

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Priestley College

July 1994

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 0203 863000
Fax 0203 863100*

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 48/94

PRIESTLEY COLLEGE

NORTH WEST REGION

Inspected January - March 1994

Summary

Priestley College is a sixth form college serving the district of Warrington, Cheshire. It is making good progress in expanding its range of courses for 16-19 year olds within a competitive local market. It has a positive image in the local community and has fostered good links with a wide range of external groups. The college is well managed and staff have a shared sense of purpose. Students receive effective guidance and support at all stages. There are high standards of teaching on the majority of courses. GCE A level and GCSE examination results are good. Staff are well qualified and have a high level of commitment to the college. To build on its strengths the college should develop a strategy to ensure that all students receive sufficient help with English and mathematics and gain adequate access to computers. Library facilities and private study areas should be extended and improved. The college should continue to develop a more comprehensive policy for quality assurance which includes systematic procedures and clear lines of responsibility.

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	2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	3
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, mathematics & computing	2	Art & design	2
Business & administration	3	Humanities	2
Services to people	2		

CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	3
Responsiveness and range of provision	8
Governance and management	13
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	17
Teaching and the promotion of learning	23
Students' achievements	35
Quality assurance	42
Resources	48
Conclusions and issues	52
Figures	

INTRODUCTION

1 Priestley College, Cheshire, was inspected in three stages. Enrolment and induction procedures were inspected in September 1993. Fifty inspector days were subsequently used for the inspection of specialist subject areas during the period from January to early March 1994. Aspects of cross-college provision were inspected by a team of five inspectors who spent 24 inspector days in the college from 14-18 March 1994. Inspectors visited 133 classes, examined representative samples of students' work and held discussions with governors, senior managers, staff and students. Meetings were held with a number of external groups, including parents, representatives from industry, North and Mid-Cheshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the careers service. The inspectors also had access to extensive documentation relating to the college and its courses.

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

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Priestley College was established as a sixth form college in 1979. It operates on a single site to the south of Warrington town centre in buildings which were formerly those of a girls' high school. The main building dates from the 1960s. A new art and design building was opened in 1987 and a further teaching block was opened at the beginning of this year. The extra buildings have been provided to accommodate a growth in numbers from 400 in 1983, the first year in which the college ceased to have 11-16 pupils, to 906 in November 1993. The accommodation includes a hall, gymnasium and outdoor sports facilities.

4 Courses are organised in the following three areas each managed by one of the assistant principals: humanities and performing arts; science, mathematics, psychology and geography; and the business school and languages. The assistant principal for business and languages also has responsibility for developing the new adult community programme. The college offers 27 subjects at General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level), six at AS level and 18 subjects at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level. There are six vocational courses at intermediate level and eight at advanced level, as well as the first year of a degree franchised from the University of Salford. A profile of the staff, expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 1. At the time of the inspection, there were 906 enrolments, all of them full time. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 2 and 3, respectively. The number of students in each of the curriculum areas is shown in figure 4.

5 The college takes approximately 23 per cent of the 16-19 year olds who remain in full-time education in Warrington. The district has a general further education college to the north of the town centre and there are seven 11-18 schools on the outskirts of the town, the nearest being one mile from the college site, the furthest approximately seven miles away. There are three other sixth form colleges which take students from the town: Widnes Sixth Form College, Carmel Sixth Form College in St Helens and Sir John Deane's College in Northwich. The college works in partnership with three 11-16 schools in the district from which it draws approximately 31 per cent of each year's intake. There are also two 11-16 Catholic schools in the district.

6 In 1991, the population of the Warrington district was 183,000. Manufacturing industry has declined and there has been a growth in the service sector associated with new town development. The period 1981-89 saw an overall growth in employment of more than 17 per cent. In January 1994, the unemployment rate was 8 per cent. There are however, some pockets of high unemployment: a significant proportion of the unemployed youth in Cheshire live in Warrington or Halton. The number of students in their final year of school in the district declined to a low of 2,095 in July 1993 but is predicted to rise steadily to 2,313 by 1997. In 1993, 65 per cent of 16 year olds stayed on in full-time education. Thirty-seven per cent of this year group gained five or more GCSEs at grades A-C.

7 In its mission, the college aims to provide high-quality education to a wide range of the 16-19 age group and to extend the number and level of its courses, particularly in vocational areas. In January 1994, the college launched a community programme which has led to 120 enrolments. In addition, since August 1993, some 40 students have been provided with short courses related to employment. This community and short-course provision was not included in the inspection.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8 In recent years, the college has made significant progress in extending the range of courses available to full-time students. In addition to its traditional provision of a broad range of GCE A level and GCSE courses, the college has developed a number of vocational courses based on existing areas of expertise. The overall growth in enrolments this year of 8 per cent has been achieved mainly by increasing student numbers on vocational programmes; 38 per cent of students are following vocational courses, 11 per cent of them on GNVQ programmes introduced this year to replace BTEC first and national diplomas.

