

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Paston Sixth Form College

September 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 111/95

PASTON SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

EASTERN REGION

Inspected June 1994 – May 1995

Summary

Paston Sixth Form College is a small college serving a large, sparsely populated, rural area in north-east Norfolk. The college provides a wide range of full-time courses for school leavers and for an increasing number of adults. There is good liaison with local schools and students benefit from comprehensive pastoral support. High standards of teaching and learning are maintained in most subjects and students achieved particularly good examination results in 1994. The college has a well-qualified and caring staff. The principal and senior managers have provided sensitive leadership during a period of rapid change. Students benefit from extensive information technology facilities. Progress is being made on the development of quality assurance procedures but arrangements for their implementation and monitoring should be strengthened. The college should also: develop the curriculum to extend access; generate a corporate strategy to plan future provision; develop procedures for the monitoring and control of resources; devise and implement a more structured tutorial programme; improve library provision; and adopt a strategy to improve the unsatisfactory areas of accommodation.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and technology	2	Creative and	
Mathematics	3	performing arts	2
Business and office		English and communications	2
technology	2	Other humanities	2

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INTRODUCTION

1 Paston Sixth Form College, in Norfolk, was inspected between June 1994 and May 1995. Enrolment and induction were inspected in June and September 1994, the curricular areas were inspected between January and March 1995 and cross-college aspects were inspected from 15 to 19 May 1995. Seventy-four days were used for the inspection. A total of 118 teaching sessions were observed. Inspectors scrutinised students' work and held discussions with staff, students, parents, members of the corporation and representatives from local schools, industry, the Norfolk and Waveney Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the community.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Paston Sixth Form College opened in 1984 following the reorganisation of post-16 education in the area. It was formed from the merger of North Walsham Girls' High School and the Paston Boys' Grammar School. The college's primary role is to provide full-time courses for school leavers in north-east Norfolk. There is also some provision for adult students. The college serves a large, sparsely populated, rural catchment area which includes parts of the North Norfolk and Broadland districts. There are four other further education colleges within a 30 mile radius: Norwich City College, Great Yarmouth College, East Norfolk Sixth Form College and Easton College.

3 The college is situated on two sites, the 'Griffons' and the 'Lawns' in the centre of North Walsham, a small market town. Some of the buildings date from the eighteenth century and have listed status. The Griffons site originally housed the Paston school and has historical significance. It was established by Sir William Paston in 1606 as a grammar school for boys. The original schoolhouse was rebuilt in 1776 and currently accommodates the college library and a range of classrooms and offices. Horatio Nelson was a pupil of the Paston school between 1769 and 1771 and the library contains a collection of Nelson memorabilia, for example, a pencil box and a brick inscribed with the initials 'HN'.

4 Norfolk is a predominantly rural county with a population of approximately 750,000. Across the county there are 56 secondary schools and 23 of these currently have sixth forms. The percentage of 16 year olds continuing in full-time education has increased significantly from 46 per cent in 1989 to 68 per cent in 1994. The college draws over 90 per cent of its students from six secondary schools in the North Norfolk district. At the time of the inspection, all of these were 11-16 schools but from September 1995 one of the schools, Sheringham High School, will be recruiting students into its new sixth form. The number of 16 year olds in the six schools was higher in 1994 than 1993 but it will decline between 1995 and 1997.

5 In the 1991 census, the population of the Broadland district was recorded as almost 106,000; the population of the North Norfolk district

was 90,461. More than 30 per cent of the residents of North Norfolk are over the age of 60. At the time of the census, the resident minority ethnic population in Norfolk was 6,600, less than 1 per cent of the county's total population.

6 The local economy has a high proportion of small businesses. The largest employment sectors are agriculture and food-related industries, hotels and catering, and personal services. Road and rail links are generally poor across the region. A large number of local residents commute to work in Norwich. During the recent economic recession, the area served by the college experienced a rise in unemployment in common with the rest of East Anglia. In March 1995, the unemployment rate in the North Walsham/Cromer travel-to-work area was 8.1 per cent. This was higher than the average rate of unemployment in the county, which was 7.8 per cent. The Norfolk and Waveney TEC predict rising employment in construction and tourism and a continued decline in employment in manufacturing and agriculture.

7 At the time of the inspection, the college had 556 enrolments. Of these, 513 were full-time students and 43 part time. Enrolments by age and by level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. The curriculum of the college covers five of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. There were 33 full-time equivalent teachers and 13 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents is shown in figure 4.

8 The college's mission is to provide high-quality, cost-effective opportunities for education, training and personal enrichment which match the needs of the local community's post-16 population to the social and employment requirements of society. The 1994-97 strategic plan places great emphasis on the role of the college in promoting educational opportunities within a rural community and also on increasing access to under-represented groups.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 Most of the college's provision has been designed to meet the requirements of school leavers. Despite its small size, the college offers a wide range of courses. These include courses for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and the General Certificate of Education at advanced supplementary/advanced level (GCE AS/A level). There are also programmes of study leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at intermediate and advanced levels, a limited number of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1, 2 and 3, and a small number of other secretarial courses.

10 The majority of students are pursuing GCE AS/A level or GCSE courses. The college offers 27 GCE A level subjects, 13 AS subjects and 13 subjects for GCSE. The GCE A level range includes science, humanities and social sciences as well as some less common subjects such as textiles,

classical civilisation, theatre studies and religious studies. Modular GCE A levels are offered in science, mathematics, media studies and performing arts. These are popular with students as assessment takes place throughout the course as units are completed. GCE A level programmes are offered only on a two-year basis.

11 There were just over 100 students studying on GNVQ programmes in the 1994-95 session. These cover business and finance, leisure and tourism, health and social care, art and design and engineering. There are two foundation and five intermediate programmes, and one advanced programme. GNVQ programmes and the NVQ administration (business) were first offered in the 1993-94 session. The college already had an established policy of offering vocational education through the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) diploma in vocational education. Further impetus to providing vocational education was provided by participation from March 1994 in a Further Education Unit project, 'Extending the Vocational Curriculum in Sixth Form Colleges'. The market analysis involved in the project confirmed that both student demand and local need would support leisure and tourism, and health and social care provision at advanced level. Both will be offered from September 1995. The college's vocational provision reflects its commitment to the national targets for education and training.

12 Individual students are able to combine elements of general and vocational qualifications. The timetable is arranged to enable GNVQs to be taken with GCE A levels or GCSEs or, for example, to enable GNVQ business students to take additional units from leisure and tourism or NVQ language units. Take-up of these additional study opportunities is generally good. Where students' choices result in uneconomic group sizes the college has, on occasions, met demand by reducing teaching and increasing guided private study. This has happened, for example, with a group of three studying AS French and a class of seven taking GCSE Spanish. Flexible arrangements are also made for individual students who may wish to resit particular subjects.

13 All students are given the opportunity to take the RSA Examinations Board (RSA) course in computer literacy and information technology. At the time of the inspection it was being taken by over 80 students. Students and parents both spoke positively about the benefits of this course. A further 76 students were taking typing or wordprocessing courses validated by the RSA.

14 Although the college does not have a tradition of providing for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, it has appointed a learning support co-ordinator and is following a carefully considered approach to meeting the needs of these students. Twelve students who had statements of educational need were placed on foundation level programmes. In addition, 38 students were receiving specific learning support. They included students with dyslexia, dyscalculia and myalgic encephalitis.

Students are offered qualifications matched to their diagnosed needs. For example, students who are unlikely to benefit from attempting to resit GCSE mathematics or English are able to take C&G numeracy and communications qualifications. The co-ordinator for students with special learning difficulties and/or disabilities has strong links with other specialists through a network of co-ordinators which includes staff from the careers service, the pupil referral unit and the visiting teacher service. This ensures that appropriate arrangements are made when students transfer from school.

