

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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**NEW College,  
Pontefract**

**September 1997**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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**THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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## **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

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

*The descriptors for the grades are:*

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

*By June 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.*

### **College grade profiles 1993-96**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Inspection grades</b>				
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Programme area	9%	59%	29%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	14%	50%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	12%	54%	30%	4%	<1%

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 88/97

**NEW COLLEGE, PONTEFRACT**  
**YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE REGION**  
**Inspected April 1996-April 1997**

## Summary

NEW College, Pontefract provides a wide range of GCE AS/A level subjects for 16 to 19 year old students. Its expanding 'next step' programme is attracting adult students into the college. Relationships with local schools and the community are good. The college provides effective support and guidance for students. Students benefit from a wide-ranging enrichment programme. A new staffing structure has been successfully introduced. The college is well governed. Relationships between governors, staff and students are characterised by trust and mutual respect. Communications are open and effective at all levels. Students' progress is monitored rigorously. Standards of teaching are high and students are successful in external examinations. The college site is attractive and provides a comfortable learning environment. The college should: strengthen its strategic planning processes; further develop its procedures to assure quality; promote issues of equality of opportunity including access for students with disabilities; develop a staff-appraisal process; produce an accommodation strategy; and improve college library provision.

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

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Mathematics and computing	1	Art, design and performing arts	2
Science	2	Humanities	2
Business	2	Social sciences	1

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 NEW College, Pontefract was inspected in three stages between April 1996 and April 1997. Thirteen inspectors spent 52 days in the college. They observed 103 teaching sessions, inspected the college's enrolment and induction procedures and attended tutorials and enrichment activities. They scrutinised college documentation and the written work of students. Inspectors also held meetings with governors, college staff, students, parents, employers, representatives from Wakefield Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), head teachers, and members of the wider community.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 NEW College, Pontefract was established in 1987 as a sixth form college serving the North East Wakefield area. It occupies the site of the former Pontefract Girls' High School and is in the closing stages of establishing its right to hold the freehold of the site in trust. At the time of its establishment, general academic education for 16 to 19 year olds was concentrated at NEW College, Pontefract and vocational provision and courses for adults were provided at Wakefield College which is 12 miles away. Wakefield College has a centre for further education which is three miles from NEW College, Pontefract. Maintained secondary education in North East Wakefield is provided by six comprehensive schools for pupils aged 11 to 16, which act as partner institutions to the college. Students also join the college from a further 60 secondary schools in the region. NEW College, Pontefract continues to concentrate on courses for full-time 16 to 19 year old students leading to the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and the general certificate of education advanced supplementary/advanced level (GCE AS/A level). However, it has recently introduced general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses at intermediate and advanced levels and an increasing number of adults study at the college in the evening on the 'next step' programme which was established three years ago.

3 The Wakefield district is an industrial and commercial area with a population of 310,000. The main categories of employment are banking and finance, manufacturing, wholesaling, textiles and motor vehicle distribution. The area has been affected by the decline of mining and other traditional industries, and it contains some of the poorest wards in the country. At the time of the inspection, the unemployment rate was 12.9 per cent, compared with the national average of 6.5 per cent. Minority ethnic groups form 1.5 per cent of the local population; 2.4 per cent of the enrolments at the college are drawn from these groups.

4 The college has increased its enrolments from 766 in 1994 to 1,290 students funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in November 1996. Of these, 1,006 were full-time students and 284 were part-time students. FEFC-funded student numbers by age, by level of

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study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3. The college employs 88 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 63 are teaching staff and 25 are support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 The college management team comprises the principal, two vice-principals responsible for resources and student services respectively, a curriculum manager, a quality and examinations manager, the manager of the 'next step' programme and the director of finance. Members of the college management team also have teaching commitments. The academic work of the college is organised by subject area heads, who are managed by six curriculum area managers. Four senior tutors and 53 tutors are responsible for the pastoral support of students. Cross-college responsibilities are shared between the college management team and other staff.

6 The mission of the college is 'to encourage the fulfilment of individual potential by providing high-quality education in a supportive environment'. It places a high value on providing support and guidance to its students and maintaining a wide range of enrichment activities.

#### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

7 The college concentrates primarily on providing GCE A level courses to students aged 16 to 18. In the current academic year, close to 90 per cent of 16 to 18 year old students are taking GCE AS/A level courses. There is a good range of 35 GCE A level subjects, a growing number of which have a modular structure, and 19 GCE AS subjects. The amount of provision at GCSE level has been reduced from 25 subjects in 1994 to 16 in 1997. Although GNVQ intermediate programmes have been run in the past as an alternative to GCSE, none recruited sufficient students to make them viable in the 1996-97 academic year. The college hopes that a new RSA Examinations Board (RSA) business administration programme, to be offered next September, will attract more students at this level. Two GNVQ advanced programmes are currently running in business and health and social care, accounting for 8 per cent of 16 to 18 year old students; the GNVQ science programme was withdrawn due to low numbers. The only provision at foundation level is the graded tests in numeracy. Some new courses have been recently introduced in response to changing demand, for example GCSE electronics and the GCE A level Salters chemistry scheme.

8 In recent years, the college has met or exceeded its enrolment targets. Total student numbers have grown by 68 per cent since 1994, and full-time numbers have increased by 35 per cent over the same period. Recruitment to many of the GCE A level courses has increased, in some cases against national trends. In physics, for example, numbers have increased from 34 in 1994 to 62 in 1997. In the other sciences and mathematics, growth has exceeded 30 per cent over the same period.

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Recruitment is falling in a small number of subjects, for example economics, where numbers have dropped by over 35 per cent in the last four years.

9 An extensive programme of enrichment activities, including community involvement, leisure, sport and academic options, is available for all 16 to 18 year old students. Large numbers of students participate in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. A regular calendar of sporting fixtures is arranged for football, hockey, basketball, netball and male and female rugby league. The choir and band are popular with students. All GCE A level students can take a programme of study leading to the GCE A level general studies examination; 200 students are entered for the 1997 examination. Just over 25 per cent of students on GNVQ advanced courses are also taking a GCE A level. The computer literacy and information technology programme attracts over 250 students. There is a small programme of modern foreign languages: no units are offered for GNVQ and only one GCSE, in Spanish, is offered as part of the daytime enrichment programme. The college is currently undertaking an audit of attendance patterns to gauge levels of participation in its enrichment activities.

10 In 1994, the college introduced an adult education evening programme, 'next step'. This attracted 211 enrolments in the second year and at the time of the inspection over 450 students were enrolled. The programme runs on two evenings a week. Information technology, business and sports leadership courses are particularly popular. A pilot programme of Saturday courses has not attracted many students. The 'next step' courses are promoted through leaflets and newspaper advertisements. In a recent survey, students commented favourably on the quality and organisation of the courses. In contrast, there are only very small numbers of adult students on day courses, partly due to a lack of flexibility in the timetabling. There is no 'access' route to prepare adults for entry to further or higher education.