9 The range and scope of vocational provision continues to be developed. Coherent foundation opportunities and routes for student progression have still to be established. Small numbers of students with moderate learning difficulties are taken in to existing vocational courses. Individual students are beginning to construct programmes which involve

mixing vocational and GCE/GCSE provision. The broadening of the curriculum structure is enabling the college to offer access to a wider client group although the extensive implications for learning support have not been fully explored. The move into adult provision follows extensive market research. These courses are run mainly in the evenings and at weekends and the college has plans to extend the provision beyond traditional term times in order to meet adults' study needs more effectively.

10 Most staff are well informed about trends and issues in the further education sector. Those staff directly involved with GNVQ provision have a good understanding of the implications for curriculum development and they are supported by effective staff development. Other members of staff who are becoming involved in vocational developments, as departments include GNVQ programmes within their development plans, also require opportunities for staff development.

11 The college has a positive image in the local community. It has established and developed productive links with a range of external groups. Liaison with schools includes recruitment advice and curricular links. School staff perceive the collaborative activities between their schools and the college as an enhancement of the provision offered by the schools and are highly complimentary about the ways in which the college supports students during transition. There are extensive links with the careers service. Students have frequent access to careers officers on college premises and college careers guidance staff make effective use of topical information provided by the careers service. Productive relationships with the TEC exist both at a strategic and an operational level. There is insufficient input from industry to some of the vocational courses and the lack of curricular links with local business is a weakness in planned GNVQ and NVQ developments. However, the college has some positive links with local employers; for example, some vocational areas have advisory panels and business studies is involved in the Young Enterprise scheme. The needs of local small businesses have played a significant role in determining the structure of the new courses for adults. Parents are well informed about the progress of their children through written communications from the college and strategically-timed parents' consultation evenings. Parents see the college as approachable and open; they appreciate the regular reports and the opportunity to follow these up with personal tutors.

12 Well-targeted and effective marketing is reflected in the continuous growth in student numbers. Promotional materials and activities are thoughtfully planned and the college makes good use of the local media.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

13 Members of the governing body demonstrate a high level of commitment to the college. The 15 members include eight representatives from local industry, commerce and the local TEC. Members' expertise includes financial, legal and estates management experience. The board is well informed to carry out its responsibilities and works well with the

senior management team to produce the college's strategic plan. Meetings of the board and appropriate subcommittees are held regularly and attendance is good.

14 The college is well managed and there is a shared sense of purpose about its future development. The strategic plan has clear aims and objectives. It is formulated after widespread consultation among staff at senior levels. Departmental planning is not sufficiently linked to the overall planning process. Sound teamwork is evident at all levels of college management. Lines of communication are good and responsibilities linked to the strategic plan are clearly allocated and in most cases well understood. The roles of the newly-created curriculum co-ordinators have yet to be fully defined. Targets have been set for enrolments, attendance, retention and student destinations. These are carefully monitored by managers and action is taken where problems are identified. Good work has been undertaken on value-added systems which measure students' progress at college by comparing their qualifications on entry with their achievements on leaving. A performance related pay system linked to targets is being considered. Documentation is in place to support many of the aims outlined in the strategic plan. There are college policies or guidelines for health and safety, student services, equal opportunities and accommodation. Some of these are at an early stage of development and lack clearly-defined plans for action.

15 The allocation of financial and human resources is generally well matched to the strategic plan. Departments are given budgets for equipment and materials. There are no cost centres at departmental level but senior managers have undertaken unit cost analyses of staffing. Computer-based information systems provide useful and reliable information for staff at a variety of levels. However, the lack of networking means that there is currently some duplication of effort, for example, in tracking expenditure. Current systems are unlikely to satisfy future requirements and options for replacement are being considered.

16 The college's unit of funding for 1992-93 was £2,480 per weighted full-time equivalent student. The median for sixth form colleges was £2,647. Summaries of the college's estimated income and expenditure for 1993-94 are shown in figures 5 and 6, respectively.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

17 The admissions procedure is well documented and effective. The range of pre-enrolment activities for students from partner schools includes 'taster' days and extensive opportunities for impartial careers advice. All full-time students participate in an extensive induction programme. However, some students feel that they are not sufficiently informed about course content. This year, 61 students have changed their original programmes. Plans for next year include greater opportunity for course familiarisation at induction. The college also recognises that the widening of the student intake has brought an increasing need for learning

support. It has designed a more systematic approach to diagnostic assessment which will be piloted in the near future.

18 All full-time students are involved in subject and personal tutorial programmes. Tutorials are well co-ordinated and students speak highly of their effectiveness. Attendance at timetabled tutorials is generally good; registers are kept and any absences are quickly followed up. Tutorial support is supplemented by effective provision for personal counselling and careers guidance. There is a range of useful student support handbooks.

