mathematics courses provided on the Park Lane site, but excluded those which form part of the college's programme of adult and community education. Inspectors observed 17 lessons which covered GCE A level, GCSE, general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) advanced and access to higher education courses. The inspectors broadly agreed with the college's assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of provision in science and mathematics.**

#### Key strengths

- the high quality of much of the teaching and learning, particularly in science
- high pass rates on the majority of courses
- effective support for students in their studies
- the regular setting and constructive marking of students' work
- extensive extra-curricular opportunities for vocational science students
- the encouragement given to students to develop key skills, particularly in information technology (IT)

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient variety and differentiation in some mathematics teaching to meet the needs of students of differing abilities
- poor retention rates

13 The college offers a broad range of science and mathematics provision including BTEC sports science, GNVQ, access to higher education courses and an extensive programme of GCE A level and GCSE subjects. The curriculum in science and mathematics is well

managed. The documentation used by course teams, including students' records, course files and schemes of work, is detailed and comprehensive. Students on vocational science courses benefit from an enhancement programme which includes work experience in several European countries. As the self-assessment report indicates, the course teams monitor students' attendance rigorously, using standard procedures.

14 The teaching in science is of a consistently high standard. The science teachers have developed materials which are held on a computer so that they can be shared across the department. Teachers succeeded in sustaining students' interest throughout the lessons, some of which were three hours long. For example, in one effective science lesson, the teacher made innovative use of the overhead projector and a well-designed handout, provided a skilful demonstration and engaged the students in useful discussion. Science students are generally well motivated. They enjoy their studies and develop good levels of knowledge and practical skills. Teachers check students' progress regularly. They set appropriate assignments which they mark and return promptly. As part of their assessment, they provide the students with constructive comments on the quality of their work. GCE A level science students are encouraged to achieve a college certificate in key skills by demonstrating these skills in their assignments. In some mathematics lessons, teachers did not vary the activities sufficiently to meet the needs of students' differing abilities, and some students lost their motivation to learn. This weakness in mathematics teaching was not identified in the self-assessment report. The use of IT is promoted across the mathematics curriculum and GCE A level students are encouraged to use graphical calculators. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that students value highly the additional support which they receive in both

# Curriculum Areas

science and mathematics through the provision of 'drop-in' workshops.

15 In 1997, pass rates for GCE A level biology and chemistry were above the national averages for general further education colleges, and those for GCE A level mathematics and physics were below. Value-added analysis indicates that students are achieving better results in GCE A level science, and poorer results in GCE A level mathematics, than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE grades. Pass rates at GCSE level in mathematics were above the national averages for general further education colleges. Students' achievements on the BTEC science (sports studies), access to higher education and GNVQ courses are good. Students on the GNVQ science programme follow a 'fast-track' intermediate programme before commencing the advanced level in the second term. Since the introduction of this intermediate programme, the students' retention rates and achievements on GNVQ science courses have improved. The self-assessment report states that the retention rates on GCSE courses need to be improved further but it does not comment on the low retention rates on GCE A level courses.

16 Staff are well qualified. All science and mathematics teachers have a teaching qualification and a degree, and 20 per cent have a second degree. Three qualified science

technicians offer a good level of support. Most teachers lack recent industrial experience. The science laboratories are up to date and well equipped. The mathematics accommodation is satisfactory and one room, in particular, is exceptionally well equipped. The laboratories and classrooms contain attractive stimulating display material. In all rooms, students and teachers have access to a good range of learning materials including textbooks, calculators and study packs. IT equipment is readily available to students in the science laboratories. There is, however, insufficient IT equipment for students' use in some of the mathematics classrooms.

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

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCSE mathematics	Retention (%)	67	63	64
	Pass rate (%)	41	44	46
GCE A level mathematics	Retention (%)	52	57	68
	Pass rate (%)	66	74	63
GCE A level sciences	Retention (%)	72	67	61
	Pass rate (%)	100	78	79

Source: college data

# Curriculum Areas

## Business and Administration

### Grade 2

**17 The inspection covered GNVQ, higher and national certificate courses in business together with a range of administration and secretarial programmes leading mainly to national vocational qualifications (NVQs). Inspectors observed 15 lessons. The inspectors considered that the self-assessment report overemphasised certain strengths and failed to identify some weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- effective and lively teaching methods
- the promotion of students' supervisory skills through the NVQ mentoring system
- the comprehensive use of work experience to strengthen learning
- constructive marking of students' work by teachers
- high pass rates on most courses

#### Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on GNVQ programmes
- declining pass rates on NVQ administration courses
- insufficiently-demanding learning activities in some lessons

18 The college offers a wide range of business-related programmes from levels 1 to 4. Overall, the management of the curriculum is sound. On most administration and secretarial courses, students may enrol at different points throughout the year. The courses are organised in units. The college has been flexible in its timetabling to enable students to study course units through various modes of attendance. The programme areas have set themselves

performance targets and they have drawn up one-year action plans for implementing the objectives of the college's strategic plan.

Inspectors agreed with the conclusion in the self-assessment report that the provision of work experience for students is effective. It forms part of all full-time programmes and is well organised. Students are provided with a guide to college procedures. They complete a daily summary of the activities they have undertaken and of their assignment tasks. However, inspectors considered there was insufficient evidence to support the statement in the self-assessment report that the students' learning experience is strengthened by a programme of external visits and lectures by guest speakers.

19 Eleven of the 15 lessons were good or better, and the remainder were satisfactory. Overall attendance was good at 81 per cent. The inspection team agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that teachers sustained students' interest by devising activities which encouraged them to play an active part in lessons. For example, in a lesson on personnel practice students were working in groups analysing a range of evaluation sheets in order to devise a suitable feedback form for a forthcoming residential weekend. The teacher used their responses to establish the principles of questionnaire design. In another example, the mentoring of year-one students by those in year two of an NVQ programme, successfully promoted the development of supervisory skills. Students' work was well presented and it demonstrated that the students made extensive use of IT. The quality of marking, particularly for GNVQ assignments, was good. The teachers' assessment included detailed comments on the quality of the students' work and constructive advice on how the students might improve their performance. On administration courses, some of the activities undertaken in college were insufficiently realistic and demanding. For example, on one higher level course students were planning an open day for employers at the

# Curriculum Areas

college as a simulation exercise rather than an actual event.

