

New College, Nottingham

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
2000-01

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also inspects other further education provision funded by the FEFC. In fulfilling its work programme, the inspectorate assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Inspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. A member of the Council's audit service works with inspectors in assessing aspects of governance and management. All colleges are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 024 7686 3000
Fax 024 7686 3100
Website www.fefc.ac.uk*

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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 1999-2000, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	6	44	44	7	0
Cross-college provision	9	45	38	8	0

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Sample size: 112 college inspections

Note: percentages subject to rounding

Student Achievements

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

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1996, would appear in the results for 1997-98 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. 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 included.

Summary

New College, Nottingham

East Midlands Region

Inspected January 2001

New College, Nottingham is one of the largest colleges in the further education sector. The college serves some of the most deprived areas of Nottingham and its surrounding districts. The college's self-assessment process is thorough and involves all staff and governors. Arrangements for conducting self-assessment are systematic and supported by clear guidelines and appropriate training. The self-assessment report was moderated by a validating team which included members from outside the college. The report was clearly structured, self-critical, and included appropriate evidence to support the judgements made. All sections contained detailed action plans. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

The college provides a broad range of courses in all of the FEFC programme areas. Provision in eight curriculum areas and in basic skills was inspected. The college benefits from strong leadership and effective management. Governors effectively determine and monitor the college's strategic priorities and have adopted rigorous procedures for reviewing their own performance.

Senior managers have skilfully managed recent substantial changes to the college's management structure. The college has extensive links with community organisations and an established record of fostering economic regeneration and widening participation. Communications across the dispersed campuses of the institution are good. Quality assurance arrangements are effective and lead to improvements. The college has responsive and well-managed admissions and guidance services. Comprehensive and accessible welfare and personal support services are provided for students. There is good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college has made significant improvements to its accommodation. Effective use has been made of partnership funding to enhance learning resources. The college offers a broad curriculum which is responsive to local needs. Courses are well managed and most teaching is satisfactory or better. Pass rates on some courses are high and improving. The college should address: low and declining retention rates on some courses; some ineffective teaching; the poor quality of some specialist resources; the inconsistent quality of tutorial provision; inadequacies in the quality assurance and monitoring of franchised provision; and the insufficient monitoring and evaluation of staff development activities.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Computing and information technology	3	Support for students	2
Construction (technologies, gas and plumbing)	3	General resources	2
Business and professional studies	2	Quality assurance	2
Hospitality and catering	3	Governance	2
Hair and beauty	2	Management	2
Performing and creative arts	2		
English and communications	3		
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3		
Basic skills	3		

The College and its Mission

1 New College, Nottingham is one of the largest colleges in the further education sector. It was established in 1998 with the merger of Basford Hall College and Clarendon College. In April 1999, the new college merged with High Pavement Sixth Form College and in September 1999 with Arnold and Carlton College. The college is in the process of rationalising its provision on to four main campuses: City and Clarendon, both in the centre of Nottingham; Basford Hall on the north-west outskirts of the city; and High Pavement in the north. It is intended to move the High Pavement campus to a new site in the city centre. The college also has community centres at Hucknall, Bulwell and Berridge. Most of the provision at the college's Digby Avenue site, the former Arnold and Carlton College, has been transferred to other centres in line with the college's intention to dispose of this site. The college is one of four further education colleges in the Greater Nottingham conurbation. There is also a city technology college, a sixth form college and a number of schools with sixth forms.

2 Greater Nottingham has a population of 639,000. Patterns of employment in the area are undergoing significant change. The number of jobs in manufacturing is steadily declining. Employment in the services and professions is increasing. Some 75% of the labour force currently work in the service sector. The region's unemployment rate of 3.8% is below the national average. However, some wards of the City of Nottingham have unemployment rates between 15% and 20%. Nottingham is ranked as the 12th most deprived district in England and is ranked 10th on income deprivation. The college serves some of the most deprived areas of Nottingham and its surrounding districts. Educational achievement of school-leavers in the City of Nottingham is significantly below the national average. In 1999, only 29% of pupils in Nottingham schools obtained grade C or above in five or more

general certificates of secondary education (GCSE) compared with 48% nationally. In north-west Nottingham, the heart of the college's catchment area, the figure was only 13%. The college works in partnership with a number of agencies to address the social and economic problems of the community it serves. Its partners include: the East Midlands Development Agency; Greater Nottingham Learning Partnership; the city and county councils and community-based organisations. With these partners, the college is involved in a range of initiatives, including: basic skills and family literacy programmes; skill development in growing employment sectors; access programmes; single regeneration budget programmes, and health promotion and awareness programmes in the most deprived wards of the conurbation.

3 The college offers courses in all programme areas funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). In addition, the college provides training programmes under contract to three training and enterprise councils (TECs) in Greater Nottingham, North Nottinghamshire and Southern Derbyshire. It has contracts with the Employment Service for the provision of New Deal training and return to work programmes. It delivers higher education programmes in partnership with the University of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University, the University of Derby, De Montfort University, and Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. The college also currently caters for some 800 school pupils between the ages of 14 and 16. In February 2000, in partnership with the local education authority, the college made provision for 57 year 10 pupils from a local school facing closure. The college manages the local learndirect hub. In 1999-2000, 16% of the college's funding units from the FEFC were allocated for franchised work, but the college has reduced this proportion to 8% in 2000-01.

4 In 1999-2000, the college enrolled 6,252 full-time students and 28,957 part-time students

Context

of which 14,000 were off-campus. Some 83% of students were aged 19 or over. Almost 40% of the college's students were designated as being from the 'widening participation' category. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups was 21% compared with 7% in the Greater Nottingham area. In July 2000 the college employed 1,290 full-time equivalent staff.

5 The college's mission is: 'to be a world class college transforming the lives of people and communities.' Its overarching strategic priority is 'to raise the achievement of individuals and communities.' The college has nine sets of corporate objectives. These focus on: participation for young people; participation for adults; diversity and inclusion; student achievement; student destinations; customer satisfaction; innovation; partnership; and efficiency.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected during the week beginning 29 January 2001. The inspection

team analysed the college's self-assessment report and reviewed information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used data on students' achievements from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1998 and 1999. The college submitted data on students' achievements for 2000, which inspectors checked against primary sources, for example, class registers and pass lists issued by awarding bodies. Twenty-five inspectors and two auditors working for a total of 100.5 days carried out the inspection. Inspectors observed 161 lessons and examined students' work and a range of college documents. They held meetings with governors, managers, college staff and students.

7 The following table shows the grades awarded to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000. Of the 161 lessons observed, 60% were judged to be good or outstanding and 4% were less than satisfactory. This compares with the averages of 62% and 6%, respectively.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	5	6	6	1	0	18
GCSE	0	1	4	1	0	6
GNVQ	2	13	6	0	0	21
NVQ	6	22	13	2	0	43
Other vocational	4	15	11	0	0	30
Other	6	17	17	3	0	43
Total (No.)	23	74	57	7	0	161
Total (%)	14	46	36	4	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000 (%)	17	45	31	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report*

Note: percentages subject to rounding

Context

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1999-2000.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
New College, Nottingham	10.4	74
National average, all inspected colleges 1999-2000	10.3	76

Source for national average: Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1999-2000: Chief inspector's annual report

Curriculum Areas

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 3

9 Inspectors observed 22 lessons. They agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. However, they considered that some strengths were overemphasised and one weakness understated.

Key strengths

- wide range of courses
- effective teaching
- well-planned and effectively managed courses
- good integration of key skills

Weaknesses

- some low achievement and retention rates
- some inadequacies in specialist resources

10 The college has a comprehensive range of courses in computing including national diploma and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) in computing and general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) information technology (IT) at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. There is also a wide range of short courses. Courses are offered at a number of locations with a variety of patterns of study and assessment. Inspectors agreed that the courses are well planned and effectively managed. The detailed schemes of work include descriptions of learning objectives and assessment methods. Students receive useful course handbooks which give clear indications of course objectives and assessment requirements. There is regular, systematic monitoring of students' progress and achievements which are discussed in detail with students in tutorials. Teachers monitor

attendance and punctuality carefully and students speak highly of their courses.

