

# **The Mary Ward Centre**

**REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
1998-99**

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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## Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1997-98, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	60	29	2	-
Cross-college provision	18	54	24	4	-

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*  
Sample size: 108 college inspections

## Student Achievements

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

- as expected completions, which is the number of initial enrolments on qualifications where the student expected to complete the qualification in a given year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which the students have completed as expected (or are continuing with the prospect of late completion). For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not shown.

# Summary

## **The Mary Ward Centre** ***Greater London Region***

### **Inspected November 1998**

The Mary Ward Centre is an adult education institution, designated under the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992*, as eligible to receive funding from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Provision described in schedule 2 of the Act, together with non-schedule 2 provision, is funded in the centre. The centre is situated in central London and aims to promote excellence in the provision of adult education and community services. All of the students are part time, and almost all are aged 19 or over. The centre carried out its first self-assessment since the last inspection in preparation for this inspection. The report was thorough. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the report but gave more significance to some acknowledged weaknesses.

The centre offers courses in five of the 10 FEFC programme areas. The inspection included a sample drawn from three of the areas that represented more than half of the centre's provision. The centre is a successful provider of adult education. Much of the teaching is good, and some is outstanding. Students demonstrate high standards of work but these achievements are not sufficiently recorded by the centre. All teachers are part time and are well supported by managers. Some specialist resources, such as the computing equipment, are outstanding. Students receive good advice about courses. Staff have productive working

relationships with students. The centre has undertaken considerable improvements to its accommodation, although some significant shortcomings still remain. The building provides a pleasant learning environment. Arrangements to assure quality have improved but some aspects are not yet fully effective. The centre is well governed and members of the management committee are fully involved in the process of strategic planning. Management of the centre is effective and staff are committed to the centre's mission. The centre should: improve some aspects of teaching; improve the recording of the progress and achievements of students; identify, and provide more effectively for, students' learning support needs; improve the level of learning resources for students and the general facilities for students and teachers; introduce effective measurement of performance and further develop procedures to assure quality; adopt good practice in governance with regard to openness and accountability; and identify and use a wider range of management targets.

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cross-college provision</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Information technology	1	Support for students	2
Visual and performing arts	2	General resources	3
Languages	2	Quality assurance	3
		Governance	2
		Management	2

## The Centre and its Mission

1 The Mary Ward Centre is a constituent part of the Mary Ward Settlement which was founded in 1891 as a residential settlement. Its broad aim was 'the advancement of public education and the promotion of social services for the community'. The Mary Ward Legal Centre and the Mary Ward Youth Club are located nearby. The three elements of the settlement are distinct and have separate funding and management arrangements. They are all responsible to the settlement's council of management. The Mary Ward Centre fulfils the settlement's adult education role, and it has been designated under section 28 of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* (the Act) as eligible for funding from the FEFC for provision defined within schedule 2 of the Act, and also for non-schedule 2 provision. The centre moved to its present location near Holborn in central London in 1982. It is housed in a five-floor, grade II listed building which is approximately 250 years old.

2 The mission of the centre is to 'promote excellence in the provision of adult education and community services; and through these means, in harmony with the vision of our founders, to offer opportunities for self-realisation and the fulfilling of personal potential appropriate to the needs and aspirations of adults and their contribution to society in the contemporary world'. The centre remains a popular provider of adult education in an area of London that includes local authority provision, many further education colleges and other specialist adult education providers. The Mary Ward Centre has built up a strong reputation with adult learners and demand for courses continues to exceed supply. The profile of students shows that 99% of students are aged 19 or over, and more than half of the students are aged between 25 and 44 years. Approximately 20% are from minority ethnic groups.

3 The centre has strong links with the local community. More than 20% of all students are drawn from the London Borough of Camden and 66% from the boroughs of Inner London. The Mary Ward Centre has a long tradition of encouraging the recruitment of students who may otherwise have been excluded from education. The FEFC has identified the centre as one of a group of colleges which typically recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas. The centre offers long and short part-time courses only. In 1997-98, the centre's 960 courses attracted 6,700 part-time students and more than 13,000 enrolments. An additional 46 courses were run in partnership with the department for extramural studies at Birkbeck College, University of London. Much of the centre's programme has been designed to accommodate patterns of study required by those whose work, family or personal circumstances prevent long-term commitment to education. Courses are offered in the day, evening and at weekends, and these are frequently combined to make up programmes of learning in related subjects.

4 Most of the centre's provision is in information technology (IT), health and personal and professional development, visual and performing arts, languages, humanities and basic education. The centre has increased the opportunities for some students to have their achievements accredited, but the proportion of non-schedule 2 provision has shown a much greater increase. During the last three years, schedule 2 provision has increased by about 5%, and non-schedule 2 provision by more than 100%. About 92% of the centre's enrolments are now non-schedule 2. The curriculum is shaped, in part, by a number of strategic objectives. These include: the provision of courses which are not specific to occupations, but which provide transferable personal skills; courses that provide marketable skills and knowledge to those who are unemployed; and courses that provide non-vocational education and opportunities for personal fulfilment.