20 On single-subject courses in business administration, a large number of students are entered for the examination and their achievements are good. Pass rates on text processing courses, for example, regularly exceed 80 per cent. Retention rates on these courses are high. The pass rates on NVQ administration programmes have averaged well over 70 per cent. Recently, however, the proportion of students who achieve a full NVQ has declined. The pass rate on the certificate in personnel practice course has been consistently high at over 95 per cent. Results on the higher diploma in administrative procedures course are also good. Although the pass rate on some of the GNVQ business courses is outstanding, retention rates on these courses are low, averaging just below 60 per cent over the last three years. Pass rates on national certificate and diploma courses average 95 per cent and they are high on higher national certificate courses. GCE A level pass rates are generally at or above national averages for general further education colleges. Retention rates on some GCE A level courses, particularly part-time evening courses, are poor.

21 Inspection confirmed as a strength, the claim in the self-assessment report that nearly all permanent teachers have a teaching qualification and a relevant degree or professional qualification. All those teaching GNVQ or NVQ programmes have relevant assessor awards, and over 50 per cent of full-time staff are qualified internal verifiers. GNVQ programmes are taught in a college annexe which is fit for its purpose although classrooms lack display boards. There are sufficient modern computers and some have multimedia facilities. Some of the IT classrooms on the Park Lane site are cramped. An NVQ conference room and office have appropriate office equipment and they provide students with a realistic working environment.

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

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced	Retention (%)	*	48	65
	Pass rate (%)	*	87	100
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	54	58	58
	Pass rate (%)	67	100	73
NVQ level 3 administration	Retention (%)	90	72	67
	Pass rate (%)	78	75	63
NVQ level 2 administration	Retention (%)	83	85	89
	Pass rate (%)	85	80	58

Source: college data

\*course not running

# Curriculum Areas

## Management and Professional Studies

### *Grade 2*

**22 Management and professional courses at intermediate, advanced and higher levels for both full-time and part-time students were inspected. Twelve lessons were observed. The findings of the inspection were broadly in line with those contained in the college's self-assessment report.**

#### **Key strengths**

- the consistently high standard of most students' work
- much stimulating and effective teaching
- some good pass rates
- well-managed courses
- the responsiveness of the provision to students' and clients' needs

#### **Weaknesses**

- some poor lesson plans
- lack of classroom display material
- low retention rates on some courses

23 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the college displays flexibility in the way it responds to clients' needs through its provision of a range of management and professional courses. Many courses are designed to meet the needs of specific organisations and are implemented in the workplace. Students may enrol on some courses at any time during the year. A range of short courses is offered at venues outside the college. For example, a course on 'introducing the European quality award' is held at Leeds United Football Club. The college provides a full-time course leading to examinations of the Institute of Legal Executives. This course recruits well, has good pass rates and offers

students good progression to appropriate employment and higher education.

24 The management of the curriculum is good. Courses are well structured and effectively planned. All courses have detailed schemes of work. Performance targets are set and progress towards reaching them is monitored by the programme area managers. There is an effective annual course review system whereby course teams systematically analyse the effectiveness of provision against a range of performance indicators. The reviews are carried out well and they include a clear statement of action needed to improve provision. Students' views are systematically sought and analysed. The programme areas maintain strong links with employers, for example through advisory boards, although they do not formally record or analyse employers' views. Full-time students on the Institute of Legal Executives course undertake a two-week work experience placement, usually with a solicitor.

25 The quality of teaching is good. Staff have a good rapport with students. Lessons are stimulating and contain a suitable range of activities including effective group work. The range of teaching and learning strategies is a strength noted in the self-assessment report. Learning is strengthened with relevant examples of business practice and with case studies, and teachers often draw on students' employment experience. Whilst most lesson plans indicated that teachers aimed to provide their students with an appropriate variety of suitable activities, some plans did not specify the activities or learning methods to be used and were little more than a list of topics. Most teachers questioned the students skilfully. In some lessons, however, teachers missed opportunities to question the students in order to draw them into group discussion or as a means of helping them to develop their communication skills. Teachers made good use of high-quality overhead projection slides and handouts.

# Curriculum Areas

Attendance rates are satisfactory on most courses. They are poor on the Chartered Institute of Transport course, however, because some students in employment are prevented from attending regularly because of the demands made upon them for work.

26 Most students achieve results at or slightly above the national average for general further education colleges. On some courses, such as Association of Accounting Technicians subjects, pass rates are significantly above the national average for general further education colleges. Overall pass rates on Association of Accounting Technicians courses are good at NVQ levels 2 and 3, but they are poor at NVQ level 4. Many students on the Certificate in Management Studies course require an extended period in order to complete their qualification. Most assignments are well presented and most students' work is consistently of a high standard. Teachers mark students' work promptly and they provide students with detailed written feedback on their performance. In 1996-97, students' retention rates were high on the Association of Accounting Technicians NVQ level 4 course and on the Chartered Institute of Transport course, at 94 per cent and 98 per cent, respectively. However, retention

rates are poor and declining on the insurance intermediaries NVQ level 2 courses, and on marketing courses.

27 As the self-assessment report states, teachers are well qualified and experienced, and many have recent industrial experience. They undertake appropriate staff development training on a regular basis. In general, physical resources are good. Teaching rooms are well appointed and they are appropriately furnished with whiteboards and overhead projectors. Most rooms lack display material and are dull. In one instance, the classroom contained inappropriate furniture which could not be moved to facilitate group discussion. Library resources for this curriculum area are appropriate. Students are provided with good computing facilities. Most students receive training on the use of the internet, which they consult in order to obtain information they need to carry out assignments.