11 The majority of teaching is effective. Most lessons are well planned and have clear goals which are shared with students. Relationships between teachers and students are good. In the best lessons, teachers give clear explanations of concepts and techniques and regularly check students' understanding. In many courses, teachers make effective use of electronic mail to communicate with their students. Bulletin boards and course web pages enable students to exchange ideas and access data and lecture notes. In one GNVQ lesson, students researched the use of graphics images to convey complex information. They used printed material and the Internet with equal ease to generate an image for presentation to the rest of the class. Teachers provide good levels of support for individual students during practical lessons and enable them to acquire a broad range of IT skills. In one practical lesson, students successfully installed network cards and the associated software on their individual machines and then linked the machines together to test the communications facilities. In a few lessons, there was too much reliance on textbooks or handouts and teachers failed to probe and challenge students' understanding. Assignment briefs are appropriately demanding. They clearly define the tasks and the criteria used to measure achievement. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that there is effective integration of key skills with other aspects of full-time courses. Key skills specialists work closely with vocational teachers to teach and assess key skills.

12 There are good specialist IT resources. Large and pleasant open plan computer rooms facilitate 'drop-in' as well as whole class activities. Although the majority of the computers are of high specification, there remains a significant number of out-of-date computers that are slow and unable to utilise the full range of modern software. On most sites students have access to electronic mail,

Curriculum Areas

bulletin boards and web pages but on one site students have to transfer work on floppy disks and have very limited access to electronic mail and other network resources.

13 There have been improvements in achievement and retention rates on many courses over the last two years but, as the self-assessment report acknowledges, some remain below the national average. Pass rates on the GNVQ foundation and national diploma courses have improved over the last three years and now exceed national averages. However, on the GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses, pass

rates have remained below the national averages. Retention rates on the national diploma and GNVQ advanced courses are low. Around 50% of students progress from GNVQ foundation to intermediate level and a slightly higher percentage from intermediate to advanced level. There is also a high level of progression on short courses, particularly the computer literacy and information technology certificate and the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) 7261 IT certificate, with over 75% of students enrolling on one or more subsequent courses.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in computing and information technology, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GNVQ foundation	1	Number of starters	33	46	42
		Retention (%)	76	68	71
		Achievement (%)	44	72	82
C&G 7261	1	Number of starters	469	432	339
		Retention (%)	80	80	89
		Achievement (%)	55	45	90
GNVQ intermediate	2	Number of starters	88	96	139
		Retention (%)	69	68	74
		Achievement (%)	43	54	57
GNVQ advanced	3	Number of starters	42	94	105
		Retention (%)	98	58	61
		Achievement (%)	71	35	51
National diploma computing	3	Number of starters	16	32	34
		Retention (%)	88	50	56
		Achievement (%)	57	93	100
GCE A level computing	3	Number of starters	44	59	65
		Retention (%)	98	73	70
		Achievement (%)	67	83	58

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Curriculum Areas

Construction (Technologies, Gas and Plumbing)

Grade 3

14 Inspectors observed 11 lessons in plumbing, gas installation and construction technologies. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- broad range of provision
- well-structured assignments
- good standard of craft students' practical work
- improved achievement rates on GNVQ advanced and GNVQ precursor courses

Weaknesses

- insufficient use of IT in craft courses
- poor marking of some students' work
- declining retention rates on some courses
- no construction technology laboratory

15 The college is the largest provider of construction training in the East Midlands. The faculty of technology serves the needs of over 3,000 construction students studying at all levels from entry through to degree work. There are well established links with Derby and Nottingham Trent universities and with the Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. Good links exist with eight local schools, and 200 pupils are enrolled for National Open College Network (NOCN) qualifications and on national vocational qualification (NVQ) and GNVQ foundation level courses. The introduction of these programmes has also enabled a wider range of people from the local community to take part in construction education and training. The construction curriculum is well managed. There are regular

formal meetings at campus, faculty and programme team level which include part-time teachers. Course teams use programme review meetings to discuss targets and performance indicators. Tutorials are an integral part of most programmes but students on part-time construction technologies courses are not given tutorial support. Internal verification arrangements are good. Detailed records are kept and any action required is taken promptly.

16 The quality of most teaching is satisfactory. In the better lessons, teaching and learning are planned effectively to meet the needs of all the students. Teachers use effective questioning to challenge and extend students' understanding and to reinforce key concepts. In one lesson on hot water supply systems, the teacher made effective use of students' work experience to reinforce learning. Reference was made to relevant codes of practice and manufacturers' literature. Assignments are well structured, clearly written and contain relevant tasks; they incorporate assessment criteria and principal objectives. This strength was not identified in the self-assessment report. There are some deficiencies in the teaching of key skills on craft courses. Although teachers provide opportunities for students to acquire communication and application of number skills, insufficient use is made of IT in lessons and assignments. There are too few comments on students' written work. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

17 Teachers are well qualified. Several are members of relevant professional institutions. They attend external curriculum and professional updating courses. Part-time teachers bring up-to-date knowledge of industry to their work at the college. There are good facilities for the Accredited Certification Scheme gas safety training and assessment. The plumbing workshops are untidy and lack health and safety signs. The quality and maintenance of some hand tools is poor. There is no specialist construction technology laboratory.

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These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

18 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that craft students produce good quality practical work. In construction technologies, students' reports and project work demonstrate their understanding of underlying theoretical principles. Reports in portfolios are generally well presented, demonstrate good use of research skills and frequently include good sketches, illustrations and photographs. As the

self-assessment report recognises, student achievement and retention rates on some courses are poor. Retention on the NVQ level 2 plumbing courses has declined in the last three years to well below the national average. Pass rates on the GNVQ advanced and GNVQ precursor courses were below the national averages in 1998 and 1999, although they improved significantly in 2000. For NVQ level 3 plumbing, the achievement rate in 1999 of 36% was well below the national average.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in construction (technologies, gas and plumbing), 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
Foundation vocational (crafts)	1	Number of starters	58	53	26
		Retention (%)	72	77	38
		Achievement (%)	64	51	80
Intermediate vocational (crafts)	2	Number of starters	556	639	591
		Retention (%)	40	62	47
		Achievement (%)	50	51	68
GNVQ intermediate	2	Number of starters	†	70	21
		Retention (%)	†	100	76
		Achievement (%)	†	30	62
Advanced vocational (crafts)	3	Number of starters	109	86	74
		Retention (%)	61	70	82
		Achievement (%)	56	42	52
GNVQ advanced and precursors	3	Number of starters	118	114	81
		Retention (%)	65	87	70
		Achievement (%)	60	64	100

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

†course not running

Curriculum Areas

Business and Professional Studies

Grade 2

19 Inspectors observed 22 lessons in business studies and management and professional studies. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- wide range of courses
- good teaching
- outstanding pass rate on GCE A level business studies
- well-managed courses
- productive links with industry and commerce

Weaknesses

- declining pass rates on GCSE business studies
- poor punctuality in some lessons

20 The college offers a wide range of vocational and professional business courses including: GNVQ business at foundation, intermediate, and advanced level; advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) business; GCE A level and GCE advanced subsidiary (AS) business studies; and several management and professional studies programmes. The flexible arrangements for attendance enable students with other commitments to achieve additional qualifications and progress to higher level courses. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that courses are well managed. There are frequent faculty and course team meetings with formal agendas and clearly minuted action points. Targets are set and progress towards their achievement is monitored. Course files are comprehensive and well maintained. Students receive

comprehensive course handbooks. Induction programmes for full-time students are effective. All full-time courses include timetabled tutorials which are used to monitor individual students' progress. However, students' individual action plans are not well documented. Teachers communicate effectively with parents and provide regular reports on students' progress and attendance.