## The Inspection

5 The centre was inspected in November 1998. Inspectors had previously evaluated the centre's self-assessment report and reviewed information about the centre held by the FEFC. The centre was notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately two months before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by eight inspectors and an auditor working in the centre for a total of 29 days. Inspectors observed 42 lessons. They examined students' work and documentation relating to the centre and its courses. Meetings were held with governors, managers, teachers, support staff and students.

6 Inspectors identified several problems regarding the centre's data for students' achievements. These same problems have made it difficult for the centre to monitor its own performance. Information for the years 1996 and 1997 was taken from the individualised student record (ISR) held by the FEFC. Information for 1998 was supplied by the centre. The FEFC did not require the centre to record full data for retention and achievement for the non-accredited, non-schedule 2 courses in previous years. Analysis of the data was difficult because some courses are grouped together under generic codes on the ISR, some courses are a mixture of accredited and non-accredited outcomes for different students, as both are funded by the FEFC, and because achievement on non-schedule 2 courses is often at more than one level. The non-schedule 2 data taken from the ISR could not be validated by the FEFC. The centre's data for students' achievements for 1998 were examined by inspectors and found to be substantially accurate. However, non-schedule 2 courses had data for achievements which were difficult to interpret. All students who completed courses in 1997-98 were recorded on the ISR as having achieved their learning goals, sometimes without adequate assessment. The centre has not previously recorded the achievements of

students on non-schedule 2 courses. Some courses were redesignated from non-schedule 2 to schedule 2 during the three-year period from 1995-96 to 1997-98. This added to the difficulties of tracking achievements on specific courses. There is no systematic assessment of the value added to students' achievements by their courses of study at the college, and the centre does not collect comprehensive information about the destinations of students. Many students are on short courses, making such procedures difficult or inappropriate. Problems with regard to the monitoring and recording of students' achievements on non-schedule 2 courses were acknowledged in the centre's self-assessment. Across all courses, managers monitor retention but do not set targets for retention or achievement. The centre identified benchmarking as an area for development in its action plan.

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the 42 lessons inspected, 79% were good or outstanding. Only 2% were less than satisfactory. This profile is significantly better than the average figures for colleges in the sector inspected during 1997-98.

# Context

## Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Lessons	15	18	8	1	0	42
Total (%)	36	43	19	2	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98.

## Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
The Mary Ward Centre	11.1	76
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*



# Curriculum Areas

## Information Technology

### Grade 1

**9 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering the range of provision in this area, including both schedule 2 and non-schedule 2 courses. Inspectors agreed with the centre's judgements in its self-assessment report on this curriculum area.**

#### Key strengths

- highly effective teaching
- carefully planned learning supported by good student workbooks
- high standards of students' work
- high levels of progression within the modular, short-course programme
- broad range of provision which is responsive to needs
- appropriate qualifications and commercial experience of teachers
- good-quality, up-to-date equipment

#### Weaknesses

- lack of opportunities on short courses for students to learn on their own
- insufficient assessment on non-schedule 2 courses
- few opportunities for some students to have their achievements recognised with national awards

10 The centre has developed a programme with a wide range of short modular courses. These are provided at beginners, introductory, intermediate and advanced levels in the full range of office applications software. There is also a range of freestanding specialist courses. The provision of longer courses, certificated by the RSA Examinations Board has been extended and now includes computer literacy and information technology stage 1, integrated business technology stages 2 and 3, internet

technologies stage 2 and desktop publishing stage 2. This provides a good range of courses. Increasing enrolments in the past three years indicate a good match of provision to students' needs. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the centre's self-assessment report with regard to the effective organisation and management of this curriculum area.

11 Teaching is highly effective and seven of the inspected lessons were outstanding. Teaching is well planned. Teachers use equipment effectively. Tutors project their workstation screen to provide a visual demonstration for the whole class. At the same time, students perform the same operations on their own workstations. Teachers organise lessons in a lively way and extend students' learning by using good workbooks which promote their confidence and enable them to make good progress. Teachers encourage students to ask and answer questions effectively. In a few lessons, teachers fail to ensure that all students are involved throughout the development of a topic. Students' work is saved in individual files on the computer network. Students print work out to a good standard and teachers return it promptly with detailed comments. On the shorter courses, teachers are over-directive and do not encourage students to learn on their own.

12 Students produce work of a high standard. For the past three years, the average retention on RSA courses has been 99%, and 94% of students starting courses go on to achieve qualifications. Most students are on non-accredited short courses, some lasting for one day. In 1997-98, there were 2,441 student enrolments on the short courses and the overall retention rate was 99%. The centre records students as achieving their learning goals if they complete their courses and assess themselves as having succeeded. A good proportion of students progress within the modular programmes. The proportion of students progressing from beginners to introductory was

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34%; from introductory to intermediate 44%; and from intermediate to advanced 68%. The high level of students' satisfaction and progression is identified as a strength in the self-assessment report and inspectors agreed. Opportunities are missed to provide more accredited qualifications for students on the short courses and inspectors agreed with the centre's judgement that this is a weakness. It is not possible to provide a tabular summary of students' retention and achievements in this curriculum area for the reasons described in paragraph 6 of this report.