11 Links with employers are developed mainly through students' work experience placements. About 25 per cent of students, including all GNVQ students, undertake work placements each year. A successful management training simulation is run for two days in the summer for all first-year students, using local business people as advisers. There are few visits to companies and little involvement of industrialists in the curriculum. For example, the establishment of employer advisory groups for vocational programmes is only now being considered. The college in its self-assessment report recognises the need for stronger links with employers. The college maintains regular contact with the Wakefield TEC through a strategic planning forum and has obtained development funding to promote the key skills of numeracy, literacy and information technology. Wider links with community organisations are promoted through a community placement programme which currently involves over 40 students each term. The college has a long tradition of arranging a Christmas concert for senior citizens. Typically about 150 students and over 170 senior citizens are involved in this occasion each year.



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12 Close links are maintained with Wakefield Local Education Authority (LEA). The principal is a member of the Wakefield 14 to 19 curriculum development group. The college is a member of the careers guidance consultative group and the records of achievement working party. Close contact with a nearby special school is maintained through student placements and an annual activities day at the college. Local primary schools have recently collaborated with college students on a performing arts project for Opera North. Curriculum links with feeder schools have recently been formalised. An LEA initiative this year enabled secondary school teachers to liaise with college staff; the college now aims to formalise these links and to hold meetings on a regular basis. Higher education links are supported by a compact with the University of Lincolnshire and Humberside to secure progression for successful GNVQ students. Mathematics master classes organised by college staff involve university lecturers working with year 11 pupils from local schools to encourage students to continue studying this subject.

13 A marketing plan has been produced this year which includes the creation of a cross-college marketing group. Its terms of reference have still to be determined and a college marketing policy has yet to be produced. Some market research has been undertaken to assess demand for 'next step' courses. The college prospectus, which is produced to a professional standard, is distributed to all local secondary schools. Course leaflets are produced to a standard format. The present marketing budget includes provision for updated display materials and a new college video. A web site has been created on the Internet for promotional purposes. Students produce an annual supplement in the regional newspaper to promote the college; this year it included students' views on the forthcoming general election. All staff are asked to use a proforma to record important activities and events and these are used to encourage press coverage.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

14 The corporation has 13 members: the principal, two parents, two teachers, six business members and two members who are co-opted. There is currently a vacancy for a member from the TEC. Four members are women. There is one student observer. Governors possess a breadth of experience which the college uses to good effect. This includes knowledge of business, law, education, accounting and building. There are three committees, for finance and general purposes, audit and remuneration. These are appropriately constituted and well attended. At the time of the inspection, the clerk to the governors was the college's finance manager. Financial information and other documentation and reports which the governors receive are timely and of good quality. The finance and general purposes committee receives monthly management accounts, and a financial summary is issued to governors at each meeting.

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15 Governors are strongly committed to the college, its mission and its character. They monitor the college's progress by, for example, scrutinising examination results and seeking reasons for different levels of performance. They discussed and approved a revised mission statement in July 1996, and played a part in planning and implementing the new staffing structure. They contributed to the selection and appointment of staff in the new structure. They are involved in the preparation of a new strategic plan for 1997-2000, and have influenced issues such as the staff disciplinary procedure and the college charter. They have approved a policy for health and safety and, at their request, receive a progress report on health and safety at every meeting. The college meets the requirements for religious education and worship laid down in the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992*. The governors have not established a schedule of reports and policies which are to be approved and reviewed by them, with the result that some policies, such as those for student support and guidance, have not been ratified by governors. Although the college has recently drawn up a statement of intent on equal opportunities and appointed a co-ordinator, there is no formal policy approved by governors and no college strategy for dealing with equal opportunities issues.

16 Governors have established a register of interests and adopted a code of conduct. The corporation has not undertaken a formal review of its effectiveness but it has evaluated its procedures and identified its information and training needs by means of a confidential questionnaire. Governors expressed satisfaction with the conduct of meetings, with documentation and procedures. The evaluation resulted in a programme of training sessions covering governance and strategic planning. Recent briefings, held immediately prior to full board meetings, have included the funding methodology for further education, the Dearing review and its implications for the curriculum, and quality assurance. New governors, and those newly appointed to committees, do not receive sufficient induction to their duties. The corporation is discussing ways of increasing the amount of contact between staff and governors, which is currently at a low level. Access to governors is insufficiently publicised: for example, no list of governors or contact point for governors is published in the college prospectus or charter.

17 The management style throughout the college is open and consultative. The college management team meets weekly and the minutes of their meetings are displayed in the staff room. Nearly half the staff participate in one or more of the cross-college committees and working parties. Non-teaching staff play a significant part in the work of the committees. Communications across the college are good. The principal holds a daily briefing for all staff and a weekly staff newsletter is published. The staff room provides a valuable informal channel of communication at break and lunch times. The published calendar of meetings includes the opportunity, approximately once a month, for all staff to meet either as a group or as curriculum area teams.

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18 Following the appointment of the present principal in September 1994, the college undertook a review and reorganisation of its staffing and management structure. Teaching and non-teaching staff were consulted at every stage of the process, and a staff working group, representing staff from different areas of the college, played a major role in determining the options for consultation. The restructuring was completed by September 1996, and the staff consider that it was introduced smoothly and successfully. The most significant changes have been the grouping of the subject departments into six curriculum areas, each led by a curriculum area manager, and the grouping of tutor groups into four teams each led by a senior tutor. The reorganisation has improved accountability, and has provided more opportunities for teamwork within and between subject areas. The time and effort devoted to the restructuring has delayed the introduction of some other initiatives, such as quality assurance and appraisal.

19 The college's strategic plan for 1997-2000 will be submitted to governors for approval in July 1997. Taking the mission statement as its starting point, it draws heavily on two development plans; one for the curriculum and one for student services. Objectives and targets from these plans have been incorporated into the strategic plan, but there are no overall corporate objectives and no college-wide operational plan. An operational plan and corporate objectives are being prepared to enable senior managers and governors to monitor the college's progress.

20 The curriculum development plan was built up from subject area and curriculum area plans which were based on evaluation and review of the appropriate courses. In this way, staff at all levels were able to make a contribution, and links were established between quality review and strategic planning. The plans vary in their usefulness: most are thorough and detailed, and include precise targets for improvement, but some are superficial. The business studies plan is particularly well conceived. The links between subject plans and curriculum area plans are not always clear.

21 The management of subjects and curriculum areas is effective. The college curriculum manager, the curriculum area managers and the 'next step' manager meet weekly to co-ordinate the implementation and development of the curriculum. Staff in curriculum areas and subject areas have regular minuted meetings, and the lines of communication and accountability are clear. So far, the main benefit of the increased dialogue between staff from different subject areas has been more sharing of resources. Little progress has been made on the sharing of good teaching practice and other joint activities.

