

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Monkwearmouth College

May 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.*

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 36/94

MONKWEARMOUTH COLLEGE

NORTHERN REGION

Inspected January–February 1994

Summary

Monkwearmouth College is a major provider of education and training in the Sunderland area, offering a broad and flexible range of provision for school leavers and adults. It is a well-managed tertiary college which works effectively in partnership with other bodies and has strong links with partner schools, community groups and employers. The needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are sensitively addressed. Teaching is of a high standard and staff are fully committed to the college and its aims. Students are well supported by the college tutorial system and a number of well-equipped, computer-resourced study areas. Students obtain good results in some vocational, GCE and GCSE examinations; in others, achievement is more modest. There are effective procedures for course and subject review which have resulted in positive changes to the courses offered. The management information systems do not satisfactorily meet the needs of all users. The commitment to flexible methods of learning is not clearly reflected in students' learning programmes. In a minority of courses, completion rates give cause for concern. Although the college has made creative use of space to provide attractive classrooms and learning areas, many of the buildings are old and do not meet the purposes of a tertiary college.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision		Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision		1
Governance and management		2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		2
Quality assurance		2
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	2
	accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science	1	Art & design	2
Mathematics	2	English	2
Information technology	2	Languages	3
Business, management & secretarial studies	2	Other humanities	2
Catering & bakery	2	Art & design	2
Care & nursing	3	Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	3		

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INTRODUCTION

1 Monkwearmouth College, Sunderland was inspected during the period 21-25 February 1994. The team of six inspectors looked at aspects of cross-college provision. They also drew on specialist inspections of curriculum areas carried out by 14 inspectors over the preceding two months. They visited 140 classes, studied a wide variety of documents, examined samples of students' work, and held discussions with governors, college managers, teaching staff, students, local employers, representatives of local schools, community representatives and parents.

2 The inspection was 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 Monkwearmouth College occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response was not available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Monkwearmouth College was established as part of the Sunderland Local Education Authority (LEA) reorganisation of post-16 education in 1979. It is one of two tertiary colleges within the city, the other being Wearside College. There are three Roman Catholic schools and one private school with sixth forms which also recruit from within the city. At the time of the inspection, the college had 9,879 enrolments. More than 9,100 students were on courses funded by the FEFC. Of these, over 2,000 were full-time students and 66 per cent were 19 years of age or over. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2, respectively. The college employed 576 staff: 143 were lecturers and 153 support staff. The numbers of staff, expressed as full-time equivalents, are shown in figure 3.

4 The college's wide provision includes General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses, General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and vocational courses accredited by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), the City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI) and the Royal Society of Arts (RSA). There is also a growing higher education provision developed in association with Sunderland University.

5 Sunderland is England's newest city. It has a population of 300,000. Shipbuilding and mining, which were the major sources of employment, are now almost non-existent and unemployment rates are high. Over 18 per cent of adult males are unemployed. The percentage of young people remaining in full-time education after the age of 16 has increased from about 29 per cent in 1989 to just over 50 per cent in 1993, but is still one of the lowest in the United Kingdom. About 30 per cent of 16 year olds participate in youth training schemes compared with a national average of

12 per cent for 1993. The college is working with partners in the city to address the issue of low participation by increasing the opportunities for education and training.

6 The college is based at three centres. Two of these, Swan Street and Redcar Road serve a largely inner-city community and are on the north side of the river approximately one and two miles respectively from the city centre. The other, at Shiney Row, is eight miles to the west and provides education for the more diverse communities of Washington, Houghton, Hetton and Shiney Row. All three centres provide a wide curriculum. Teaching also takes place in LEA establishments and increasingly, in response to industry's requirements, on the premises of local firms. Specialised facilities for hotel, catering and bakery studies are located at Swan Street, and those for art and design, media studies, hairdressing and beauty therapy at Shiney Row. As a consequence of LEA policies, prior to incorporation, Wearside College, the other tertiary college in the city, has the specialised facilities for heavy engineering, construction and languages. Wearside College also provides the general post-16 education for the south of the city.

7 Monkwearmouth College is organised into 12 schools: languages and communication studies; humanities; science; mathematics; design and creative arts; leisure and the performing arts; foundation studies; secretarial studies; business and computing; professional and management studies; hotel, catering and hospitality studies, and social and community studies. The number of full-time equivalent students by curriculum area and mode of attendance is shown in figure 4.

8 The mission of the college is to increase participation in education and training and to help all the people of Sunderland to realise their full potential by providing them with the means to acquire the skills, knowledge and understanding needed for work, further study and family and community life. It aims to do this by offering high quality learning opportunities in a supportive, high quality environment.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 General education and vocational courses are delivered in both the major population areas served by the college and they are available in full-time and part-time modes. The number of courses for specific community groups and for businesses is growing rapidly through an effective and expanding network of partner organisations in the region.

10 The bulk of the provision is managed and timetabled as two unified programmes: the advanced studies programme and the intermediate studies programme. A third programme, the higher studies programme, is currently being developed. The central admission staff use this structure to design individual programmes for students. The structure allows programmes to be constructed which bring together both academic and vocational elements. In 1993-94, about 30 per cent of full-time students

took advantage of this, most of them GNVQ students opting for additional general education subjects.

11 The extensive general education provision includes 36 subjects offered at GCE A level, 14 at GCE AS level and 33 at GCSE. Most subjects are offered both at Shiney Row and at one or other of the city-centre locations. Programmes are available in a range of attendance patterns and this has encouraged students not traditionally represented in further education to return to college. A particular strength of the provision is the number of students studying through open learning. At the time of the inspection, almost 400 adult students were studying a range of 20 GCSE subjects through open learning and about 170 were studying one or more of 20 GCE A level subjects.