15 The college has recognised the importance of attracting adult students and, in the 1994-95 session, it had 62 such enrolments. A quarter were full time and the remainder joined full-time courses on a part-time basis. Adults are able to find out about the college at adult advice days. In addition, an introductory 12-hour study skills course is held each year in June and July. Norfolk Adult Education Service runs a 20-hour 'Return to Learning' course, half of which is delivered on college premises. However, the college does not run day or evening part-time academic or vocational classes, nor are there access courses which enable students to progress to higher education. Overall, strategies to widen access are underdeveloped for a dispersed rural community with a very poor transport network. For example, there is no open learning provision and the college lacks resource-based learning materials which would enable adults to adopt more flexible attendance patterns. Norfolk Adult Education Service provides vocational, academic and recreational part-time courses, some of which are delivered on college premises. The college is expecting to have a greater involvement in the planning of adult provision in the 1995-96 session as a result of improvements in the links with the Adult Education Service and discussions with the Rural Development Commission.

16 The college has strong links with local schools and these operate in a variety of ways. For example, one school has a one-day exchange of staff, another sends 12 pupils to the college on one morning each week to study GCSE drama. Other examples include joint training days, regular meetings between subject heads, and an exchange of information on GNVQ developments. The schools also appreciate the information provided about the eventual destinations of their ex-pupils after they leave college. The principal attends meetings of the North East Norfolk Secondary Heads Group.

17 Staff in local schools see the college as a provider of academic education of high quality. They also consider that its good reputation for student support influences the decisions of many pupils and their parents. Schools are less aware of the college's vocational provision and many pupils do not necessarily think of the college if they wish to follow a vocational programme. College efforts to communicate its broader image have not yet been fully effective. Parents spoke well of the college, its staff and its local reputation as a caring institution.

18 Students appreciate the sports and other extra-curricular activities on offer. However, the range and take-up of these has declined in recent years. All students have the opportunity to take part in theatrical productions and the college is a venue for visiting theatre companies. Students are involved in supporting such companies, for example by operating the theatre lighting. Another activity is the Paston Saturday morning music school. It is attended by some 80 young people between the ages of 7 and 16. Some of the college's full-time students attend to learn an instrument; those with particular talents teach some of the younger students. Other community links arise principally from letting college premises to Norfolk Adult Education Service.

19 Contacts with commerce and industry are co-ordinated by an industrial liaison officer. She has recently begun a process of identifying the training needs of local employers and matching them to available staff expertise. The extent of the links with industry varies between curriculum areas and largely depends on the initiative of individual teachers. Links with the three largest local employers are mainly limited to the provision of work experience placements. Work placement is compulsory for students following the NVQ course in administration (business) and this enables the college to co-operate with local employers in the planning of individual training programmes and the assessment of workplace competencies. Students from the programme have been successful in obtaining related employment, often with their placement organisation. Employers are well informed about the NVQ course, but have limited knowledge of the overall range of provision at the college. GNVQ and GCE A level students undertake three days work shadowing which enables them to gain useful experience of the demands of employment. A charter for work placements defines the obligations of the college, students and employers. There is an annual college industrial conference which enables students to experience working on a realistic project such as the preparation of the front page of a local newspaper or designing packaging for chocolates. A range of other activities is organised within curriculum areas. For example, business studies students, helped by a local bank, have the opportunity to plan and mount a business as part of the young enterprise scheme.

20 Links with the Norfolk and Waveney TEC are developing through locally-supported projects such as a compact supporting the use of interactive videos for training in business administration. The TEC is represented on the board of the corporation and the principal represents the college on the TEC further education liaison group.

21 The college marketing function is underdeveloped. Responsibility for marketing and publicity has not been clearly designated. The college does not have a marketing strategy or an operational plan. A marketing committee meets when the need arises to review publicity material. A second committee meets on a seasonal basis specifically to produce the college prospectus which is an attractive and informative publication. The

college has received some good press coverage, but press liaison is not co-ordinated and coverage depends on initiatives of individual managers. Each year the college carries out surveys of new students to try and identify unmet demand. For example, in response to these questionnaires, the college has successfully introduced psychology into the curriculum. The limited impact of college marketing has contributed to a college image that does not accurately reflect current provision. The local education authority withdrew its transport subsidy for students in 1994 and the college has decided that it cannot afford to meet these costs.

22 There are other gaps in liaison with outside bodies. For example, higher education links are limited to occasional visits to universities. There are no curriculum links and no associate college relationships. Similarly, apart from some visits to Paris by language students, there are no international curriculum links or students' exchanges. Currently the college has no full cost provision. There are no plans, targets or responsibilities related to the development of commercial full-cost courses or consultancy.

23 The college charter contains a commitment to equal opportunities. This commitment is further developed in a short policy statement. An equal opportunities committee was established in 1993 and has sought representation from college staff, adult students and school leavers. Staff and adult students have responded positively to the invitation to join the committee but full-time 16-19 students have yet to find a representative. The committee has identified key issues and raised awareness but has not yet developed standards to guide practice, or methods of monitoring performance.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

24 The corporation board has 16 members, including the principal. Incorporation provided an opportunity to review membership with the result that 10 new members joined the board. There are eight independent members, four of whom are drawn from the Paston Trust which owns the Griffons site of the college. Trustees have been governors throughout the history of the college and the Paston school. Three members of the corporation are co-opted and include a member with expertise in the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are four nominated members; two members of the teaching staff, a parent, and a senior manager from the Norfolk and Waveney TEC. The members of the corporation have expertise in legal matters, accounting, finance, insurance, marketing, secondary education and vocational education and training. Members are committed to using their expertise for the benefit of the college. There is no board member drawn from higher education.

25 Much of the work of the board is carried out through its committees: finance and general purposes; curriculum; personnel; audit; and remuneration. Each committee has clear terms of reference and care has

been taken to ensure that the expertise of members is well matched to the work of the committees on which they serve. The committees meet regularly and are generally well attended. The curriculum committee plays a valuable role in enabling members to monitor examination results and to work co-operatively with senior college managers in reviewing future curriculum developments. The work of the personnel committee has included the development of a set of personnel policies and procedures which are summarised in the staff handbook.

26 The board members have reviewed their role and relationship with senior management in the development of the college. Day-to-day management of the college and the curriculum is clearly regarded as the responsibility of the principal and the management team. Members of the corporation have played a part in shaping the college's mission statement and have begun to recognise the importance of their role in shaping the strategic plan. Currently the plan is prepared entirely by the principal and senior management. The college faces a number of critical decisions concerned with funding and accommodation. These are exacerbated by the legal obligations on the college for the care and maintenance of some of the older buildings. Since the Paston Trust has insufficient resources to fund this work, the corporation has recently initiated a detailed evaluation of the future policy options in order to develop a strategy for coping with the challenges facing the college. The corporation has not yet conducted a formal review of its own performance.

27 The present college strategic plan is more comprehensive than the first. It has benefited from the opportunity to review progress against the previous plan and the increased time for broader consultation. It provides clear guidance on a range of areas for development including not only the curriculum but also support areas such as staffing, staff development, quality and learning methods. However, the extent to which the college fully quantifies the impact of identified risks and the range of possible outcomes of its plans is unclear. The college did not achieve its planned growth in 1993-94 nor in 1994-95, when there was no growth, and it has recently recognised that it is unlikely to achieve its expected growth in 1995-96. In recognition of its financial constraints, college managers have identified the need to explore a range of options with the corporation. Work has been commissioned to undertake a detailed analysis of these options, but the report will not be available until the autumn. There is a lack of integrated strategies that take account of the critical issues affecting the college, for example, the problems associated with the high running costs of the accommodation.

28 The present management structure has been in operation since September 1993. In addition to the principal, the senior co-ordinating team comprises the vice-principal, the curriculum and resources co-ordinator, the administrative officer, three sector leaders and a representative of the senior tutors' group. The vice-principal has

responsibility for the pastoral system and quality assurance. The curriculum and resources co-ordinator has responsibility for timetabling and operational management, including the management information system, and works with the sector leaders in developing the curriculum. The senior management team meets weekly. Incorporation and the implementation of a new management structure has brought many new responsibilities to senior management. Most senior staff still undertake a significant amount of teaching.

29 The college principal and senior managers provide sensitive leadership. They have recognised the impact of change on staff and have secured their support through effective collaboration and the direction of their respective teams. There have been a number of successful developments, including the introduction of staff appraisal, curriculum changes, the implementation of the new management structure and a more flexible approach to staffing.