22 The college monitors enrolments, retention, attendance and destinations effectively, and is increasingly using computerised systems to do so. The college's management information unit provides a good range of reports to managers and teachers and provides all staff with ready access to information. A management information systems focus group is

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currently investigating the needs for management information across the college. The confidence of staff in the reliability of the information is increasing.

23 Efficiency gains have been achieved by increasing class sizes and reducing the teaching time allocated to courses. The college has undertaken an exercise in course costing which has been discussed with staff in preparation for increased financial delegation. At present, financial allocation to subject areas for consumable items is carried out according to a well-established formula which takes account of student enrolments and retention, and the varying costs incurred by different subjects. The formula is not fully understood by all staff and is due for revision. Bids for capital expenditure are evaluated and agreed by curriculum area managers. Many subject area plans do not identify and prioritise resource needs sufficiently to assist the process of financial allocation.

24 The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £20.07 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.36 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

#### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

25 The college has a good reputation locally for the quality of support and guidance it provides to its students. Relations with local schools over recruitment and liaison are managed in a friendly, personal and effective manner. Members of a liaison team, consisting of senior tutors and members of the college management team including the principal, visit most local schools to talk about the college to pupils, staff and parents. Current college students also go to schools, and pupils particularly value the direct and clear information which they receive from them. Open evenings at the college three times a year are well attended; parents appreciate the opportunity to discuss choices with teachers at the college and to see its facilities. College students are encouraged to maintain contact with their former schools throughout their time at college.

26 The percentage of applicants who subsequently enrol on college courses has grown steadily from 66 per cent in 1993 to 85 per cent in 1996. Prospective students receive clear guidance on selecting a suitable programme of study. They all have at least two personal interviews, either at their own school or at the college, depending on their preference. The induction programme has recently been extended. In the summer term, prospective students can sample lessons to get a clearer idea of the nature of the subjects they have chosen; in July 1996, 438 prospective students attended such sessions, of whom 407 subsequently enrolled at the college. A second induction takes place in September and extends over three days. The process is supportive and helpful in setting students at their ease. It contains activities which enable students to confirm or change their subject choice, to get to know each other in tutor groups, to have individual interviews, and to become familiar with the college, its

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staff and necessary administrative procedures. All new students receive helpful college and subject handbooks and the college charter. During one of the tutorial sessions, students calculate their projected GCE A level grades from their GCSE scores and use these as the basis for setting targets for achievement. Tutors are issued with clear written guidance prior to the induction process. Students are asked for their views on the value of the induction process and are appreciative of the help they receive.

27 The tutorial programme has recently been revised and strengthened, and students commented favourably about the new developments. Every full-time member of the teaching staff has a group of about 15 students: four senior tutors support clusters of tutors and develop the tutorial programme. Students remain with the same tutor throughout their time in college. Efforts are made to keep pre-existing friendship groups together if students wish. Students appreciate the daily registration session in tutor groups for the regular communication it promotes between themselves and their tutor. Once a week, there is a 50-minute tutorial session. The new tutorial curriculum is flexible and responsive. Modifications to the tutorial content, such as introducing more outside speakers, have been made as a result of student feedback. During the inspection, tutorial groups were devising activities to raise money for Comic Relief. Students appreciate the tutorial programme: although some activities duplicate topics already covered in school, students recognised the need for them. However, they commented that some tutorials lacked structure and that some tutors were insufficiently prepared.

28 There is a tradition of strong guidance and support at the college. Subject teachers give their students substantial, additional help on an individual basis. Students speak highly of this support and are confident that every effort will be made to assist them with any difficulties they experience on their courses. Additional academic support is available informally and in timetabled revision classes where necessary. If students wish to change their programme of study, they receive expert guidance from subject teachers, tutors and careers staff, and their parents are consulted to ensure that decisions are carefully considered. The procedures are clear and the college maintains an up-to-date database of course changes. Students' attendance is monitored regularly and students are aware of the college attendance target of 85 per cent. The actual college attendance rate this academic year is 89 per cent. Unexplained absences and other issues are addressed through a 'concern note' system which keeps all relevant people informed and ensures that action is taken. Adult students on evening courses are supported by the manager of the 'next step' provision who acts as a personal tutor, and also by their individual teachers.

29 Students and parents appreciate the rigour of the processes for reviewing progress. Students are informed regularly of their progress in each subject, and are aware of their achievement targets and what they need to do to achieve them. Individual reviews take place twice a year

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with subject teachers, as a result of which students grade themselves on a one to five scale for effort, attendance, punctuality, meeting deadlines, participation and subject skill. The reviews of students' progress vary in their effectiveness. GNVQ reviews are particularly comprehensive while some in art and design are insufficiently evaluative. Students are helped to produce specific action plans. The tutor works with each student to summarise overall progress and targets. Some students find the tutor reviews less helpful than the subject reviews, particularly in the GNVQ courses: they believe that the time allocated for individual sessions with their tutor is too short to conduct an effective review. Parents value the information they receive and can discuss reports further at the consultation evenings which follow the reviews. The college is now giving increased prominence to the completion of records of achievement, and time is spent in tutorials developing these.

30 From September 1996, all first-year students have been screened on entry to the college to establish whether they need extra support in literacy. All GNVQ students and any others who have not achieved a satisfactory grade in GCSE mathematics are also screened to determine their level of numeracy skills. The numbers identified as needing additional help in developing these key skills has outstripped the available staff time; there is as yet no strategy for deciding how to meet the need which the screening process has identified. Well-qualified staff provide learning support in workshops for 17 periods a week. Not all students who need to improve their key skills can be accommodated in the workshops. Those who attend are highly appreciative of the provision and felt that there had been an improvement in their college work as a result.

31 Staff are thoroughly committed to the welfare of students. A newly-developed student services centre brings together senior tutors, the college matron, administrative staff and the careers service in a single location. The centre is well used by students. There is no professionally-qualified college counsellor and some students have expressed a need for one. A co-ordinator provides support for the 5 per cent of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The majority of these students have physical disabilities. Dyslexic students are offered external assessment and a laptop computer has recently been purchased to support one dyslexic student at home. The college operates a welfare fund to help students in financial difficulties continue with their studies. Some students travelling to the college from outside a three-mile radius can use one of the five free buses which travel daily from some of the college's catchment areas to the college.

32 There are close working relationships with Wakefield Guidance Services with which the college has an agreement to provide careers guidance. A member of their staff is in college three days a week and in the last year 645 careers interviews took place. The internal college careers adviser is a member of the student services team and makes a substantial contribution to the content and development of the tutorial programme. The careers section of the student services centre contains a wide range of

useful materials, including computer software. Students appreciate the ready access they have to advice and careers materials. Guidance for students who wish to proceed to higher education is thorough; one member of staff is responsible for supporting potential candidates for Oxford and Cambridge. College staff organise visits to university open days and offer guidance to students and their parents about entry to higher education during evening events. Students are helped to prepare themselves personally for life after college. Those who wish to move directly into employment are confident that they receive as much attention and guidance as those progressing to higher education.