13 All teachers are part time. They bring good commercial expertise and interest to their teaching. They have opportunities for training in the range of software applications available in the centre. Inspectors agreed with the centre's judgement that the continuous process of upgrading the computer equipment is a strength. This significant investment has resulted in each of the three specialist computer rooms having 11 high performance, networked, computer workstations with printers, internet connectors and a range of integrated commercial software. The teaching rooms are small and restrict flexible use. The layout of the rooms provides a good workspace for each student and there is appropriate furniture. The curriculum area has outstanding specialist resources to support the full range of courses on offer.

# Curriculum Areas

## Visual and Performing Arts

### Grade 2

**14 Inspectors observed 17 lessons covering the range of provision in this area. Inspectors agreed overall with the judgements in the self-assessment report on the provision but they considered that a few strengths and weaknesses had not been identified.**

#### Key strengths

- much good teaching
- clear schemes of work and lesson plans
- good standard of students' work
- good exhibitions of work
- wide range of subjects and opportunities for progression

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient recognition and recording of students' achievements
- little sharing of good practice between teachers

15 The centre provides more than 200 courses covering most aspects of art, design and the performing arts. Recently introduced accredited provision includes the access to higher education course, general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) in graphic design and fine art, and City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) certificates in calligraphy and handknitting. The access course is popular and provides a flexible method of study. Students can choose from a variety of units including 'observation and imagination, painting, life drawing, sculpture and jewellery'. The performing arts provision attracts good numbers of students and is valued by them. Inspectors agreed with the centre's self-assessment that the curriculum does not have sufficient links between theory and practice, and

that course structures need to be reviewed. The programme area is effectively managed and communication is good. There is a rigorous process of teacher appraisal and lesson observations. Course review is carried out by course tutors and annual course reports are produced. These reports are variable in their quality.

16 Teaching is well planned and teachers produce clear schemes of work and lesson plans. Assignment and project briefs are good and provide students with clear aims, objectives and assessment criteria. Teachers frequently check that students understand what is expected of them and ensure that they are aware of aims and objectives during lessons. Teaching is invariably lively and engaging. Five of the inspected lessons were outstanding. Inspectors agreed with the centre's assessment that most teaching is good. Students explore and experiment with a variety of concepts. They develop ideas and increase their confidence in discussing their work. Inspectors observed one group of 'over-sixties' students working on a collage for a party and another learning how to paint. In these lessons, some outstanding experimental work was being produced. Inspectors agreed with the centre's judgement that most teachers set work appropriate to the different abilities of individual students. However, on some courses, which are taught in mixed ability classes, teachers make insufficient demands on those students who already have high levels of skill. Although teachers are committed to giving their students the broadest possible experience, inspectors agreed with the centre's assessment that, as yet, they do not provide enough variety of learning activities to students. Some teachers do not sequence learning activities effectively. There are few examples of co-operative approaches to teaching, and opportunities to share good practice are not fully exploited. Teachers make little use of new technology in their teaching.

# Curriculum Areas

17 Portfolios of students' work demonstrate some high standards of achievement. Students develop sound basic art, design and craft skills and apply them in a range of demanding projects and assignments. Teachers give students useful feedback on their work and provide clear guidance on how they can make progress. Until recently, few students have had opportunities to study for accredited qualifications. In 1997-98, 19 of the 23 students who started the access course completed it successfully. The overall range of courses enables students to progress to other courses in the centre and increasing numbers now go on to higher education. Centre data indicate that retention rates on all courses in the programme area during the last three years have ranged between 76% and 96%. Inspectors agreed with the centre's self-assessment that the arrangements for assessing and recording students' achievements on non-schedule 2 courses are underdeveloped. It is not possible to provide a tabular summary of students' retention and achievements in this curriculum area for the reasons described in paragraph 6 of this report.

18 The programme area makes good use of restricted accommodation. All classrooms, studios and workshops are efficiently used. The lack of soundproofing causes problems for students working in areas adjacent to some performing arts classes. Displays of students' work and the work of professional artists and designers are exhibited in the centre. Inspectors agreed with the centre's judgement that the teachers in this area are a significant resource. They are well qualified in their subjects and many have a teaching qualification. The majority of teachers are practising artists and designers and they bring an extensive range of expertise and experience to the centre. There is sufficient technical support staff in areas such as printmaking, sculpture and woodworking. However, students have little access to computers or other new technology to assist their learning.

# Curriculum Areas

## Languages

### Grade 2

**19 Inspectors observed 13 lessons, covering a range of languages taught in the centre. Inspectors agreed with the centre's overall assessment of its provision but considered that some weaknesses were underestimated or had not been identified.**

#### Key strengths

- good teaching on most courses
- effective development of students' language skills
- good standard of students' work
- high proportion of native language speakers as teachers
- wide range of languages and opportunities for progression

#### Weaknesses

- failure of some teachers to take account of differing learning needs of students
- insufficient assessment and recording of students' achievements
- declining retention rates and poor attendance

20 Inspectors agreed with centre's self-assessment that it provides a wide range of language courses, some of which are offered at a number of levels. The programme provides well-structured progression routes. The centre has recently introduced courses in British Sign Language and Community Interpreting and Translation. The centre's courses attract a diverse range of students who have many different reasons for learning languages. There are some unusual courses, including a distance-learning course in Sanskrit that recruits students worldwide. This course, and the taught course in Sanskrit offered by the centre

until this year, are highly rated by students. One distance learning student explained: 'you are able to absorb the beauty of the language and its script at your own pace'.