21 There is much good teaching. Thorough schemes of work and lesson plans identify appropriate objectives, activities and learning outcomes. In the best lessons, students are motivated and engage in a range of appropriate activities. Teachers ask demanding questions to sustain students' interest and check their understanding. They make good use of group work to develop students' ability to work co-operatively and engage in discussion. In one AVCE lesson, students worked effectively in small groups to consider issues involved in the marketing of children's games. As a result, they acquired a deeper understanding of the principles of marketing. Many teachers use IT as an integral part of teaching and assessment. For example, students on a supervisory management course can access teaching and assessment materials on-line. In the majority of lessons, teachers use learning materials that take appropriate account of the different abilities of students. Occasionally students spend time unnecessarily copying information from projected slides. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that full-time students' punctuality is poor. In six of the lessons observed by inspectors students arrived late and this adversely affected teaching and learning. The development of key skills is an integral part of course provision. Opportunities to develop key skills are identified in students' learning activities and assignment work. Assessment procedures are consistently applied. Assessed work is returned to students quickly. Teachers' comments on written work are generally helpful and constructive.

Curriculum Areas

22 As indicated in the self-assessment report, there are productive links with industry and commerce. Students on AVCE and GNVQ business studies courses have benefited from residential experiences, company visits and visiting speakers, all of which have vocational relevance to their courses. GNVQ foundation and AVCE courses include a period of work experience which is effectively linked to learning activities in the college. However, on some management and professional courses, teachers do not use sufficient practical examples to illustrate theory.

23 Teachers are appropriately qualified. A programme of staff development has been introduced which includes secondment of teachers to local employers to update their commercial knowledge. Classrooms are appropriately furnished with whiteboards and overhead projectors and most contain good and relevant display material. Students have insufficient access to good-quality IT facilities with modern business software at the Clarendon campus. The library has an adequate stock of books, business journals and CD-ROMs. Students are encouraged to use the Internet for research work, and in so doing they develop their investigative skills.

24 On AVCE, GCE A level and professional courses, most students' written work is of good quality. Students' portfolios on NVQ management and professional programmes contain appropriate evidence of their competence, based on work experience activities. In 2000, the pass rate on the GCE A level business studies course was outstanding and there was a general improvement in achievement rates on many courses. However, as noted in the self-assessment report, pass rates are declining on GCSE business studies. Between 1999 and 2000 retention rates declined on four programmes including GCSE business and the certificate in marketing. Most students who complete their courses progress to higher education, to higher level courses at the college or to employment.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in business and professional studies, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GNVQ foundation business	1	Number of starters	14	32	19
		Retention (%)	93	72	74
		Achievement (%)	77	43	82
NVQ accounting	2	Number of starters	127	117	78
		Retention (%)	86	81	72
		Achievement (%)	54	64	84
GCSE business	2	Number of starters	42	47	28
		Retention (%)	86	76	54
		Achievement (%)	72	66	47
GNVQ advanced business	3	Number of starters	147	105	115
		Retention (%)	61	62	60
		Achievement (%)	74	68	78
GCE A level business	3	Number of starters	121	111	139
		Retention (%)	78	69	73
		Achievement (%)	65	93	96
Certificate in marketing	3	Number of starters	26	27	24
		Retention (%)	81	89	67
		Achievement (%)	29	38	75

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Curriculum Areas

Hospitality and Catering

Grade 3

25 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering NVQ and GNVQ courses. They broadly agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that the weaknesses in students' achievements had been underestimated and the strengths in teaching overstated.

Key strengths

- broad range of well-planned courses with good progression routes
- well-planned and carefully monitored work experience
- good range of specialist facilities

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on the majority of NVQ courses
- inadequate arrangements for teaching key skills on the GNVQ advanced course
- inadequate action-planning to address poor achievement rates

26 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there is a broad range of courses in hospitality and catering from entry to degree level. There are good links with schools. Pupils are able to attend catering and bakery lessons in college and college teachers run cooking classes in schools. Courses are well planned. Most programme management files are well organised. Course teams meet regularly. The minutes of some meetings lack specific action points and action taken as a result of student feedback is seldom recorded. The analysis of students' achievements and the action plans to address poor student performance are inadequate.

27 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that links with industry are strong. A catering advisory group meets regularly at the

college. GNVQ and bakery students benefit from well-planned and carefully monitored work experience. A series of visits to industry, a student exchange with a bakery school in Lyon and study trips to Spain, Belgium and New York all help to enhance students' learning experience.

28 Teaching is generally well planned, particularly for practical lessons. In the realistic simulated work environments and in the commercial restaurant there are good opportunities for students to develop technical and social skills. Dishes on menus reflect those found in industry. In the restaurants and kitchens, students frequently work under an acceptable amount of pressure which prepares them well for employment. Overall, students produce food of a good standard but there were occasions when students paid insufficient attention to the quality of food served to customers. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities successfully run a take-away food service and bakery students operate a shop. Inspectors did not agree with the college's judgement that the overall standard of teaching was high. In a few lessons, students did not focus on the work to be completed or work effectively as a team. On the GNVQ advanced course the arrangements for teaching key skills are inadequate. The level of students' prior achievements in key skills is low and the teaching time allocated to this aspect of the course is insufficient. Assessment is carefully planned. Records of students' progress are updated regularly. Assignments are interesting and vocationally relevant. The work in most students' portfolios is of a good standard. Teachers' marking of written work does not always include constructive comments to help students improve their performance.

29 As noted in the self-assessment report, teachers are well qualified and many have recent industrial experience. There are sufficient technicians and other support staff. Inspectors agreed with the college that there is a

Curriculum Areas

good range of specialist accommodation and equipment at the City and Clarendon campuses. However, some of the equipment at Clarendon is dated. There is an excellent range of books and periodicals at City campus but some of the books at the Clarendon campus are out of date.

30 Over the last three years, the pass rate on the GNVQ advanced course has improved and all students who completed the course in 2000 achieved the award. However, over the same period retention has declined to below the national average. Achievement rates on the Hotel and Catering International Management Association professional certificate course are consistently high. On the two-day course for the

British Institute of Innkeeping licensees' certificate the pass rate has declined from 91% in 1998 to 71% in 2000. Retention on the Wine and Spirit Education Trust certificate is high but the pass rate is low. The pass rates on NVQ awards at levels 1, 2 and 3 have declined over the last three years and are now significantly below the national average. Retention over the same period has improved on the NVQ level 3 catering and hospitality to above the national average but declined dramatically on the NVQ level 2 craft baking. Inspectors considered that the college underestimated the significance of the weaknesses in students' achievements.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in hospitality and catering, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
NVQ catering and hospitality	1	Number of starters	52	107	29
		Retention (%)	94	70	86
		Achievement (%)	81	57	16
NVQ catering and hospitality	2	Number of starters	185	228	229
		Retention (%)	89	58	69
		Achievement (%)	84	59	35
NVQ craft baking	2	Number of starters	19	38	36
		Retention (%)	84	58	47
		Achievement (%)	75	68	59
Wine and Spirit Education Trust certificate	2	Number of starters	78	83	69
		Retention (%)	87	84	90
		Achievement (%)	48	56	47
NVQ catering and hospitality	3	Number of starters	53	85	73
		Retention (%)	33	67	91
		Achievement (%)	42	79	45
GNVQ advanced hospitality and catering	3	Number of starters	30	21	29
		Retention (%)	97	76	69
		Achievement (%)	86	88	100
Hotel and Catering International Management Association certificate	3	Number of starters	12	30	13
		Retention (%)	92	73	77
		Achievement (%)	82	73	90

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Curriculum Areas

Hair and Beauty

Grade 2

31 The inspection covered courses in hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapy. Eighteen lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- broad range of courses meeting local needs
- well-planned and effective teaching
- good retention and achievement rates on level 1 and level 2 courses
- effective curriculum organisation and management
- high standard of accommodation and specialist resources

Weaknesses

- poor key skills teaching
- no work experience for some students

32 As noted in the self-assessment report, the college provides a broad range of full-time and part-time courses that meet the needs of students, industry and the local community. Specialist courses, such as African-Caribbean hairdressing and a range of complementary therapies, are provided in response to local demand. In the year preceding inspection the curriculum area and its administration were rationalised across the college. The curriculum is managed effectively and roles and responsibilities are clear and understood by staff. There is a well-planned programme of meetings that involve both full-time and part-time staff from all sites. A wide variety of visits and presentations from speakers improve students' familiarity with modern techniques in hairdressing and beauty therapy. Participation in internal and external competitions is used effectively to encourage and promote artistic skills.