12 The vocational provision reflects the college's commitment to curriculum development. The college was quick to recognise that the new GNVQ courses offered a better way of providing education for some school leavers. Four of the five available GNVQ vocational areas were piloted by the college in 1992-93. All five are now offered by the college at intermediate and advanced level and in 1993-94 the college is piloting the GNVQ foundation course in health and social care. The business studies team has developed an innovative part-time route to GNVQ; and the mathematics team has developed a BTEC national diploma for careers in commerce and industry, the only such course in the country. The college fully supports National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Courses are available in most vocational areas.

13 There is good provision for students with moderate or severe learning difficulties. Students can enrol on specifically-designed courses or join mainstream courses and receive additional learning support. Effective links have been established with external agencies to ensure that students are recruited to the most suitable course. The college is flexible in devising programmes which best suit individual students. Often there are arrangements which encourage students to transfer between specific and mainstream courses. Further progression routes into employment and continuing education are being developed.

14 The college has forged many productive partnerships with other bodies who have a major stake in the region's future. The college is linked with Sunderland University in a variety of schemes designed to enable wider participation in higher education. Students with no specific entry qualifications who successfully complete a foundation-year programmes in science, computing or engineering-related subjects are guaranteed a place at Sunderland University. In an imaginative development involving the college and Sunderland City Challenge, preparatory units for these foundation year courses are being prepared for delivery through open learning.

15 The college company, Monkwearmouth Business Development Centre

Ltd, is used to manage the modest commercial activities of the college. The expertise and links built up through the college's work with Wearside Training Enterprise Council (TEC), Sunderland City Challenge and other bodies now provide substantial opportunities for expanding these activities. Contracts won by the college for its work for business and for some community projects amount to over £800,000 since April 1993. This is a threefold increase on the previous year. Monkwearmouth College works with Wearside College, the University and the TEC to supply training needs analysis to small companies. In 1993-94, the college is the principal provider in the partnership.

16 Links with schools are well managed and form an essential part of the college's marketing strategy. The curriculum in both the schools and the college has benefited. The college has worked with local schools to develop a number of GNVQ units. In 1993-94, over 300 pupils in four of these schools are taking one or more GNVQ units. Strong links with the LEA are maintained by using the authority's tertiary adviser as a general consultant and facilitator for the college.

17 The success of these networks is a result of the excellent personal relationships developed by the marketing team and others. The college should work to create a higher public profile for the college in the wider community and to improve the attractiveness of some of the college's printed information.

18 The college's mission statement emphasises equal opportunities and this emphasis is reflected in the curriculum. There is specific provision for disadvantaged adults, single parents and women-only groups. A course entitled 'What the hell do I do now?' has been developed to introduce adults to the range of education opportunities open to them. It has been delivered to over 140 participants in a number of community centres. A major factor in the success of the course has been the method of recruitment which takes place in local primary schools and in mother and toddler groups. Other projects are aimed at reaching young single parents and youngsters under 16 years of age who are non-attenders at school. The college has also designed courses specifically to meet the needs of the small number of ethnic minority groups in the locality. Managers are actively addressing ways of providing education for other groups in the area which are under represented in the college.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19 The college is well managed. College managers present an energetic and responsive image. They seek positive change and deal effectively with the various issues that the college faces. Responsibilities within the management structure are clearly located and all staff know who their line manager is and to whom they are accountable.

20 The governing body has 16 members including the principal, two college staff, a student, and a representative of the TEC. Its other members are drawn largely from the commercial sector, and are particularly strong

in financial expertise, both public and private. Local community interests are also well represented. At the time of the inspection, there were four vacancies which led to occasional operational difficulties.

21 Relationships between governors, the principal and vice-principals are good. Managers set targets for the college which the governors use in assessing the college's performance. Governors receive and review policy documents, and provide a broad steer on implementation. Staff below the level of vice-principal said they would welcome the opportunity for more contact with the governors.

22 The principal takes the lead with his senior management colleagues in operating an open and participatory style of management. There is a strong commitment to keeping staff informed and involving them in discussions on major college issues. For example, the college management group of principal, vice-principals and assistant principals holds a series of consultative meetings for all staff whenever there is an issue that requires a consistent message or where clarity is needed on the college's stance. The roles and functions of the academic board are still to be finally agreed. The board requires a clearer remit if it is to support changes in the college.

23 The strategic plan provides a general scenario for the college's development over the next few years. It was circulated to staff and the board of governors for their consideration. Comments were also invited from other organisations including the TEC, partner schools and the LEA. The amended version was used to develop the college's operational plan and subsequently by heads of school and cross-college co-ordinators in producing their own plans. As yet, no standard format exists for these school and cross-college plans, which makes it difficult to relate them effectively to the college's overall strategies and targets. The college has developed new policies on a wide range of issues. These are helpful in defining the parameters within which staff and students are expected to work. However, many of the policy documents are excessively lengthy and staff, though aware of their existence and their general tenor, do not often consult them.

24 The college's organisational structures have evolved in response to changing circumstances. They are both complex and dynamic. There are large number of different teams led by team leaders or co-ordinators which are built around three aspects of the college's work: the curriculum areas, the intermediate and advanced studies programmes, and the college-wide functions such as admissions, learning resources and open learning. Most staff are members of several of these teams. The major teams such as the intermediate studies programme team and advanced studies programme team meet weekly and have spawned smaller working groups which meet even more frequently to deal with particular issues. This way of working creates strong informal networks that allow the college to deal very quickly with new developments. The teams provide an effective mechanism for sharing good practice and initiatives, enabling the college to achieve consistency and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. Staff comment

positively on the effectiveness of the team approach.