19 All subjects use a system for monitoring student progress, which is based on predictions of performance in relation to entry achievements. There is an informal though effective system for identifying learning support needs through the regular review and recording of student progress in subject and vocational course tutorials. Subject tutors pass information on performance to personal tutors who use it to help students set relevant learning targets. The mechanisms for meeting some of the identified needs are far less effective. They consist largely of students following optional short courses in basic skills or using self-study packages in mathematics and English workshops. A number of students requiring support do not take up any of these options.

20 All full-time students participate in individual action planning. Students in consultation with tutors, analyse their own strengths and weaknesses and set detailed targets for progress. Generally, students understand the process and find it useful. Records of achievement are used to record the outcomes of the personal review and action planning processes. Students proceeding to higher education make most use of these records; students on one-year courses and those intending to progress to employment generally do not use, or value sufficiently, their records of achievement.

21 The 12 students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive appropriate support which is co-ordinated effectively by three staff in different departments.

22 There is an active student council which holds regular, minuted meetings. Students regard this as an effective forum for them to express their views and concerns. There are student representatives on the equal opportunities and the health and safety committees. The college makes provision for all students to take part in collective Christian worship on a daily basis. This meets the requirements of sections 44 and 45 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

23 The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions inspected:

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A/AS level		29	23	14	1	0	67
GCSE		4	13	1	1	0	19
GNVQ		1	5	3	0	0	9
NVQ		0	2	4	0	0	6
Other		3	11	11	6	1	32
Total		37	54	33	8	1	133

24 Sixty-eight per cent of the sessions inspected had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. Work in science, performing arts and sociology was consistently of a high standard. Most of the weaker sessions were in the vocational programmes of study.

25 Classes were well prepared and well organised. Lesson plans and other documentation were used effectively to structure individual classes and to relate them to programme aims. In most classes, students were made aware of the lesson plan and given a clear indication of the purpose and aims of the class. Chemistry students, for example, were provided with booklets detailing topics and learning objectives.

26 Overall, students experienced a variety of learning experiences which successfully maintained their interest and gave them good opportunities to work on their own or in small groups. Teachers provided well-directed support for students. In science classes, for example, regular checks were made on students' levels of understanding. A feature of the sociology teaching was the constant reference to previous work as a means of reinforcing learning. In care lessons, a variety of learning activities were provided; assignments were used effectively to integrate related elements and to give the students opportunity for working independently. However, in some care programmes there was an over emphasis on individual research which was at the expense of developing essential knowledge and understanding. In GNVQ business studies, there were ample opportunities for the students to apply their knowledge and concepts to practical business situations. In some GCE A level and BTEC national diploma classes in business studies, there was an over-reliance on a single activity which was not well integrated with homework exercises.

27 Teachers' wide knowledge and understanding of their subject were used to stimulate students' interest and to promote discussion. In GCE A level mathematics, teachers made good use of realistic examples to involve students in effective discussion of mathematical ideas. Sociology teachers also made use of a wide range of examples and illustrations which

enhanced students' learning. Most English classes involve group activity in which students were given opportunities to contribute to discussion. With few exceptions, staff had established productive working relationships with students and this created a supportive learning environment.

28 In the majority of classes, the pace of work and the degree of challenge offered to students were appropriate. In history and geography classes, teachers recognise the varying abilities within each group and the learning activities, particularly those involving problem solving, were designed to ensure that all students found the work challenging. In sociology, teachers ensured that students worked to task and were encouraged to set targets for learning and to evaluate their own work. Class assignments and homework provided effective challenges for science students. In English, students were provided with good-quality support material but there were too many occasions when they were insufficiently challenged. In business studies, the use of assignments in teaching was of variable effectiveness; well-structured activities for GNVQ programmes contrasted with some national diploma assignments which did not clearly specify what was expected of the student. In some computing classes, students were not always given sufficient support and encouragement with their assignment work.

29 Practical activity is used effectively to develop students' personal and technical skills. Theory is reinforced with investigation, problem solving, demonstration and supervised practice. In performing arts, a structured balance of directed and optional tasks enabled students to develop sufficient confidence to perform on their own. The involvement of students in major dramatic productions provided valuable, realistic learning experiences which also integrated the three elements of dance, drama and music. Science practicals were closely linked to related theory and students were made fully aware of safe working practices and their importance.

30 The extent to which students were given opportunities within subjects to develop communication, numeracy and information technology skills varied considerably. The variety of learning experiences ensured that students had opportunities to develop some of these skills, particularly in problem solving and oral communication, but there is no systematic planning for their development. In sociology and in many vocational programmes, core skills were explicitly integrated within the curriculum. In care programmes, a comprehensive range of core skills formed part of the curriculum and were assessed. Although some subjects, for example travel and tourism, used information technology effectively, in most subjects there was insufficient attention to information technology.