33 The student council is an active body. Each tutor group sends a representative to the weekly meetings. The council organises social and charity events and raises money for student facilities. The president is an observer at meetings of the governing body. The college is expanding the range of its communications with students by holding informal meetings with student council officials to discuss key issues such as the tutorial programme. Members of the council said that they felt confident that college staff pay attention to their views. College staff provide unobtrusive support and encouragement to the council, including keeping records of its financial transactions.

#### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

34 Of the 103 teaching sessions observed, 78 per cent were judged to have strengths which outweighed weaknesses. Four per cent of the sessions were judged to have weaknesses which outweighed strengths. This profile of grades is better than the average for all lessons observed in the sector during the 1995-96 inspection programme when, according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*, 63 per cent of classes were judged to have strengths which outweighed weaknesses and 8 per cent of classes were judged to have weaknesses which outweighed strengths. The average level of attendance in the sessions inspected was 86 per cent. The following table shows the grades awarded to the sessions inspected.

**Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE AS/A level	27	33	14	3	0	77
GCSE	4	7	3	1	0	15
GNVQ	1	3	1	0	0	5
Other	1	4	1	0	0	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>103</b>

35 Overall, teaching is highly effective and of a good standard, especially in the humanities and social sciences. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to their subjects. They have sound subject knowledge and

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expertise. Lessons are generally well prepared and planned. Schemes of work are detailed, making reference to classwork and homework as well as the subject content. They include a timetable of topics for the year. Teachers use schemes of work as their primary planning tool, and many do not routinely prepare lesson plans. Informative student handbooks have been produced for all courses. Some of these, for example in typewriting and wordprocessing, include progress record sheets. Comprehensive study notes have been compiled for some subjects such as economics. Relationships between teachers and students are good. Work is set regularly and is marked and returned promptly. Detailed records of students' progress are kept, and students are aware of their achievements.

36 Teachers in business studies have good working relationships with their students, and encourage them to contribute to class discussions. In the best lessons, the aims are made clear. A variety of learning activities is used, including whole-class discussion, group work and presentations by students. In a GCE A level economics lesson on the transition of eastern European countries to a market economy, the teacher provided comprehensive statistical data to support the discussion about the consequences of change and introduced a theoretical model to help to explain the changes. In some less effective lessons the aims and objectives were not obvious and questions were not directed at all members of the class. Links with commercial business practice need to be improved.

37 The teachers on the GCE A level mathematics courses present theoretical concepts clearly. The theory is supported by worked examples and a regular programme of homework and assignments. In GCSE and GCE A level courses, teachers provide useful materials, including commercially produced worksheets, which enable students to work on their own. More use of information technology is needed to illustrate mathematical concepts. The teaching in computing is sound. Some teachers do not set sufficiently clear objectives. In practical computing sessions, teachers give thorough and patient support to students. Revision sessions are mostly handled well, and students clearly benefit from discussion of model answers to examination questions.

38 Science teachers structure their sessions carefully. The teaching materials are well prepared, interesting and instructive. Teachers make the context of the topics clear to students and give them the chance to consolidate their learning. Biology students benefit from the attention paid to developing their study skills. Chemistry teachers make the course materials relevant to the real world and have recently introduced the Salters GCE A level scheme to extend this approach further. Students are encouraged to summarise their work using flow diagrams. Practical activities are not well integrated with theory work. Teachers depend too much on demonstrations, and give students insufficient opportunity to practice and develop the full range of practical skills. In some lessons, the teaching of factual material relies too heavily on dictation and copied notes.



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39 Teaching methods in art, design and the performing arts are suitably varied. The teachers prepare and manage their sessions capably, although the 50-minute session time is too short for some art, design and performing arts activities. The briefs and projects which the teachers set are imaginative and challenging. For example, in a performing arts session, students were given a short story about a man ordering a meal in a restaurant and asked to devise a scripted presentation about food and food-related issues such as anorexia and obesity. They responded with imagination and enthusiasm. The students are encouraged to gather their own resources by recording, drawing, photographing, and collecting objects. They are expected to carry out research in libraries, museums and galleries and at performances and concerts. Students' work in progress and completed work in their portfolios demonstrated a good grounding in visual research. The students on the GCSE course in expressive arts were completing a project on discouraging young people from smoking. They devised and performed a roadshow and drama workshop for pupils at a local primary school. The performance was recorded on video to allow students to evaluate and assess its effectiveness at a later date. GCE A level art is taught in a way which enables students to make informed choices about the areas in which they wish to specialise.

40 In the social sciences, teaching is excellent. It relates closely to the needs and abilities of the students. Teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods and up-to-date materials. They employ the overhead projector and handouts effectively. Teachers encourage students to develop their verbal skills. Psychology teachers make constructive use of information technology: students are encouraged to wordprocess their assignments and they use spreadsheets and databases effectively. Schemes of work set out systematically the main teaching methods and approaches teachers will use. These are directly linked to clear learning outcomes and assessment methods and criteria. The course handbooks and study packs contain guidance on study skills as well as useful information about different aspects of the subject.

41 Teachers in the humanities area use a wide range of teaching methods and approaches. Relationships between staff and students are respectful and mutually supportive. Question and answer sessions do not involve all students. In GCE A level history, good use is made of alternatives to the written word: diagrams and worksheets help students record necessary information in an accessible form and reach conclusions. In a GCE A level history class, the teacher began a new topic on parliamentary reform by giving students a quiz to test their knowledge of modern parliamentary procedures and political systems. This motivated students to learn and set the context for the forthcoming topic. There is good recapitulation of previous lessons to ensure that everyone in the class has the same basic knowledge on which to build. English students are encouraged to read beyond the requirements of the syllabus. Additional weekly subject workshops are well attended. Some teachers in English give students insufficient scope to work independently and develop their own notes.

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42 The teaching of modern foreign languages is supportive and encouraging. Teachers give freely of their time to help their students outside lessons. They use a topic approach to languages, which involves extensive use of authentic materials. The lessons are suitably varied, and include exercises in groups and pairs and student presentations. In a first-year GCE A level German class the students' presentations on water and traffic pollution demonstrated a high standard of vocabulary and structures for the early stage of their course. The teacher had set high standards for speaking the language in class, and encouraged students to ask questions in German. In some classes, students were not given enough opportunity to communicate in the foreign language. In others, foreign language assistants work successfully with students to develop their oral skills.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

43 Pass rates in external examinations are high. According to tables published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) in 1996, the 351 students aged 16 to 18 who were entered for GCE AS/A level examinations scored on average 5.3 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). However, after the remarking of some GCE A level papers the college recalculated this point score and now considers it to be 5.5 points per entry. A similar figure of 5.4 points per entry was achieved in 1995. This places the college in the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. Of the 1,096 subject entries at GCE AS/A level in 1996, 55 per cent were graded at A to C and 91 per cent at A to E. This shows consistency with the previous year, when 53 per cent gained grades A to C and 89 per cent A to E. The results are better than the provisional average figures for all sixth form colleges in 1996 of 51 per cent and 86 per cent, respectively. Of the 277 GCSE entries in 1996, 58 per cent of students gained grades at A\* to C. This is better than the provisional average of 51 per cent for sixth form colleges and represents a significant improvement on the figure of 44 per cent in 1995.