33 All of the lessons observed by the inspectors were judged to be good or outstanding. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and use a wide variety of strategies to interest and motivate students. Aims and objectives are clearly defined and explained to students at the start of lessons. Teachers encourage students to participate fully in lessons and check that they have understood key points. In most practical lessons, good use is made of demonstrations and question and answer sessions. Group work is effective and helps students to develop communication skills. Students make good use of college-devised learning packages. The work in the college salons reflects good commercial practice and provides students with access to a considerable range of clients and many assessment opportunities. Links with employers are not as good as they might be. Opportunities are missed to carry out assessment in the work place. Some students are not given the opportunity to undertake work experience as part of their programme. The college identified that this was a particular problem in beauty therapy.

34 All students have individual and group tutorials. These are used effectively for action-planning and progress reviews. All assessments are carried out in practical lessons. Students understand the assessment process and are given productive feedback on their performance. Inspectors identified weaknesses in the teaching of key skills. Students do not always work at an appropriate key skills level to meet their individual learning needs. Key skills are not integrated with other aspects of courses. Most students expressed dissatisfaction with this aspect of their course.

35 Teachers are well qualified. They have access to a wide range of specialist staff development opportunities which help them to maintain their skills and to keep up with industrial trends. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that the accommodation for hairdressing and beauty

Curriculum Areas

therapy is of a high standard on all sites and reflects good commercial practice. There is sufficient modern equipment and a wide range of specialist teaching and learning resources.

36 Students' portfolios are well presented and the work they contain conforms to assessment requirements. Students' practical work is good and conforms to commercial standards. There is an atmosphere of professionalism in the salons. Students communicate well with their clients. They speak with enthusiasm and knowledge about their courses. Most are able to work confidently in practical lessons without close supervision. Most achievement rates are above the national average. For example, in

NVQ level 2 hairdressing the achievement rate has been between 71% and 90% over the last three years. In beauty therapy NVQ level 2 the achievement rate has improved from 63% to 88% over the same period. Achievement on NVQ level 1 hairdressing has been consistently good with a range from 80% to 93%. However, achievement rates in both hairdressing and beauty therapy NVQ level 3 have not always been good. For example, in 1999 hairdressing and beauty therapy NVQ level 3 achievement rates were well below the national average. In the same year achievement rates in complementary therapies were also below the national average.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in hair and beauty, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
NVQ hairdressing	1	Number of starters	56	60	85
		Retention (%)	73	85	86
		Achievement (%)	88	80	93
NVQ hairdressing	2	Number of starters	200	201	153
		Retention (%)	69	74	58
		Achievement (%)	81	71	90
NVQ beauty therapy	2	Number of starters	147	125	83
		Retention (%)	67	58	75
		Achievement (%)	63	75	88
NVQ hairdressing	3	Number of starters	22	45	40
		Retention (%)	82	67	60
		Achievement (%)	100	33	82
NVQ beauty therapy	3	Number of starters	62	60	64
		Retention (%)	92	87	77
		Achievement (%)	84	33	98
NVQ beauty therapy (complementary therapies)	3	Number of starters	194	259	367
		Retention (%)	95	89	86
		Achievement (%)	41	51	74

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Curriculum Areas

Performing and Creative Arts

Grade 2

37 Inspectors observed 23 lessons in art, design, fashion, performing arts, music and music technology. They broadly agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- extensive range of provision
- high pass rates on most courses
- effective assignments which promote creativity
- high standards achieved in live performances
- good specialist resources and equipment in performing arts

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some courses
- inadequate specialist resources in art and design
- insufficient specialist IT facilities in art and design

38 The college offers an extensive range of full-time and part-time courses in performing and creative arts, from foundation level to higher education. The provision in performing arts and music is predominantly based on the Clarendon campus. Art and design courses are located in the Stoney Street annexe of the City campus with some provision offered at the Basford Hall and High Pavement campuses. Fashion courses are taught at the City campus. Courses are well managed and curriculum teams meet regularly to plan and monitor provision.

39 Teaching in performing arts is generally good. In the best lessons, teachers balance the needs of individuals with the need to maintain group progress. For example in a foundation level performing arts lesson, some students had difficulty speaking their lines in front of fellow

students. The teacher devised a simple game to reduce students' anxieties. A ball was passed to the student delivering the line whilst the rest of the group were instructed to focus quietly on the person speaking. This quickly gave students the confidence to speak in turn without first having to gain the attention of the group. As recognised in the self-assessment report, there are well-organised opportunities for students to be involved in live performances. For instance, during 2000, there were a large number of productions by performing arts students. These included full productions and 37 mini productions lasting 15 minutes each under the supervision of a visiting professional production manager. First-year popular music students gain confidence quickly and learn performance discipline through a series of 'gigs' in local schools. In music technology, students were required to develop creative experimental sound pieces for productions. Teaching in art and design is satisfactory. However, during some lessons, where students were working independently, opportunities were missed to reinforce design principles and raise awareness of the importance of drawing. Effective assignments are devised to promote creativity and students' individuality. A professional designer gave a critique for a packaging design project after which the tutor required the students to formally re-evaluate their design work and present revised solutions. Clear detailed written information was given to the students in advance.

40 Teachers are well qualified and have appropriate industrial experience. The rebuilding at Clarendon campus has provided performing arts and music with new, high-quality accommodation and equipment. The Courtyard and Community theatres provide performance space of commercial standard for students and visiting companies. The dance studios have sprung floors and are light and spacious. The music technology laboratory provides industry standard software with sufficient machines to meet the students' needs.

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Music students use well-equipped practice rooms. Fashion studios contain excellent manufacturing equipment. The art and design facilities at Stoney Street are inadequate. For example, printmaking is housed in a small studio that has inadequate ventilation. This restricts the number of students who can use oil-based inks safely in the studio. The college recognises there are insufficient specialist IT resources in art and design. There is one suite of high-specification computers at the City campus but these are frequently in use by whole classes, restricting their availability on a 'drop-in' basis.

41 Progression rates to higher education are good. Art and design students gain places in

highly regarded university departments. There are high standards of performance in acting and movement. Examination results on most courses are good, particularly on vocational courses at level 3. Achievement rates on the national diploma in fashion have been well above the national average for the last three years. GNVQ advanced art and design students have had high achievement rates over the same time period. The self-assessment understated the poor retention rates on some courses. Retention rates on GCE A level theatre and drama, GCE A level music performance and first diploma performing arts have been consistently below national averages for the last three years.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in performing and creative arts, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
First diploma performing arts, popular music, music technology	2	Number of starters	84	125	156
		Retention (%)	66	67	72
		Achievement (%)	82	83	88
GCE A level theatre and drama	3	Number of starters	34	44	31
		Retention (%)	100	65	65
		Achievement (%)	71	88	94
National diploma popular music	3	Number of starters	34	52	58
		Retention (%)	94	71	61
		Achievement (%)	94	97	82
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	Number of starters	57	58	62
		Retention (%)	68	68	68
		Achievement (%)	86	91	91
National diploma foundation studies	3	Number of starters	64	51	73
		Retention (%)	95	94	89
		Achievement (%)	98	98	98
National diploma design fashion	3	Number of starters	22	21	24
		Retention (%)	95	81	83
		Achievement (%)	95	94	100

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Curriculum Areas

English and Communications

Grade 3

42 Inspectors observed 17 lessons. They agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that the college had overstated the quality of teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- effective course management
- good achievement rates
- thorough and helpful assessment practices
- high-quality teaching and learning materials

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates
- some poorly planned and executed lessons
- insufficient co-operation between teachers on different sites
- some inappropriate accommodation

43 English and communications courses are taught at three of the college's campuses. GCE A level courses are offered as one-year or two-year programmes for full-time students. Part-time courses are available for GCE A level language and literature, GCE A level English literature and GCSE English. The college has responded well to students' needs by introducing new courses, including a preparatory course for potential GCSE students. Inspectors agreed that courses are well managed. Teachers on each campus have regular, minuted meetings at which they review progress as well as covering practical necessities. Course reviews are thoughtful and evaluative. In their reviews, course teams make good use of data on achievement, retention and the value added to students' achievements. Action plans arising from these reviews are insufficiently detailed. There are useful

handbooks to guide students and staff. Although teachers have shared developments in GCSE English, there are few other arrangements to encourage the joint development of assessment, the standardisation of practices, or the sharing of resources across the different sites.