30 Although there has been a move towards more formal management procedures, some basic processes require improvement. For example, whilst minutes of management meetings provide a record of the discussions, they do not indicate sufficiently clearly the actions to be taken or who are responsible for carrying them out and monitoring progress. Similarly the operating statements resulting from the strategic plan have no explicit milestone targets and fail to identify who is responsible for their implementation. There are no arrangements during the year for a systematic review of the progress of the plan and the consequential need for any amendments. There is generally a lack of implementation procedures for college policies.

31 Day-to-day management of the curriculum is based on three sectors: business and modern languages; arts and humanities; and science and technology. Within each sector, there is a senior tutor and subject and course leaders who have considerable autonomy over the choice of subjects offered, syllabuses and assessment methods. Teaching staff in the sectors have clear job descriptions and areas of responsibility. They are strongly committed to the priorities identified in the college mission. Sector meetings are held regularly and each sector is beginning to develop common procedures for the management of the curriculum, tutorials and resources. Each sector has for example, produced a plan which charts future subject and course developments. While the plans represent an attempt to co-ordinate strategy at this level, they do not fully identify the resource implications of curriculum developments nor contain clear targets for student enrolment, retention and progression.

32 There is effective communication and consultation with staff. For example, curriculum matters are discussed in regular weekly meetings between the curriculum co-ordinator and the sector leaders. Similarly, meetings between the vice-principal and the senior tutors assist in the development and delivery of pastoral support. At sector level, there are

regular meetings of teaching and support staff. Cross-college communication is achieved through committees, such as those for health and safety, and for equal opportunities. Each week, the principal holds three short early-morning meetings at which staff have an opportunity to exchange information. In addition, the principal invites all staff to a monthly meeting at which the members of the management team brief staff directly. There is also an informative college newsletter. Occasional arrangements are made to involve members of the corporation in meetings with staff but, overall, staff have a limited awareness of the role of the corporation.

33 The college's average level of funding for 1994-95, as recorded in the Council report, Funding Allocations 1994-95, is £19.59 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.81 per unit. Summaries of the estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

34 The college budget has been determined on a historical basis suitably modified to take account of planned changes in provision, including the concomitant staffing requirements. The staffing budget is held by the principal. The college budget is agreed by members of the corporation. They receive regular reports of income and expenditure and other aspects of the budget. However, there is insufficient detail and a lack of supporting commentary in the reports to enable them to assess the developing financial position. The college administrator monitors the short-term cash requirements but there are no cash flow projections. The calculation of costs at course level is not undertaken. The college is forecasting a deficit for the current year.

35 There is an effective mechanism for allocating the curriculum materials budget. It is based on FEFC course weightings with additional funding to help establish new developments. Sector teams agree the allocations at course level based on course needs. Bids for capital items are discussed and prioritised by the senior co-ordinating team but there is an absence of explicit criteria for evaluation and prioritisation. The allocations are open and generally understood.

36 Computer systems are used to support student administration, personnel management, and financial management. Student records of application, enrolment, attendance, retention, examination results and completion are maintained on a well-designed, in-house system. It is user friendly and on-line access is provided to a wide range of users across the college. The system tracks a student from initial application to course completion. The college has recently installed a commercially developed computer management information system which supports the requirements of the individual student record.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

37 Pastoral support is given a high priority by the college. The tutorial system is overseen by the vice-principal. A senior tutor has responsibility

for the guidance work of the tutors in each of the three sectors. The system has been carefully designed and considerable time is spent in arranging induction, and in ensuring that each student receives good tutorial and learning support. However, there is no overall policy statement covering student services.

38 Students are allocated a tutor in the curriculum sector which provides the majority of their courses. This has simplified communication between tutors and subject teachers but raised some concern about the gender imbalance in tutor groups, for example the predominance of females in languages and males in sciences, and the distribution across the two sites. However, the two sites are in close proximity and the siting of most communal facilities at the Griffons site draws students together.

39 The college has a well-structured programme of liaison with local high schools. Each of the six designated high schools has a senior member of college staff who leads a team covering all of the college's curriculum sectors. High school representatives comment favourably on the college's willingness to respond to requests for visits and on its receptivity to ideas for improving liaison. College staff participate fully in an extensive programme of visits, careers conventions and open days. An attractively-presented prospectus and informative subject leaflets give students and parents a full picture of the college curriculum and the support offered to students. Students receive impartial guidance from the county careers service during the last two years of their high school education. In addition, all 16 year old school leavers receive a comprehensive booklet describing the full range of post-16 courses open to them in north-east Norfolk.

40 The learning support co-ordinator has established an area network for teachers and other professionals working with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This forum for discussing the opportunities for students' progression is highly valued and has been influential in broadening access for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and in raising staff awareness of the learning needs of students. Further training of staff is planned to meet the needs of visually-impaired students.

41 Procedures for admissions are systematic and efficient. Guidance is provided through individual interviews with students either at high school or at the college. A two-day introduction to the college is held in late June which allows students to sample different subject areas and to have a further guidance interview with a tutor. Parents are invited to meet college staff at informal evening meetings. Parents and students value the advice given and the flexibility which the college demonstrates in negotiating changes to courses.

42 Induction is thorough, comprehensive and generally effective. The student handbook is informative and provides a wide range of guidance on college procedures and facilities. In the September induction week, students have a valuable opportunity to sample subject teaching before

making their final choice of course. However, the content and effectiveness of the induction activities in different subjects vary. In the best sessions, students achieved a high level of confidence through working on skilfully-managed tasks, but in a few sessions there was little student involvement and poorly-structured teaching. A college survey has indicated that a high percentage of students believe that they were provided with the information they needed to help them settle into college life.

43 The introduction of testing for basic skills as part of induction for all students has helped the college to identify students' communication and numeracy needs and to match these with course provision and learning support. Students have received appropriate and prompt support as a result of this initial assessment.

44 The systems for subject tuition and tutorials are well integrated. Regular subject clinics help students on an individual or group basis. Students receive feedback on their progress through informal discussion, written comments on major assignments and formal discussion at the end of each term. Tutors, who generally teach the students in their groups, receive copies of the termly assessments and targets and this enables them to offer informed guidance to their students. There are twice-weekly meetings of the staff and senior tutor in each sector to share concerns about students' progress and this enables staff to intervene early if a student is experiencing difficulties. Senior tutors support tutors effectively and contact parents where necessary. Students who experience serious personal difficulties are referred to a counsellor from Norfolk educational psychology service or to other appropriate agencies.

45 A useful tutor handbook outlines the aims of the tutorial system and supports tutors in carrying out their role. Students are clear about their tutor's role in offering them guidance and nearly all students expressed confidence in their tutor's ability to assist them with a problem of an educational or a personal nature. However, there is a lack of an overall structure or curriculum for the tutorial programme and this limits the college's ability to provide guidance on a wider range of issues, for example on equal opportunities education. The weekly tutorials are not always used effectively and are sometimes seen as solely administrative in nature.

46 Tutorial support for adults is excellent. The adults' co-ordinator has responsibility for their progress, guidance and support. Adult students are successfully integrated with 16-19 year old students on their courses and are unreserved in their praise of the welcome and help given by the college.

47 Progress is reviewed systematically and students are encouraged to take some responsibility for their work by contributing to the assessment. However, there are several different reporting procedures in use. For example, progress review is currently separate from the recording of achievement process based on the national record of achievement. This leads to duplication of work and also, in the eyes of some students, devalues the national record of achievement.

48 Attendance is systematically monitored. Students' attendance is recorded at a daily tutorial registration and at lessons. The two systems are regularly cross-checked by senior tutors. The college management information system generates reports on students who have three unexplained absences or 10 explained absences within a set time. These absences are investigated, initially with students, and if necessary, with parents. Most parents fully support the college's rigorous approach to attendance.

49 The careers guidance available to students is of a high standard. There is effective liaison between the college careers co-ordinator and the county careers service officers. An extensive series of talks and careers activities are offered which draw on the expertise of local employers. Resources for careers education are good and careers software is networked across the college. Arrangements have been made for staff development for tutors on the use of the software. The careers library is well stocked, but is sited within a former student common room which is still used for a short time each day as a snack bar. The incompatibility of such facilities has caused difficulties for the careers officers conducting interviews in an adjacent office and for some students who are deterred from using the resources. The destinations of students after leaving college are carefully tracked but they are not routinely analysed to help in planning.