44 In the sciences, results for GCE A level modular courses are very good. In 1996 the overall pass rate was 97 per cent and in geology it was 100 per cent. For all subjects apart from physics, the A to C pass rate was above 60 per cent. Retention rates are good in all the science subjects at close to 90 per cent. Teachers pay close attention to assessment tasks throughout the course and students reach high standards in their written assignments. Course files, for example, contain many examples of well-organised and carefully-presented pieces of work. Achievements at intermediate level are more variable, especially in GCSE subjects. GNVQ intermediate results in health and social care have been satisfactory in the past, but the retention rate for the first group of advanced GNVQ students, completing in 1996, was only 25 per cent.

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45 Achievements in mathematics are excellent. Examination results at GCSE and GCE A level are well above the average for sixth form colleges and the college's value-added measures suggest students achieve better grades at GCE A level than would be predicted on the basis of their GCSE scores on entry. In 1996, for example, students achieved a pass rate of 100 per cent, and 84 per cent of candidates gained A to C grades. Students demonstrated an impressive grasp of mathematics when answering questions in class and clearly enjoyed the subject. Although GCE A level results in computing are near the sector average, retention has been poor; only 52 per cent of students completed the course over the 1994-96 period. GCSE results in computing have also been less than satisfactory: only just over 30 per cent of students have achieved grade C or above over the last two years. Computer literacy and information technology pass rates over the last two years have been better than 90 per cent, enabling students to progress to information technology awards at higher levels.

46 Students in economics and business subjects were well informed and contributed confidently and effectively to many of the discussion sessions. In the GNVQ advanced programme, students were developing the key skills of numeracy, literacy and information technology through the work they prepared for their portfolios and in classroom activities, where they had ready access to computers. Examination results in GCE A level economics are good, significantly exceeding national averages for sixth form colleges over the past three years. In 1996, for example, 79 per cent of students gained passes at grades A to C and 100 per cent at A to E. Results in GCE A level business studies are also good, exceeding national averages except in 1996 when the A to C pass rate dropped to 33 per cent. National diploma and GNVQ intermediate results showed 100 per cent pass rates in 1996. Results were less satisfactory in GCSE business studies where the A to C pass rate has been significantly below national averages for sixth form colleges in two out of the past three years. Results in GCE AS economics and business studies have also been below national averages although only small numbers of students entered. In 1994-96, the retention rate in GCE A level economics and business studies was relatively low at 75 per cent.

47 Students in the creative and performing arts area were enthusiastic, confident and well motivated. Their written work demonstrated evidence of primary research and evaluation together with the development of relevant knowledge and skills. High standards were achieved in choir and band activities. The small number of students who lacked confidence or motivation were given appropriate encouragement. GCE A level examination results are at or above national averages. Apart from theatre studies, pass rates at grades A to C averaged over 80 per cent in 1996 and in music this figure was 89 per cent. GCSE results in 1996 were above national averages except in art.

48 Achievements in GCE A level English language and literature are at or above national averages. In 1994 and 1995, 100 per cent of those

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entered for English language gained a pass. Retention has improved markedly in English literature from 75 per cent in 1995 to 94 per cent in 1996; retention in English language in 1996 was 80 per cent. In English language, records are kept of students causing concern, although the absence of early remedial help is having an adverse effect on eventual course completion and achievement. Students maintain their course work files to a good standard but their note-taking skills need to be improved. In English language the pass rate at grade C or above in 1996 was 84 per cent, which significantly exceeded the national average and represents a remarkable improvement over the 1995 figure of only 27 per cent. In history the standard of written work is high. Examination pass rates of over 90 per cent are consistently above national averages. Retention rates are less satisfactory at 78 per cent of the 1994-96 cohort. The small number of students entered for classical civilisation achieved a pass rate of 100 per cent in 1996, and half the students gained grades A to C.

49 GCE A level pass rates at grades A to E in modern languages have been consistently above the national average over the last three years. However, the proportion of A to C grades has been low and value-added analysis suggests that significant numbers are under performing. Retention rates are high and a large proportion of students continue with their study of languages at degree level. In class and in their written work, students generally demonstrated good language proficiency for the stage of the course, although grammatical accuracy was poor in some cases.

50 Students in the social sciences subjects expressed themselves clearly. Some of their coursework was of a very high quality, well presented, properly referenced and demonstrating a good grasp of relevant theory. Results at GCE A level were significantly above national averages for all social science subjects in 1996 except sociology, where the pass rate was 73 per cent. In geography 100 per cent of those entered gained a pass. The A to C pass rate is high, particularly in government and politics where over 70 per cent of candidates have gained these grades in each of the last three years. Retention is generally good although it dropped below 80 per cent in geography for the 1994-96 cohort. GCSE results are close to national averages but less satisfactory in law, which had an A to C pass rate of under 40 per cent in 1994 and 1995.

51 The average retention rate on the 'next step' adult evening programme was 84 per cent in 1995-96. On some subjects such as wordprocessing, over 90 per cent of students completed the course; in a small number of subjects such as English language, this figure fell below 70 per cent. Achievement rates have not been analysed.

52 The majority of students aim to enter higher education directly from the college. In 1996 over 75 per cent of those taking two or more GCE A levels were successful in gaining entry to higher education; this represents 68 per cent of the final year students. In art and design a significant

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number of GCE A level students were able to enter higher education directly without the need for a foundation year. Ten per cent of students are recorded as progressing to employment, 12 per cent to further education and a further 10 per cent of destinations are unknown. Similar results are recorded for 1995.

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

53 Quality assurance policy and practices are contained in a college document published in September 1996. A senior staff member is designated as quality and examinations manager. Curriculum area managers have responsibility for assuring quality in their subject areas. The major elements of the quality assurance system currently being implemented are annual subject and curriculum area reviews, the monitoring of key performance indicators, the establishment of quality standards for some of the college's operations, and the use of student evaluation questionnaires. The college management team receives and considers proposals for curriculum change and exercises a collective responsibility for quality assurance throughout the college. This includes ensuring that review and evaluation, and the production of an annual report, are completed within specified areas of college operations, such as curriculum, finance, resources, staff development and the 'next step' adult provision. A quality panel, with representatives from teaching and support staff and chaired by the quality and examinations manager, has been established to act as a forum where quality issues can be raised and recommendations passed to the college management team.

54 The quality assurance system is at an early stage of development. The individual elements of the system do not have consistency of approach, or the necessary rigour. The college has yet to publish an annual overview report on quality assurance that would provide a summary of quality issues across the college. The full potential of the quality panel has still to be exploited.