21 Inspectors agreed with the centre's self-assessment that the quality of most teaching is good. Three of the inspected lessons were outstanding. Almost all teachers are native language speakers and conduct large parts of their lessons fluently in the language being learned. They plan lessons carefully to sustain students' interest. In a lesson on making requests and ordering food, the teacher had prepared a wide range of materials and activities. The lesson was conducted at a lively pace and included whole class work, work in pairs, a quick vocabulary test and group role-play. In the best lessons, teachers use good visual prompts, games and role-plays to involve students in the learning. In whole class work, they question students individually to ensure that all have an opportunity to contribute. However, few teachers plan effectively to meet the individual needs of all learners or to ensure that students develop study skills, such as note-taking. In a small minority of lessons, teachers made excessive use of English. Not all teachers set and mark homework regularly or give enough helpful feedback to students on their work. There is no common approach to the setting of learning tasks or for the assessment of students' progress. Teachers find some classes, which have students of widely differing abilities, difficult to teach.

22 Students who enrol on language courses at the centre have varied motives. Some wish to improve their language skills for vocational purposes, but many more enrol for personal and social reasons. They measure their progress in practical ways, such as their ability to communicate with friends and relatives in the foreign language, to read texts, to listen to radio broadcasts, or to deal with callers at work in their own language. Inspectors found that students' achievements were often

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demonstrated in their developing fluency and confidence in oral work and, in some cases, their increasingly fluent writing. In a number of lessons, or where there was a context of good social relationships and much mutual support, students displayed an impressive ability to communicate in the language they were learning. An example of this was that students of Cantonese continued to speak the language during their lesson break. As the centre's self-assessment report acknowledged, the assessment and recording of students' progress and non-accredited achievements is underdeveloped. The number of students choosing to enter for examinations, or follow accredited courses, is small. This was identified as a weakness by the centre. On some courses, such as the RSA basic level certificate of business language competence and the Community Interpreting and Translation course, there are high pass rates. Centre data indicate that retention rates overall are declining. On courses leading to the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry preliminary level certificate in foreign languages for industry and commerce, retention rates declined from 94% in 1995-96 to 73% in 1997-98. Attendance in the lessons observed during the inspection was low, at 67%. It is not possible to provide a tabular summary of students' retention and achievements in this curriculum area for the reasons described in paragraph 6 of this report.

23 All of the teachers are part time. The centre makes good efforts to ensure that they are well informed and that they can meet as a team from time to time. There is a well-developed programme of lesson observations and feedback to teachers. Some teachers are not fully aware of all of the resources at their disposal. There is a good supply of equipment, including ready access to audio and video playback machines. Students can purchase course textbooks through the centre. As the self-assessment report acknowledged, there is no technician help for the production of

materials, many of which are provided by teachers at their own expense. Language students and teachers have no access to IT.

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 2

**24 Inspectors broadly agreed with the centre's self-assessment of this area. However, inspectors attached different significance to a few strengths and weaknesses identified by the centre.**

#### Key strengths

- productive working relationships between staff and students
- flexible and efficient arrangements for enrolment
- good initial guidance
- effective induction
- wide range of practical support for students with disabilities
- provision of a good creche facility
- effective procedures for monitoring absences

#### Weaknesses

- underdeveloped identification of, and provision for, students' learning support needs
- lack of specialist advice and training for supporting students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- few arrangements for guidance at the end of courses

25 The centre succeeds in its aim of being 'a friendly place to learn'. Staff have particularly productive working relationships with students which promote learning. Inspectors agreed that support for students is of good quality and that some improvements have been made since the last inspection. The centre has flexible and efficient arrangements for students' enrolment. They can enrol by telephone, fax and post or they can personally call at the centre throughout the year. Enrolment days in the summer term

are well attended. The reception area is small but welcoming. At peak times, staff deal with several hundred enrolments and many more inquiries about courses each day. The number of inquiries is not recorded nor analysed. The waiting lists held for many courses are fairly and efficiently managed.

26 Inspectors considered that the centre's judgement about the strength of initial guidance is well founded. Clear information about courses given in the prospectus is supplemented by helpful course descriptions. Useful course guides have been developed for some courses. A recent survey of students' perceptions confirmed that students are well informed about courses before they enrol. Trained reception staff and heads of department give effective guidance to many students. The principal or vice-principal offer appointments for further guidance and each year a few students take advantage of this. The centre does not monitor the number of students receiving guidance. Students can sample lessons, using a visitor's pass, to help them decide if a course is the most appropriate one for them. Individual admissions interviews are held for students on some courses. Inspectors agreed that induction is effective. All teachers ensure that students are given information about the content of the course, the teaching and assessment methods used and other information about the centre. Teachers follow a standard set of guidelines for induction. Arrangements for transferring between courses are appropriate, although in practice it is sometimes difficult because other courses are oversubscribed.

