

Newark and Sherwood College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION
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.

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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 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	10	53	30	7	–
Cross-college provision	14	54	23	7	2

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*
Sample size: 104 college inspections

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 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which 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

Newark and Sherwood College *East Midlands Region*

Inspected January 2000

Newark and Sherwood College is a general further education college with sites in the town of Newark and in the district of Newark and Sherwood. Flexible arrangements for attendance and study are being developed to enable students to study at their own convenience and to widen participation, especially through the expansion of open and distance learning. The college produced its second self-assessment report for the inspection. The self-assessment process is an integral part of the strategic planning cycle. The report had sections covering the curriculum areas as organised in the college's management structure and separate sections covering FEFC programme areas. It was prepared using the headings in Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. This structure causes some difficulties in getting a clear picture of each curriculum area. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. Inspectors identified some additional strengths and weaknesses in both cross-college and curriculum areas, particularly in teaching and learning.

The college offers courses in all FEFC programme areas with the exception of agriculture. Work in six programme areas was inspected. Aspects of cross-college provision were also inspected. Courses are designed to take account of students' career aspirations and the needs of local industries and businesses. Teachers successfully plan and manage the learning of individual students. Retention and achievement rates for some courses are below the national average. Students have access to a comprehensive range of personal and support services. Full-time students have their progress reviewed effectively. The college is located on attractive sites with well-maintained accommodation. There is good access to most facilities for students with restricted mobility. The commitment to quality assurance has led to significant improvements. There is a well-established and constructive staff appraisal system for all staff. Governors have a good range of skills and experience. There is firm leadership which provides a clear vision for the college. Internal communications and procedures for budget setting and monitoring are effective. The college should improve: the quality of its governance; the reliability of its data on students' achievements; the low take up of students identified as requiring additional support; the quality of programme reviews; and the quality of some of its town centre accommodation.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Engineering	3	Support for students	2
Business and secretarial courses	3	General resources	2
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	3	Quality assurance	2
Art and design	2	Governance	4
Modern foreign languages	3	Management	2
Basic skills	3		

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Newark and Sherwood College is a general further education college located in the small market town of Newark. Newark has a population of 35,000 and is in eastern Nottinghamshire, close to the boundary with Lincolnshire. The college's catchment area extends across rural and ex-mining communities stretching to the west of Newark. The Newark and Sherwood district has an additional population of 75,000. The college's Park and Grange centres are located close to the centre of Newark. Reflecting its community partnership strategy the college operates centres in premises owned by Newark and Sherwood District Council in the centre and west of the district, in primary schools throughout the district in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council, and on employers' premises. The college has operated, with partners, outside Newark and Sherwood as part of its overall strategy to maintain sustainable further education provision in some skill areas. The college is one of only three campus-based development centres for the University for Industry.

2 The local economy has been affected by the significant decline of mining and engineering activities. Growth has been in the service sector, food manufacturing and distribution. The 1998 North Nottinghamshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) employer survey identified local skill shortages at craft and technician levels. It revealed that applicants who had problems with personal and communication skills were unable to take up employment opportunities. The survey showed that smaller companies, which predominate in the area, lack specialised business and management skills. Unemployment in Newark and Sherwood is 2.6% compared with 3.5% for the East Midlands.

3 The college offers a wide range of courses in all but one of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. Art and design, caring, leisure and tourism, and information technology (IT) have grown substantially in recent years. Student enrolments have increased over the last three years and modes of attendance have changed. FEFC-funded enrolments have grown from 5,559 in 1996-97 to 8,157 in 1998-99. In 1996-97, part-time enrolments represented 76% of the total whilst in 1998-99 the percentage was 86%. These changes reflect the college's efforts to widen participation and to work collaboratively with local training providers, though they have also increased competition with local schools for the recruitment of full-time students. Newark has three secondary schools, all with sixth forms. About 60% of the college's students aged 16 to 19 come from Newark schools, and the remainder from other parts of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. The Newark Learning Partnership, supported by the local education authority (LEA), is working to establish co-operation between the college and the local schools.