50 Opportunities are provided for students to participate in sport, community action, drama and other activities. There are plans to broaden the range of activities through the introduction of short certificated courses as a replacement for the college's complementary studies programme which ran until June 1994.

51 The aim of the student council is to represent student opinion and organise social events for students. The council raises its own funds, some of which are used to support students experiencing financial difficulty. It recently purchased a projector and screen for the college theatre in order to benefit college students and improve the facilities the college can make available to the community. Students are not represented on the corporation nor on other college committees except the equal opportunities committee. Students' views are represented to staff through one of the senior tutors; they are also encouraged to see the principal if they wish to raise issues. The college supports a group of students who organise a weekly act of worship. It therefore meets the requirements of sections 44 and 45 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 in respect of religious observance.

52 The vice-principal meets regularly with senior tutors and the adults' co-ordinator to plan and review the support that students are offered. Several evaluation procedures are used to judge the quality of guidance, both formal and informal. The results of these have not yet been sufficiently drawn together. In addition, recent changes to guidance have still to be fully evaluated. College managers have identified the need for further

change to the tutorial system in order to achieve greater efficiency in the use of staff time whilst maintaining high-quality guidance for students. This has exacerbated the college's difficulty in fully evaluating its provision of guidance and support.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

53 The teaching in most of the 118 sessions inspected was of a good standard. In 68 per cent of the sessions inspected the strengths outweighed the weaknesses. The strengths and weaknesses were evenly balanced in a further 29 per cent of sessions. In only 3 per cent of sessions did the weaknesses outweigh the strengths. The most consistently good practice was found in the teaching of humanities. The grades given for the teaching sessions inspected are summarised in the following table.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		13	33	16	1	0	63
GCSE		2	4	7	0	0	13
GNVQ		4	11	7	2	0	24
NVQ		1	2	0	0	0	3
Other		1	9	4	1	0	15
Total		21	59	34	4	0	118

54 Most classes were well planned and managed but schemes of work and lesson plans varied in quality. Students often participated in small group research and subsequent presentations to the whole group. They received regular homework or class-based assignments that were of an appropriate standard and these were carefully marked by teachers. In a few subjects students would benefit from more detailed written comments on their work.

55 In GCE A level modern foreign languages, lessons were conducted almost entirely in the language being studied. Teachers have a good command of the languages they are teaching. Students' interest was generated by content which included a variety of topics and by effective use of contemporary material such as press cuttings or audio/video recordings. For example, a GCE A level French session began with an input from the teacher during which she explained the historical and political background to the problem of immigration in France. Students then spent a productive period, working collaboratively in groups, on reading and listening assignments. They made use of photocopied material and an audiotape linked to the theme. During this time, a student discussed her progress with the teacher in order to complete a subject profile sheet designed to help her assess her own progress and identify areas needing attention. The lesson was well organised and there was a good balance

between teacher input and independent study. A strong feature of the language provision is the opportunity students have to attend language support clinics where they are given one-to-one tuition.

56 English teachers gave a useful introduction to topics and ensured that the aims and objectives of sessions were clear and precise. A variety of teaching strategies was employed to achieve these objectives. For example, a GCE A level literature class used graphic representation and charting of dramatic tension in a scene from *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. In a GCSE English language class, good use was made of a video of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and subsequent discussion helped students to produce diaries written from each character's perspective. In the majority of sessions, tasks were appropriately demanding. In a few sessions, the time allowed for tasks was not made sufficiently clear to students.

57 Business studies students in GCE A level classes spend a substantial amount of time listening to the teacher but, on vocational programmes, they are required to adopt a more active role. Students were encouraged to undertake personal research in the completion of assignments using both the college library and external sources. In most vocational business classes, they worked individually, at their own pace with the teacher acting as facilitator. The work was generally well organised and students' progress closely monitored but assignments were often set without a date for completion. There were limited learning materials designed to support students working on their own and an over-emphasis on the use of textbooks for assessments. Relevant activities and visits enhance students' learning. For example, all students on the NVQ level 2 administration (business) course undertake work placement for one day each week. Students are placed with one of 23 local employers and are regularly visited by tutors. One student working in a local canning company was involved in reception duties under the direction of a workplace supervisor. The tutor observed her responding to telephone calls and commented critically and constructively about her success in meeting the performance criteria. The student used the evidence from her workplace experience to build up her portfolio.

58 Sessions for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were planned and managed in a purposeful, supportive atmosphere. Tasks were clearly explained and previous relevant learning reviewed. Arrangements for reviewing, monitoring and recording students' progress across subjects areas are co-ordinated effectively through the tutor system. Individual support/review sessions were handled skilfully and rigorously, with clear objectives for each session and a plan agreed for the meeting. GNVQ foundation courses are taught in small groups and teachers used imagination and skill in adapting materials and ideas for these students. For example, in a health and social care foundation GNVQ, a small group of students were taking their end of unit assessment. They spoke

individually, and with confidence, about the displays they had prepared on aspects of healthy living. They had taken a high degree of responsibility for this work, having written to external agencies to gain information and then wordprocessing some of the material. Students made progress well beyond the expectations of the teacher and some intended to progress to the intermediate course.

59 In history and classical civilisation, lessons also contained a good balance between teacher input and student activity. Students were challenged appropriately and their learning skills extended. Progress was evident from classroom activities including the analytical and research skills developed through structured tasks. Examination of a group assignment on the Greek tragedy, *Electra*, revealed evidence of students thinking independently and creatively. In religious studies the balance between teachers' input and students' activities was less effective. Whilst the teachers' exposition was enthusiastic, paired work was not well structured and little group work occurred. Classes in geography and geology were well organised. However, a limited range of teaching strategies was employed and the work in some sessions proceeded at too slow a pace. There is a need to ensure that suitable arrangements are made to enable students to develop field skills.

60 The provision in psychology and sociology is relatively new. The courses have been carefully planned and thoroughly documented. Subject files include draft schemes of work. The syllabuses and schemes of work were given to the students. There is regular reference to syllabus demands in the course of day-to-day teaching. Students have access to all teaching resources, registers, mark books and profile records, so that they can check on their completed and unmet course requirements. In addition to scheduled classes, there are a variety of mechanisms to support students including essay and coursework clinics, extra lessons, repeating topics and, if required, help from the college's learning support co-ordinator. The social science staff meet regularly to review progress in delivering the course and to discuss students' attainments and difficulties. However, students of varying ability and previous experience were being asked to do the same types of work at the same level and there is a need to refine strategies to ensure that task and expected outcomes are more closely related to students' abilities.

61 In performing arts there was a lot of successful independent learning, which was well supported by teachers. Practical work and theoretical studies were combined effectively. Assignments were of an appropriate standard and were clearly and fully assessed. Standards of teaching were high and learning was productive. Information technology was well integrated with media studies classroom activities through networked compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database and central facilities. A midweek afternoon drama option, 'The Far East Theatre Company', provides a valuable curriculum extension into practical theatre, production techniques and stage management. The emphasis in art and design is

mainly limited to fine art and textiles. Some students were working well but there was over reliance on one-to-one teaching with the result that group concerns were not shared. Some students were not being stretched and were not sufficiently motivated.

62 In biology, physics and chemistry, students' interest was sustained by the use of a variety of teaching and learning strategies, including practical work to reinforce learning and good teacher exposition combined with frequent practical demonstrations. Students produced presentations and practical work in groups of various sizes. Good use was made of teaching aids, for example, a video microscope. In many lessons, teachers frequently checked students' learning through questioning or short exercises. In biology, topics were often helpfully presented as discovery rather than accepted fact. Teaching in science would be strengthened if there was more effective co-ordination of the individual subjects and links developed with mathematics.