44 Inspectors did not agree with the college's assessment that teaching is effective in all lessons. Some lessons are thoughtfully planned and incorporate a variety of appropriate activities. In others, teachers do not exploit opportunities to motivate and interest students. In the best lessons, teachers introduce relevant activities in a timely way to enable students to systematically develop the skills they need to succeed. In a small number of lessons, teachers make excellent use of their knowledge of the students' prior achievements. They track individual students' progress carefully, using their GCSE achievements and predicted GCE A level grades as a starting point, and design their lessons carefully to meet all students' needs. For example, the teacher of a GCE A level language lesson, with students who had low GCSE scores, used teenage magazines from three decades to stimulate their interest and designed effective activities to develop and reinforce their understanding of language change. In weaker lessons, teachers do not identify specific learning objectives and activities are not well matched to the abilities of all the students in the class. Some teachers do not use questioning techniques effectively to develop and test students' understanding. Assignments are well designed and thorough. Detailed comments on students' written work help students to develop their skills systematically. On one course, students receive a copy of the awarding body's marking criteria attached to each piece of marked work showing the level of achievement attained.

45 The size of the rooms used for teaching English and communication studies is not always well matched to class size or to the planned learning activities. Some suffer from

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noise disturbance. However, many rooms contain displays of students' work, some of a high quality. Teachers provide a good range of high-quality learning materials and resources for students. Some teachers use relevant websites to produce up-to-date materials.

46 The self-assessment report identified the good achievement rates on many English and communications courses. Pass rates on GCE A level English language have been above national averages for three years, as have the proportion of grades C or above in GCSE English. The two-year GCE A level English literature course has produced very good achievement rates of 96% in 1999 and 97% in

2000, and the proportion of A to C grades has improved. Pass rates on GCE A level communication studies have improved to match the national average. The self-assessment report recognised retention rates as a weakness. Retention rates on GCE A level literature courses have been below national averages for the last two years. The GCE A level language and literature course has high withdrawal rates, with a particularly poor retention rate of 53% in 2000. Retention rates are also poor for GCSE English. The college has taken action to address this issue through the introduction of the GCSE preparatory course.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in English and communications, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
GCSE English	2	Number of starters	403	382	412
		Retention (%)	68	65	65
		Achievement (%)	57	52	61
GCSE English literature	2	Number of starters	35	37	24
		Retention (%)	71	81	71
		Achievement (%)	24	52	80
GCE A level English language	3	Number of starters	95	115	118
		Retention (%)	96	71	75
		Achievement (%)	88	96	89
GCE A level English literature	3	Number of starters	188	175	157
		Retention (%)	83	66	72
		Achievement (%)	88	94	91
GCE A level communication studies	3	Number of starters	93	107	70
		Retention (%)	86	65	71
		Achievement (%)	79	74	77
GCE A level English language and literature (part-time, one-year course)	3	Number of starters	34	29	34
		Retention (%)	68	72	53
		Achievement (%)	43	60	81

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

Curriculum Areas

Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Grade 3

47 Inspectors observed 11 lessons. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-managed provision
- effective learning support workers
- good progress in improving students' life and practical skills

Weaknesses

- incomplete analysis of students' long-term goals
- some poorly planned lessons

48 Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is organised by the faculty of basic education and key skills. The faculty became operational in September 2000 and reorganisation of the provision has been managed well. There are clear lines of responsibility. Course teams meet regularly to discuss programme content and to share information. As recognised in the self-assessment report, staff are responsive to national initiatives. Students' programmes are focused on the needs of the individual. Citizenship has been recently introduced as a separate topic of study on some programmes.

49 Assessment procedures before students' entry to the college are thorough. Reports are received from students' schools or previous placements and, where appropriate, interviews are held with parents or carers. A range of activities including literacy and numeracy tests is used at induction to decide the content of students' programmes.

50 Teaching is of variable quality. In the best lessons, staff are enthusiastic, the range of tasks is appropriately varied to sustain students' interest and the learning activities suit students' differing abilities. In one lesson on citizenship, the teacher used questioning to good effect to recap the previous week's learning and to introduce the current topic. A range of tasks including card matching, a quiz, and use of the Internet effectively reinforced learning. The occurrence of a student's birthday was used to introduce a discussion on the rights and responsibilities of adult citizens. Learning support workers ably assist teachers. They bring their own talents to the lessons which complement those of the teacher. However, as the self-assessment report recognised, some lessons are poorly planned. Teachers are not clear what they expect students to achieve, progress is slow, and students lose interest.

51 Use is made of community facilities to develop students' independent living and practical skills. Where appropriate, students undertake supported or independent work experience within the locality or at college. Good use is made of external services such as speech therapy and physiotherapy. Individual education plans have recently been introduced for all students. They are not yet used effectively. Realistic long-term goals for students are not identified correctly and short-term targets are not matched appropriately to long-term goals. Teachers do not monitor progress within lessons sufficiently. They focus on what students feel about the lesson rather than making an objective assessment of progress against targets. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report. The data held by the college do not accurately reflect students' progress or the achievement of qualifications. Therefore a table of students' achievements has not been included in this report.

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52 Students' confidence is developed effectively. In a drama lesson for students with complex and profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities, students were eager to demonstrate their acting abilities. The standard of mime to the song 'I have a dream' was high. It evoked the presence of angels and the embracing of the future. In a cookery lesson, students who joined the course reluctant to work, now follow recipes competently and tidy up after lessons. They talk confidently with other students and with staff, making their views known. Students on a citizenship course were initially uninterested in the subject and how it related to their lives. They left a recent lesson determined to vote at the next election. Students in a craft lesson were able to create templates for what they wished to make. They researched suitable pictures from library books and the Internet, transferred the images to their materials and cut out the shapes competently.

53 Team managers acknowledge that staff need professional updating; 68% of staff do not have the appropriate specialist knowledge or qualifications. Resources are of a good standard. Rooms for practical activities such as cookery or carpentry are large, bright and airy. Classrooms are generally spacious and allow access for students in wheelchairs. One room, used for a horticultural theory lesson, was too small. Students are encouraged but not required to wear protective clothing and boots for woodwork lessons. They do not do so.

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills

Grade 3

54 Inspectors observed 25 lessons in basic skills in 11 different locations. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-managed and effective family learning programmes
- good teaching
- good range of basic skills courses
- good community-based resources
- good staff development

Weaknesses

- inadequate learning support provision
- some ineffective planning and recording of students' learning and progress
- some programmes insufficiently challenging
- some unsuitable accommodation

55 The inspection covered literacy and numeracy courses below level 2. These included: basic skills courses on college campuses and sites around the city; additional support for students on vocational programmes; learning support on full-time and part-time programmes and family learning programmes in schools. Basic skills provision is offered at eight main sites and many community venues. Of the 3,000 students following discrete basic skills courses, 59% are drawn from areas designated as being in the widening participation category. The provision is being successfully managed through a period of substantial organisational change. Since September 2000, basic skills provision has been managed by staff in the faculty of basic education and key skills. In January 2001, there was a change from a campus approach to a cross-college approach. These organisational changes have improved

liaison between staff who teach basic skills on adult learning programmes, within learning support and on vocational courses. Staff are well informed and communication across the team is good. The college takes the lead on a number of innovative projects teaching basic skills in the workplace and supporting community-based volunteers. It has been successful in gaining funding from a variety of sources. It is a lead partner in the Basic Skills Achievement Strategy in Greater Nottingham. The commitment to basic skills is evident in the college's strategic plan. Inspectors agreed that well managed and effective family learning programmes have been developed in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council, Nottingham City Council and the Basic Skills Agency (BSA). The content of the programmes matches the work planned within the literacy and numeracy hour in school. The programmes are successfully attracting parents back to learning. Inspectors observed parents developing their basic skills in order to help their children with their learning.