31 With few exceptions, programme documentation provides clear, comprehensive statements of aims and objectives linked, where appropriate, to examining board syllabuses. For all the care programmes there is a course file with detailed documentation relating to assessments and grading, course assignments and schemes of work. Most schemes of

work clearly specify content, delivery and assessment methods. The aims and objectives of science and music syllabuses are effectively incorporated in well-documented schemes of work and lesson plans. The geography and history schemes indicate the themes to be studied and indicate the time to be spent on each topic and private study task.

32 The college provides a range of short courses to complement students' main programmes of study. Three hours per week are allocated to these. Options include certificated vocational elements, general and leisure interest activities and courses specifically related to main programmes. They provide good opportunities for students to develop personal, social and some core skills. Students select their short course programme in consultation with their personal tutor. The balance and coherence of an individual's overall programme varies depending upon the mix of their main programmes and short courses. Although the short-course programme provides an opportunity for all students to achieve a minimum level of information technology skills it is possible for a student to receive little or no further development in this area. The college is proposing to remedy this.

33 All GCE A level and vocational students have opportunities to gain work experience. Last year just under 80 per cent of first-year GCE A level students opted for work experience. An evaluation by the college shows that 95 per cent of these students found the experience worthwhile.

34 Assessment is often used effectively to support learning. Comments by teachers on assessed work provide a sound basis for the student to improve their performance. For some written assessments, insufficient attention is given to correcting spelling and grammatical errors. In most areas there are effective procedures to ensure consistency of assessment. In English, care is taken with internal moderation especially in GCE A level language where there is a comprehensive procedure for moderating all course work. In some vocational areas, insufficient attention is given to standardising and agreeing assessment procedures for assignments. This is a major development priority for the GNVQ programmes where structures for assessment verification are being implemented.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

35 Students appear to enjoy their studies and have a positive attitude to their work. They are responsive in class and normally work with enthusiasm to complete the tasks set. A few students do not always use their non-class contact time in the college productively. A small number of GCSE students lack motivation. Students normally work well together. There are productive group sessions in many subjects. Performing arts students are able to perform together in a wide variety of styles and contexts. Many business studies students show good personal skills in group work and some effective joint working takes place on the BTEC national diploma and GNVQ programmes. Students achieve appropriate standards in their course work, homework and responses to assessment

and often demonstrate a good understanding of their programme of study. In history and geography, students are able to perform well in a range of written modes, for example, essays, projects and note-taking. Sociology students' files are well structured and informative. In English, the students' written work is well-prepared and thorough. In performing arts, the work is generally accurate but only a few students sustain incisive analysis in their writing. Art students' work is generally good and sometimes of a high standard but their diagnostic and exploratory skills are limited. On some occasions, students' lack of knowledge on intermediate care programmes hinders the development of their applied skills.

36 Generally, students are able to express themselves clearly and most contribute effectively to class discussion. In history and geography, students are encouraged to participate orally and do so in a confident and competent manner. In performing arts, students have good listening skills and are able to evaluate their work clearly and purposefully. Sociology students' oral work is of a high standard both in discussion and in presenting information. The students' level of information technology ability varies according to the subjects and optional short courses they chose to study.

37 Most students complete their studies. In 1992-93 just under 7 per cent of the 831 students failed to complete the year. Of these, the majority left in the first two months, some of them as a result of finding late places in higher education. This year, the proportion of students leaving in the November to January period is approximately 4 per cent higher than the previous year and analysis of the reasons for this shows a greater proportion leaving the college's intermediate level courses to enter employment or to join youth training schemes.

38 In 1993, a high proportion of students entering GCE A level examinations achieved pass grades A-E. Excluding general studies, the pass rate was 83 per cent compared with an average of 80 per cent for all sixth form colleges. Fifty per cent achieved grades A-C compared with a national figure for sixth form colleges of 46 per cent. Students taking two or more GCE A level subject examinations achieved an average points score of 14.6 (where A=10, E=2 points), placing the college in the top 10 per cent of institutions within the further education sector. Pass rates in over half of the subjects were above national averages. In some subjects, including art and design, business studies, media studies and sports studies, all of the students entering the examination passed. Pass rates in history, religious studies and theatre studies were lower than the national averages, and in all of these subjects the overall pass rate in 1993 was significantly down on previous years. The overall pass rate of 68 per cent for English language was poor and the college has taken action to address weaknesses in this area. The college's analysis of entry achievements, based on GCSEs, shows wide differences between subject groups in average level achievement prior to entry. Just over 20 per cent of students taking GCE A levels have average GCSE grades of C, D or lower on entry. However,

many of the students in the lower achievement bands at GCSE reach a good level of attainment at GCE A level. For example, the 27 students with an average GCSE grade D or E on entry, achieved a pass rate at GCE A level of just under 70 per cent.

39 In 1993, the GCSE pass rate, grades A-C, for students aged 16-18 was 51 per cent. This compares with an average of 50 per cent for sixth form colleges nationally. There was considerable variation between subject pass rates ranging from 100 per cent in art to 10 per cent in physical education. In most subjects, pass rates, grades A-C, were close to national averages. In some subjects they were significantly above, as for example, in music, (88 per cent), French (71 per cent), psychology (69 per cent), biology (60 per cent) and physics (59 per cent). The college's analysis of entry and exit GCSE grades shows that for students taking more than one GCSE, approximately 90 per cent of them improve their grades.