25 As well as the weekly meetings of the college's senior managers, there are also regular meetings of heads of school and senior co-ordinators with the appropriate member of senior management. Middle managers also meet fortnightly with the college's senior managers as the college management forum. The college management forum was set up at the initiative of heads of school and senior co-ordinators and is seen by them as essential for their effective functioning and a key element in the chain of communication. Despite these mechanisms and the publication of a weekly college newsletter, a recent survey of staff identified a degree of dissatisfaction over college communication systems. There is a general sense among staff that too much paperwork is generated both internally and externally. A more consistent and focused approach to internally-produced documents should be adopted.

26 Split-site working leads to management difficulties but these are being addressed as a matter of priority. Each centre is the responsibility of a senior manager and generally the college copes well with its different locations. There is a good sense of corporate identity. For example, the college's administrative staff have voluntarily agreed to adopt a practical and attractive college uniform which the college provides. Many corridors carry displays which celebrate the achievements of students.

27 Financial responsibility is devolved to heads of school through a complex but effective system under which targets are set for curriculum areas to achieve in relation to their student-to-staff ratios. Additional funds are allocated to those areas that recruit over their projected numbers. Some budget holders, particularly those below heads of school level, experience difficulties with the system, and it is currently being modified.

28 In 1992-93 the college's unit of funding per full-time equivalent student was £2,611. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges was £2,444. The broad patterns of the college's estimated income and expenditure are shown in figures 5 and 6. In 1993-94 the college exceeded its 8 per cent growth target by 1 per cent.

29 College information systems are not responsive enough to the demands of some users. Staff are aware that the information is there, but it is not always available to them in a form which they can easily access and use. Some records are inaccurate and a particular problem is caused by the complicated and inconsistent sets of course codes that are used by the college. Information about the examinations are still collected manually and the system is not geared to produce statistics.

30 There is considerable proliferation of computer-based management information systems developed by individual members of staff to meet their particular requirements. A review group has been set up to develop proposals for an integrated system. It faces a considerable task. The college should attend to these matters urgently if it is to meet the operational requirements of a devolved management system operating

across three centres and the increased demands for information from both internal and external sources.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

31 Support for students at Monkwearmouth College reflects the caring ethos of the college and a commitment to parity at all three centres. Students are appreciative of the friendly relationships with staff and consider the support provided to be of a high standard.

32 The college is an active partner in the Sunderland City network of educational provision, which comprises the Careers Service, local schools, Wearside College, the University of Sunderland and the TEC. There are many tangible results of this partnership. For example, partners are collaborating on an accreditation of prior learning project and establishing a city centre guidance point. In addition the two Sunderland colleges produce a joint prospectus.

33 Interviews and enrolments for full-time students are dealt with effectively by a central admissions team of 80 trained members of the lecturing staff who provide specialist guidance. Admissions for full-time students are co-ordinated by an admissions officer who logs and tracks all applications rigorously. There is no systematic follow-up of students who enrol but fail to attend. Students generally felt well advised about the content of their programmes of study. The college allows all prospective full-time students who receive conditional offers while still at school to use the college facilities before they begin their studies.

34 Full-time students receive a well-planned induction to the college and to specific subjects. They generally found the programme useful although some of the student groups were considered to be too large. The induction of part-time students is not as thorough.

35 Each full-time student is allocated two hours per week tutorial time. Tutors receive clear guidance on suitable tutorial activities. Attendance is monitored and absences are followed up quickly through the tutor system. A senior co-ordinator oversees tutorial arrangements for students following GCE/GCSE programmes. Tutorials for vocational students are co-ordinated by the appropriate head of school. Some of the time allocated to vocational course tutorials is used to support aspects of the course. Tutors working on the same programmes have the opportunity to share good practice but there is no mechanism to enable practice to be shared between tutors on vocational courses and tutors working with GCE/GCSE students. Levels of tutorial support for part-time students are inconsistent.

36 Not all tutor groups make use of the record of achievement and there are limited opportunities for recording students' participation in extra-curricular activities. In some areas of work, students had no sense of ownership of their records of achievement.

37 Work experience placements are available for all full-time students. In addition, students benefit from exchange programmes and visits from foreign students. All full-time students are encouraged to participate in

activities outside their main course. The range of activities offered by the college is limited. It is mainly sports-related though there are, for example, groups working in school and hospital placements. In September 1993, about 900 of the full-time students signed up for wider curriculum activities. About 600 of these students were still attending regularly at mid-year which represents a creditable retention rate for a voluntary activity.

38 Flexible learning, which allows students to work on resources independently in their own time and at their own pace, has been given a high priority by the college. It intends to increase the proportion of the curriculum which is delivered in this way from the present 10 per cent to 30 per cent by 1995. The flexible learning bases in all three centres have been equipped to a good standard and they are well used. Computer-based technology centres are available at each centre: the technology centre at Swan Street also opens on Saturday mornings and this is much appreciated by students. The use of the centres is encouraged by lecturers, but course and subject teams should develop a better strategy to ensure that work in the flexible learning centres becomes a natural part of students' learning.

39 The college has recently launched a pilot project to identify the literacy and numeracy needs of students as they join the college. Of those screened, 40 per cent were found to have specific needs. Additional support was made available on a limited basis through the flexible learning centres but the take-up by students was disappointingly low. This should be reviewed before the system is extended for use with all students.