4 The college currently employs 150 full-time equivalent staff. There has been a reduction in the numbers of senior and middle managers. The college management team of 14 staff, including the principal and two other senior postholders, is responsible through delegated budgets for the achievement of targets. Emphasis has been put on internal communications through computer-based resources. The college has recently been recognised as an Investor in People for the second time.

Context

5 The college aims to be a 'flexible college with a community role'. The college mission is to:

- make the college more accessible to all
- offer greater choice of study and learning
- improve the quality of the learning experience
- ensure the long-term viability of the college.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected in January 2000. Inspectors had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information held by other directorates of the FEFC. Data for 1997 and 1998 were taken from the FEFC's individualised student record (ISR). The college submitted its own data for students' achievements for 1999, which were validated by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining and awarding bodies. Retention data were considered to be reliable but some achievement data were not considered to be reliable. The college was notified approximately two months before the inspection of the sample of its provision to be inspected. The inspection was carried out by 11 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 56 days. They observed 65 lessons and examined students' work and college documentation. Meetings were held with governors, managers, staff and students.

7 Eight inspectors from the Training Standards Council (TSC) worked with the inspection team during the inspection. The TSC inspectors concentrated on work-based training. Areas inspected were construction, engineering, business administration, health care and public services, and manufacturing. They also inspected trainee support, equal opportunities, management of training, and quality assurance. The TSC inspectors observed three training sessions, reviewed student portfolios, visited 21 work-based training placements, and held

meetings with training managers, training assessors, and trainees. Where it was appropriate to the FEFC inspection framework, evidence gathered by TSC inspectors was taken into account when grading college provision.

8 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99.

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	2	1	0	1	0	4
GNVQ	0	2	2	0	0	4
NVQ	2	5	6	1	0	14
Other vocational	2	8	6	3	0	19
Other*	8	9	4	2	1	24
Total (No.)	14	25	18	7	1	65
Total (%)	21	38	28	11	2	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

*includes basic skills, GCSE and professional courses

9 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Newark and Sherwood College	12.0	76
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 3

10 Inspectors observed 10 lessons covering all aspects of engineering provision. Inspectors identified additional strengths and one weakness that were not recognised in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- close match of courses to student and industry requirements
- effective development of the skills of individual students
- the provision of high-quality teaching material
- helpful annotation of completed assignments
- the recently re-organised engineering and welding/fabrication workshops

Weaknesses

- some ineffective teaching
- some below average retention rates
- lack of work experience for full-time students
- little use of IT in assignments
- dated computer numerical control equipment

11 Craft and technician courses are provided for students and local industries. Mechanical, electrical/electronic and welding courses are offered in the college. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) are run on company premises. Specific courses for initial training and for skills updating have been run for companies. Courses and qualifications are mixed and matched to the requirements of individual students and their training programmes. For example, alternative welding qualifications are offered to meet the needs of individual students. This strength was not

identified in the self-assessment. More efficient use of resources is achieved by some classes containing students following different courses or qualifications. Changes have been made to assessment procedures in response to issues identified through the internal quality checks. Administrative documents used to support the quality checks vary in format and style and do not present a coherent picture.

12 Teaching is at least satisfactory. Students are given work which takes account of their initial level of skills and knowledge and they are able to work at their own pace. Teachers successfully manage the skills development of individual students, particularly in practical lessons. This strength was not identified in the self-assessment report. In many lessons teachers use good-quality teaching materials such as handouts and relevant textbooks. Some teaching is ineffective. This was not identified in the self-assessment report. Teachers do not always involve all students in the learning by, for example, directed questions. A few teachers do not monitor the learning of all students. In-class support is provided to help welding students with their basic numeracy and literacy skills. General national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate students have work experience but it is not available for other students, as noted in the self-assessment. A useful summer school was run for prospective students to help them prepare for their course. Most teachers annotate assignments with suitable comments to help students improve their work.