40 In 1993, 82 per cent of BTEC first diploma students completed the course and achieved the full award, although only 64 per cent of those who enrolled actually completed the course. Those achieving their qualification ranged from 100 per cent in design to 69 per cent in business and finance. Achievements in the other vocational programmes were satisfactory or good. No national diploma or GNVQ programmes had been completed at the time of inspection.

41 Many students who achieved two or more GCE A levels progress to higher education. In 1993, 200 students completed their courses. Of these 76 per cent entered higher education, 13 per cent continued in further education and 7 per cent entered employment. A high proportion of students gaining intermediate vocational awards either continue in further education or enter employment, including youth training. In 1993, 57 per cent of the 47 students who gained the first diploma continued in further education, many returning to the college; 28 per cent gained employment or joined a youth training scheme.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

42 Although there is a strong commitment by staff at all levels to develop and implement the college's quality initiatives there is no clear operational strategy for quality assurance. Significant progress has been made over the last two years and the formation of a quality group this academic year has improved the co-ordination of developments. The main focus is upon outcomes; insufficient emphasis is given to the evaluation of procedures.

43 Middle managers are clear about their role in the development of quality assurance. They are given considerable flexibility in implementing the college's broad requirements for the review of provision. As a result, the stage of development and the effectiveness of implementation varies widely between subject areas. The quality group is reviewing practice with the aim of introducing more systematic, standardised procedures. Some of the college's key activities have well documented procedures

though few include measures for the evaluation of effectiveness. An example of good practice is the proposal for changes to the student induction programme resulting from a thorough review of the previous system.

44 The procedure for reviewing academic subjects is based on a detailed analysis of examination performance, including value added analysis. Senior managers discuss outcomes with course co-ordinators, weaknesses are identified and remedial actions agreed. However, outcomes of this process are not always clearly recorded. There are inconsistencies in the review of vocational programmes. Although good use is made of moderators' reports in most areas, the process lacks objectivity and rigour. There is insufficient input to the review process from staff outside the course team. Some of these weaknesses have been identified in relation to GNVQ programmes and appropriate action is being taken.

45 A student charter in draft form has detailed statements of students' rights and complaints procedures. Governors and staff have been consulted on the draft but, at the time of inspection, students themselves had not been closely involved in the discussions.

46 Staff development is seen as closely allied to quality improvement. It is well linked to the college development plan and there is a strong emphasis on middle management training. The college is committed to the achievement of Investors in People status, a national award given to companies who satisfy independent assessors that they have attained certain standards in staff development. The development of staff is based on an effective system of personal review for managers, teachers and support staff and this is helping to develop a sense of corporate identity. A system of appraisal is currently being piloted with senior managers.

47 Response to identified needs is often rapid and effective as shown by the intensive training to support GNVQ developments. However, induction for new staff is not comprehensive. In particular, it fails to cover the knowledge and skills required for the role of personal tutor. Staff training currently lacks effective monitoring to ensure that there is consistency of practice across the whole college.

RESOURCES

Staffing

48 Staff teaching GCE A level and GCSE subjects are well qualified and have an adequate range of experience. Generally the vocational programmes are taught by appropriately-qualified staff who have relevant employment experience. In business studies and art, part-time staff increase substantially the overall range of work experience which staff possess. In social care, few staff have substantial vocational experience. In art there is an effective balance between full-time and part-time teachers; in business studies there is too much reliance on part-time staff for some programmes. There is adequate technician support in most areas of the

college. In a few areas teachers carry out duties that could be undertaken by administrative staff, although administrative support is generally sufficient.

Equipment/learning resources

49 The library is small for the number of students, providing only 60 private study places. This shortage is made worse by the lack of other appropriate areas within the college for students to work on their own. The library stock of less than 10,000 books is inadequate for the range of subjects offered. The quality of books and journals for some GCE A level courses, for example sociology, mathematics and science is satisfactory, but it is inadequate for many others, particularly English and art. There are sufficient teaching and learning aids. Teacher-produced handouts are generally of a high standard. General learning resources to support the development of students' core skills are not always readily available; for example, there are insufficient self-study packages for mathematics. Only the specialist computer rooms are presently networked and there is insufficient student access to information technology facilities across the college as a whole. The planned expansion in student numbers coupled with more independent learning by students, particularly on vocational courses, will increase the demand for study areas and learning resources. Specialist equipment in most areas is sufficient and of at least adequate quality to support the range of courses offered. Science equipment is generally good. In performing arts and media, the facilities are good but access to them is restricted. The travel office used by leisure and tourism students provides an insufficiently realistic working environment.