## Examples of students' achievements on management and professional studies, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Institute of Legal Executives	Retention (%)	75	74	78
	Pass rate (%)	80	95	89
Association of Accounting Technicians	Retention (%)	93	86	85
	Pass rate (%)	28	41	60
Chartered Institute of Marketing	Retention (%)	*	100	53
	Pass rate (%)	*	30	76
National Examining Board for Supervisory Management	Retention (%)	84	100	100
	Pass rate (%)	89	84	87

Source: college data

\*data not available

# Curriculum Areas

## Travel, Tourism and Leisure

### Grade 1

**28 The inspection covered full-time and part-time programmes in travel, tourism, leisure and sport. Inspectors observed 11 lessons. They agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- some excellent teaching
- the sharing of good practice by teachers
- varied, demanding and realistic assignments for students
- a broad and innovative range of provision
- opportunities for students to gain additional qualifications
- well-managed courses
- good links with industry in Britain and on the continent
- high pass rates on all courses
- the high standard of students' work
- students' success in progressing to relevant employment

#### Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some courses

29 The college offers a broad range of full-time and part-time courses leading to GNVQs at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels; NVQs at levels 2, 3, and 4; and many additional qualifications in leisure, tourism, travel and sport. Courses are well designed and planned. Students on full-time courses at advanced level are provided with a choice of options. Of particular note is the new 'animateurs' route for GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism students. This is an innovative programme designed to meet the emerging requirements for multi-

skilled employees within the holiday and leisure industry, and it can lead to good job opportunities abroad.

30 The curriculum area has strong links with employers locally, nationally and overseas, who provide work experience placements for students. In 1997, assisted by European funding, 133 students undertook work experience in countries such as Greece, Spain and Ireland, for periods lasting from three to 12 weeks. Students carry out assignments while they are abroad, and the work they complete on their return shows that they have acquired additional knowledge and have benefited from their work experience. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that this work experience is a major strength of the provision.

31 Teaching methods are effective. In lessons, teachers stimulate responses from the students and hold their interest. In one lesson, a group of GNVQ students were making and using puppets in order to understand the value of these in strengthening children's learning. As the self-assessment report indicates, assignments are demanding and realistic. For example, students on a GNVQ advanced course were enthusiastically planning an event to take place in the town centre at which they would have to advertise holidays and travel in foreign countries and raise money for charity at the same time. Other assignments are closely linked to a programme of visits, including some which are residential, to employers.

32 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the college's self-assessment report that pass rates are high on all courses. All GNVQ results in 1997 were significantly above the national averages for general further education colleges. The self-assessment report also identified poor retention rates on some courses. The college has taken action to improve retention rates. Staff now monitor students' progress more closely, provide students with better guidance before they start their course, follow up

# Curriculum Areas

students' absence more rigorously, set stricter deadlines for the completion of assignments, and they have established closer contact with parents of students aged 16 to 19. For example, of the 155 students who enrolled on GNVQ advanced programmes in September 1997, only three had left the course by February 1998.

33 Students' work, especially in groups and practical situations, is of a high standard. Leisure students produced a 30-minute educational play at the Royal Armouries in Leeds for members of the public. As stated in the self-assessment report, in addition to their main course of study, students also work towards obtaining other qualifications in order to improve their employment prospects. These include qualifications in foreign languages, first aid, ticketing and fares, and sports coaching. Many students progress to employment in travel and tourism professions, sometimes before completing their course of study, or to further and higher education.

34 Teachers have extensive industrial experience, especially within the travel industry. They update this experience by taking up work experience placements abroad which are funded

by the European community. They make good use of their industrial experience to show students how theoretical subject knowledge is applied in current professional practice. The travel shop, a busy working travel agency operated by the students, is centrally situated in the foyer of the main college building. It is a valuable learning resource where students can acquire and develop their practical skills. The college hires facilities in a nearby sports centre to provide students on sport and leisure courses with a suitable environment in which they can carry out a good range of sporting activities.

## Examples of students' achievements in travel, tourism and leisure, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced	Retention (%)	*	56	64
	Pass rate (%)	*	93	92
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	87	87	67
	Pass rate (%)	73	85	77
GNVQ foundation	Retention (%)	85	73	71
	Pass rate (%)	82	66	90
BTEC NVQ level 2 diploma in sport (one-year course)	Retention (%)	*	75	63
	Pass rate (%)	*	100	100
NVQ level 2 travel services	Retention (%)	68	70	80
	Pass rate (%)	87	71	75

Source: college data

\*course not running



# Curriculum Areas

## Modern Languages and English as a Foreign Language

### Grade 2

35 Inspectors observed 18 lessons, covering courses at all levels in modern languages and English as a foreign language (EFL). The inspection did not include modern languages in adult and community education. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered some strengths to be overstated. They also found some weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

#### Key strengths

- the wide range of provision and the clear progression routes for students
- the good quality of most teaching and learning
- high pass rates on most courses
- successful recruitment to, and good retention rates on, EFL programmes
- the effective management and successful co-ordination of the provision
- good learning resources for students

#### Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory retention rates on modern language courses
- some pass rates below national averages
- some poor accommodation

36 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the college's self-assessment report that a key strength in this area is the wide range of provision offering clear progression routes for students. Courses in EFL include all levels of the Cambridge Certificate, as well as courses in English for specific purposes such as English for tourism. Courses are organised flexibly so that students may enrol on them at any time during

the year. The college has developed a framework of modern language courses across five levels, from beginners level to GCE A level, and these offer good progression routes to a wide range of students. Recruitment to EFL courses has risen steadily. Recruitment to modern languages courses has declined, however, and some modern language classes have had to be closed and others have had to be amalgamated. In order to maintain provision of some modern languages, the college has had to combine first-year and second-year groups and teach students who are at different stages of language development in one class. Such an arrangement has had an unsatisfactory effect upon the quality of the teaching and learning and the self-assessment report identifies it as a weakness in this curriculum area.

37 Much teaching is of good quality and some is outstanding. Teachers prepare detailed lesson plans with clear objectives. In most lessons, students are keen to take a full part in learning activities. These enabled students to practise the full range of language skills and to work on their own and in groups. Modern languages teachers help students to develop good comprehension skills by conducting most or all of the lesson in the language being studied. In particularly successful lessons, students undertook demanding tasks which helped them to develop their thinking skills as well as their language skills. In an EFL lesson on the theme of paranormal phenomena, the teacher encouraged students to express their opinions and summarise the views of others. In a modern languages lesson for students on a leisure and tourism course, the teacher gave the students imaginative activities which captured their interest and stimulated them to talk about themselves, listen to others and express their personal views. In the few lessons that were less successful, teachers did not manage the time well and some failed to ensure that all students had understood or were fully involved in the learning activities. The motivation and behaviour of some students in vocational

# Curriculum Areas

language classes were poor. The grouping of students of different nationalities in EFL classes ensures that students use English as a common language in lesson. In modern language lessons, however, students rarely make spontaneous use of the language being learned.