63 Computing sessions were well managed. Teachers took care to support the weaker students. Their presentations were clear and lesson activities were appropriate to the syllabus and the overall objectives of the course. Examination of the notes of first-year GCE A level students indicated inadequate coverage of basic theory and records of the work completed in the first year were poor. The college has taken action to address these issues. Mathematics teaching was predominantly sound. Relationships between staff and students were generally good and this helped to promote effective learning. However, teachers provided few opportunities for practical work or investigations in which students could take the initiative. The standard of teaching in engineering was satisfactory but students spent too much time during lessons copying notes and diagrams.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

64 Students enjoy their studies at Paston Sixth Form College and respond well to the opportunities provided. Most are well motivated and are able to discuss their work clearly and with enthusiasm. They appreciate the commitment and support shown by staff in assisting them to achieve their goals. Students enjoy the intimate atmosphere of a small college, an attribute that is particularly valued by adult students. The majority of students make satisfactory progress. The college's information on the destinations of students when they leave the college shows that in 1994: 53 per cent of those who completed their GCE A level studies went on to higher education; almost 18 per cent entered employment; some 10 per cent continued in further education; 6 per cent decided to delay further study for a year; just under 1 per cent joined a youth training course; 3 per cent were unemployed; and the destination of 9 per cent of students was unknown. The available data show that the percentage of students entering higher education improved from the 1993 figure of 44 per cent. However, these percentages are significantly lower than those found in many sixth

form colleges. The college attributes this to a culture of low aspirations within the community coupled with apprehension regarding the high costs of higher education.

65 In 1994, the college entered 186 students for GCE A level examinations. The pass rate at grades A-E was almost 92 per cent, a figure that is some 10 per cent higher than the average for all sixth form colleges. Students aged 16-18 years taking GCE AS/A level examinations in 1993-94 scored, on average, 5.3 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). Based on this performance measure, the college is among the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector in the 1994 tables published by the Department for Education. The average point score per candidate was 14.9, slightly above the average figure of 14.5 for all sixth form colleges. In view of these good results, the percentage progressing to higher education is disappointing.

66 The pass rates in most subjects in the 1994 GCE A level examinations were good and some were excellent. All students passed their examinations in classical civilisation, computing, English literature, history, religious studies and theatre studies. The average percentage of GCE A level passes at the higher grades, A-C, was 57 per cent, compared with a provisional figure for 18 year olds in all sixth form colleges of 48 per cent. The percentage of passes at grades A-C was significantly above national averages in computing, economics, geography and mathematics. The percentage of A-C grades in French and in art and design was slightly below the national averages. Overall, the 1994 GCE A level results were a significant improvement on those for the two previous years when many of the college's results were below national averages. In 1993, for example, only 36 per cent of passes were gained at A-C grade, compared with the national average of 48 per cent. One of the major factors contributing to the improved performance of students is believed to be the introduction of modular syllabuses. The college has begun to analyse its GCE A level results using the Advanced Level Information System, which predicts grades on the basis of students' GCSE achievements, but as yet there is an inadequate statistical basis for accurate predictions.

67 In 1994 there were 60 entries for GCE AS level, of which 72 per cent were successful. This figure was close to the national average for similar colleges of 73 per cent. However, the percentage of passes at grades A-C at 33 per cent is slightly lower than the national average. The overall achievements of students taking GCE AS awards has improved from the results in 1993 when the overall pass rate and the percentage of students who gained A-C passes were both about 10 per cent below the national average.

68 Improvements in students' achievements in 1994 were also evident in the overall GCSE examination pass rate at grades A-C, which at 54 per cent, was slightly better than the national average for all sixth form colleges of 49 per cent. All students taking drama and economics achieved grades A-C and good results were also obtained in geology, law, physics and

psychology. In the previous year, the overall A-C pass rate of 42 per cent was below the national average for sixth form colleges of 50 per cent. The GCSE subjects with most entries are English and mathematics. Whilst the percentage A-C grade pass rate over the past three years in mathematics has fluctuated above and below the national average for sixth form colleges, the percentage A-C pass rate in English has been consistently below the national average. The percentage of students gaining A-C grade passes in physical education has been significantly below the national average.

69 In 1994, 73 candidates entered for the diploma in vocational education. The percentage of students who successfully completed all elements of the diploma was modest at 45 per cent. However, most of the remaining students gained certification for some elements of the course. Success rates in NVQs in business services were good at 80 per cent for level 1 and 58 per cent for level 2. Of the small numbers of students entered for the intermediate GNVQ, 80 per cent were successful in art and design, but in health and social care the figure was lower at 56 per cent.

70 In the arts and humanities sector, inspectors found that GCE A level English students demonstrated enthusiasm and motivation in a number of different situations. Students' written work showed high levels of language work and critical skills, and several pieces were genuinely creative and innovative. Class discussions were, however, sometimes insufficiently based on the text being studied. In art and design, some students were producing good-quality work but overall the quality of work seen was uneven. There was general evidence of a lack of rigour and portfolios showed a limited range of art and design activities. In contrast, students in performing arts subjects worked well. They concentrated on their work and were confident and knowledgeable about their subjects. In history, test results demonstrated a sound grasp of complex concepts and events. There was evidence of enjoyment and enthusiasm in class, with students displaying a wide knowledge of the Elizabethan religious settlement and policy. In sociology and psychology, students' motivation and interest were good and standards of oracy were high. Practical investigative reports revealed that students were developing the scientific and data-analysis techniques required to progress to the study of a social science at a higher level but that not all social science students were developing satisfactory information technology skills. Overall, the student files examined varied, ranging from neat well-ordered files in subjects such as classical civilisation and religious studies to untidy files and poorly-presented work in sociology.

71 Students in the science and technology sector, carried out practical work safely and competently. In theory lessons, good understanding was developed along with the ability to apply knowledge and skills in new situations. In computing, second-year GCE A level project work was of an appropriate standard but, in the first-year group, students' understanding of principles of program design was weak. In mathematics, GCE A level students uniformly showed their concern to develop understanding but some less able students paid insufficient attention to accuracy and failed

to appreciate its importance. Design and technology students were developing their core skills and acquiring appropriate technical expertise. Their achievements would be enhanced if they followed a logical problem-solving procedure more rigorously. For example, students could not justify the decisions they had taken in developing other projects or articulate a full specification. Geography students have developed good standards of writing and sound oral skills and generally have a good grasp of geographical and cartographical concepts. However, they sometimes lack basic geographical knowledge and do not always use geographical terminology securely or comfortably.

72 In the business and modern languages section, most of the students' assessed work was well presented and demonstrated a good level of knowledge and understanding of the topic. The standards achieved by some of the NVQ administration students were particularly good. Systematic development of core skills in the GNVQ programme was not evident and there was no provision of additional business GNVQ units. In economics and business studies, students' notes were well organised and assessed work was well presented, but in French there were some examples of untidy files and poorly presented work. A large number of students from across the college take additional modules enabling them to gain accreditation for the information technology skills which they have achieved.

73 Students' attendance is regularly monitored. For the 1993-94 session, average attendance was 88 per cent. At the time of the inspection, a similar figure was evolving for the 1994-95 academic year. The retention rate for students at the college for the 1993-94 academic year was 94 per cent and is equal to the national average for sixth form colleges.

74 In addition to their academic achievements, students have gained success in other ways. For example, in 1993 a group of GCE A level design and technology students entered the Machine Tool Technologies Associations manufacturing awareness challenge national competition and won the Castrol Prize for Environmental Awareness with a three-axis milling machine. In 1994, media students were successful in the Co-operative Associations Young People's Video Festival gaining two certificates for individual merit.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

75 The college has a commitment, through its mission statement, to provide students with an educational experience of high quality. The vice-principal was initially charged with the responsibility of developing a quality assurance system that would formalise and extend the existing procedures. Considerable emphasis was placed upon the need to create a flexible system.

76 The college has made good progress in establishing an overall strategy for quality assurance which it refers to as the quality framework. Available

documentation makes it clear that all aspects of curriculum delivery and college support systems are covered by the framework. For example, student services, resource provision and college administration are all included. The framework document details alongside each college service or activity, the specific issues that are to be addressed, the staff with responsibility for carrying out the task and the timescale and performance measures used to monitor achievement.

77 The college recognises that aspects of the quality framework have not yet been systematically implemented across the whole college. Success has been achieved in some areas. For example, the development and implementation of the staff-appraisal system meets the requirements of the framework in full. However, in contrast, the procedures for course review are not consistent across the college. Specific targets and the assignment of responsibilities for taking action as a result of the review process are not made explicit.