Accommodation

50 Teaching rooms have been increased in number, and laboratories adapted, to cater for the planned increase in student numbers. Overall there is sufficient space available and, helped by flexible timetabling, it is generally used effectively. The load on the students' recreational and social areas is eased by a system of overlapping times for breaks. In the performing arts and business studies areas, rooms are not always well matched to the size of classes. Parts of the building are not accessible to students with restricted mobility, a deficiency which is not addressed in the college's accommodation strategy.

51 The buildings are of different ages but all provide adequate teaching accommodation. English teaching rooms are spacious and well furnished. The science laboratories are tidy and have good storage facilities. Sociology rooms are furnished to a good standard. The computer rooms are generally poorly furnished. Although music rooms present a pleasant learning environment there is considerable transmission of sound between adjacent rooms. The college has established a five-year maintenance plan. Teaching rooms and laboratories are clean and generally in good decorative order and wall displays help to produce pleasant and stimulating environments which are conducive to learning.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

52 Priestley college is making good progress towards satisfying its mission to provide high-quality education for all of its students, particularly 16-19 year old students. The strengths of the college are:

- its positive image in the local community and strong links with a range of external groups
- a shared sense of purpose and effective teamwork at all levels
- effective guidance and support for students
- high standards of teaching
- good examination results at GCE A level and GCSE
- well-qualified staff with a high level of commitment to the college and its students.
- commitment to staff development and appraisal.

53 If the college is to raise its standards further, it should:

- develop a strategy to ensure all students receive sufficient help to develop basic skills, including information technology skills
- improve access to existing information technology facilities
- continue to develop a comprehensive quality assurance policy with systematic procedures and clear lines of responsibility
- improve library facilities and extend provision for private study.

FIGURES

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

2 Percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)

3 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)

4 Full-time enrolments by curriculum area (1993-94)

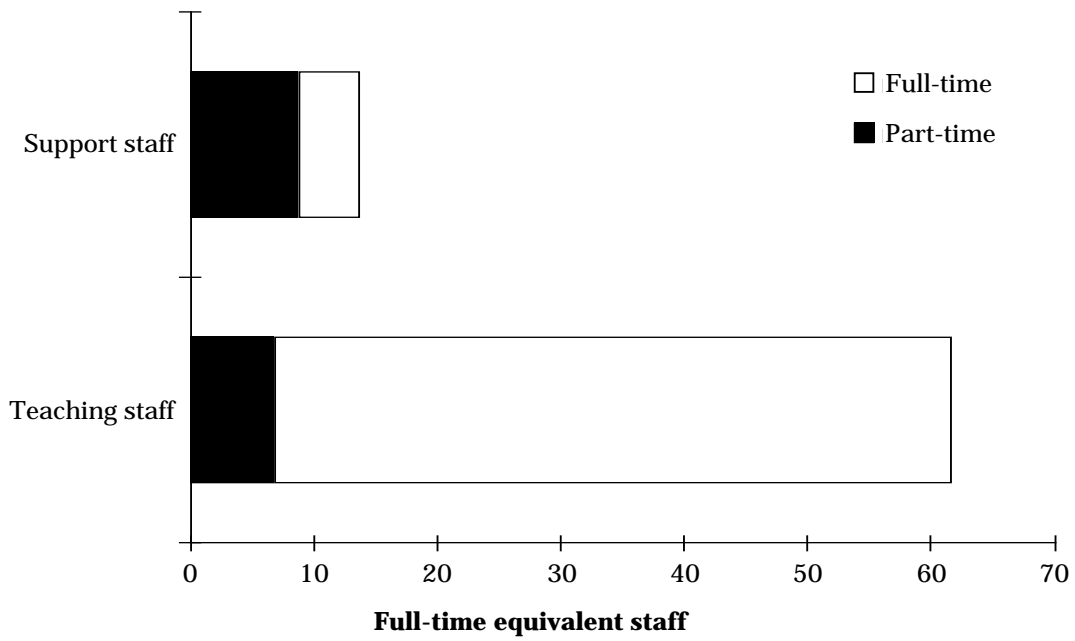
5 Estimated income (16 months to July 1994)

6 Estimated expenditure (16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

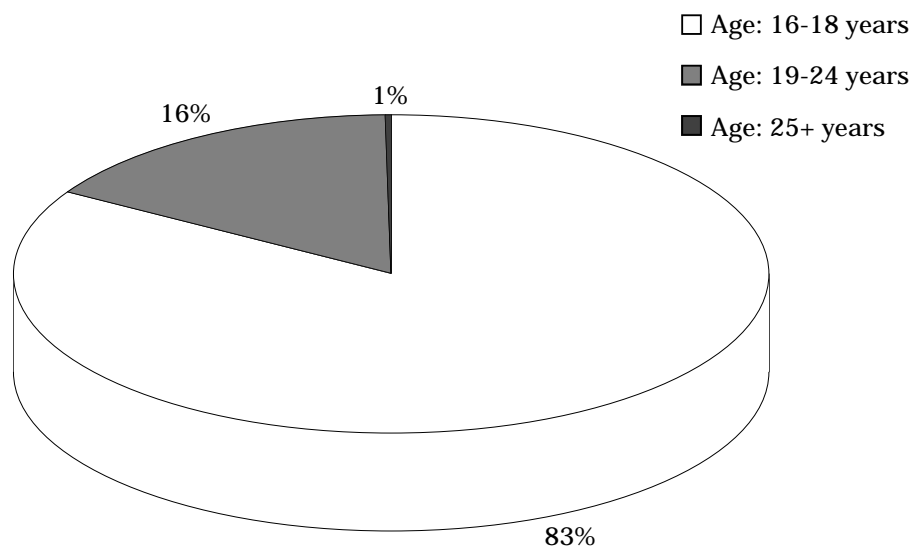
Priestley College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 76