40 All students have access to a valued counselling service, organised and delivered by five well-qualified and highly-committed lecturing staff. Although the amount of time they can give to counselling has increased over the past three years, the provision is fully stretched in the face of mounting demand from students and staff. There is no supervision of this service and the fact that it is staffed by lecturers limits its provision largely to term time. Careers guidance is comprehensive. A qualified member of staff and an educational guidance officer make effective use of existing links with the city careers service. There are creche facilities at Swan Street and there is a nursery at Redcar Road. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by five care support workers who attend to their specific needs and who are available to work with them in teaching sessions. The college has no system for co-ordinating the diversity of student support mechanisms but areas of support generally work well together.

41 The students' union is active and benefits from the presence of a sabbatical president. The union has a base at only one of the three centres. To date, the union has not, as intended, elected one of their number to serve on the corporation board or academic board. Generally, students felt that they were well informed of their rights and responsibilities and

most understood the ways in which the union could support them.

42 Academic staff know the terms of the Charter for Further Education and are enthusiastic about its introduction. The college intends to use the charter to make full-time and part-time students' rights explicit, and to make it easier to gain information on aspects of college life. A college charter exists in draft form and plans are well advanced for it to be implemented fully by June 1994. The draft has been developed with emphasis on simple English and clear communication.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

43 Inspectors visited 140 teaching sessions, covering most major curriculum areas of the college. Work was inspected at all three centres and included full-time, day-release and evening sessions in classrooms, laboratories, studios and learning centres. Sixty per cent of the sessions inspected had strengths which clearly outweighed the weaknesses. The following table summarises the inspection grades.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Total
GCE A/AS level	8	17	9	1	0	35
GCSE	3	8	1	0	0	12
GNVQ	1	6	6	4	1	18
NVQ	4	9	12	0	0	25
Other	6	22	20	2	0	50
Total	22	62	48	7	1	140

44 The majority of lessons were well prepared and lesson plans had clear aims and structure. Course documentation was generally of a high standard. For example, leaders of the GNVQ advanced level course in business kept comprehensive records of both the teaching programme and students' progress. The majority of courses had schemes of work covering the syllabus content and the assessment requirements of the awarding bodies.

45 Lecturers had a sound knowledge of their subject, and most used real-life examples to maintain relevance, topicality and student interest. On a number of vocational courses, visiting lecturers linked lesson activities with contemporary developments in the world of work. This was particularly evident in courses in social care, business, management, hairdressing and beauty therapy and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In French classes the language assistant made particularly useful contributions.

46 Lecturers developed a friendly and supportive atmosphere which encouraged students to take an active part in classes and to develop responsibility for managing their own work. Lecturers showed enthusiasm

for their subjects and much of the teaching was stimulating. Students were often organised into groups to discuss topics which the teacher had introduced. In the best lessons, lecturers used a variety of teaching methods to encourage student participation and checked regularly that learning had taken place. Most of the work was appropriately challenging and students were developing their knowledge and understanding.

47 In science classes, constant interaction between lecturer and student ensured that students were made aware of their own progress. Science lecturers also encouraged students to formulate their own plans of action, establish the targets they intended to achieve and review the progress they had made. In an NVQ business administration session, individual students had the opportunity to work through a wide range of office activities at their own pace while the lecturer provided individual support and opportunities for assessment.

48 A small minority of lecturers failed to use appropriate teaching methods or to organise the work effectively. For example, in one social and community studies class, the lecturer took little account of the wide range of students' abilities; the task was not adequately introduced and students' understanding of the task was not checked. The learning experience for lower-attaining students could be improved by using explicit short-term objectives. In a few sessions, the slow pace of the work resulted in students losing interest in the topic. Some lecturers used overhead projector transparencies and handouts which were not adequately prepared.

49 The practical work in the laboratories, kitchens and bakery areas was conducted safely. Lecturers ensured students were familiar with the relevant health and safety legislation as well as safe working practices.

50 On courses specifically designed for students with learning difficulties and/or disability, staff had high expectations of their students. Lecturers used a variety of teaching strategies, and students were highly motivated and eager to learn. The work was lively and interesting and students were challenged to respond. In some classes, the contributions of visitors from community projects enhanced the classwork and widened the experience of students. In mainstream classes, not all lecturers took sufficient account of the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a consequence, students sometimes engaged in activities which were inappropriate.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

51 Students spoke positively about their studies and their college. Many students' high level of motivation mirrored the enthusiasm of their lecturers. Second-year students were particularly appreciative of the development of the learning centres.

52 Literacy, numeracy, communication and information technology

skills are developed in all BTEC and GNVQ courses. Progress is regularly monitored and targets set. In other areas of work, particularly some GCE A level and NVQ courses, students are not given the opportunity to develop the full range of core skills.

53 A college policy statement commits teams to marking and returning all assignments promptly. Examples of good practice were found in the GNVQ business course and in science subjects. The great majority of work was marked and returned to the students with full and helpful comments from teachers. In most, but not all cases, standards of assessment were appropriate for the level of work.

54 Retention rates have been used as an important performance indicator for course and subject teams for some years. Relatively few students leave before finishing their course. Average retention rates have been consistently above 93 per cent for the last three years, and many full-time and part-time courses have retained all their students. However, some full-time groups in computer studies have high levels of non-completion. There are significant variations in completion rates for part-time students. Courses providing preparation for higher education and language courses have completion rates of below 70 per cent. On one foundation level course, high absenteeism among students may have contributed to their failure to develop an effective knowledge base. Students are able to change courses and subjects easily after receiving appropriate guidance but the numbers doing so are low. From September 1993 to February 1994 approximately 2 per cent of students changed their course or subject.