13 Engineering has a suite of dedicated rooms. They include the recently reorganised welding and fabrication workshop and the engineering workshop. These provide clean and pleasant working conditions. The welding and fabrication workshop has a good range of equipment. The engineering workshop contains equipment which is dated but suitable for its purpose. There is a small amount of dated computer numerical control equipment. This

Curriculum Areas

dated machinery was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment. Classrooms are of good quality. There is a computer suite for engineering use. The computers have a modern specification and provide access to industrial standard design software.

14 Students are industrious, especially when undertaking practical work. They are confident in using machinery. To help develop their confidence and competence, students inspect each other's manufactured work. Initially the teacher assesses machined components produced by students. Then another student inspects the work and completes an inspection sheet with all the relevant dimensions. Completed student portfolios are comprehensive, produced to a good standard, and cover a relevant range of activities. However, little use is made of IT in the preparation of assignments. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment. As acknowledged in the self-assessment report most retention rates are

at, or below, national averages. For example, the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) 2240 electronic servicing in 1996-97 had a retention rate of 30%. The national certificate and diploma courses in 1997-98 both had retention rates below the national average. Generally, retention rates in 1998-99 have improved significantly. Most were close to the national average with the GNVQ intermediate and the national certificate being above the national averages. Data on achievement rates are not always reliable. For those courses with reliable data, achievements are mixed as noted in the self-assessment. Some are above national averages. For example, the national certificates in 1998-99 had achievement rates of 100% for those students who completed the courses. The GNVQ intermediate in 1998-99 had an achievement rate of 100%. Some are below average. For example NVQ level 1 course achievement rates in 1996-97 and 1997-98 were below national averages. Achievement rates on short courses are generally good. Many full-time students obtain employment at the end of their course.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in engineering, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Craft ¹	1	Number of starters	44	24	70
		Retention (%)	52	67	79
		Achievement (%)	22	50	*
Craft ¹	2	Number of starters	181	129	90
		Retention (%)	72	73	74
		Achievement (%)	*	*	80
Craft ¹	3	Number of starters	+	22	+
		Retention (%)	+	82	+
		Achievement (%)	+	*	+
Technician ²	3	Number of starters	17	17	16
		Retention (%)	82	36	94
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

¹includes NVQs in welding and engineering and C&G courses in electronic servicing and computer-aided drawing

²includes national certificates in mechanical and electrical engineering and an engineering national diploma

*data unreliable

+course not offered

Curriculum Areas

Business and Secretarial Courses

Grade 3

15 Inspectors observed 13 lessons covering business, administration and secretarial courses. The self-assessment report lacked clarity and detailed evaluative comment. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the report but identified additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- effective teaching
- good achievement rates on secretarial courses
- flexible arrangements for attendance and study
- effective integration of IT with coursework

Weaknesses

- lack of differentiated activities to meet some students' learning needs
- low achievement rates on the general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) business studies course
- poor retention and achievement rates on GNVQ advanced business courses
- the lack of a training office for students on administration courses

16 The college offers a range of courses from foundation to advanced level. There is a wide choice of secretarial courses, including NVQs in business administration and customer care up to level 4 and a number of single subject secretarial courses. The college also offers part-time professional accountancy courses accredited by the Association of Accounting Technicians up to level 4. A public services course was introduced in response to a rapid decline in the GNVQ business provision, although the GNVQ advanced business (music

industry studies) course remains popular.

Inspectors agreed that flexible arrangements for attendance and study have been developed successfully. For example, a secretarial skills course for mature women enables students to vary their hours and days of attendance depending on their circumstances. Course files are generally well organised, although some schemes of work and lesson plans lack detail. Course teams meet regularly. Course reports include relevant monitoring data on achievement but evaluation of performance lacks rigour. There are well-managed arrangements for the small off-site franchised provision.

17 In the many effective lessons teachers establish a good rapport with students and use a variety of appropriate teaching methods. They give supportive advice to individual students that sustains interest and consolidates their learning. For example, in a business and finance lesson, students engaged in a well-informed discussion of personnel procedures and the teacher encouraged students to explore topics in the context of current business practice. The strengths in teaching practice were not clearly identified in the self-assessment report. In a number of lessons, teachers did not differentiate the activities sufficiently for students studying for different qualifications, or for groups with mixed ability levels. This weakness was not identified by the college. In some lessons opportunities are missed to allow students to express views or raise questions through discussion. Assessment procedures are effective. Assignment tasks make appropriate reference to current business practice. Teachers' written comments are clear and constructive.