27 The centre acknowledges that arrangements for learning support are underdeveloped. Since the last inspection, the centre has encouraged students to ask for support. The prospectus includes short sections on the centre's willingness to provide support for students who may have difficulty in coping with a course, although little reference is made to the kinds of support available. Inspectors did

# Cross-college Provision

not agree with the self-assessment report that one of the strengths was that most students receive effective learning support which takes account of their individual needs. Teachers identify students' needs and provide learning support, but they have received no training for this role. Some informal support is provided for students. Teachers discuss students' work with them before or after a lesson. On a few accredited courses, there are tutorials. Improving the quality of learning support is one of the centre's strategic priorities.

28 The centre is committed to supporting students with disabilities. Many students with disabilities appreciate the practical support given by the centre. On the enrolment form, students indicate that they have a disability and how the centre can help. Staff contact these students promptly and arrangements for support are made before they start their course. Examples of support include: moving classes to teaching rooms on the ground floor for students with restricted mobility; providing induction loops for students with hearing impairment; and preparing large print learning materials for students with visual impairment. The lack of training for staff about learning difficulties and/or disabilities was considered to be a weakness by inspectors; this was not identified in the centre's self-assessment. The centre's disability statement is comprehensive but its availability is not promoted. For example, it is not referred to in the prospectus. The statement is not available in different formats, such as on tape or in Braille.

29 The self-assessment report identified the range of practical support available to students as a strength. Inspectors agreed with this judgement. Students are warm in their praise of the creche and cafe. The centre's 'over-sixties' club provides stimulating learning opportunities and valued support for members. In 1997-98, a significant proportion of students benefited from fee remissions; approximately 37% of enrolments. The centre waived fees for a

further 3% of enrolments because of hardship. Courses in computing and professional development recruit the highest proportion of students who are unemployed. The centre has taken some steps to widen participation by providing courses specifically for people who are homeless and for ex-offenders.

30 A rigorous system ensures that students' absences are followed up and that students are encouraged to return to their studies. Students are reassured that the teacher will welcome them and help them with work they have missed. The self-assessment identified that course descriptions are often not explicit about progression routes or how students can get advice on progression. Arrangements for providing guidance, including careers guidance, when students complete their courses are not well developed. This weakness was understated in the self-assessment report. There are examples of teachers and of heads of department giving useful guidance to students on other courses students can progress to and career options.

## General Resources

### Grade 3

**31 In this section of the self-assessment report, the centre identified some strengths that were not relevant to general resources. Inspectors agreed with most of the other strengths that were identified. Inspectors agreed with the weaknesses identified by the centre but considered that the significance of some were underestimated. Some additional deficiencies were also identified by inspectors.**

#### Key strengths

- attractive learning environment
- efficient use of accommodation
- improvements to the building and upgrading of equipment



# Cross-college Provision

## Weaknesses

- insufficient space at peak times
- inadequate facilities for teachers and students
- insufficient learning resources for students
- a lack of an accommodation plan or strategy document

32 The centre occupies a building comprising two adjoining houses. The architecture and style of the building create a pleasant learning environment. There are 19 teaching rooms and five offices, in addition to a cafe and creche. The 'listed' status places constraints on alterations to the fabric of the building. Considerable improvements, however, have been made during the last three years at a cost of more than £160,000. These include easier circulation around the building, clearer directional signs and better fire evacuation routes. The centre has: upgraded office accommodation; relocated tenants off-site to provide more space; upgraded kitchen equipment; provided more toilets; and redecorated and refurbished the building. An accommodation maintenance plan is in place. Managers have made some creative use of existing space and inspectors agreed with the centre's self-assessment that accommodation is managed efficiently. The building is used intensively throughout the week and is crowded at peak times. Room utilisation is high but is not surveyed systematically. Classes are timetabled for 11 hours each day, including two lessons each evening, and at weekends, but only for 36 weeks each year. The centre estimates that the frequency of room use is currently more than 70%. A franchised, vegetarian cafe provides refreshments throughout the day and evening, and is used as a social area by students and staff. It is highly regarded by users. The building is in good decorative order and is clean and well maintained. Inspectors agreed with

the centre's own assessment of the good standards of accommodation.

33 Accommodation is a significant issue for the centre. The centre acknowledges that it has insufficient space, and that the size of the building constrains the volume of provision. Demand for many courses exceeds the number of places available and the centre has some long waiting lists for places. The shortage of space restricts facilities for teachers. Teachers do not have a room to work in when they are not teaching. The building continues to have some other significant shortcomings. These include: a lack of storage space; rooms that are sometimes too small for the number of students using them; a lack of rooms for purposes such as interviews; and noise from adjacent rooms where there are music classes. The centre does not provide a common room or other recreational facility for students, although a classroom is made available each day for quiet study and relaxation. Feedback from students and teachers indicates a lack of satisfaction with some aspects of the building. There is improved access for students with restricted mobility, although access is still limited to only one of the five floors. The centre's lease on the building expires in 2002. The intention is to renew the lease, if possible, and also to rent additional accommodation. The matter is under active consideration by the management committee but the centre does not have an accommodation plan or strategy document and did not recognise this weakness in its self-assessment. One of the objectives in the strategic plan for 1997-98 to 1999-2000 is to carry out works arising from the planned maintenance programme. There are no other strategic objectives relating to accommodation, but accommodation is given a high priority in the annual operating statement.