78 The senior management team recognises that the definition of standards and targets in the framework is underdeveloped. For example, there are currently no standards or targets relating to the performance of senior management in the quality framework. A systematic programme for reviewing the framework has not yet been established.

79 The role of senior managers in overseeing the operation of the quality assurance processes and its further development is not clearly defined. There is no one person or committee charged with driving quality developments forward. Responsibility rests with the senior co-ordinating team and other committees such as those responsible for curriculum delivery and sector developments. There is no evidence that quality developments form a regular and important part of the deliberations of these committees. Similarly, the issue of quality is not systematically discussed by committees of the corporation.

80 External reports of examination bodies such as GCE and GCSE boards are discussed by the appropriate sector leader and subject or course co-ordinator. GNVQ and NVQ courses have received positive assessments from the external verifiers of their respective awarding bodies. The report on the NVQ programme recommended application by the college for direct certification status from the RSA. This would reduce the number of visits required from the external verifier. Internal verification procedures for GNVQ courses have been satisfactorily developed in response to the comments made by the C&G external verifier.

81 The college's use of performance indicators is developing and there is regular compilation of data on attendance, retention, examination results and destinations. Attendance data are regularly and constructively used by course and pastoral tutors. Concern to maintain good retention rates has led to new student induction procedures. The curriculum committee of the corporation takes an active interest in the performance of students as measured by examination results. In 1994, the college received its first

value-added analysis of its examination results using the Advanced Level Information System. The use of this data has so far been left to the discretion of sector leaders and subject co-ordinators. The college recognises the need to take the analysis further and to develop systematic approaches to the use of all data and, where appropriate, to set targets based on the data.

82 Students have significant opportunities to review their progress through assessment profile forms, subject clinics and tutorial interviews, all of which involve one-to-one discussion. In addition, extensive use is made of questionnaires to obtain student feedback. A leavers' questionnaire is completed by students and the results analysed. A similar exercise has been used to review the effectiveness of the induction process. Individual subjects and courses use a range of questionnaires which are not coherently organised or presented. There are no requirements to feed back to students the results of these questionnaires, or any action resulting from them.

83 Staff appraisal is well established and involves class and tutorial observation and student feedback. It is linked to staff development and is valued by teaching staff. The process is being extended to support staff. The schedule for completion of the appraisal of all staff is clearly laid down in the staff-development plan.

84 The commitment to staff development is reflected in the budget which, in spite of a reduction in funding during 1994-95, represents approximately 1.5 per cent of the staffing budget. There is extensive Training and Development Lead Body training for staff involved in GNVQ and NVQ delivery including support staff employed in resource bases. Twenty-three teaching and four support staff are currently involved in assessor and verifier training. The vice-principal is the budget holder for staff development and gives final approval to requests based upon the recommendation of sector leaders. Partial delegation of the staff-development budget to sector leaders and senior tutors is being considered. The need for more precise planning and evaluation mechanisms for staff development has been identified and is also being discussed. Internally-organised training which includes activities identified by staff, such as information technology training and practice, is particularly valued.

85 A commitment has been made to achieving the Investors in People award with the intention of submitting for assessment by December 1995. This is an ambitious target date which the college recognises it is now unlikely to achieve. At present, there are no formal procedures for the induction of new staff. Nevertheless, help and support is provided on an informal basis and has been valued by recent newcomers. There are comprehensive staff and tutor handbooks available to all staff, although they have been written primarily to meet the needs of teaching staff.

86 The college completed a self-assessment report using the seven headings from Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The report

identified strengths and areas for development and was clearly and logically set out. The areas for development were less clearly defined under some headings than others but, in the main, the conclusions in the report were similar to the findings of the inspection.

87 The college has responded positively to the national charter for further education by producing its own charter booklet. This covers all the major requirements, although its language and presentation do not always make it an easy document for the range of audiences for whom it is intended. The college has worked hard to make the charter generally available to staff, students, parents, feeder schools and to employers receiving students on work placements. The development of the charter has helped to increase staff awareness of the need for a customer focus. Students and parents are aware of its existence, although they do not necessarily see it as significant in defining their rights and obligations. The charter statements do not contain many performance indicators nor indicate clearly how standards and targets are to be measured or reviewed. Routine monitoring of the charter is relatively informal. The college intends to review the charter in the near future but strategies and processes for this have not yet been developed. Management and corporation responsibilities in relation to the charter are not clearly defined.

RESOURCES

Staffing

88 Academic staff are well qualified. There are 27 full-time teachers and the equivalent of a further 6.4 teachers employed part time. There are approximately equal numbers of male and female full-time teaching staff and the majority of part-time staff are female. Teaching staff are effectively deployed and all have job descriptions. Staffing policies and procedures are clearly stated in the staff handbook.

89 The introduction of an increasing number of vocational courses has created a need for up-to-date industrial and commercial experience. There is no college-wide strategy to address this issue. As a first step, a compact arrangement has been agreed with the local TEC to facilitate work experience for 10 per cent of the teaching staff during the next academic year. In some subject areas, the reliance on full-time teachers results in limited opportunities to use specialist part-time teachers who might have the requisite experience. This issue is particularly relevant, for example, to the proposed GNVQ developments in leisure and tourism. The small size of some subject provision, with only one or two specialist staff in a specific area, has limited the opportunity for staff and curricular development.

90 Good progress has been made by staff towards achieving assessor and verifier awards required to support NVQ and GNVQ developments. Seven staff have already achieved the assessor qualification and five have internal verifier certification. There is one adviser for the accreditation of

students' prior learning and two staff are working towards this. Norfolk and Waveney TEC has provided financial assistance to support training to Training and Development Lead Body standards.

91 There are 13 support staff including the college administrator. The support staff are effectively deployed and are valued for their contribution to the work of the college. There is a good level of technical support for science and information technology, but the level of support for art and design, media and drama and engineering is insufficient. Support staff are actively involved in the staff-development programme. Learning resources staff are all working towards assessor qualifications. Technicians have undertaken appropriate training in health and safety and information technology. Training is ongoing for the learning resources staff and the library assistant to enable them to be flexibly deployed in support of students.

Equipment/learning resources

92 There is sufficient equipment in most subject areas to support teaching and learning. All teaching rooms are equipped with satisfactory, if basic, classroom furniture and chalk or marker boards. Television, video players and overhead projectors are available on a shared basis. The 200-seat theatre with its computerised lighting system is an excellent teaching resource. It is also being increasingly used by a local theatre group and by touring companies. There is a limited quantity of high-quality video, sound and editing equipment to support the planned development of media courses. A good range of language learning technology exists including satellite, multi-listening cassette machines and a telephone simulator. The training office is well equipped to provide a realistic working environment but the range of industrial-standard office technology software is small. There is a good level of equipment for science but some is becoming dated, particularly that for electronics.

93 The quality and quantity of information technology equipment is exceptional. There is a computer to student ratio of 1:5. The networking of the computer system provides considerable flexibility for students as it enables them to gain ready access to their computer files, regardless of which site they are working on. In all, there are some 127 machines on the network of which just over 100 are available for student use. The resource-based learning centre can accommodate 40 students and has 20 workstations. The GNVQ base room and training office each have 15 workstations. Most equipment is of industrial standard and there is a good range of specialist software to support the curriculum. The 16 CD-ROMs are also networked and provide a good resource for students.

94 The library is on the Griffons site in what was the original entrance hall to the old 1776 school house. It is a historically interesting room with wooden floors and panelled walls, and decorated with Nelson memorabilia. However, it is an inappropriate environment for a modern library and

inadequate in size. There is a maximum of 40 study places in cramped and noisy conditions which are not conducive to a learning environment. The bookstock of approximately 7,000 items is inadequate to support the present curriculum. In addition, there is a wide selection of magazines, journals and newspapers. There is no library on the Lawns site. A useful 20-place quiet study area has been provided which, owing to the lack of social facilities, students also use as a meeting place.

95 The main library is augmented by subject libraries located in classrooms across both sites. The budget allocated to learning resources includes the needs of the library. There is a separate budget allocation for books in the curriculum areas. Substantial book collections exist in several sections, such as media studies and science, but they are not catalogued or secure and the main library collection in these subjects is small. Library provision for engineering and art courses is poor. Although stock records, book issues and usage are meticulously recorded manually in the main library there is no college-wide cataloguing system or central register of all library resources. Classroom collections are mostly uncatalogued and there is no agreed mechanism for removing outdated books from circulation. Students are unaware of, and cannot access, all library resource materials as there is no centralised referencing or point of contact.