55 In 1993, a total of 253 students, aged 16-18, entered for two or more GCE A levels. They achieved an average of 12 points (where A=10, E=2) compared with a national average for all students of 14.7. This performance places the college in the top 40 per cent of colleges within the further education sector. Many other students are over the age of 19 years and are often from backgrounds lacking educational experience at this level. Over 250 of these students gained one or more GCE A level passes and in many subjects students achieved pass rates of over 80 per cent. In 1993, the pass rates for GCE A level mathematics students rose to 100 per cent after the mathematics team changed to a modular syllabus.

56 The college commissioned an independent value-added survey from the LEA designed to measure students' progress in college by comparing their qualifications on entry with their final achievements. The achievements of all 16 year old leavers in the city were tracked. The survey shows Monkwearmouth college students achieving better grades than predicted from prior achievements at GCSE. Managers make use of value-added analysis to monitor the achievements of subject teams.

57 The wide variation in the age, background and previous achievements of students makes success in the GCSE difficult to evaluate. For example, students of all ages attending in all modes in mathematics achieved an

average A-C grade pass rate of 63 per cent which is higher than the national average while other subjects such as English language achieved 36 per cent, which is lower. In 1993, over 900 students entered 1,400 GCSE subjects. Of these over 52 per cent achieved A-C grades, which is higher than the national average of 50 per cent for colleges in the further education sector. (Source: Department for Education statistics.)

58 Of the 77 students in the final year of study for a BTEC National Diploma in 1992-93, 92 per cent achieved the full qualification. This compares favourably with the average across all further education colleges of 80.5 per cent and places the college in the top 25 per cent of institutions within the sector.

59 Most students progress to further study or employment. In 1993, over 74 per cent of students from the BTEC National Diploma in business and finance went to study at university. Over 81 per cent of the students on the two access to higher education courses continued their studies at university.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

60 The college has a strong commitment to quality assurance. There is a detailed policy and strategy for assuring quality within the institution and great efforts are made to ensure that quality issues are considered at all managerial levels. The college company aims to achieve certification to British Standard 5750 by June 1994.

61 Reviewing and evaluating courses is established practice in all areas of the college's work. The results of monitoring, evaluation and review activities inform each new cycle of planning. The college has set up a quality group. It receives analysis derived from centrally-collated information and sets target dates for teams to respond to these analyses. The reports from each team are considered by the quality group and recommendations are made to the college management group and the governors. Course and subject teams use comprehensive records of the success rates of students by age and mode of attendance to review progress and set new targets.

62 As part of its approach to quality, the college has successfully made use of a number of 'continuous improvement project' groups, formed to meet identified objectives within specified time scales. Ten of these are in operation in 1993-94. They make a significant contribution to successful change. For example, a project on parental links has generated information packs and newsletters, and organised consultation evenings.

63 Senior managers in the college have an effective system for developing short, medium and long term targets for each school and its component teams. Reports produced by heads of school regularly incorporate statistics on the progression and achievement of students. Optical mark readers have been introduced to enable data from students, staff, employers and parents to be processed more quickly. The analysed data are given high

prominence in the college and are used to set targets for teams. The system has had initial difficulties and the interpretation of data requires care.

64 The college's strong commitment to staff development is reflected in the significant proportion of the college's budget that is allocated for this purpose. Four per cent of the total college budget is used for general curriculum development. The principal retains part of this budget for the retraining of staff from areas where student numbers are declining. An additional 1 per cent is delegated to the staff-development committee and heads of school for staff development. There are many informal opportunities for staff to discuss their development needs in the context of the institution, schools and teams but individual staff-development needs are not identified systematically, and the enthusiasm and support of the particular line manager often determines whether or how identified needs are met. The staff development committee plans to improve the evaluation of training and developmental activities. The Investors in People scheme is being introduced and staff are working well in order to meet targets agreed with the TEC.

65 A staff-appraisal scheme focusing on the personal and professional development of lecturers is being introduced. So far, training on appraisal has been at senior and middle manager level. Considerable care has gone into the consultation process. All staff have been involved. From the consultation process, college managers have identified a potential gender and status imbalance if the appraisers are to be drawn solely from line managers. As a result the nature, status and number of appraisers is being reconsidered.

66 There is an induction programme for all new staff. For full-time staff employed from the beginning of the academic year, the programme is well managed. The college should ensure that those joining at other times also have access to an induction programme. Briefing sessions have been started for part-time staff but these are not as thorough as for full-time staff. A staff handbook is available and a revised edition is being developed.

RESOURCES

Staffing

67 Staff are well qualified and experienced although the college is concerned about the ratio of part-time to full-time staff in some areas. Staff are deployed sensibly and sensitively after consultation at school and team meetings. The nature of their work has changed. Both academic and support staff are engaged in a broader range of activities and have increased responsibility. Most staff find their work more satisfying as a result. Morale is generally good. Staff can see that their efforts and suggestions are being taken up and often lead to positive change.

68 A personnel manager has been appointed recently and a post of assistant personnel manager is to be advertised. Additional personnel advice is purchased from the local authority. Job descriptions for support

staff are being reviewed by the personnel manager. Specifications for the roles of middle and senior managers have recently been updated.