38 Pass rates on EFL courses are usually above the national average for these courses. As stated in the self-assessment report, retention rates on EFL courses are good. In modern languages, pass rates at GCE A level have been consistently at, or above, the national averages for general further education colleges, for the past three years. Similarly, the proportion of students who obtain grade C or above in GCSE subjects has been significantly above the national average for general further education colleges, during the same period. The self-assessment report acknowledged that retention rates on GCE A level and GCSE courses are low. The self-assessment report did not, however, record that there are low pass rates on some courses, such as the Cambridge Advanced Certificate in English course, and that on some courses which have high pass rates, the retention rates are poor. The department has identified strategies for improving retention rates. These are proving successful and some retention rates have increased during the past

three years. Many students take one-year courses in modern languages and most who complete these courses gain some accreditation.

39 The provision is well managed. There are good communications between staff and part-time teachers play a full part in the teaching teams. Priority is given to improving the quality of provision and to the professional development of staff. The self-assessment report accurately identifies as a strength good resources which include a well-equipped and fully-staffed multimedia language centre and English workshop where students can study and receive additional support for their learning. The department operates an effective 'conversation exchange' system whereby students practise their speaking skills in a particular language by being paired with students who are native speakers of the language in question. Some accommodation is of poor quality. Much of the teaching is in temporary buildings. These contain some classrooms which have whiteboards and furniture of poor quality, and other classrooms in which the acoustics are unsatisfactory. The few rooms which are used exclusively for the teaching of modern languages and EFL are well equipped and they contain attractive wall displays.

## Examples of students' achievements in travel, tourism and leisure, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level modern languages	Retention (%)	53	56	67
	Pass rate (%)	78	78	81
GCSE modern languages	Retention (%)	49	68	59
	Pass rate (%)	89	88	86
Vocational courses in modern languages	Retention (%)	64	73	74
	Pass rate (%)	52	70	62
English as a foreign language	Retention (%)	90	95	88
	Pass rate (%)	73	74	78

Source: college data

# Curriculum Areas

## Adult and Community Education

### Grade 1

**40 The inspection covered provision in literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and a range of courses designed to widen the accessibility of further education to people in the local community. Inspectors observed 35 lessons at 18 sites across Leeds and its surrounding areas. The self-assessment report on adult and community education was thorough and comprehensive. The inspectors agreed with almost all the judgements in the report but they considered that the college had underestimated the weaknesses in a few aspects of teaching in this curriculum area.**

#### Key strengths

- highly effective management
- the wide range of provision and the opportunities for students to progress to higher levels of study
- successful widening of participation
- the high quality of most teaching
- the good progress made by students
- consistently high pass rates in examinations
- good-quality resources and accommodation

#### Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on a few GCSE courses

41 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that management of the geographically-dispersed adult and community education department is highly effective. The staff based in local areas work closely with cross-departmental curriculum teams. The

college responds to the needs and interests of local communities and offers a curriculum of high quality managed by subject specialists. The planning of adult and community education is effective, it reflects the college's strategic objectives and is based upon thorough market research. Systems for reviewing and improving the quality of provision are rigorous. The wide range of courses provides clear progression routes for students. Enrichment activities, including international visits and social and cultural events, extend students' learning. Some provision is distinctive. For example, the department offers 'return to learn' courses for adults recovering from mental illness, courses in dyslexia awareness, and 'on-line learning', whereby students are provided with learning materials and tutorial support by electronic means. Many courses are organised jointly with other organisations, such as primary schools, probation hostels and the local authority. These organisations praised the department for establishing open and reciprocal partnerships with them and for the unstinting commitment of its staff to ensuring high-quality provision for their clients.

42 The quality of the teaching is high. Almost half of the lessons observed were outstanding. The excellence of the teaching was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Teachers have particularly positive and good relationships with students. Lesson plans relate clearly to the aims of the curriculum and to the requirements of the examining and validating bodies. On many courses, students benefit from a variety of teaching methods and receive constructive feedback from the teachers on the quality of their work. In learning workshops, teachers of literacy, numeracy and ESOL encourage and prepare students to organise their own learning activities, to work effectively by themselves using purpose-designed study materials, and to record the progress they make. A few ESOL teachers do not give students sufficient opportunity to practise their oral skills.

# Curriculum Areas

On workshop-based courses, teachers rarely bring students together to discuss ideas or work jointly on tasks.

43 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that students make good progress in their studies. Some students make particularly fast progress even though initially they lacked confidence and their study skills were underdeveloped. The college celebrates students' broader achievements, for example, by publishing students' writing and by organising award ceremonies. The proportions of students who gain suitable qualifications are consistently high. The proportion of students who gain grade C and above in GCSE subjects provided by the adult and community education department, is significantly above the national average for general further education colleges. The results of these students are particularly impressive in view of the fact that about half of those who enrol for GCSE subjects have progressed from courses in basic skills. Retention rates on most courses are good although the self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that retention rates on a few GCSE courses are low. The inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the college had, through its adult and community education provision, successfully widened participation and had enabled students, who would not usually enrol in further education, to

study successfully, achieve qualifications and progress to further courses or to employment. Over the last three years some 70 per cent of students from literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision have progressed to other further education courses or to employment.

44 The quality of learning resources and accommodation is good, and it has improved since the last inspection. Centres are well maintained and welcoming. Computers are up to date and have a good range of software. Equipment for practical classes such as sewing and cookery is of good quality. Students can use the library at Park Lane. Several centres make arrangements for local libraries to provide relevant resources. The 'on-line learning' service is available at five sites and is also being extended to city council libraries across Leeds. Teachers provide students with the books and printed materials which they require. Staff are experienced and well qualified, and managers are particularly skilful in their roles.