18 Students have good access to IT resources, including well-equipped secretarial studies workshops. Staff and students make extensive use of the college computer network to access course schemes of work, assignment programmes and information sources. For

Curriculum Areas

example, teachers have set up websites containing information appropriate to individual courses and students submit completed assignments through their own electronic mail addresses. An appropriate range of up-to-date workbooks, handouts and other learning materials is used. The college lacks a model office with modern business equipment for students on administration courses.

19 The quality of most students' written work is good. The best portfolios are well organised and well presented. IT is used appropriately in the presentation of coursework. Some work is poorly prepared and presented. Students on some courses submit completed assignments after the intended submission date. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment.

20 Inspectors agreed that achievement rates on some courses are good. Over the last three years, achievement rates in business administration and single-subject secretarial courses have been above the national average. Retention rates on these courses have also been high. The achievement rate on the GNVQ advanced business course was significantly below the national average from 1997 to 1999, and retention declined from 67% in 1997 to 49% in 1999. These low levels of retention and achievement are recognised in the self-assessment. There was also a low retention rate on the national certificate in business and finance. Achievement and retention rates on Association of Accounting Technicians provision have been erratic. In 1999, a high proportion of the students retained on the Edexcel Foundation first diploma in public services, Edexcel Foundation national certificate in business and finance, and the NVQ level 3 administration course in customer care did not complete their course. The college has recognised the need to address the weaknesses in retention and achievement.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of retention and achievement rates in business and secretarial courses, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
First diploma public services	2	Number of starters	+	7	12
		Retention (%)	+	57	75
		Achievement (%)	+	50	*
Association of Accounting Technicians foundation	2	Number of starters	28	42	30
		Retention (%)	82	76	90
		Achievement (%)	69	35	76
Association of Accounting Technicians intermediate	3	Number of starters	15	30	26
		Retention (%)	80	93	77
		Achievement (%)	*	32	56
GCE A level business studies (one-year course)	3	Number of starters	26	28	24
		Retention (%)	54	64	79
		Achievement (%)	8	21	21
GNVQ advanced business	3	Number of starters	42	30	43
		Retention (%)	67	50	49
		Achievement (%)	42	58	40
National certificate in business and finance	3	Number of starters	+	13	11
		Retention (%)	+	46	55
		Achievement (%)	+	*	*
NVQ customer service (one-year course)	3	Number of starters	40	28	31
		Retention (%)	75	89	97
		Achievement (%)	83	89	*

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*data unreliable

+course not offered

Curriculum Areas

Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy

Grade 3

21 Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering hairdressing and beauty therapy including franchised provision. Inspectors agreed with most judgements in the self-assessment report. However, too much significance had been given to slightly improved retention and achievement.

Key strengths

- flexible programmes to meet individual students' needs
- consistently good standards of practical work
- excellent use of teaching and learning resources in some lessons
- well-organised tracking and monitoring of individual students' progress
- development of new provision to widen participation

Weaknesses

- retention and achievement on most courses at or below national average
- students not fully challenged
- poor attendance in many lessons
- underdeveloped integration of IT
- some inappropriate accommodation affecting learning

22 The college offers a range of courses in hairdressing and beauty therapy leading to NVQs at levels 2 and 3. Full-time and part-time provision includes body massage, aromatherapy and reflexology. The NVQ level 1 hairdressing has helped to widen participation and improve retention and achievement. The college has two franchise partners. The chamber of commerce provides NVQ levels 1 and 2 hairdressing. The Retford International College provides NVQs in hairdressing and beauty therapy and a 'total look' course which incorporates film, theatre

and television make-up, special effects and wig-making. The college is one of only four colleges nationally to offer this course.