69 Technician and other support staff are highly valued within the college and often attend course and other team meetings. A recent survey of technical support staff indicated variations in provision between schools and identified areas where new posts are required. In areas that are currently well catered for, support staff are used effectively to enable lecturing staff to maximise their contact with students. Administrative support for academic staff varies. The central provision works well for some staff, but not for all.

Equipment

70 A teaching and learning resources committee monitors the use of equipment and makes recommendations on equipment needs. Most classrooms and teaching areas have suitable specialist equipment.

71 Some curriculum areas, for example beauty therapy, and catering and bakery, lack some necessary specialist equipment. As the NVQ and GNVQ programmes extend, additional equipment will also be required in other areas. Books and software resources are generally adequate. Compact disk (CD-ROM) resources are concentrated at Shiney Row but catalogues of titles are kept at each centre to encourage use. The replication of resources to serve all three centres causes problems.

72 The college has invested large sums of money over the last three years to provide a reasonable number of computers at all three centres. The flexible learning centres contain most of the book and computer-based resources. Computers are readily available for all students to use. They are well-managed and technician support is good. Staff are free to use the computers but this has implications for issues of confidentiality and data protection. There should be a replacement policy to ensure maximum benefit is obtained from these resources.

Accommodation

73 The main buildings on the three college sites were originally secondary schools and their design is less than ideal for their present use. Within these constraints, suitable accommodation has been created for the college's purposes. In particular the interior of the Swan Street buildings shows how an attractive learning environment can be created from a poor starting point.

74 Many of the college's buildings are of an inflexible design. The ratio of useable teaching space to overall area is poor. The three-centre operation results in many difficulties in managing the college and its provision. Library, technology and flexible learning centres are often separated within each building. Not all parts of the college are accessible to non-ambulant students though much has been achieved. The main entrances lack a welcoming focus for enquiries or advice.

75 In each centre, many general purpose classrooms have been refurbished and redecorated to a good standard. Some of these rooms are employed as base rooms for particular subject areas. The best, for example the English base rooms at both Redcar Road and Shiney Row, contain specialised resources and wall displays that combine to give them a strong subject identity. In some subjects, the development of the allocated base room has been less imaginative. The quality of the specialist teaching accommodation is generally good while the library, flexible learning and technology centres offer an attractive learning environment to all.

76 A clear accommodation strategy has been developed which takes account of the limitations in the quality and life expectancy of the present accommodation and the projected growth in student numbers.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

77 The college is making good progress towards achieving its mission to help the people of Sunderland to realise their full potential through participation in education and training. The strengths of the provision are:

- the responsive and pro-active management at all levels of the college
- the wide-ranging provision which is responsive to local demands
- active participation in many local and regional networks and partnerships
- the commitment to flexible and open learning
- the high standard of the teaching
- the strong guidance and support for full-time students
- the general level of student achievement in external examinations
- staff who are fully involved in, and committed to, the college.

78 If the college is to maintain its responsiveness, continue its planned growth and improve the high standards of teaching and student achievement, it should address the following issues:

- the streamlining of college systems and improvements to the accuracy and accessibility of management information
- the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in mainstream classes
- effective use of the facilities in the flexible learning centres
- low retention and completion rates in a minority of courses
- the suitability for purpose of many of the college buildings.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)

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

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

 - 4 Enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)

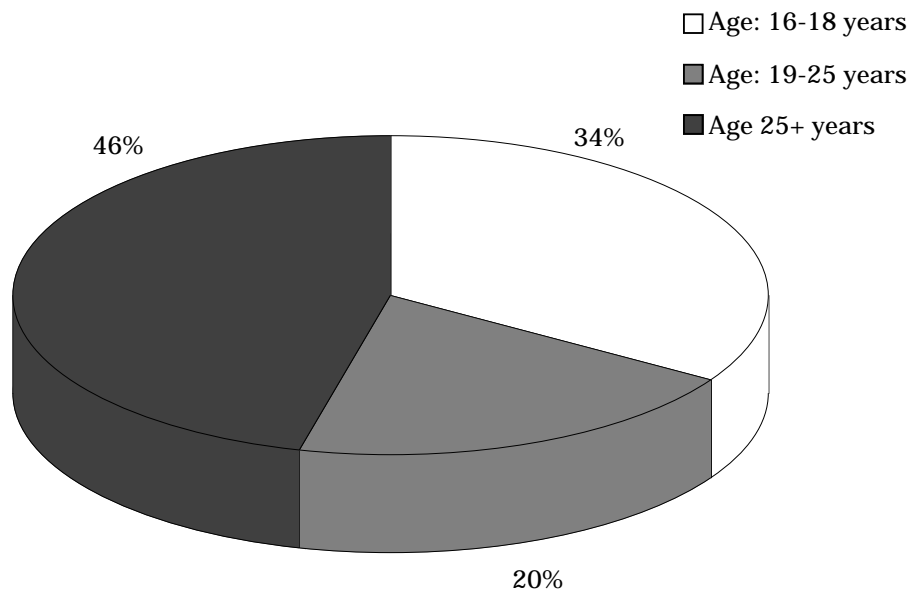
 - 5 Estimated income (16 months to July 1994)