## Examples of students' achievements in adult and community education, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Retention (%)	*	84	85
	Pass rate (%)	85	90	92
GCSE	Retention (%)	91	87	80
	Pass rate (%)	67	69	68
Other one-year courses	Retention (%)	85	89	90
	Pass rate (%)	91	81	89

Source: college data

\*data not available

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### *Grade 1*

**45 The inspectors agreed with the college's assessment of the strengths in the support provided for students. The few weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report are being addressed.**

#### **Key strengths**

- effective pre-course guidance
- the relevant and well-planned induction programme
- the effective tutorial support
- the high quality of the careers guidance for students
- extensive arrangements for providing students with learning support
- the good level of additional support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- accessible and effective support for students with personal problems

#### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient provision of personal and social education on some courses

46 Support for students is well co-ordinated and it is an integral and effective part of the work of the teaching departments. As indicated in the self-assessment report, prospective students are given clear information about their courses. Between September 1997 and February 1998, the college held 19 open evenings at which specialist staff were available to answer queries about courses and the curriculum. Careers advisers from Leeds Careers Guidance work closely with college careers staff to provide impartial guidance to prospective students. For example, all applicants for GCE A level courses are interviewed by a member of the careers staff

and a subject tutor. Designated adult guidance tutors have been trained by college careers staff to work with prospective students in the community. Close links exist between the college and special schools. Pupils from these schools attend 10-week link courses at the college to familiarise themselves with the college and its provision. Enquiries about courses are followed up efficiently and the progress of applications is carefully monitored. Many teachers have been trained in interviewing and basic counselling. There is a service to accredit the prior learning of mature students. In its self-assessment report, the college acknowledges that there are gaps in the information it collects on students' destinations. The college is now collecting data on students' destinations through a computerised system in order that staff may give prospective students more definitive information about the progression routes and employment opportunities open to them when they leave college.

47 There is an induction programme for new students. This is well planned and it is adapted to suit the course which a student is following. In their responses to questionnaires, 94 per cent of students expressed satisfaction with the induction process in 1996-97. All students studying for eight hours a week or more are allocated a personal tutor, and time is provided for group or individual tutorials. Personal tutors frequently provide support for students outside the allocated tutorial time. They maintain effective links with subject tutors and help them to keep a close eye on students' progress. Some courses provide elements of personal and social education. Full-time GCE A level students, for example, have a structured programme of group tutorials for the first term which includes sessions on environmental awareness, European awareness and study skills. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that on other courses, provision for personal and social education is less well developed. Health education, for example, is provided on some courses but not on others.

# Cross-college Provision

48 All students on programmes of eight or more hours' duration a week are initially tested in numeracy and literacy in order that their needs for additional help with basic skills may be identified. The college has devised its own assessments at five levels. Personal tutors liaise closely with learning support tutors to provide students with appropriate support, either in class or in the learning support workshop. Students' progress is reviewed at six-week intervals and reports are sent to personal tutors. In 1997-98, 71 per cent of those identified as requiring learning support have taken it up. Ninety-eight per cent of students receiving learning support in the workshop expressed satisfaction with the help they had received.

49 The self-assessment report accurately identifies the strengths in the identification of additional support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is well managed and begins when students apply to the college. The range of support is varied and extensive. For example, the visually impaired unit is well resourced with computers and audio equipment, and qualified note-takers are provided for hearing-impaired students. The college provides strong support for students with dyslexia. Additional learning support staff have played an active role in providing staff development training for other college staff on inclusive learning.

50 The college's careers and educational guidance service is a strong feature of its support for students, and has been awarded the Leeds Careers Guidance gold award. The college employs three full-time and seven part-time careers advisers who all have the Diploma in Careers Guidance and who have previously worked as local authority careers advisers. The work of advisers from Leeds Careers Guidance is closely integrated with that of college staff. The college has been successful in making careers guidance an integral part of its curriculum. Each course team has a link with a nominated careers adviser, with whom it has

developed a separate service level agreement. This details responsibilities for careers education and guidance and it specifies how these are to be carried out. All applications to establishments of higher education are centrally co-ordinated by the college careers service. Careers advisers assist students in completing their applications and in preparing for interviews. The college careers office is centrally located in the Park Lane reception area, where it is extensively used by students. It has excellent facilities and resources including software packages, booklets on seeking and applying for jobs and the display of job vacancies to help students who are seeking employment.

51 Counselling and welfare support for students is well resourced and organised. Eight counsellors and four welfare staff are available to students on the community-based sites and on the college's sites in the city centre. They also provide valuable staff development training for tutors. A hardship fund is used generously to support students who might otherwise be unable to continue their studies at college. The college makes extensive provision of childcare support for students with young children and this is highly valued by those who use it. In 1996-97, 600 students made use of the 275 places in registered crèches available to them. There is a crèche at 20 of the community-based sites. The college believes that its provision of crèches has been a significant contributing factor in the widening of participation.

# Cross-college Provision

## General Resources

### Grade 2

**52 The self-assessment report identified the significant improvements in the college's resources since the last inspection.**

**Inspectors were in broad agreement with the college's assessment of the quality of its resources. The report overstated some strengths in relation to resources and gave insufficient emphasis to some weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- the high quality of most classrooms
- the good range and high quality of IT equipment
- the provision of library and learning resource centres on all major sites
- the improved reception areas and refectories
- the good facilities for students with physical disabilities

#### Weaknesses

- some poor classrooms
- inadequate library facilities at some centres
- few leisure and recreational facilities

53 The Park Lane site is situated near the city centre, and comprises a modern main building, some temporary huts, and the St Anne's annexe in an adjacent Victorian building. The college has three other sizeable sites within a three-mile radius of Park Lane, at Potternewton, Bridge Street and Vicar Lane. The college has designated three centres at Crossgates, Burton Road and St Bartholomew's as venues for adult and community education in the east, south and west of the city, respectively. The college's accommodation is well managed, and there is an effective system for monitoring room usage across all sites. Improvements to the

accommodation have been carried out and since the last inspection, a major programme of refurbishment and maintenance has been implemented. Most teaching accommodation is furnished to a high standard, and it is well maintained and effectively used. Most rooms have a whiteboard and an overhead projector, although some do not have screens or blinds. Staff have adequate access to audio-visual equipment. The self-assessment report acknowledges that the quality of the accommodation at the St Anne's annexe, and of the temporary huts at Park Lane, is poor. The college's accommodation strategy addresses the shortcomings of these buildings. The implementation of further improvements to the college's accommodation has, however, been deferred, pending the outcome of the proposal to merge the college with Airedale and Wharfedale College.