Inspectors agreed with the strength identified in the self-assessment report that courses are designed to cater for a broad range of attendance patterns. Students' progress on NVQ units is closely monitored and students are helped to track their own progress. The provision is well organised and managed. Effective links are maintained between sites. Internal verification procedures operate effectively. There are close links with local schools; students help at fashion shows and school plays. Work experience salons are not checked prior to the work experience; the college recognises the need to address this.

23 Inspectors agreed with the college that teachers have a good rapport with students. Students speak positively about the support they receive from teachers. In the best lessons students are fully involved in the learning. In an holistic therapy lesson, the teacher used mature students' personal experiences successfully to promote discussion on personal skills related to counselling. In some lessons teachers make excellent use of resources. At Retford International College, demonstrations by teachers are filmed so that they can be used for new learning, for task setting within a lesson, or for revision. In some cases, students are not fully challenged or motivated to complete tasks within a commercial time frame. All full-time students gain work experience in salons in the area or in the commercial salons at Retford International College and the chamber of commerce. The 'total look' students have a good variety of work experience as identified in the self-assessment report, including working on film locations, in theatres and in the fashion industry. IT is not fully integrated with the curriculum, as identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report. At the Grange site some hairdressing and beauty therapy students are timetabled for IT on a pilot programme. There is a 'drop-in' facility on site but students are not using it.

Curriculum Areas

24 As identified by the college, staff are well qualified to vocational and to training and development lead body standards. The accommodation for hairdressing and beauty therapy students is of mixed quality. The Retford International College has appropriate commercial salons in the town centre which provide a realistic work environment. The self-assessment report recognises that the accommodation at the Grange site is a weakness. The hairdressing salon is inappropriate for some learning activities. It is too small to allow effective use of a variety of teaching methods. The beauty therapy room does not have a reception or shower facilities.

25 Students are well motivated and they enjoy their studies. Their practical work is of a consistently good standard. In an NVQ level 1 hairdressing lesson, students were working with, and learning and developing skills from, level 2 students in a realistic working situation. Students' portfolio work makes effective use of diagrams and photographs to enhance their presentation. There have been poor achievements in hairdressing and beauty therapy for the past three years, as identified in the self-assessment. There has been a steady

improvement but the self-assessment report did not recognise that rates are still on, or below, the national average. The 'total look' course has above average achievement with, for example, an achievement rate in 1998-99 of 75% against a national average of 64%. The retention for this course is on, or above, the national average. Student attendance was poor in the classes observed at 67% against a national average of 78%.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ hairdressing	2	Number of starters	82	89	72
		Retention (%)	74	67	53
		Achievement (%)	44	38	63
NVQ beauty therapy (one-year course)	2	Number of starters	71	100	73
		Retention (%)	72	76	81
		Achievement (%)	39	66	75
Fashion and theatre total look (one-year course)	3	Number of starters	48	32	41
		Retention (%)	77	84	79
		Achievement (%)	74	73	75

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Curriculum Areas

Art and Design

Grade 2

26 Inspectors observed 10 lessons covering art, design and media courses. Inspectors agreed with the majority of judgements in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- effective and varied teaching activities in most lessons
- innovative and successful management of learning in mixed ability groups
- productive external links
- thorough assessment procedures
- imaginative and technically competent work
- high-quality specialist media resources and technical support

Weaknesses

- some ineffective teaching and management of learning
- shortcomings in art and design resources
- erratic retention and achievement on some part-time courses

27 Full-time and part-time courses in art, design and media include national diplomas, a foundation studies diploma, a C&G course in digital editing, open college art and design courses, and several general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) and GCE A level subjects. Suitable progression opportunities are provided within the college. Effective use is made of external contacts as stated in the self-assessment report. These include designing and making an exhibition stand for the local council and a drugs awareness video for the Nottinghamshire Constabulary. Projects are integrated with the courses and provide students with valuable experience of working to industrial standards. Course teams meet

regularly to discuss the management and use of specialist resources, project briefs and assessment. Course files are well organised and demonstrate that planning and review is undertaken regularly. The college self-assessment report recognises that some courses operate in isolation and that the links between the individual teams are underdeveloped.