34 There is a good level of equipment around the building. Most of the main teaching rooms have a supply of audio and visual equipment and are carpeted and well furnished. Staff have unrestricted access to three photocopiers. There

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is a procedure for monitoring the functionality and maintenance of equipment but there is no planned replacement programme. Once a year, staff are asked to identify their needs for new equipment, but this is an informal system. A vice-principal has overall responsibility for resources and manages support staff and the budgets for IT, other equipment and furniture. The upgrading of resources in the centre during the last three years has included the purchase of new hardware and software for use by staff and students. All administrative staff and permanent academic staff have sole use of good-quality personal computers.

35 The centre provides an inadequate level of learning resources for students. Students on most courses do not have any access to computers outside of timetabled classes, and this is acknowledged as a weakness in the self-assessment report. The centre does not have a library nor a learning resource area. Some departments hold small supplies of books but not stocks of learning materials. The annual budget for books in the centre is £700. The centre has chosen not to prioritise this provision as other libraries and resources for learning are accessible locally.

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 3

**36 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but thought that some acknowledged weaknesses, such as performance review, were underestimated by the centre. By the time of the inspection, the centre had begun to address some of the issues stated in the action plan.**

#### Key strengths

- proven commitment to quality improvement
- well-developed procedures for lesson observations

- effective collection of, and responses to, the views of students

#### Weaknesses

- inadequate measurement of performance
- insufficient evidence of continuous improvement in key areas
- underdeveloped course reviews

37 The centre has made progress in developing its quality assurance procedures since the last inspection. Some aspects of quality assurance are well developed including lesson observations, staff appraisal, and the collection of the views of students. Other arrangements, such as arrangements for course reviews and the identification and use of performance indicators are still developing. The self-assessment report states that 'guidelines for quality assurance do not as yet feature analysis of past and current performance or identify areas for improvement in all endeavours'. Inspectors attached more significance to this than the centre. Quality assurance procedures were reviewed as part of the self-assessment process and a recent policy is underpinned by supporting guidelines for staff. A set of quality characteristics, standards and measurements has been developed but it is too early to evaluate its impact. Inspectors agreed with the centre's self-assessment that there is a strong commitment to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning and the student experience.

38 Staff at the centre are committed to ensuring the students have a worthwhile and enjoyable learning experience. There is a well-established and effective system for lesson observations, known as 'class visits'. Inspectors agreed with the centre that this system is a strength as it includes detailed observation sheets and constructive feedback to teachers. The proportion of lessons that are good or outstanding, as indicated by the grades awarded

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for inspected lessons, has not improved in the last three years. Quality assurance procedures are not comprehensive. The centre is still developing aspects of its course review system and it is not sufficiently effective. Managers have not yet agreed criteria by which to judge the performance of curriculum areas. In 1997-98 the centre, for the first time, conducted a useful survey of 101 courses, approximately 11%, aimed at assessing students' perception of teaching and learning. This gave the centre some benchmarking information to measure the performance on these courses.

39 Inspectors considered that the weakness identified in the self-assessment report with regard to the lack of targets for retention and achievement was underestimated. Retention is monitored and taken into account in the annual course planning process, but the decline in overall retention during the last three years was not identified as an area for action by the centre. The centre does not have consistent data for comparative analysis; the data for 1995-96 were recorded on a different basis from the following years. However, data held and used by the centre indicate that retention rates have declined between 1995-96 and 1997-98 on both schedule 2 and non-schedule 2 courses. Achievement rates on schedule 2 courses have increased, but from a very low level. Tutors are experienced in assessing students' learning and discussing their progress, but less effective in recording it. The centre is developing approaches to defining and measuring learning outcomes in non-schedule 2 work, but the monitoring of such students' achievements is not yet effective. The centre has given insufficient attention to student data analysis as a part of its quality assurance procedures.

40 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment judgement that there are effective systems for collecting and analysing students' views. These include: survey questionnaires and course evaluations; a telephone enquiry when attendance drops to 75% in a class; and a

well-used suggestion box. Summary reports are produced to evaluate the results of the surveys and suggestions. Issues are followed up by heads of department, but there is not always a record of the action taken. There is an impressive formal complaints procedure and records show detailed responses by the centre to issues raised by students. The centre is responsive to students. The centre management committee includes two student members. The student charter is available to students, but the self-assessment report acknowledged that, until recently, there had been no procedure for reviewing performance against the charter. The charter is not used effectively as part of the quality assurance process.

41 The centre has approached self-assessment conscientiously and thoroughly. Appropriate systems have been developed and teachers, support staff and governors were effectively involved in the process. The process was well managed; a comprehensive timetable of tasks and milestones was adhered to rigorously. Two self-assessment teams developed the self-assessment report. Draft sections were moderated by a self-assessment committee comprising members of the management committee. This is the first self-assessment report the centre has produced since the last inspection. The report is comprehensive. Inspectors agreed with the majority of judgements. The centre recognises the need to develop more appropriate external benchmarking in arriving at judgements. The action plan is brief, but is underpinned by more detailed departmental plans.