54 There has been significant investment in IT across the college over the last three years. A committee is responsible for ensuring that IT is an integral part of the college's curriculum in all areas, and for overseeing the continued development of a network of high specification computers using industry-standard software. There are 670 computers for students' use. These are located in a variety of centres around the college and the ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is high at 1:7. The IT suite at Park Lane contains 300 computers, and is used extensively for group work and by students on a 'drop-in' basis. At the Park Lane Site, there are 50 computers in a 'drop-in' workshop and 20 multimedia machines in the learning resource centre. IT classrooms on some sites are cramped. Staff have access to IT facilities in staff rooms and computer workshops. There is some monitoring of the extent of usage of software packages.

55 As the self-assessment report indicates, there has been significant expansion and improvement of libraries and learning resource centres since the last inspection. New learning

# Cross-college Provision

centres have been developed at Park Lane, Potternewton and at Bridge Street. There is effective liaison between staff in curriculum areas and library staff. Each member of the library staff has responsibility for maintaining links with specific programme teams. There is an appropriate range of books and other resources for most programme areas, including an extensive collection of audio and video cassettes and CD-ROMs. The learning resource centre at Potternewton is small and cramped. Some community centres do not have separate library facilities, but students at these centres can obtain books and learning materials through an effective inter-site loan service.

56 At Park Lane, the reception area is bright, lively, and welcoming. Corridors are carpeted and well decorated. Many of the areas where students circulate feature attractive displays and these include students' work. The refectory is spacious and modern, and refectories on five other sites are of a similarly high standard. The college has few leisure and recreational facilities, although Park Lane students have access to neighbouring sports facilities. All teaching areas in the main buildings are accessible to wheelchair users. Access ramps, lifts and toilets for people with disabilities have been installed at Park Lane and at other major sites. IT workshops have been adapted for students with visual impairment. The inaccessibility of the St Anne's annexe and of some temporary huts at the main site to wheelchair users is difficult, as acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Although car parking space at Park Lane is severely restricted, the college has ensured that there are designated parking spaces for people with restricted mobility.

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 1

**57 Inspectors concluded that the college had underestimated some of its strengths in the area of quality assurance. Some weaknesses in the college's quality assurance system had been remedied by the time of the inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- the commitment of all staff to the continuous improvement of the quality of provision
- the comprehensive and well co-ordinated quality assurance system
- high-quality course reviews
- the comprehensive range of service standards
- the well-managed staff development programme and staff appraisal system
- the effective arrangements for gathering students' views on the quality of provision
- the robust and self-critical self-assessment process

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement of support staff in the self-assessment process and in the staff appraisal procedures

58 The college's mission statement and strategic plan emphasise the importance of quality assurance. Inspectors agreed with the statement in the college's self-assessment report that all staff have a commitment to the continuous improvement of the quality of provision. Policies on, and procedures for, quality assurance are implemented fully across the college. Cross-college working groups, such as those for GNVQ and NVQ courses, set standards and disseminate good practice. The academic standards committee meets regularly



# Cross-college Provision

to determine and monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Its processes for reviewing new course proposals and revalidating existing courses are thorough. The principal studies all reports from external verifiers before forwarding them to the relevant director and course team. Remedial action is taken when necessary to improve the quality of provision. Staff identify and share good practice. Many cross-college services have specified standards which their provision aims to meet. The performance of the college against agreed standards is closely monitored by the senior management team.

59 Procedures for the review and evaluation of courses are well established and thorough. Course reviews are held on a mid-year, annual and triennial basis. Course teams compare data on students' retention rates, achievements and destinations with the data on these from the previous year. They also compare students' retention and achievement rates with national averages for the sector and they ascertain the extent to which departmental targets are being met. An audit team scrutinises the reviews to ensure they have been thoroughly completed. The quality of most reviews is high, although a few do not place sufficient emphasis on the importance of teaching, learning and students' achievements. The findings of these reviews are reported to the academic standards committee and to the academic board, and the effectiveness of the implementation of action plans to improve the quality of provision is carefully monitored.

60 A scheme for observing lessons was introduced in the summer term 1997. The work of all teachers in the classroom is observed every three years. Part-time teachers supplied by external agencies are observed within six weeks of taking up their posts. Trained observers of lessons are supported by a verifier from a local university. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the process of lesson observation assists teachers in their professional development. However, the findings from lesson observations are not yet

taken fully into account in course reviews. Furthermore, the findings do not inform judgements about teaching and learning in the college's self-assessment report because the lesson observation scheme had not been introduced at the time the college carried out its process of self-assessment.

61 In 1997, the college was awarded the charter mark for the second time. The college charter is reviewed and updated annually. It includes sections for students, employers and the community. Measurable standards are set for services and provision to which students are entitled by the charter. The college's performance against these standards is monitored. Details of how the college is meeting these standards are displayed in the foyer each month. The charter is published only in English. Procedures for making complaints are clearly explained, and the complaints are summarised annually for governors. At three stages of the year, students are asked to complete comprehensive questionnaires about the quality of the college's provision. Most students answer the questionnaires. Their responses are compared with those to previous questionnaires. A summary of responses is made promptly and this is fed back to the students. The views of employers on the college and its provision are not gathered systematically by all departments.

62 Preparation of the college's self-assessment report involved almost all the teaching staff. Each programme team produced its own self-assessment report, which was graded independently by the college's self-assessment review group. This group included a governor. A similar procedure was adopted for the self-assessment of aspects of cross-college provision. The self-assessment report identified the non-involvement of managers in the grading of management or governance as a strength. The report clearly identified strengths and weaknesses, and it stated the sources of evidence to support the decisions to award

# Cross-college Provision

particular grades. However, the self-assessment process did not include sufficient evaluation of students' experiences in the classroom. A weakness acknowledged in the report is that support staff were insufficiently involved in the process of self-assessment. For example, self-assessment reports on aspects of the college's operation such as finance and estates were not produced. The self-assessment report's action plan indicates clearly what needs to be done to improve the quality of provision. It identifies the person responsible for carrying out the requisite action and it specifies the timescale within which this action must be completed. Many weaknesses identified in the report have since been rectified. The college has continued to improve the quality of its provision since the previous inspection.