28 Inspectors agreed with the good practice in teaching and learning identified in the self-assessment report. Well-structured and effective learning activities include formal lectures, introductions to projects, one-to-one tuition and the promotion of group learning. Appropriate emphasis is given to investigating and developing ideas through visual studies, written research and information gathering. In most lessons, teachers fully involve students in the work and enable them to learn both individually and as part of a team. Inspectors agreed with the strength identified by the college that successful learning is taking place in mixed ability groups. In one practical lesson, students were working towards gaining one of three different levels of art and design qualifications. The teacher introduced common themes explored in a variety of two- and three-dimensional media. The students then worked on a project brief specific to their qualification. A support assistant successfully and sensitively helped the students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in their learning. Students undertake trips in England and abroad to enhance their studies and cultural awareness. Project briefs are clear, staged, contain assessment criteria and are clearly illustrated with examples. Students and tutors communicate very effectively and show respect for each other's contributions. The self-assessment report did not fully recognise that some teaching was ineffective. There are lessons in which teachers make insufficient checks on students' learning. Some students are working without reference to preparatory

Curriculum Areas

studies and lose interest when they are not being challenged by the activity. On some project briefs assessment criteria are not identified. As stated in the self-assessment, student progress is assessed regularly and in a variety of ways. There is self-assessment and assessment by peers as well as by the tutor and critiques take place regularly. Feedback from external clients is also used. The formal assessment by student and tutor is recorded and informs the student action plan in the termly tutorial review.

29 The specialist media facility is used effectively. Specialist technical support allows teachers to work with small groups of students in external locations whilst other students remain or return to use the editing equipment. There are some shortcomings in art and design resources. Physical space is small and restricts

activities. There is no access to specialist IT equipment in the design studios. The isolation of the graphic design facilities impedes the sharing of good practice and does not allow students to learn from their peers. The use of the graphic design studio as a general classroom prevents students from continuing their work in their study time.

30 Student work-in-progress is good. The quality of the portfolios reflects the high level of progression into higher education. Inspectors agreed that retention was poor on the national diploma in media. Students on the national diploma in media and the diploma in foundation studies are achieving at or above the national average. On some part-time courses, retention and achievement is erratic, often because students do not want to take the examination at the end of the course.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in art and design, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
C&G photography	1	Number of starters	35	37	47
		Retention (%)	74	68	83
		Achievement (%)	19	86	100
GCSE art techniques	2	Number of starters	18	49	18
		Retention (%)	83	81	56
		Achievement (%)	79	60	100
National diploma media	3	Number of starters	35	34	17
		Retention (%)	63	65	53
		Achievement (%)	100	82	100
Diploma in foundation studies	3	Number of starters	31	19	25
		Retention (%)	68	95	92
		Achievement (%)	95	100	91
GCE A level art (one-year course)	3	Number of starters	25	32	41
		Retention (%)	52	88	68
		Achievement (%)	27	48	*
GCE A level art (two-year course)	3	Number of starters	15	15	15
		Retention (%)	87	53	80
		Achievement (%)	60	67	86

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Modern Foreign Languages

Grade 3

31 Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering each of the languages offered. In the self-assessment report there were few specific references to languages which formed part of the humanities section. However, the underpinning programme logs identified most of the strengths and some of the weaknesses identified by inspectors.

Key strengths

- good and demanding teaching in the target language
- good progression routes from beginners to advanced level in four languages
- steady development of levels 1 and 2 schemes with good achievement rates
- above average GCSE retention and achievement rates in 1997 and 1998
- high-quality teaching staff

Weaknesses

- excessive use of English for communication at levels 2 and 3
- lack of variety and slow pace of work in several lessons
- below average GCE A level achievements
- poor retention rates on level 1 and 2 courses
- failure of a significant proportion of students completing courses to enter for a qualification
- some rooms with poor acoustics