56 In addition to literacy and numeracy courses, basic skills are being developed through creative writing, cookery and other practical subjects. Most teaching is good. However, not all teachers are effective in planning teaching activities, setting targets for individual learners, or recording the progress of students. Learning support in basic skills has only recently been introduced, and does not yet meet the needs of all the students. Learning materials are not based on the students' main course of study and basic skills are not integrated with other aspects of vocational programmes. The college has identified this as a weakness in its self-assessment report and has made plans to tackle the weakness.

57 The college has implemented a substantial staff development programme in the teaching of basic skills. Full-time and part-time staff have been given the opportunity to attend both specialist and general training within the faculty.

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The college has been active in preparing for changes brought about by current national basic skills initiatives; 10 staff work as national trainers and two as facilitators. All the centres used for basic skills courses have good accommodation, library facilities, childcare facilities and access for disabled people. The Berridge centre has been developed into an effective community resource. It is a well-used, well-organised centre with a wide range of good resources for teaching basic skills. The self-assessment report acknowledged that some of the accommodation in which basic skills

learning support is provided on vocational courses is unsuitable. The problem is being tackled.

58 Overall, students' achievements are satisfactory. In 1999-2000, over 3,000 students on basic skills programmes gained accreditation. Students are awarded accreditation upon completion of their primary learning goal. For some students, the goals set are insufficiently challenging. Retention rates on some programmes are low.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in basic skills, 1998 to 2000

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1998	1999	2000
C&G Wordpower – foundation	Entry	Number of starters	111	31	71
		Retention (%)	58	83	76
		Achievement (%)	40	15	92
C&G Wordpower	1	Number of starters	334	122	154
		Retention (%)	54	63	83
		Achievement (%)	47	32	93
OCR national skills profile	1	Number of starters	681	136	329
		Retention (%)	98	90	79
		Achievement (%)	73	39	100
NOCN literacy	1	Number of starters	625	444	2,204
		Retention (%)	68	62	67
		Achievement (%)	43	64	96
NOCN numeracy	1	Number of starters	186	397	356
		Retention (%)	65	64	67
		Achievement (%)	51	53	80
C&G Numberpower	1	Number of starters	41	13	24
		Retention (%)	90	69	58
		Achievement (%)	51	55	100

Source: ISR (1998 and 1999), college (2000)

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Support for Students

Grade 2

59 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but gave a different emphasis to some strengths.

Key strengths

- responsive and well-managed admissions and guidance services
- productive links with schools
- good range of effective student development activities
- comprehensive and accessible welfare and personal support services
- good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on mainstream courses

Weaknesses

- some poor tutorials
- systems for providing additional learning support not fully effective

60 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that systems for admissions and guidance are well managed and effective. Extensive information on courses is available in the prospectus, through the college website and directly from welcoming staff in the reception areas. The 'Learning Link' dedicated call centre is an effective focal point for telephone and electronic mail initial enquiries and enrolments. Specialist advice is readily available from advice and guidance staff. A constantly updated database can be used to confirm whether places are available.

61 The college has productive links with schools. This strength was not highlighted in the self-assessment report. There are 'taster' courses and link programmes with 18 schools. The college participates in industry days and careers events and supports schools' personal development programmes. Links with schools

for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are particularly close. Work placements are provided for school pupils. Productive arrangements encourage the continuing participation in education of some disaffected school pupils.

62 Tutorial arrangements have recently been revised. Tutorial entitlements for full-time and part-time students have been defined but not yet implemented. Tutorial practice varies. Some tutors do not have schemes of work and do not make effective use of colleagues with specialist knowledge in areas such as careers guidance. There is good tutorial practice on GCE A level programmes and some vocational programmes. In these programme areas, tutors review their tutees' progress carefully and help them to devise action plans to improve their performance. In other programme areas target-setting and action-planning are not carried out effectively.

63 As the self-assessment report acknowledges, systems for providing additional learning support for literacy and numeracy are not fully effective. The college has started to use the same initial screening and referral procedures across all campuses. Learning advisors collate test results and produce student support plans for curriculum teams. Some delays occur between assessment and the start of support. Some support is provided by learning support tutors and some by teachers on course teams. Overall take up of additional support is low. In 1999-2000, only 65% of students identified as needing additional learning support received it.

64 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on mainstream courses is good. The communications support team makes effective arrangements to support students with visual and hearing impairments and to enable them to benefit from the range of college courses. Many college staff, including reception staff, have

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achieved British Sign Language qualifications. Support for students with disabilities is well managed and effective. Arrangements for supporting dyslexic students are good.

65 Students benefit from a wide range of student development activities. This strength was not highlighted in the self-assessment report. The student development team provide support for individuals and groups. The team arrange numerous events and activities to raise awareness about issues such as Aids, drugs and mental health. They also co-ordinate events and activities associated with the college's nominated charity, which supports disadvantaged young people. Some students provide support 'in kind'. For example, art students have designed visual displays and signage and IT students have provided technical help and training. Youth workers and student development staff based on each campus work closely with the increasingly active students' union. They manage common room facilities and organise recreational activities. They develop 'Building Employability Skills' programmes and deliver these through the enrichment or tutorial programmes. In response to requests from teachers, short programmes have been designed on topics such as team building and dealing with bullying.

66 As noted in the self-assessment report, student welfare and personal support is readily available from a range of sources. The well-organised student finance team provides comprehensive and timely financial advice. There is an accommodation service. Development workers and youth workers provide a mediation and advocacy service. Personal tutors refer students to appropriate support services. Students have confidential access to an effective professional counselling service. The college mental health service provides effective support that enables students with mental health problems to study at the college. There is a mental health awareness raising week annually.

General Resources

Grade 2

67 Inspectors broadly agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report but found some additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- significant improvements to the college's accommodation
- high standard of estate maintenance
- good access for disabled people
- effective use of partnership funding to enhance learning resources
- extensive nursery provision at all sites

Weaknesses

- low space utilisation
- insufficient open-access computers
- some poor quality teaching accommodation

68 Since the merger of four colleges to form New College, Nottingham, the estate is managed as three further education campuses, a sixth form college, and a number of community-based centres. Almost £23 million has been invested in major refurbishment and rebuilding projects. A £17 million refurbishment programme of a near-derelect Victorian lace warehouse has resulted in the Adams Building, which has great character. Major improvements have also been made at the other campuses, including a new college building at Hucknall. Many specialist facilities have been created, including new theatre studies resources and a fully equipped television studio. While some poor-quality teaching spaces remain, inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that the overall quality of the estate has been substantially improved since 1998. The new accommodation strategy identifies further major improvements but these are at an early planning stage. The

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self-assessment report acknowledges that space utilisation, at 23%, is poor despite some rationalisation.

69 There are effective procedures for estates maintenance. All sites are generally well maintained and all rooms are checked monthly for defects which are quickly dealt with. Some older rooms provide a poor environment for learning. More than 20 classrooms on one campus have poor heating and ventilation. Inspectors sometimes found a poor match of rooms to class sizes. Opportunities to display students' work and resource material are frequently missed.

70 The learning centres inherited from the merged colleges are increasingly operating as a unified service. Improvements for students include a common catalogue that allows students to reserve books from any college site. The resulting available bookstock is adequate for most students' needs. Library use and students' views on the quality of the library service are monitored. Improvements have been made, including the provision of quiet work areas and earlier opening in the mornings. Students speak highly of the help they receive from library staff. Some learning centres are too small for the number of students using them. This weakness is identified in the self-assessment report. Most learning centres have insufficient computer workstations to meet the demand from students. Links between library staff and teaching staff vary in effectiveness. Individual library staff are 'adopting' curriculum areas to improve liaison.