42 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment judgement that appraisal is well established and effective. All full-time staff and part-time support staff are appraised annually. Appraisal has been extended recently to include most part-time teachers. Teachers employed for four hours or more each week are appraised annually and others are appraised every two years. 'Class visits' are linked to the appraisal

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process. Effective use is made of the probationary period to ensure the quality of teaching staff. Training needs arising out of appraisal are fed into the annual staff development plan, which is also linked to strategic planning. A staff development policy clearly spells out staff entitlement to training and an annual report evaluates the effects of training. The centre is about to undergo assessment for Investor in People status.

## Governance

### Grade 2

**43 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report, although some additional strengths and weaknesses were also identified.**

#### Key strengths

- wide experience of management committee members
- involvement of members in strategic planning
- effective monitoring of the centre's financial position
- involvement of staff and students in the work of the management committee

#### Weaknesses

- underdeveloped monitoring and review of governors' own performance
- insufficient adoption of good practice relating to openness and accountability
- recent audit arrangements

44 As a designated institution, The Mary Ward Centre does not come within the standard instrument and articles of government for further education institutions. The centre is part of the Mary Ward Settlement which itself is a charitable company limited by guarantee, with the legal framework for its operation set by its

own memorandum and articles of association. A council of management has overall responsibility for the governance of the Mary Ward Settlement. There are two subcommittees of the council that relate to the operation of the centre: the management committee and the audit committee. The management committee has delegated responsibility for the governance of the settlement's adult education provision at The Mary Ward Centre. The respective roles of the council and the subcommittees are clear and well understood by members.

45 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the centre is adequate. The governing body, known as the management committee, substantially conducts its business in accordance with the memorandum and articles of association. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC. The management committee has established five subcommittees which operate in accordance with clear terms of reference. Proceedings at subcommittee meetings are reported to the next meeting of the management committee.

46 The composition of the management committee is unusual. It currently comprises 12 members (maximum 14), including two elected students and two elected staff members. The principal and vice-principal are ex-officio members. All members of the management committee are also on the council of management for the settlement. Although no formal search committee exists, the management committee regularly reviews the competency profile of members and makes good use of their powers to co-opt new members. Inspectors agreed with the centre's judgement that members bring a wide range of relevant experience to the management committee, including expertise in adult education, finance, general management and aspects of the curriculum offered at the centre. Members are encouraged to use their particular expertise to

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help the centre. For example, one member provides guidance on financial matters and others provide help in interviewing applicants for staff vacancies in a particular subject area. The conduct of management committee meetings is effective. Members' attendance at committee meetings is good at an average of 85%.

47 Members demonstrate a clear commitment to the ethos of the centre and inspectors and auditors agreed with the centre's judgement that the members are fully involved in the formulation of the strategic plan. Monitoring of the achievement of the goals set out in the plan is carried out through regular and clear reports to the management committee. The financial position of the centre is reviewed at each meeting of the management committee, with the head of finance being closely questioned on any variances from the approved budget. Management committee members are knowledgeable and well informed about the work of the centre. This has been reinforced through briefings and interaction with relevant centre staff through the subcommittees. Staff and students are strongly represented on both the council of management and the management committee and this brings a high level of expertise to the committee. The management committee is a strong advocate of the centre and its mission, and benefits from operating within the broader activity of the settlement's council of management. There is a strong and productive relationship between the management committee and members of the senior management group, and a clear understanding of their respective roles. An unusual feature of the management committee's approach to openness and communication is that full sets of papers from both the management committee and the council of management are placed on display at reception and in the cafe so that they may be read by anyone using the centre.

48 The management committee has been fully involved in the self-assessment process, not only

taking responsibility for the section on governance, but offering advice on all sections of the report in its various draft forms. Monitoring and review of the centre's work is well developed but procedures for evaluation of the governing body's own effectiveness are at an early stage of development. There has been no regular monitoring of the committee's effectiveness and only recently has attention been given to members' own training needs. This is recognised in the self-assessment report.

49 Members have established a voluntary register of interests, but this is not operating effectively as a number of returns are incomplete. There is no code of conduct for members nor any codified standing orders that govern the conduct of committee business. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report. In accordance with its memorandum of association, the settlement holds an annual general meeting which is open to the public and publishes an annual report on the activities of the centre and the settlement.

50 The audit committee was not operating effectively during 1997-98. It failed to ensure that the centre was provided with an internal audit service during this time and has not established formal performance indicators to monitor the effectiveness of the internal and external audit services. Other aspects of the operation of the audit committee do not accord with Council Circular 98/15, *Audit Code of Practice*. These weaknesses are being addressed by the centre.

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## Management

### Grade 2

**51 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report, although some additional strengths and weaknesses were also identified.**

#### Key strengths

- effective achievement of management objectives
- staff commitment to the centre's aims and their involvement in planning
- clear management structure and effective communications
- effective and efficient deployment of staff and other resources
- effective use of management information for monitoring purposes
- consistent exceeding of targets for funding units

#### Weaknesses

- identification and use of management targets
- documentation of the review of finances by senior managers
- document monitoring system

52 The centre has a clear and unambiguous mission which it is successful in achieving. Staff are committed to the centre's clearly published values and aims and understand and support them. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that staff are fully included in the planning of courses in their departments. The strategic plan has clear objectives which are successfully achieved, and an annual operating statement linked to these objectives.