32 The college offers good progression routes from beginners to advanced level in four languages; French, German, Spanish and Italian. Students can study modern Greek at levels 2 and 3. Inspectors agreed with the college that there has been a steady development of courses at levels 1 and 2 with

changes in accreditation schemes in order to meet students' needs more effectively. The college is a member of the national extension college distance learning project and provides GCSE courses in French, Spanish, German and Italian and GCE A level French. Flexibility and ingenuity have been used to maintain the provision despite low student numbers in some advanced classes. Daytime GCE A level French classes contain 16- to 18- year-old students and adult learners in both first and second years of study. Helpful advice is given to students by specialists during recruitment and enrolment. In some cases, an extra diagnostic test is used to ensure that students enrol on the right course.

33 The best lessons are taught entirely in the language being learned. Teachers conduct them at a good pace using an appropriate variety of methods and present students with a good level of demanding work. In one GCE A level lesson, the teacher made good use of authentic press extracts and material from the Internet for an environmental project. The teacher used a range of methods and gave support to each student at their own level while they worked in pairs. In another lesson, a similar group learning another language found a listening comprehension recorded at natural speed too difficult. Points of grammar were explained in English and there was an inappropriate emphasis on translation rather than communication. The new ABC practical languages scheme was introduced in 1999. The self-assessment report recognises that there is a variation in practice in these lessons. Many tutors use English excessively as the vehicle for communication at level 2. This weakness was not identified by the college. In a good lesson where students were enthusiastic and thoroughly enjoying themselves they communicated readily with each other, in pairs and as a whole group, all in the language they were learning. In the next room, however, the atmosphere was much more formal. A small group of students read out answers to a

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grammatical exercise and were then engaged in a speaking exercise which involved lengthy research with dictionaries so that spontaneity was destroyed. The tutor spoke almost exclusively in English. Only 50% of the students enrolled were present. Most students' work is of an appropriate standard and is marked thoroughly. Some level 2 Spanish students had created interesting letters, in some cases, using actual postcards. This work demonstrated their ability to communicate at a sophisticated level.

34 Languages are taught by teachers fluent in the languages they teach. Over half are native speakers; many have broad industrial experience. The college has recognised that teaching is not all of the same high quality and steps are being taken to provide opportunities for staff development, with tutors paid to attend Saturday workshops. There is no specialist support outside classroom contact hours. There is no full-time member of staff; part-time staff attend only for their prescribed contact hours. Most lessons are in well-equipped classrooms with overhead projectors, video and audio cassette recorders. Some rooms have poor acoustics.

35 Achievement rates on most courses are good. In 1997 and 1998, students taking GCSE obtained better than national average results with good retention rates but there was a significant drop in 1999. There are below average results at GCE A level, with very few candidates entered in 1999. At all levels, a significant proportion of those who complete a course do not enter for a qualification. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment. None of the students enrolled on distance learning courses have completed the qualification. Retention rates are currently below national averages.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in modern foreign languages, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Practical languages	1	Number of starters	149	131	189
		Retention (%)	63	66	66
		Achievement (%)	72	87	94
GCSE (one-year course)	2	Number of starters	92	92	57
		Retention (%)	83	76	51
		Achievement (%)	52	69	25
GCE A level (one-year and two-year courses)	3	Number of starters	55	45	36
		Retention (%)	80	76	78
		Achievement (%)	33	52	*

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills

Grade 3

36 Inspectors observed 10 lessons covering all aspects of the basic skills provision. Inspectors agreed with some strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and also identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- effective initial and ongoing assessment
- well-structured individual action plans
- appropriate differentiated learning
- regular reviews and recording of students' learning

Weaknesses

- ineffective co-ordination of the range of basic skills provision
- less effective teaching in some 'drop-in' support lessons
- insufficient staff development for basic skills teachers and support staff
- inadequate provision of computers to assist learning at some sites

37 The range of provision for cross-college basic skills includes separate specialist provision, basic skills as part of other programme areas and basic skills as additional learning support. An effective initial assessment enables teachers to identify students' learning needs. This strength was not recognised in the self-assessment. Following initial assessment, teacher and student work together to form an individual learning plan. The plan guides the student's learning to a clearly defined outcome. This strength was identified by the college. Students have the opportunity to gain an accredited qualification, if appropriate. At level 1 and above, there are three levels of assessment. At entry level and below, there are

two further levels of assessment which include a reading test and one using signs. Further initial assessments have been created specifically for students with more complex needs. As identified in the self-assessment, the college acknowledges the need to develop further and co-ordinate the teaching of basic skills.