 - 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

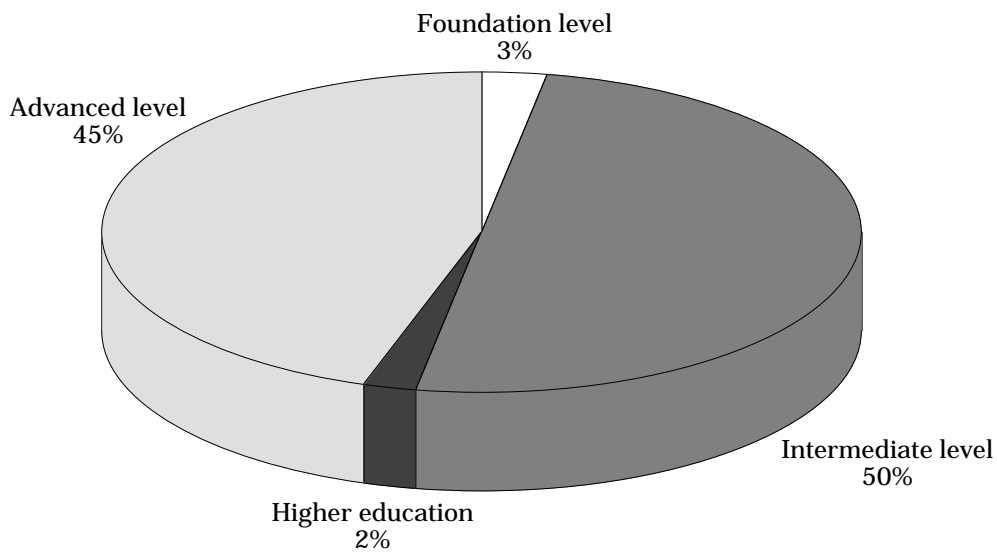
Monkwearmouth College: percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)



Enrolments: 9,879

Figure 2

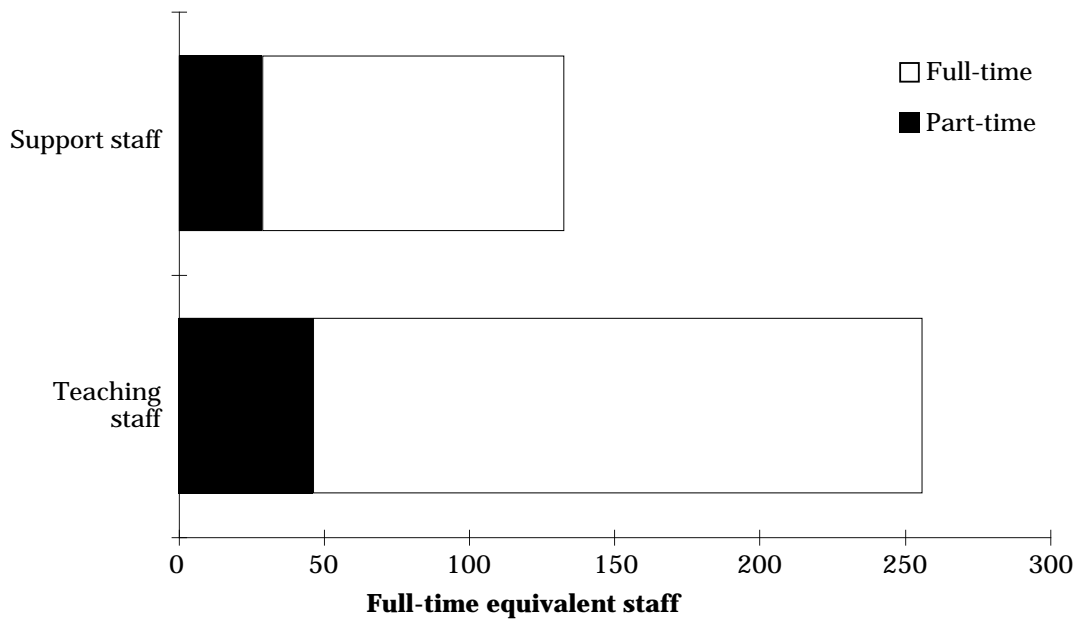
Monkwearmouth College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)



Enrolments: 9,879

Figure 3

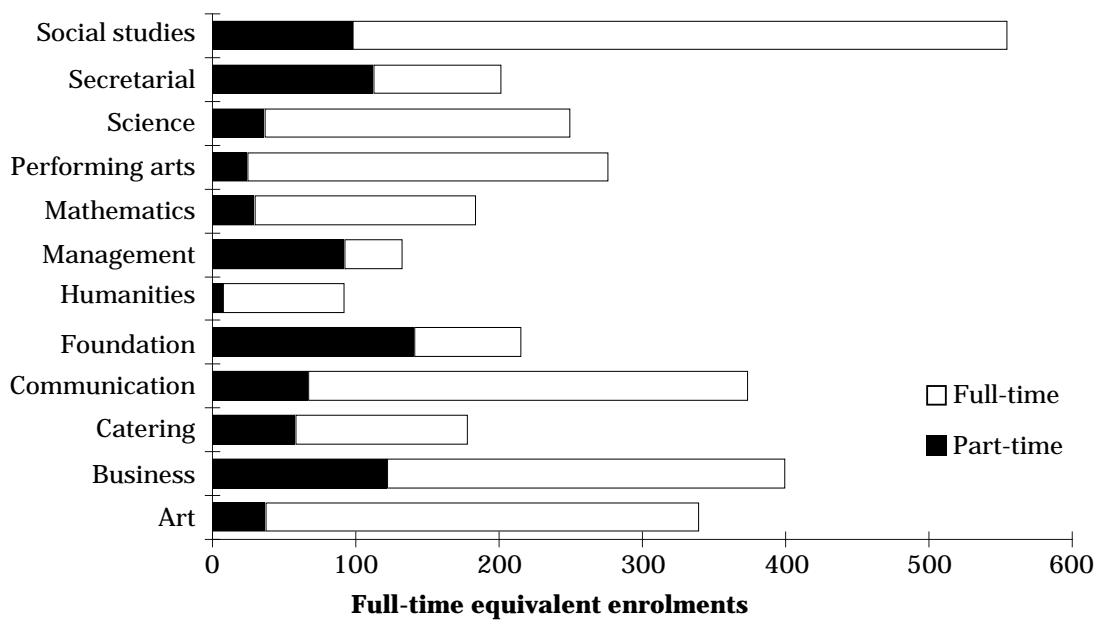
Monkwearmouth College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 389