71 There have been significant improvements in the computer network since the self-assessment report was produced. New equipment and extra staff have been introduced to accommodate the increase in network traffic resulting from the college's information and learning technology strategy. The college intranet has been established but as yet there is little curriculum material available to students. The college has greatly expanded the number of

modern computers used in teaching, but the number available for casual access is inadequate to meet demands at some sites.

There are good professional services to support the development of teaching materials in areas such as photography, video production, desktop publishing and reprographics.

72 The college has been successful in attracting external funding for the improvement of its resources, a strength not identified in the self-assessment report. The Adams Building refurbishment was the result of a private finance initiative and sponsorship secured from many sources including the European Regional Development Fund, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the FEFC. Sponsorship by computer software and hardware companies has allowed the development of animation and virtual reality facilities and provided access to hundreds of journals and reference works through an Internet information service provider.

73 The college has improved access to most of its buildings for students with restricted mobility. New lifts, ramps, and toilets have made almost all areas accessible and usable. Induction loops for those with hearing difficulties are installed in many areas, and tactile paving and signage to assist those with visual impairment are designed into all accommodation changes. There is generally good support for students with children. Day nurseries have places for 400 children. When these nurseries are full the college provides funding for childcare.

74 The self-assessment report did not mention weaknesses in the facilities for sport and recreation. There are outdoor sports fields at three sites but few indoor facilities apart from a gymnasium and health spa. Subsidised facilities exist at local leisure centres and minibuses transport is provided to sports facilities but there is little evidence of sports promotion in the college and take-up is generally low. Common room facilities at most sites are poor; there are none in some buildings. All sites have

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refectories, but in general they are not attractive, and some, such as at Clarendon, are too small.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

75 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. An additional strength and an additional weakness were identified.

Key strengths

- effective quality assurance arrangements leading to improvement
- systematic and thorough self-assessment
- effective college-wide internal verification arrangements
- well-developed standards for college support areas
- effective arrangements for gathering the views of students

Weaknesses

- inadequate quality assurance of franchised provision
- insufficient monitoring and evaluation of staff development activities
- inconsistent internal grading of lessons

76 The college's strong commitment to quality assurance is reflected in its strategic priority, 'to raise the achievement of individuals and communities'. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that quality assurance arrangements are effective and have led to improvement. They cover all aspects of the college's work. There is a clear quality assurance policy and well-written quality manual which contains a helpful schedule of quality assurance activities for the year. Clear links exist between the college's quality assurance framework, the self-assessment

process, and strategic and operational plans. There is a director of quality who is also a member of the senior management team and five deans of quality who co-ordinate procedures across the college's campuses and take responsibility for college-wide initiatives. These include internal review; classroom observation; programme approvals; and links with awarding bodies. The college achieved ISO 9001 registration for the whole organisation in December 2000.

77 There are effective procedures for approving new courses. Arrangements for reviewing existing courses are thorough. Action plans to address weaknesses are carefully scrutinised and progress on implementing action points agreed at earlier reviews is monitored. Data on students' achievements are analysed carefully against benchmarking data to evaluate the college's performance. Targets are set for future performance. There is a comprehensive system for internal quality review. Reviews are undertaken by teams of internal consultants and students. Outcomes of the reviews are used to support the college's self-assessment.

78 The 1999-2000 self-assessment report was the first to be produced by the college since the completion of the mergers. Inspectors agreed that the arrangements are systematic and thorough and supported by clear guidelines and appropriate training. They involve all areas of the college. Self-assessment reports produced by staff teams in teaching and support areas are used as the basis for the main report on the whole college. A validating team includes members drawn from outside the college and conducts a thorough scrutiny of team assessments. Action plans are produced which prioritise the required improvements. The college's lesson observation scheme is extensive. Lesson observations are undertaken initially by small groups of staff who assess the teaching of other team members. Subsequent observations are made by staff from other areas in the

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college and lessons are graded. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that its internal grading was inconsistent and overgenerous.

79 The college has effective college-wide internal verification arrangements. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. An internal verification team checks for consistency across the college. Reports from external verifiers are used to identify and share good practice. Quantifiable standards for cross-college services are well established and progress towards reaching them is regularly monitored. Reports on performance against the standards are produced in most service areas and considered by a member of the executive. The college has been quick to amend its standards in order to improve quality. For example, new standards are now in place relating to students' access to college enrichment activities. Inspectors agreed with the college that the quality assurance of franchised provision is inadequate. The college does not produce an evaluative annual report on the performance of each partner. In 1999-2000 some retention and achievement rates on franchised courses were very poor. The college has begun to apply its own quality assurance procedures to its main partners.

80 There are effective arrangements for gathering the views of students. Questionnaires are issued regular and effective use is made of feedback. Each campus has a student board. The boards have representatives from all courses and meet regularly with senior college staff. Resulting improvements to the college's services include the extension of the learning resource centres' opening hours and the provision of additional computers for students to use. Student focus groups contribute to the college's programme reviews, internal quality review, and self-assessment. The academic board includes student representatives. The college gained the Charter Mark in 2000. The college's charter is readily available, written in

plain English, and clearly identifies to students, employers and the community the standards and services they may expect. The charter is regularly monitored by staff and students and revised annually. The complaints procedure included in the charter is effective and timely. Training is available for staff in dealing with informal and formal complaints.

81 All staff receive an annual professional development review which helps to identify their training needs. The college devotes a high level of resources to staff development. Staff value the opportunities provided for professional development. However, the college did not identify in its self-assessment report that it undertakes insufficient monitoring and evaluation of staff development activities. The college achieved Investors in People status in 2000.

Governance

Grade 2

82 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. An additional strength and an additional weakness were identified.

Key strengths

- strong strategic leadership by governors
- good arrangements for the appointment, induction and training of governors
- rigorous procedures for reviewing the performance of the board
- well-organised conduct of corporation business

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped links between the board and college staff
- inadequate monitoring of franchised provision

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83 The composition of the governing body of the college was revised in September 2000 in response to legal requirements. This revision provided the opportunity to implement the decision to change the college organisation from a 'federal' system of four semi-independent colleges, to a single organisation and also to acknowledge the outcomes of the most recent review of governance. The governing body was reconstituted with a reduced membership of 16, a reduction in the number of committees from eight to five and the dissolution of the previous college councils. Five of the governors are female and there are no vacancies. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that governors possess a range of relevant skills and demonstrate a high level of commitment to the college. Overall attendance levels are satisfactory. A number of college committees make good use of co-opted governors with specialist skills.

84 There are effective systems for the appointment, induction and training of governors, a strength not identified in the self-assessment report. Four new governors were appointed in 2000. The search committee identified the skills and experience required by the new governors. The appointment process included advertisements in the local press, direct approaches to potential candidates and formal interviews. Newly appointed governors found the induction programme, which included seminars and the distribution of well prepared documentation, thorough and useful. Regular training events for all governors are held throughout the year. Training events are systematically evaluated and future training needs are identified.

85 Inspectors agreed with the college that governors provide strong strategic leadership and effectively determine and monitor the college's strategic priorities. The mission, values and corporate objectives are reviewed with representatives of staff, students and external organisations at an annual residential

conference. Governors have agreed a range of demanding corporate objectives. These include a commitment to widen participation and to raise student achievement rates. The board systematically reviews college performance each quarter against these objectives. The standards committee, whose membership includes co-opted members, regularly reviews the academic performance of the college. The minutes of this committee and related issues are considered by the corporation.

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

87 Governors have comprehensive procedures for reviewing their own performance. This strength was recognised in the self-assessment report. Objectives and targets have been established to monitor and improve the board's effectiveness. The board reviews its performance against these targets twice a year. Each committee reviews its performance and its terms of reference annually.

88 The self-assessment report recognised as a weakness the inadequate procedures to facilitate communications between governors and the college's internal and external communities. The board has recently introduced measures to improve external links including the establishment of strategic forums to discuss areas of common interest with partner organisations. Contacts between governors and college staff remain underdeveloped. The board has agreed to introduce a 'critical friend' scheme whereby individual governors will be linked to a curriculum or support area. The scheme has not yet been fully implemented.