63 All teachers are appraised during a two-year appraisal cycle. Many part-time teachers are also appraised. Staff say that they find the appraisal process supportive and effective. An appraisal scheme for part-time staff is planned. Staff development is well managed. There is a structured programme of staff development activities and the effectiveness of this is evaluated. In 1997-98, the staff development budget was 2.5 per cent of staffing costs. The staff development needs of individual members of staff are identified during their appraisal interviews or as a result of having their work in the classroom observed. Staff development needs are also identified at meetings of course review teams. At a more senior level, college managers identify how staff development can help the college to meet the priorities specified in its strategic plan. Current staff development activities include training leading to NVQs in management at levels 4 and 5, and to an NVQ in supervisory management at level 3, and a training programme for all support staff in the college to enable them to gain an NVQ in business administration/information technology at level 2. An extensive programme of training activities which take place in the college is widely advertised. 'Staff development weeks' for

all full-time staff take place three times a year. All staff receive a training credit to use on a college course. There is a comprehensive induction process for new staff. The college was reaccredited as an Investor in People in 1998.

## Governance

### Grade 1

**64 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report. They found, however, that the college had overstated some weaknesses in the quality of its governance.**

#### Key strengths

- the wide range of governors' skills and experience
- the corporation's effective committee structures
- the good arrangements for reporting to governors
- the corporation's close monitoring of the college's financial performance
- the governors' significant contribution to deciding the strategic direction of the college
- the productive relationships between governors and college managers
- the governors' strong commitment to ensuring the college's success

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring of some aspects of the college's operations

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

# Cross-college Provision

66 The corporation has 14 members, including five women. There are no vacancies. Members have a range of appropriate expertise and this is drawn from the areas of general business, health care, finance, the law, industrial relations and trade unions and insurance. Their backgrounds, skills and experience enable them to understand the scope of the college's curriculum. There is one staff and one student member. The term of office of all members is due to expire on 31 March 1998, but most have already indicated their willingness to stand for re-election. As noted in the self-assessment report, a search committee has responsibility to find suitable new members to fill vacancies on the corporation. This committee has two external and co-opted members who help to identify persons who might be suitable to serve as governors. All governors undergo a formal induction programme. Training is arranged to meet the specific needs of members. The corporation was closely involved in the preparation of the self-assessment report.

67 The corporation meets at least twice a term. Attendance at meetings is usually good. Some governors have committed themselves to an onerous and additional workload through their oversight of the proposal to merge with Airedale and Wharfedale College. The self-assessment report notes that over the last 12 months, the attendance of some individual governors has fallen below the 80 per cent considered desirable. In some instances, however, this decline in attendance has been due to pressure of work and to medical circumstances. Attendance at corporation and committee meetings is closely monitored by the clerk to the corporation and it is reported upon annually to the search committee. During the last 12 months, two corporation meetings were inquorate, owing to a misunderstanding about quorum rules. The conduct of meetings is determined by detailed standing orders. Governance is conducted largely through the finance and general purposes, audit and

remuneration committees. Each committee has comprehensive terms of reference. The arrangements for the corporation to receive reports are good. Governors receive written minutes of meetings and these are supplemented by an oral report where appropriate. The financial position of the college is closely monitored by the finance and general purposes committee. This is scheduled to meet at least termly, but in practice it meets more often than that.

68 As the self-assessment report claims, the corporation has considered the recommendations of the Nolan reports and it conducts its business openly. The register of interests has recently been updated. It includes the interests of all governors, their close relatives and members of the college management team. A notice in the reception area publicises the fact that the register of interests and the corporation minutes are open to public inspection and this information is repeated in the college's financial statements. All governors have signed the code of conduct.

69 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that governors are highly committed to ensuring the success of the college. Governors have a clear understanding of the differing roles of governance and management. They are represented on several college committees and bodies, for example the students' forum and the self-assessment review group, and individual governors are informally linked with different curriculum areas. The chair and principal jointly address staff on key issues. Governors have played a productive part in reviewing the college's mission and core values. Through their representation on the corporation's strategic planning committee, they have helped to determine the strategic direction of the college and they have assisted in the college's strategic planning processes. An appropriate range of reports is received on aspects of the college's performance. For example, governors receive a report in which

# Cross-college Provision

the college compares its inspection grades and the retention rates and success rates of its students, including GCE and GCSE results, with averages for the sector. They also receive reports on the implementation of key policies, such as the equal opportunities policy. The self-assessment report did not acknowledge that governors pay insufficient attention to some indicators of the college's performance, such as the views of customers and staff and data on students' destinations.

70 Governors have taken a prudent approach to the proposed merger with Airedale and Wharfedale College. They have set up a merger committee and this has clear aims and appropriate terms of reference. These reflect the corporation's requirement that the interests of Park Lane College are adequately protected. Governors have considered how the merger would contribute to the achievement of the college's strategic aims. They have commissioned reports from independent companies on the financial, legal and environmental implications of the merger. They have established a detailed set of criteria to guide them in coming to their decisions.

## Management

### *Grade 1*

**71 Inspectors were in broad agreement with the college's identification of strengths and weaknesses in this area. However, they considered that the college had underestimated the strengths of its management.**

#### **Key strengths**

- the effectiveness of managers in providing strong leadership
- the college's successful performance against a range of performance indicators

- effective planning for, and monitoring of, the college's strategic performance
- well-documented procedures and policies
- well-understood management structures and good communications
- the effective management of the curriculum
- good financial management
- effective deployment of resources
- the college's extensive links with the community and outside organisations

#### **Weaknesses**

- underdeveloped use of management information system

72 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the college is successful in meeting realistic and demanding targets. Its achievements have been recognised through a significant number of national awards. It performs well against a range of measures such as enrolments, students' achievements, and financial indicators. The college is well managed. Staff benefit from strong leadership. The college's resources are used effectively. The college is well regarded by the local community and it has extensive links with a wide range of local organisations. There are clear and systematic procedures for determining the college's strategic objectives. Through effective use of labour market research and other relevant information, the college has established a clear picture of its present position in the local education and training market and it has identified future marketing objectives. It sets itself operational objectives and targets, following annual reviews of its performance. Staff are required to set objectives for courses and programme areas which are achievable, and they are well informed about how these objectives relate to those for the college's strategic direction.