96 The split-site working places limitations on access to the resource-based learning centre and library facilities. Usage of the resource-based learning centre is constrained by the opening times of Monday to Friday 08.30 to 17.00. There is a good range of videos in the learning-resource area and a separate room for viewing. There are no explicit policies for information technology or resource-based learning. The extensive investment in resources has taken place without the benefit of a whole-college implementation strategy.

Accommodation

97 The college occupies two sites in the centre of North Walsham. The trustees of Paston school retain the freehold of the Griffons campus and the college playing field with its pavilion. The college pays a peppercorn rent to the trustees for the continued use of these facilities. The Lawns campus was transferred to the college on incorporation. The Grade II listed status of some of the buildings has placed constraints on developments and resulted in additional building maintenance costs, such as the need to caulk the library floor. The Griffons campus occupies some two acres and the Lawns 3.5 acres. Approximately 55 per cent of college teaching takes place at the Griffons and 45 per cent at the Lawns.

98 The landscaped grounds are well maintained and provide students with courts for tennis and other ball games. There is also a large well-equipped sports hall. The college playing field, which is a designated green site, is infrequently used by students and occasionally let. It is planned temporarily to discontinue using the field and to minimise maintenance costs.

99 Both sites comprise a collection of buildings of various ages and desirability. The listed status, the trust deed, the rambling nature and room sizes all impose limitations on the use and flexibility of the accommodation. The older buildings have small classrooms interlinked by narrow corridors and numerous stairs. Other classrooms are large with high ceilings, poor acoustics and inappropriate heating systems. The art and design block is a temporary building which had previously been taken out of use and was renovated in 1991. Rooms used for teaching media are in a recently renovated building. Suitable teaching rooms are at a premium while other space is underutilised as it is unsuitable for teaching. When the college opened in 1984, facilities were designed for 250 students. With over 500 students and an expanded curriculum there is pressure on the available facilities. Most staff have a base classroom and have made efforts to provide suitable wall displays of students' work or information to enhance the learning environment. There is a reception area at the Griffons site but it does not provide a central focus for college visitors or promote the college to its full potential.

100 At the time of inspection, the college did not have an accommodation strategy. The college commissioned Norfolk Property Services to prepare a strategy and a discussion document was produced in February 1995 giving details of a variety of options. The proposals have been considered by the corporation and the trustees and a response has been compiled but no decision has been made on the accommodation strategy to be adopted.

101 The college has a five-year internal decoration plan which includes routine maintenance. The standard of decor in the communal areas of the college is satisfactory. Considering the inherent structural difficulties associated with old buildings the college is well maintained and kept clean and tidy. Extensive work has been carried out to satisfy health and safety and fire regulations. Attempts have been made to reduce heating costs by introducing energy-saving measures and by replacing boilers and fitting thermostatic controls.

102 Accessibility for wheelchair users to the majority of college facilities remains limited despite the building of a number of ramps and a toilet for people with disabilities. A report compiled by architectural specialists concluded that access for wheelchair users is unlikely to be significantly improved due to the large number of structural constraints.

103 There is no common room for 16-19 year old students but a base room has been provided for adult students. Due to the lack of social areas, the careers library also serves as a snack bar for a short period each day. Limited refectory facilities with seating for approximately 50 students are provided on the Griffons site. Students use the facility as a meeting and social area as there is no other communal provision.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

104 The strengths of the college are:

- the wide range of provision which matches the requirements of local school leavers
- effective liaison with local schools
- sensitive leadership by the principal and senior managers
- an effective student guidance and support system
- high standards of teaching and learning in most subjects
- good examination results in 1994
- a comprehensive programme of staff development
- well-qualified and committed staff
- extensive information technology provision.

105 If the college is to raise standards further it should:

- develop the curriculum to meet the needs of adult students and employers
- generate a corporate strategy to plan provision
- develop procedures for the monitoring and control of resources
- devise and implement a structure and curriculum for the tutorial programme
- ensure systematic application of the quality assurance system
- improve library provision
- adopt a strategy to improve the unsatisfactory areas of accommodation.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1994)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1994)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1994)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1994)

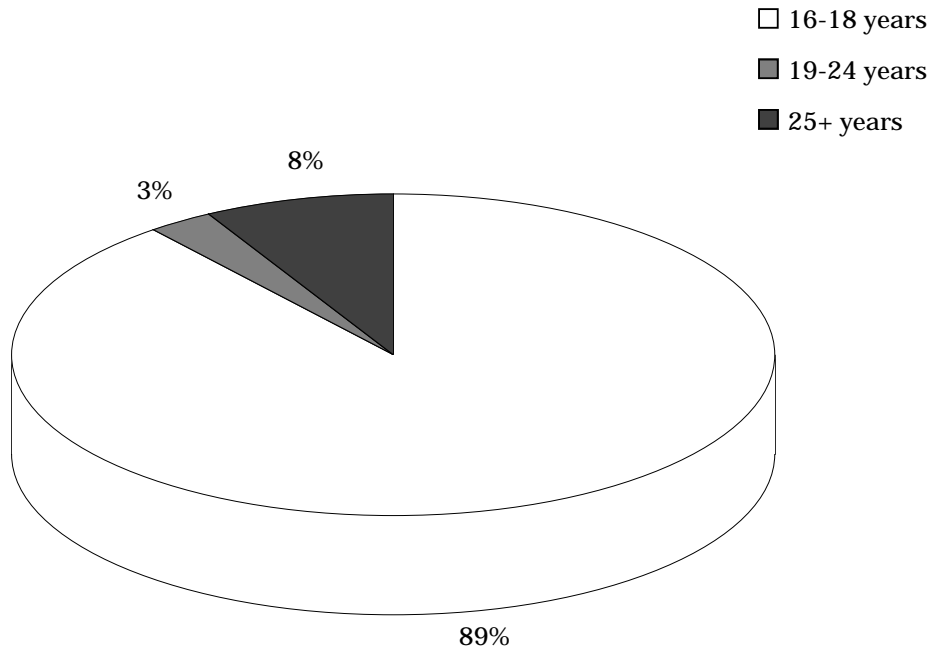
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

Paston Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1994)

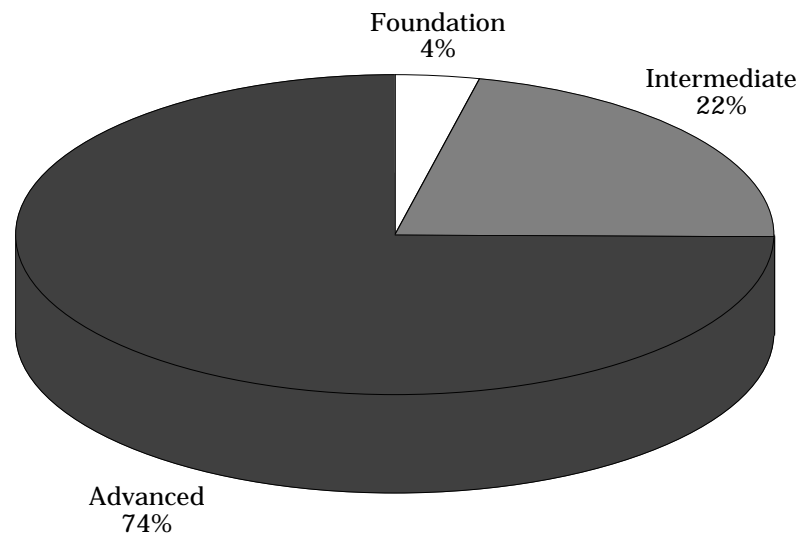


Enrolments: 556

Note: this chart excludes two enrolments under the age of 16.