55 One of the main features of the quality assurance system is the setting of standards for curriculum areas. Quality standards have also been devised for two areas of cross-college activity; student services and learning support. These standards provide a useful vehicle for monitoring performance and creating a culture of continuous improvement. However, there is scope for refining the standards and relating them to more specific criteria and measurable outcomes and targets.

56 Each subject area is required to produce an annual review. The first set of such reports, produced in September 1996, were variable in their rigour and quality. Some reports, including those for social science subject areas, were detailed and comprehensive. They included all the required performance indicators, and were accompanied by a thorough and rigorous analysis of results, a considered evaluation of the overall performance of the subject and clear action plans. Other reviews, for

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example some of those in the humanities area, were less comprehensive, contained only a minimum of information and data, and little evaluative comment or action planning.

57 The college's management information system produces a range of indicators and other data in relation to students' performance at GCE A level in comparison with the grades predicted on the basis of GCSE scores. This value-added information is communicated directly to subject heads in September in time to inform the production of the annual subject reviews. Subject teachers are encouraged to consider any factors that might affect the performance of individuals or groups and to establish benchmarks against which future performance can be judged.

58 Students' perceptions of their courses have been monitored using questionnaires. All subject staff receive copies of the returns that concern them and overall results are compiled and analysed; they feed into curriculum and college-wide action planning. However, the college has not developed a formal system of feeding back to students the analysis of responses to the questionnaires and the action taken. The college does not have a systematic method of obtaining the views of parents or employers who provide work placements but acquires some informal feedback through letters or telephone contacts.

59 There are established systems in place for the induction and support of new teaching and support staff which staff find valuable. These include a programme of familiarisation with the college and a mentoring system. The college lacks a coherent staff-development policy. Until very recently, staff development was provided on an ad-hoc and personal basis; the college responded to specific requests from individuals. This led to variability in the scale and scope of staff-development activities between subject and curriculum areas. The variability has been reduced to some extent by increasing the allocation to the central fund to provide, for example, training in information technology and in management for those members of staff recently appointed to managerial posts. Much remains to be done to link staff development more explicitly to curriculum development and strategic planning.

60 There is no system of staff appraisal in the college, although some progress was made in the current academic year, as part of the preparation for inspection, when senior staff observed every teacher in the classroom. A working group of staff and union representatives has been set up to consider and develop a full appraisal system.

61 The current college charter was published in 1994 and sets out clearly the major college aims and objectives, and the entitlements which students can reasonably expect. It also sets out clearly the responsibilities of students including hard work, good attendance and respect for others. There has been a considerable amount of discussion during this academic year in staff groups, in tutorials and in the governing body on revisions to

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the charter. The achievement of the charter's aims and objectives is monitored through the student questionnaires.

62 The college's self-assessment report is clearly written and conforms in structure and layout to the FEFC's expectations as set out in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It provides good evidence of a rigorous and honest self-appraisal by the college with an appropriate amount of detail and a fair and realistic balance between perceived strengths and weaknesses. Its judgements generally match those of the inspectors. In some sections, for example students' recruitment, guidance and support, the self-assessment is too descriptive. The issues identified in the self-assessment report constitute the main focus of the latest curriculum development plan and of the emerging strategic plan for 1997-2000. The report has been distributed to all staff. It was formulated and produced by the college management team with minimal involvement of governors.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

63 Teachers and support staff are enthusiastic and dedicated to their work. They are well qualified and experienced. Most have worked in the college for a considerable time. Ninety-three per cent of full-time teachers are graduates and 21 per cent have higher degrees; 98 per cent are qualified teachers. Half of the teaching staff are women, and of the seven members of the college management team, three are women. Three per cent of staff are from minority ethnic groups. Some teachers have developed their professional expertise by undertaking short secondments to industry or by working for examining bodies but others have insufficient relevant experience outside the college. Some teachers have achieved or are working towards assessor qualifications. Part-time teachers account for 14 per cent of teaching hours and contribute valuable vocational experience. Staff deployment is effective and is informed by a skills audit which the college recently undertook.

64 The support staff are well qualified and experienced. They are well integrated with the life and work of the college, show a high level of commitment and enthusiasm and their contribution is appreciated. Technician support in information technology and in the science workshops is effective. A physics technician runs a practical workshop for students, in which they can increase their knowledge and understanding of scientific instruments. The chemistry technician co-ordinates technical support around the college and the senior computer technician is responsible for supervising, running and maintaining the college's two computer networks. There is inadequate technician support in a few areas such as modern foreign languages and art and design. Many support staff are involved in college committees and others attend departmental team meetings and participate in the curriculum planning processes.

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65 The college has been sensitive and systematic in its approach to staffing issues during reorganisation and some effective personnel policies and procedures have been introduced. A staff handbook has been issued to all staff. Staffing and employment related policies have recently been updated but more remains to be done. For example, there is no formal policy on recruitment and selection, and some job descriptions have not been updated to reflect postholders' current responsibilities.

#### **Equipment/learning resources**

66 The amount and quality of specialist equipment in most subject areas is good. The college has a fully equipped metal and woodworking workshop. The design studio, and the adjoining textile studio, are well equipped with looms and dyeing and printing equipment. General levels of equipment in classrooms are good: most rooms have an overhead projector, screen and board, and there is adequate access to audio-visual equipment, including television and video facilities. A few departments such as sports studies do not have sufficient specialist equipment, and in the science laboratories some equipment is out of date or in short supply. There is an assets register but no formal plan for the replacement of equipment.

67 The range of information technology equipment is generally good; the hardware and software is of industrial standard and includes facilities for desktop publishing. There are 121 computers available for use by the students which gives a ratio of full-time students to computers of 8:1. Some departments, for example, mathematics and creative and performing arts do not have sufficient computers or adequate subject-related software. The intensive use of some of the computer rooms for timetabled teaching restricts the extent to which they can be used by students working on their own. Some of the computers are located within departments to support the teaching of courses, and six networked computers have recently been installed in the library.

68 The college library provides a comfortable learning environment with 110 quiet study spaces; an additional 24 study places are available in the student services centre. However, there are deficiencies in the library service provided. The collection of books is inadequate and some are out of date. In the last academic year, the college spent £4,000 on books; about £4.00 for each full-time equivalent student. The allocation for the current year has only been increased by 2 per cent. The modern fiction section is small and limited in scope. The college believes it has 10,000 books but does not know the exact number, because no formal audit has taken place. The library collection is augmented by stocks of books and other materials held in departments, but these stocks are not included on the library database. There is no security system. Links between library staff and some subject areas are poor. The development of library and learning resources across the college is poorly co-ordinated.