89 As stated in the self-assessment report, there is effective administration of corporation

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and committee business. The business of governance is conducted through the finance and resources, standards, search, remuneration, appeal and audit committees. These committees operate within their comprehensive terms of reference. An annual schedule of corporation meetings identifies which meetings will deal with most key aspects of the annual governance cycle. The corporation has established procedures to ensure openness and accountability including standing orders to guide the conduct of business, a code of conduct and a comprehensive register of interests covering all governors, senior managers and the clerk. Governors' interests in business are disclosed from time to time. Good clerking arrangements contribute to the effective conduct of business. The clerk is an external appointment and is assisted by a deputy clerk.

90 The finance and resources committee monitors the college's financial position by receiving the monthly management accounts at its meetings, six times a year. The corporation considers the college's financial position termly. The management accounts are informative but income forecasts in 1999-2000 were not accurate. Although the finance and resources and standards committees have received some reports on franchising activities, the corporation has not received regular or sufficiently detailed reports. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

Management

Grade 2

91 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report and concluded that the college had made substantial progress in addressing many of the weaknesses it had identified.

Key strengths

- strong senior management providing clear direction

- success in fostering economic regeneration and widening participation
- effective communication across the organisation
- useful market research to support curriculum development

Weaknesses

- failure to meet enrolment and financial targets in 1999-2000
- insufficient monitoring of students' destinations

92 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that senior managers have provided the college with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Until recently the college's management was based on a federal structure in which individual colleges had considerable autonomy. A more integrated faculty structure was introduced in 2000-01 allowing some rationalisation and co-ordination of course provision and enabling services such as personnel and estates to be managed successfully across the college. This recent change has been managed skilfully. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities.

93 Effective action has been taken to improve communications across the multiple site college. Priority has been given to informing teaching and support staff about the mission and corporate priorities. The principal is seen as accessible by all staff. Electronic mail and the college intranet are being used increasingly to disseminate information. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, not all staff have access to electronic mail and the IT infrastructure is insufficiently developed to support this.

94 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the college failed by a substantial amount to meet its unit targets in 1999-2000. The system of planning and monitoring, still based on the federal

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structure, was not sufficiently accurate in forecasting demand and identifying shortfalls. Although the college has a high level of reserves, its solvency is forecast to deteriorate as funding is repaid to the FEFC. Managers have developed a post-merger reconfiguration strategy to address the financial weaknesses. The college has worked closely with the FEFC to determine an achievable level of provision and is negotiating external financial assistance to support the reconfiguration. The college's external auditors, in their 1999-2000 management letter, raised significant issues regarding pressures faced by the college, including the college's high dependence on franchised provision to achieve its unit targets. For 2000-01, the college has planned to reduce its franchised provision from 16% to 8% of FEFC-funded units.

95 Monthly management accounts report detailed historical and forecast information. The monthly management accounts did not recognise the full extent of the college's failure to meet its income targets until late in the 1999-2000 financial year. Recently updated financial regulations are comprehensive and widely distributed. Returns of student records to the FEFC have been made promptly.

96 Key new appointments in the revised management structure have facilitated the introduction of more robust planning and monitoring systems. It is too early to assess their effectiveness. Budget-setting procedures are documented and involve appropriate consultation with staff. A monitoring group of senior managers reviews the financial and academic performance of the college regularly.

97 The college's corporate objectives are shared with managers and staff through planning events and are reflected as objectives and targets in operating plans. A key aspect of the planning at course level is setting targets for retention, achievement and success. A sophisticated system is used to monitor course

performance. Underperforming courses are identified and faculty heads are responsible for taking remedial action.

98 As the self-assessment report identifies, the college inherited inconsistencies in management information caused by merging the different systems of the former colleges. A comprehensive information and learning strategy has been put in place. The college, through its information services unit, has improved the consistency and accuracy of management information and provided a local service to curriculum teams. At the time of the inspection, curriculum managers had good on-line access to budget information and data on students' achievements. The college recognises that the system needs further development. While there are some pockets of good practice in monitoring destinations, the college lacks an overview of this aspect of performance.

99 Development of the curriculum is well supported by market information. Many faculties make use of both general market intelligence and specific data on local labour market needs when planning their curriculum provision. Marketing for international development has been especially successful and the college has recruited over 1,000 overseas students.

100 Inspectors agreed that there are extensive links with community organisations in Nottingham and the college has successfully fostered economic regeneration and widened participation in education. Provision for adults has increased and initiatives have been introduced with local schools to tackle underachievement. A team has been created within the college to take responsibility for all off-campus work. This includes outreach and community links as well as work with the unemployed and local businesses.

101 The college is strongly committed to equal opportunities and this is reflected in its corporate objectives to recognise diversity and

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promote social inclusion. There is a well-developed policy and action plan that is monitored by the academic board and, at campus level, by equal opportunities and diversity groups. The staff profile for the college indicates that the proportion of staff from minority ethnic groups does not reflect the local community. The college is aware of this and has adopted a number of measures to address the situation.

Conclusions

102 The college's self-assessment report was clearly structured, self-critical and contained a wide range of evidence including comparisons with FEFC-produced benchmarking data. The inspection team found that it provided a good basis for planning and conducting the inspection. Inspectors agreed with most of its judgements but identified some additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with eight of the nine curriculum grades and awarded a lower grade in one area. In one cross-college area, inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given by the college. In the four other areas of cross-college provision, inspectors agreed with the grades awarded by the college.

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

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (July 2000)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	2
16-18 years	15
19-24 years	17
25+ years	66
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 2000)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation) and entry level	31
Level 2 (intermediate)	36
Level 3 (advanced)	22
Level 4/5 (higher)	3
Level not specified	5
Non-schedule 2	3
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 2000)

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	1,032	6,068	20
Agriculture	117	117	1
Construction	289	766	3
Engineering	235	1,188	4
Business	661	2,875	10
Hotel and catering	585	1,680	6
Health and community care	1,253	3,540	14
Art and design	1,052	1,351	7
Humanities	791	8,772	27
Basic education	237	2,600	8
Total	6,252	28,957	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1998-99 ISR data, the college recruited 39% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions' Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 2000)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	430	139	41	610
Supporting direct learning contact	140	28	0	168
Other support	470	42	0	512
Total	1,040	209	41	1,290

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1998	1999	2000
Income	£40,067,000	£43,190,000	£45,040,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£15.19	£16.20*	£16.77
Payroll as a proportion of income	61%	64%	63%
Achievement of funding target	99%	95%	80%
Diversity of income	24%	20%	28%
Operating surplus	£1,992,000	-£778,000	-£1,884,000

Sources: Income – college (1998, 1999 and 2000)

ALF – college (1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999), college (2000)

Payroll – college (1998, 1999 and 2000)

Achievement of funding target – college (1998, 1999 and 2000)

Diversity of income – college (1998, 1999 and 2000)

Operating surplus – college (1998, 1999 and 2000)

*provisional data

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
1	Number of starters	865	1,238	1,319	4,091	4,436	4,930
	Retention (%)	74	71	74	70	76	84
	Achievement (%)	56	53	59	45	52	63
2	Number of starters	3,561	4,135	4,136	6,570	7,916	7,123
	Retention (%)	73	75	76	78	76	77
	Achievement (%)	70	61	66	62	66	56
3	Number of starters	3,450	3,876	3,720	4,048	4,215	4,739
	Retention (%)	75	76	75	70	74	76
	Achievement (%)	75	70	71	53	53	51
4 or 5	Number of starters	32	24	41	1,363	795	720
	Retention (%)	66	100	80	86	84	78
	Achievement (%)	70	65	52	42	42	43
Short courses	Number of starters	4,253	4,042	3,671	22,651	29,845	33,881
	Retention (%)	93	91	93	95	95	96
	Achievement (%)	58	60	58	63	68	65
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	1,439	1,876	2,324	6,653	8,229	7,973
	Retention (%)	80	72	86	86	74	85
	Achievement (%)	35	50	44	47	46	34

Source: ISR

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Further copies can be obtained by contacting
the communications team at:

The Further Education Funding Council
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT

Telephone 024 7686 3265

Fax 024 7686 3025

E-mail fehcpubs@fefc.ac.uk

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