# Cross-college Provision

73 Staff have a clear understanding of the college's management structures. They know who has responsibility for specific aspects of management. As the college's self-assessment report indicates, internal communications are good. The roles of the college's committees are clearly documented. The minutes of departmental and cross-college meetings indicate that the implementation of agreed actions is closely monitored. College policies are collated in a policies manual. Their implementation is well managed. Staff are kept informed about the effectiveness of these policies in practice.

74 The college's curriculum is managed effectively. The academic board, with its subcommittees and working groups, takes a leading and successful role in the management of the curriculum. The provision of work placements for students is centrally managed. Employers report very favourably on the good relationship they have with the college. Staff demonstrate good practice in their promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities. The college has responded positively to the Tomlinson report on provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It has established a working group on 'inclusive learning'. In addition, staff have written a report on such provision, together with an action plan for improving it. Following the implementation of this plan, training in relation to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been strengthened, learning support for these students has been increased, and more students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enrolled on mainstream courses.

75 The college's approach to the proposed merger with Airedale and Wharfedale College has been careful and considered. The strengths of this include the thorough consideration of the college's future market position and extensive consultation and effective communication with staff. Staff report that they feel comfortable with

the proposal and that they have confidence in the ability of the college's managers to see it through to a successful conclusion.

76 Resources are effectively deployed. The proportion of total expenditure allocated to staffing has been reduced and is below the average for the sector. Over 90 per cent of teachers are on new contracts. The initiative to increase teachers' productivity has been successful and well managed. Teachers accept the need for increased productivity and, at the same time, they are satisfied that the teaching and administrative load is spread equitably. Accommodation and equipment are managed carefully and efficiently.

77 There have been significant developments to address the weaknesses in the management information systems identified at the last inspection. Strategies have been designed to ensure that staff are fully involved in data gathering and dissemination. New hardware has been purchased and appropriate software has been developed. A wide area network connects 200 computers in staff offices across several sites. As recognised in the self-assessment report, these developments are recent and staff are not yet fully confident in the accuracy of the data available through the network. Staff on some sites still rely on manually-prepared data. Reports relating to examination entry and achievement are still being developed, and some of the data on students' achievements initially prepared for inspectors were inaccurate or unclear.

78 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The finance team is led by the director of finance and management information systems, who is supported by a financial accountant. Comprehensive management accounts are produced monthly together with a detailed commentary on them. The college management team formally monitors the college's financial position through monthly presentations of the

# Cross-college Provision

management accounts and enrolment information by the director of finance. Budgets for non-pay revenue, which are prepared on a largely historical basis, and for part-time staff costs and small capital items are devolved to departments. Reports on actual and committed expenditure are provided by the finance department. As noted in the self-assessment report, the college's financial position is strong, and is above the sector average in a number of areas. The reports of the internal and external auditors indicate that in most areas, the college's systems of internal control are reliable. However, the reports highlight weaknesses in the student registration and general IT systems, and there have been delays in the college's submission of returns to the FEFC.

## Conclusions

79 Inspectors found that the self-assessment report was useful in the planning and the implementation of the inspection. Judgements in the report were supported by detailed evidence including findings obtained through the college's quality assurance process. Inspectors agreed with all but one of the grades awarded by the college to curriculum areas which were inspected. In a few instances, the college overestimated some strengths relating to teaching and learning, and understated weaknesses in student retention and achievement rates. The inspectors considered that the college had underestimated the strengths of some aspects of its cross-college provision and they awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report. Many of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report had been addressed in the six months since it was written. The college's programme of lesson observations began too late for its findings to inform the judgements of teaching and learning in the self-assessment report. However, analysis of the lesson grades awarded by the college subsequently, revealed that they closely matched those awarded by inspectors.

80 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 1997)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	1
16-18 years	15
19-24 years	16
25+ years	67
Not known	1
Total	100

*Source: college data*

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

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	41
Intermediate	26
Advanced	19
Higher education	3
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	11
Total	100

*Source: college data*

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	460	1,365	13
Agriculture	117	101	2
Construction	56	124	1
Engineering	45	106	1
Business	434	1,959	17
Hotel and catering	172	32	2
Health and community care	349	370	5
Art and design	103	193	2
Humanities	753	4,812	41
Basic education	216	2,030	16
Total	2,705	11,092	100

*Source: college data*

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

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	290	35	40	365
Supporting direct learning contact	28	8	10	46
Other support	155	32	0	187
Total	473	75	50	598

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

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£13,598,000	£14,722,000	£16,211,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£16.49	£16.54	£16.86*
Payroll as a proportion of income	67%	66%	62%
Achievement of funding target	100%	100%	99%
Diversity of income	27%	26%	27%
Operating surplus	£464,000	-£371,000	£369,000

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

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

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

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), college (1996-97)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

\*not yet been finalised

### Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	161	201	238
	Average point score per entry	3.6	4.0	4.4
	Position in tables	middle third	middle third	middle third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	214+	192	237
	Percentage achieving qualification	85%+	81%	85%
	Position in tables	top third+	top third	top third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	245	191
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	89%	89%
	Position in tables	*	top 10%	top 10%

Source: DfEE

Note: the majority of the college's students are 19 years of age or older

The achievements of these students are not covered in published DfEE performance tables

+Source: college data

\*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available



# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends *continued*

### Students' achievements

		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Advanced academic	Pass (%)	76	75	74
	Retention (%)	61	60	64
Intermediate academic	Pass (%)	51	56	57
	Retention (%)	73	67	67
Advanced vocational	Pass (%)	83	82	80
	Retention (%)	79	74	75
Intermediate vocational	Pass (%)	82	78	82
	Retention (%)	82	75	75
Foundation vocational	Pass (%)	70	78	86
	Retention (%)	69	77	78

*Source: college data*

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