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## **Accommodation**

69 The college consists of eight buildings occupying a pleasant site adjacent to open park land. The attractive central three-storey block, dating from 1910, is used for teaching and administration. Behind and adjacent to this building are three single-storey teaching blocks, a three-storey science block, a hall and cafeteria built in 1959; a sports hall and a two-storey music block and a two-storey craft block were added in 1970, and a single-storey library was added in 1989. Social and recreational facilities are well maintained and welcoming. There is no graffiti and rubbish is quickly cleared at the end of the college day. The student common room and canteen are large and well used. The college has recently established a new student services centre in what was previously the students' common room. Part of it still acts as a social area for students. There is as yet no accommodation for the student council officials. Some social areas are overcrowded. On warm days the students are able to sit outside at tables. The sports hall is equipped for basketball, baseball, tennis and cricket. Students can use one playing field owned by the college and others which are rented from the local authority. The changing rooms are some distance away and rarely used. The staff common room is spacious and comfortable and the mezzanine floor provides useful quiet study space. There is a lift in the main building but no lifts elsewhere. Much of the site is inaccessible for wheelchair users. The college has an on-going programme of minor works to address those areas of the teaching blocks which are in need of refurbishment and repair.

70 The teaching rooms are grouped together in subject areas, and staff and students appreciate the sense of subject identity which is created. Most rooms are well furnished, decorated and maintained, and have attractive displays of students' work and subject-related information. Some of the classrooms are small and awkwardly shaped, which restricts the scope of teaching and learning activities. The college is aware that teaching accommodation is sometimes not used efficiently. The college has not yet produced an accommodation strategy which addresses its accommodation requirements.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

71 The strengths of the college are:

- the wide range of GCE AS/A level subjects
- an extensive enrichment programme
- the open and consultative management style
- effective management of the curriculum
- the advice, guidance and support which students receive before entry and during their courses
- the rigorous monitoring of students' progress

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- high standards of teaching
  - staff commitment to the welfare and progress of their students
  - good examination results
  - an attractive and well-maintained site.

72 If the college is to continue to improve, it should:

- review its provision at intermediate level
- address more effectively issues of equality of opportunity
- improve strategic planning
- extend and refine the process of setting quality standards
- introduce a full appraisal system for staff
- address current deficiencies in library resources
- produce an accommodation strategy.

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## FIGURES

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1 FEFC-funded percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)

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2 FEFC-funded percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)

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3 FEFC-funded student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)

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4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996)

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5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

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6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

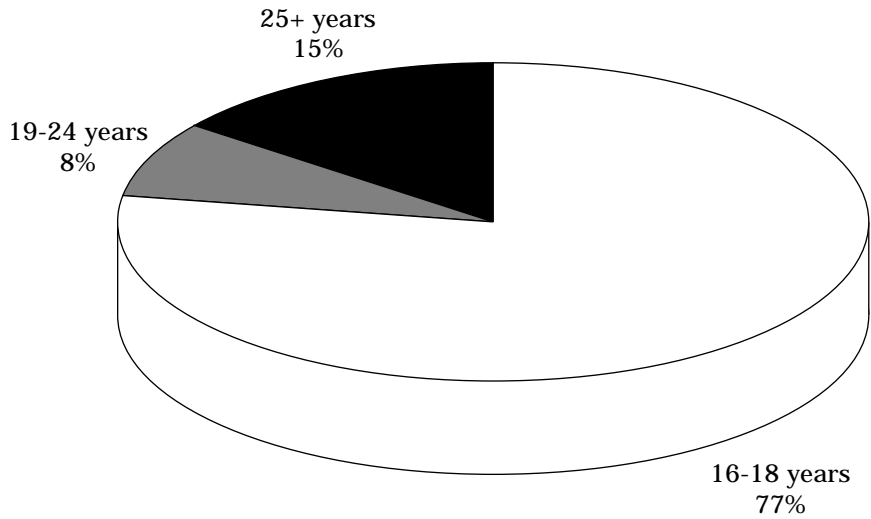
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**Figure 1**

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**NEW College, Pontefract: FEFC-funded percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)**



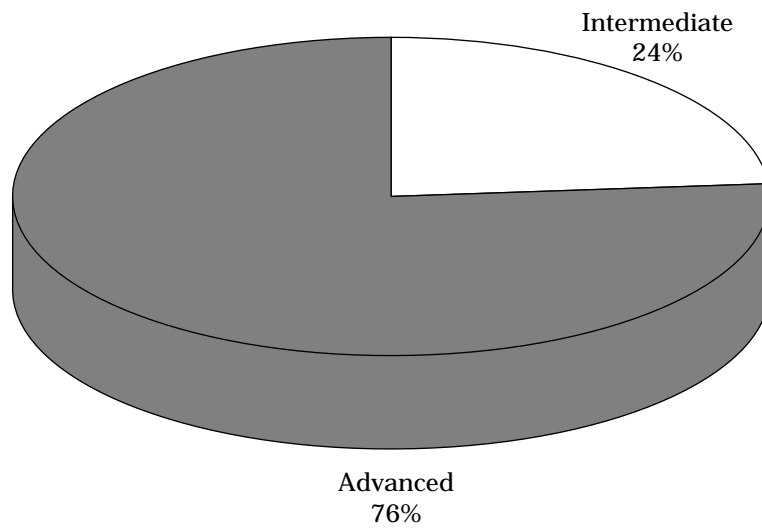
FEFC-funded student numbers: 1,290

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**Figure 2**

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**NEW College, Pontefract: FEFC-funded percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)**