Figure 2

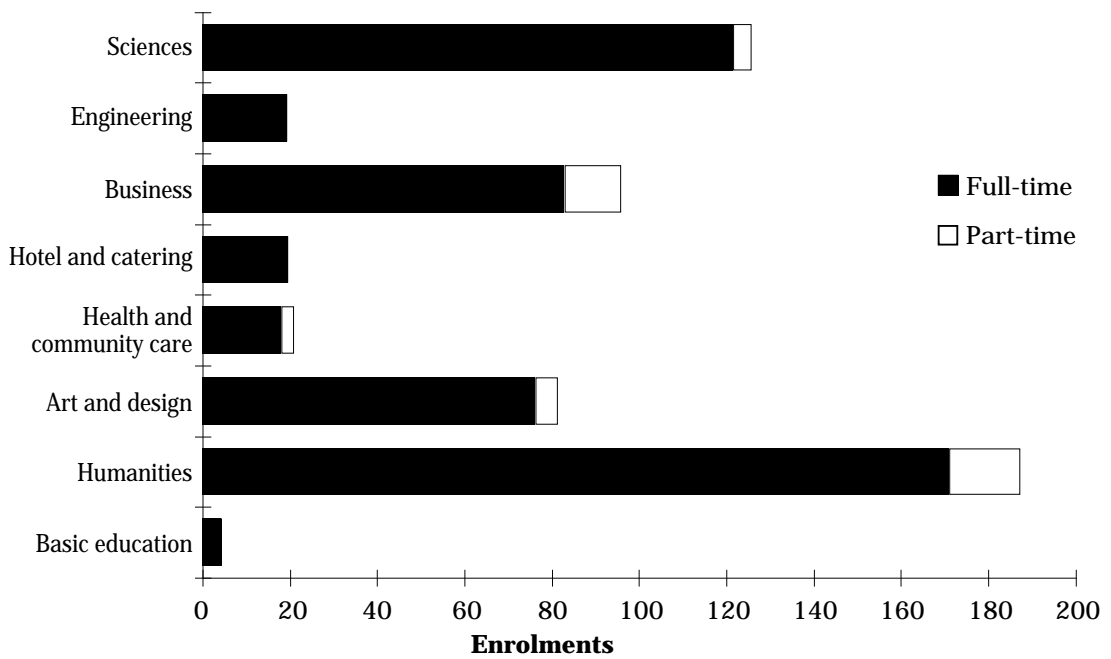
Paston Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 556

Figure 3

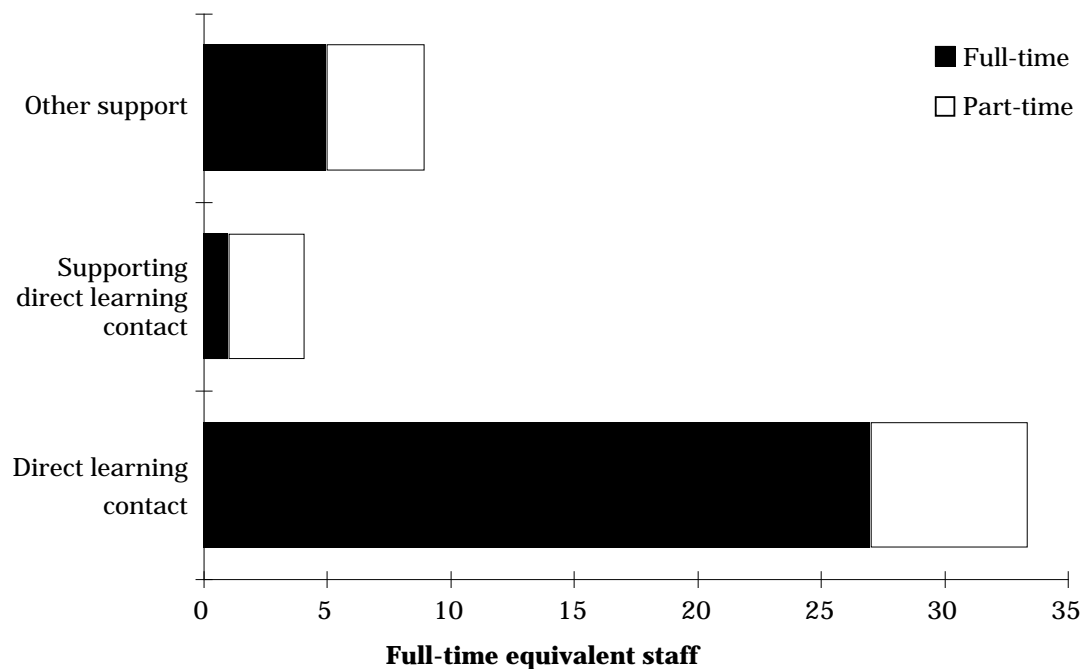
Paston Sixth Form College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 556

Figure 4

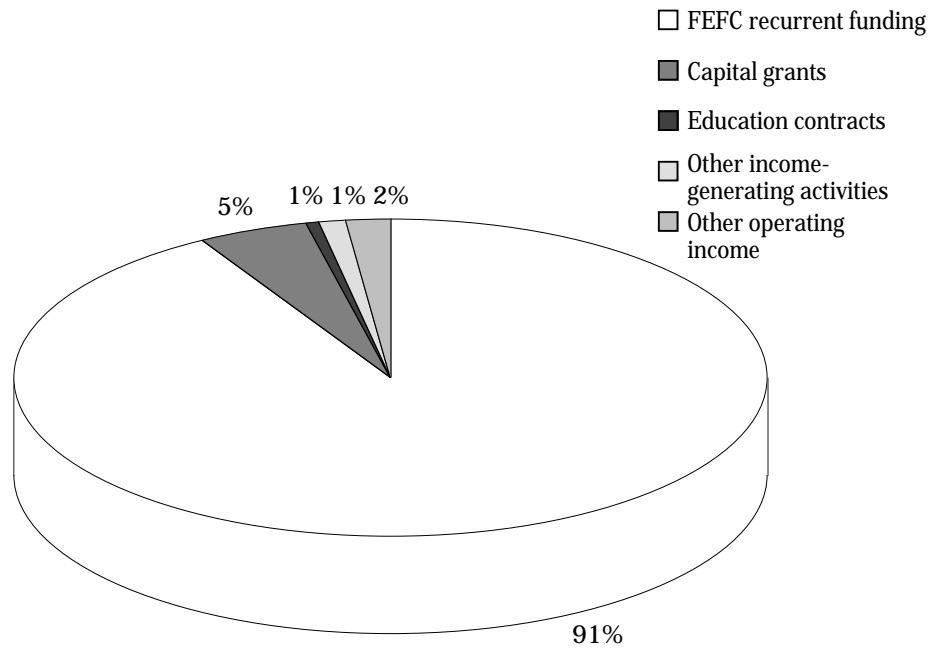
Paston Sixth Form College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1994)



Full-time equivalent staff: 46

Figure 5

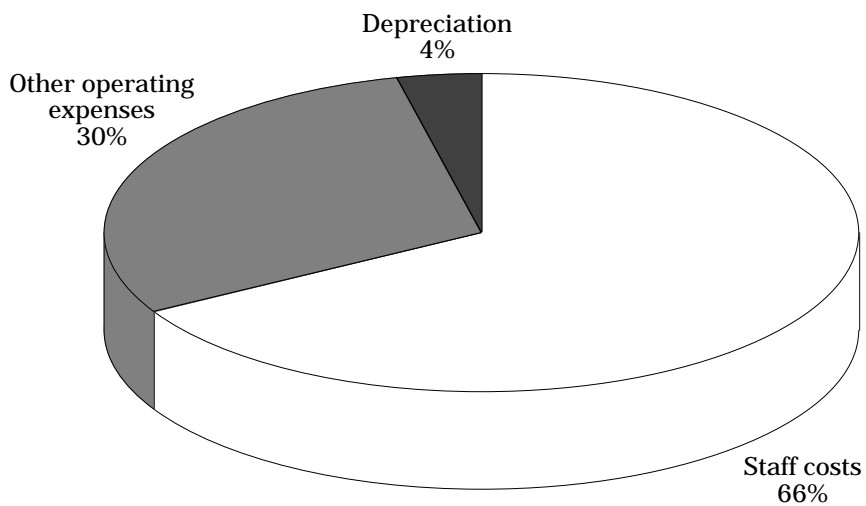
Paston Sixth Form College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated income: £1,619,000

Figure 6

Paston Sixth Form College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Estimated expenditure: £1,711,000

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