Figure 2

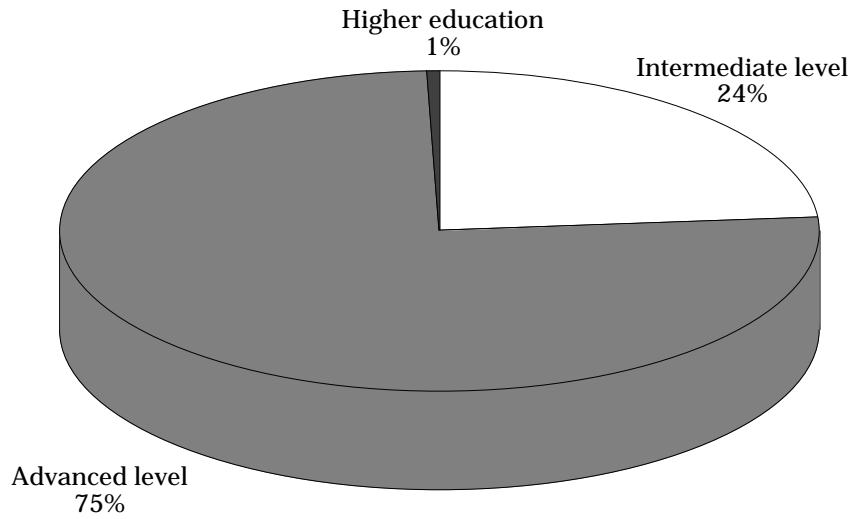
Priestley College: percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)



Enrolments: 906

Figure 3

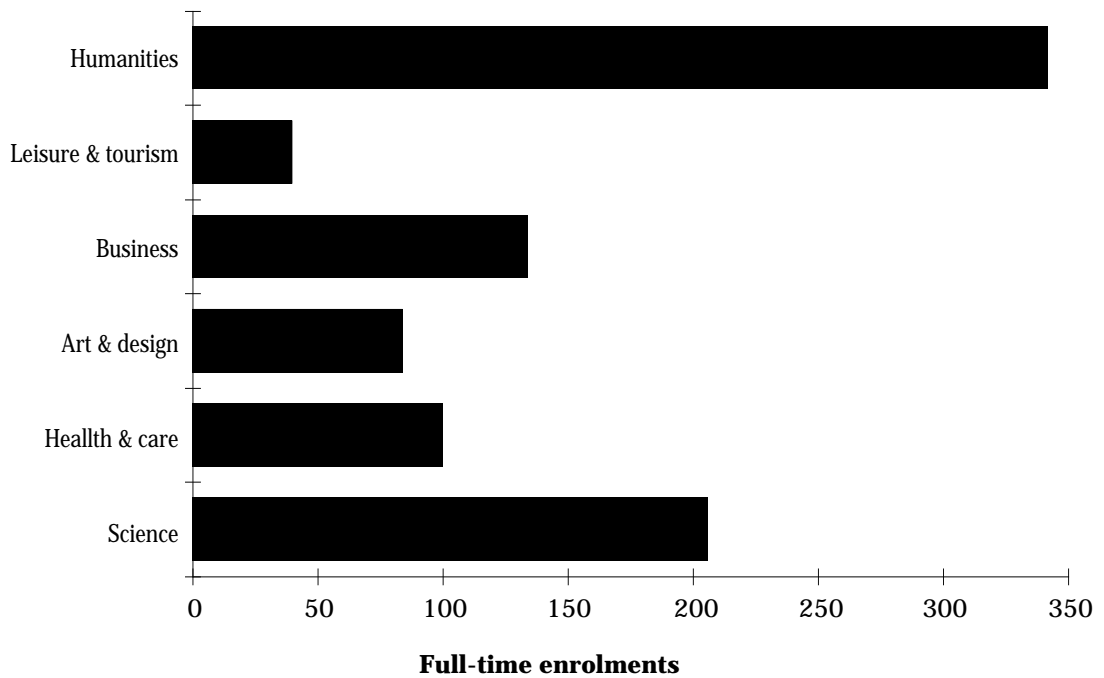
Priestley College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)