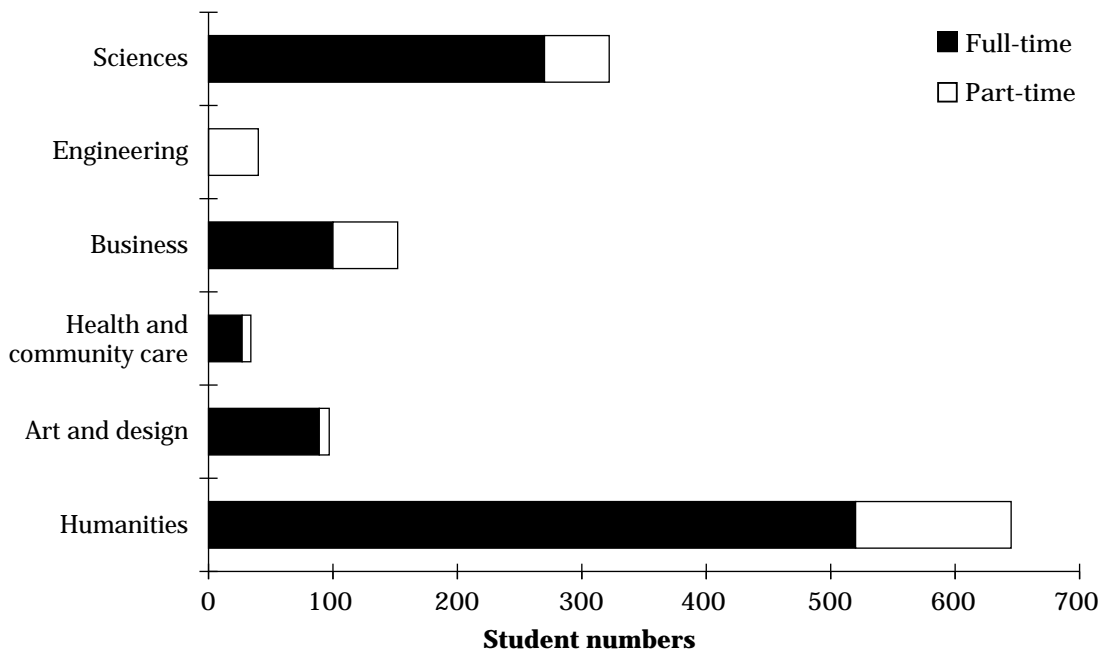
FEFC-funded student numbers: 1,290

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**Figure 3**

**NEW College, Pontefract: FEFC-funded student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)**

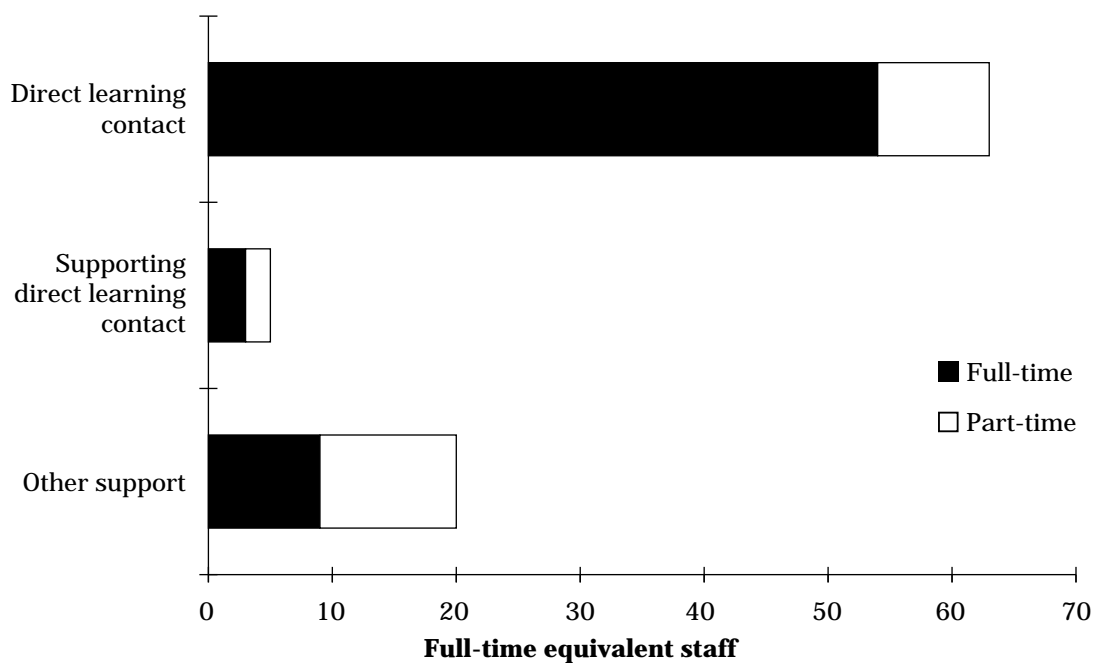


FEFC-funded student numbers: 1,290

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**Figure 4**

**NEW College, Pontefract: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996)**



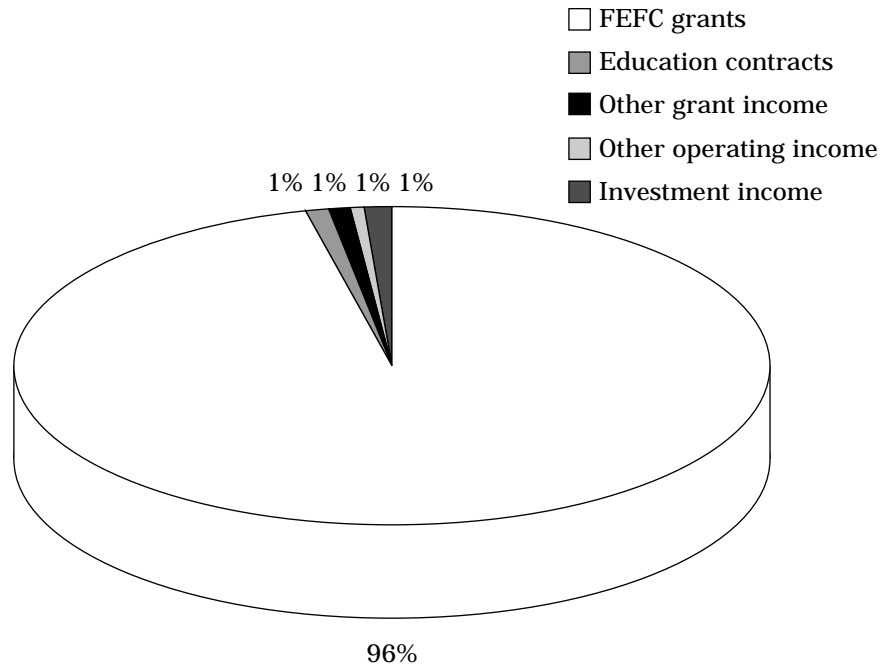
Full-time equivalent staff: 88

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**Figure 5**

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**NEW College, Pontefract: income (for 12 months to July 1996)**

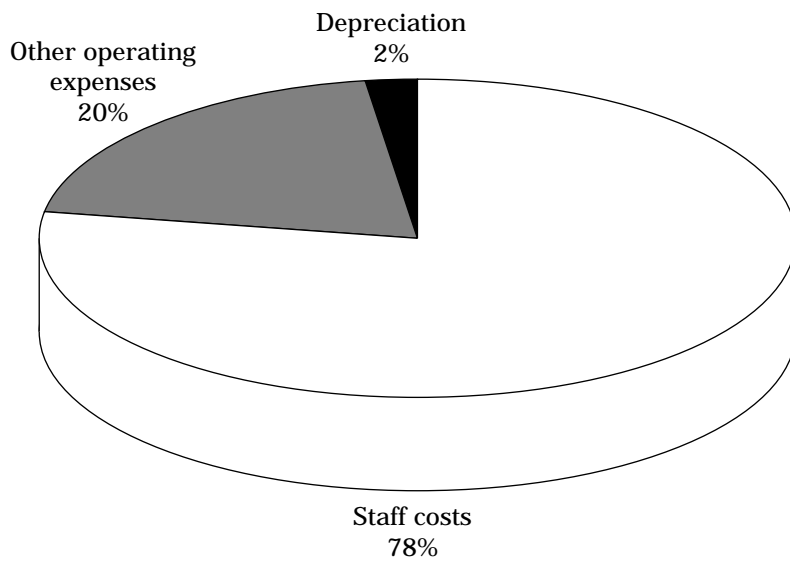


Income: £2,734,000

**Figure 6**

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**NEW College, Pontefract: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)**



Expenditure: £2,625,000

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