Figure 4

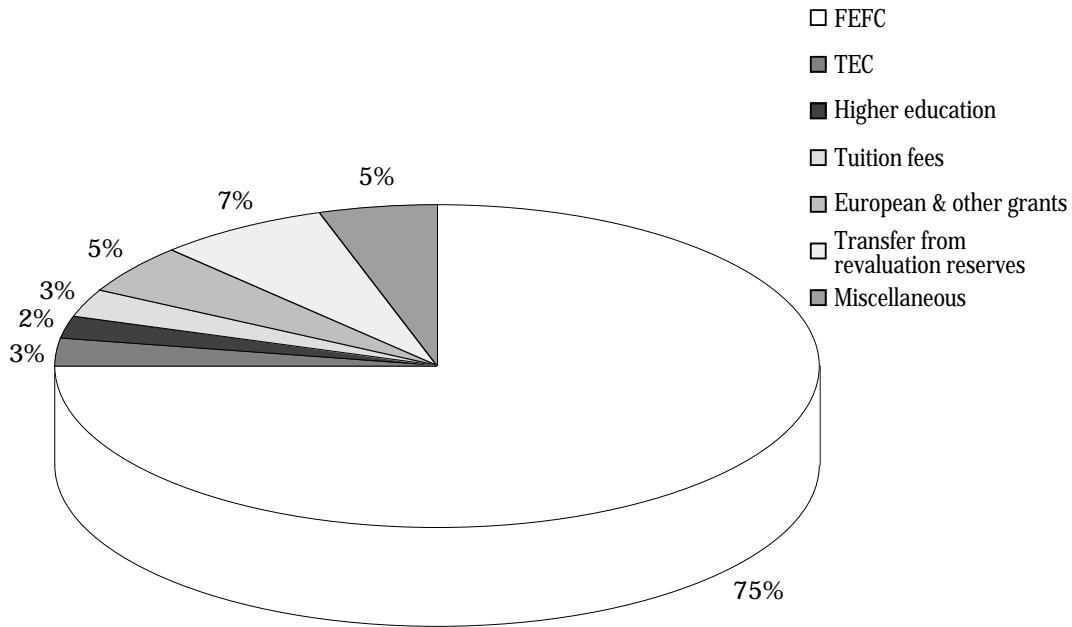
Monkwearmouth College: enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent enrolments: 3,203

Figure 5

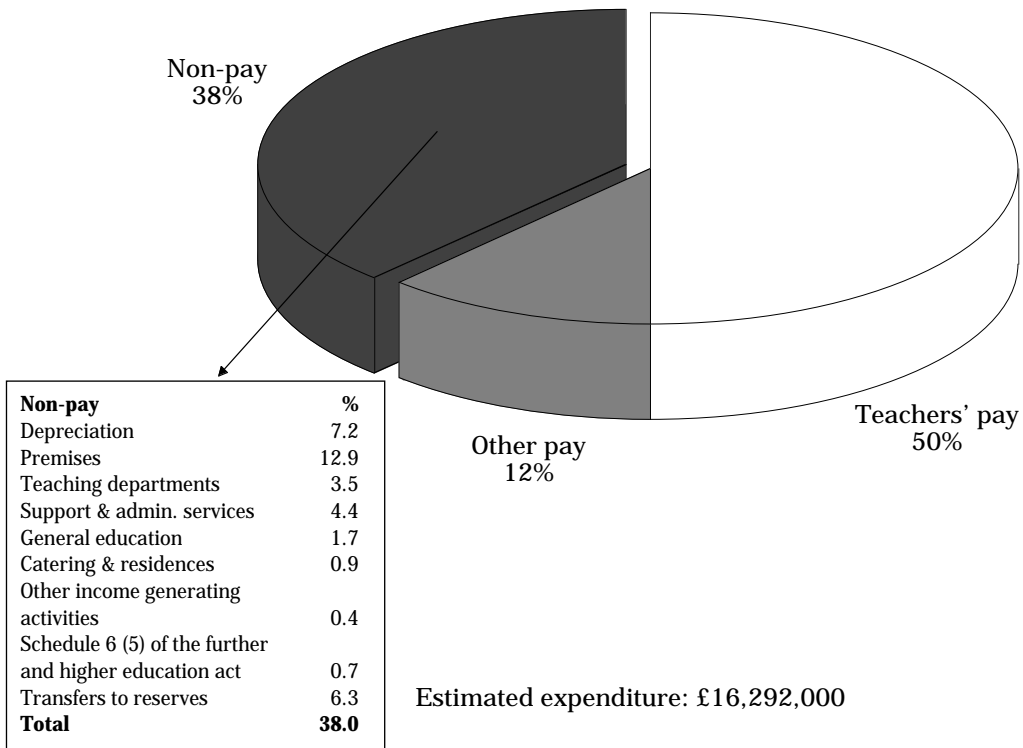
Monkwearmouth College: estimated income (16 months to July 1994)



Estimated income: £16,292,000

Figure 6

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



Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
May 1994