Enrolments: 906

Figure 4

Priestley College: full-time enrolments by curriculum area (1993-94)



Enrolments: 906

Figure 5

Priestley College: estimated income (16 months to July 1994)

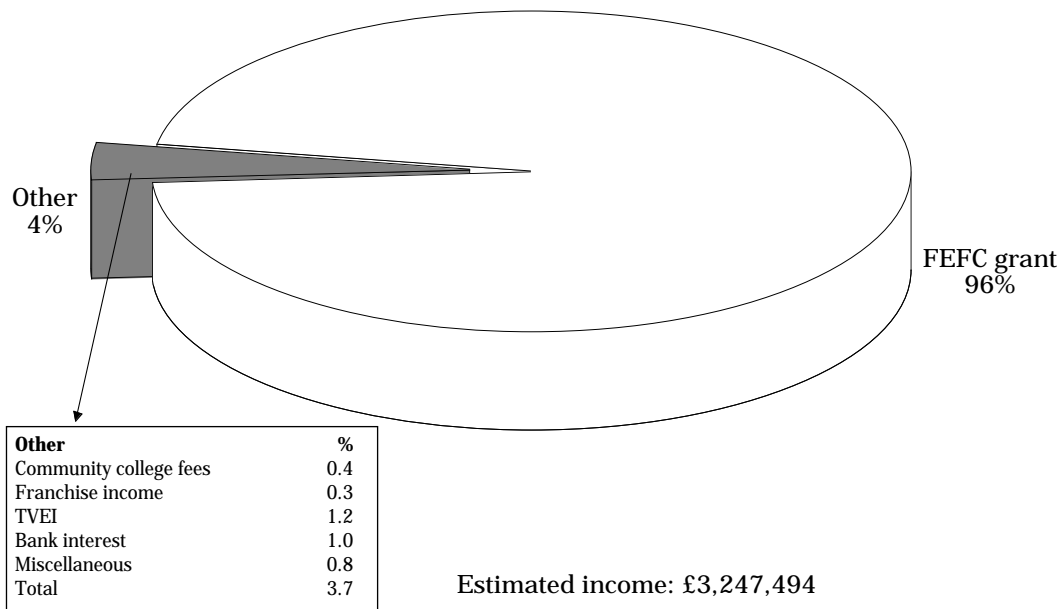
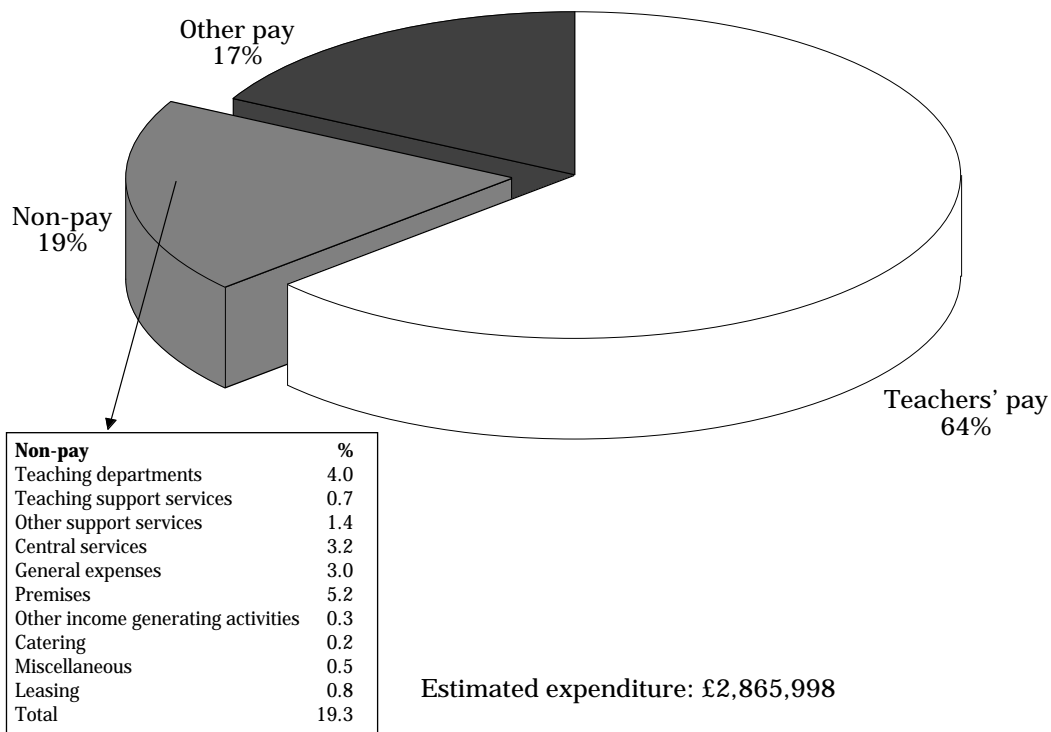


Figure 6

Priestley College: estimated expenditure (16 months to July 1994)



Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
July 1994