53 The quality of teaching and learning is monitored through class visits and discussions

at head of department level. There is a broad expectation that the previous year's performance should be equalled or bettered, but success criteria for courses and the students' achievements have not yet been developed. Targets for enrolment are reviewed and reset each year, and have been exceeded for the last three years. The centre is developing aspects of performance review and a draft set of performance indicators has been discussed by managers. Managers, however, have not yet agreed a set of appropriate indicators by which performance can be monitored against agreed targets. This is clearly recognised in the self-assessment report.

54 The organisational structure has been improved since the last inspection through the appointment of more staff to manage the curriculum and courses, and to carry out strategic and cross-college functions. There are now four heads of department. Senior staff comprise the principal, vice-principal (curriculum) and vice-principal (resources). They meet weekly and keep a minute book to record decisions. A clear reporting structure exists between the senior managers, the management committee and the council of management. All staff, including tutors, have individual job descriptions and these have been reviewed recently. Regular meetings of senior and middle managers are held and staff are briefed by their head of department following heads of department meetings. There is a clear management structure, lines of communication and accountability are effective and staff are clear about their roles and those of other people. Staff and other resources are effectively and efficiently deployed and this strength was recognised in the self-assessment report. Heads of department do not have delegated budgets but work within broad parameters set by the three senior managers. Teachers feel included in the process and are pleased at the extent to which managers seek their views.

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55 The centre has a range of policies which the management committee has approved. Several of the policies such as those for IT, quality assurance and staff development, are undated. There is no document monitoring system which sets out when documents should be reviewed and when they have been updated. This makes it difficult to know whether they are current. Staff and managers feel effectively supported by the management information systems in the centre. The data on student enrolments, income and expenditure for each course are accessible on the centre data network. This allows heads of department to closely monitor each of their courses and aspects of this information are monitored on a daily basis by the principal. The management information system is not yet used to its full capacity by the heads of department and it has been recognised that further training in its use would be helpful.

56 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the centre's financial management is adequate. The centre is in a sound financial position and is benefiting from convergence of the average level of funding. The small finance team is led by a vice-principal who is appropriately experienced and qualified. The financial accounting system used by the centre is appropriate to its needs and has been certified as year 2000 compliant. Financial reports are produced for each meeting of the management committee of the centre, though these do not include a written commentary, balance sheet or rolling 12-month cashflow forecast. Monitoring of the finances by the senior management team occurs monthly, but this review is not clearly documented. Although the centre has set a strategic goal of making an annual financial surplus, and has achieved this in the last few years, performance indicators to facilitate the monitoring of the achievement of this target are underdeveloped.

57 Since the previous inspection, the centre has continued useful links with voluntary

organisations that have led to a broader range of off-site work. Educational provision is made for groups under-represented in further education. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that this was a strength. Although the work is still at an early stage, a programme for widening participation has been initiated and includes courses for homeless people, ex-offenders and single parents.

## Conclusions

58 The inspection team found that the self-assessment report provided a useful basis for planning and conducting the inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the centre's report. They identified a few strengths and weaknesses that were not included in the self-assessment report. Some weaknesses acknowledged by the centre were given more significance by inspectors, such as those relating to various aspects of performance review. Inspectors agreed with most of the grades awarded by the centre in its self-assessment report. Two grades awarded by inspectors for cross-college areas were lower than those in the centre's report. The centre had made some progress in addressing issues for development during the period between the submission of the report and the inspection.

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

# Centre Statistics

## Student numbers by age (September 1997)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	1
19-24 years	8
25+ years	84
Not known	7
Total	100

Source: college data

Note: includes students enrolled on university extra mural studies

## Student enrolments by level of study (July 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	11
Intermediate	1
Advanced	1
Higher education	7
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	80
Total	100

Source: college data

Note: many students enrol for more than one course at different levels

## Student enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 1998)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Business	0	2,930	22
Health and community care	0	1,128	8
Art and design	0	4,761	35
Humanities	0	4,127	31
Basic education	0	575	4
Total	0	13,521	100

Source: college data

Note: many students enrol for more than one course at different levels

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 65% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	16	0	0	16
Supporting direct learning contact	0	0	0	0
Other support	19	0	0	19
Total	35	0	0	35

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



# Centre Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£1,041,000	£1,114,000	£1,156,000
Average level of funding (ALF) Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£8.22	£9.13	£11.34
Payroll as a proportion of income	65%	75%	69%
Achievement of funding target	123%	124%	99%
Diversity of income	35%	40%	37%
Operating surplus	£110,000	£11,000	£21,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Payroll – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

### Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 19 or over		
		1996+	1997	1998
Schedule 2 courses	Expected completions	897	979	945
	Retention (%)	81	70	72
	Achievement (%)	13	10	21
Non-schedule 2 courses	Expected completions	4,526	5,107	10,816
	Retention (%)	93	89	90
	Achievement (%)	*	*	*

Source: college data

+data collected on a different basis from those in 1997 and 1998

\*data not recorded for non-schedule 2 courses

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