38 There is much good teaching and some is outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers organise stimulating learning activities which take account of students' individual learning plans. Lessons are prepared well and students are given clear objectives. For example, during a numeracy lesson the teacher provided differentiated activities and used a range of learning styles and teaching methods. These were linked back to the students' individual learning plans. The teacher and learning support assistants worked closely together to create a positive learning environment. There was some high-quality, creative teaching which successfully enabled some disaffected young people to improve a range of skills without in any way threatening them. Similarly, in a lesson held at a centre in the community, parents of young children were able to improve their basic skills while beginning training to be classroom assistants.

39 Support for communications and numeracy is provided in 'drop-in' sessions. There is on-course support in areas where a high proportion of students with additional basic skills needs were identified through their initial assessment. Students can be referred to 'drop-in' sessions by their tutor. However, the quality of teaching in 'drop-in' sessions was not always good, a weakness which was not identified by self-assessment.

40 Students' learning is reviewed regularly and progress recorded. For the majority of students their achievements are recorded when their learning plan is reviewed. Students contribute to these reviews in a range of formats, according to their ability. Some

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students write their response, others dictate what they want to say, while for others symbols are used. This strength was not identified in the self-assessment report. Most students receive effective feedback on their written work which helps them to improve their performance.

41 Most students' files are well organised. They contain work of a good standard. Students are well motivated and have clear personal goals for progression. Retention and achievement rates for numeracy are consistently equal to or above the national average. Until 1998-99, the achievement rates for all qualifications in communications were well below the national average. The self-assessment acknowledged this weakness. There was a significant improvement in level 1 achievements in communication in 1998-99 to well above the national average.

42 Most of the teachers are part-time. A programme of staff development is planned to enable teachers to gain relevant specialist qualifications in basic skills. Appropriately qualified learning support assistants work closely with the teachers to help students in their learning activities. Volunteers form an important part of the adult basic education provision but there is no training available for them. The standard of accommodation is good. Some classrooms have good wall displays. The 'drop-in' centre has a wide range of paper-based resources and some computer-assisted learning material. Provision for computer-assisted learning is inadequate at some sites. The self-assessment recognises that the key skills base room is a well-equipped resource for computer-assisted learning. However, at one centre in the community, there is a range of computers available for use but there is only one software programme. Students have to wait to share the use of the computer. Improved access to information learning technology is needed across the range of the basic skills provision.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in basic skills, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
C&G numeracy	Entry	Number of starters	+	15	16
		Retention (%)	+	80	100
		Achievement (%)	+	50	82
C&G communications	Entry	Number of starters	27	51	18
		Retention (%)	81	88	67
		Achievement (%)	68	20	17
English Speaking Board basic oral skills	Entry	Number of starters	+	14	14
		Retention (%)	+	86	93
		Achievement (%)	+	91	77
C&G numeracy	1	Number of starters	46	31	27
		Retention (%)	74	68	78
		Achievement (%)	26	81	48
C&G communications	1	Number of starters	+	19	36
		Retention (%)	+	100	86
		Achievement (%)	+	16	77

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)
+course not offered

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Support for Students

Grade 2

43 Inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths in the self-assessment report. However, they identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- comprehensive and well-managed information, enquiry and application procedures
- effective individual progress review for full-time students
- comprehensive range of personal and welfare services
- good identification of additional support needs
- effective support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Weaknesses

- low take-up by those identified as requiring additional support
- inadequate levels of support for some students

44 Inspectors agreed with the college assessment that the procedures for information, enquiry and applications are well managed and effective. Information sessions are given in schools and through opportunity fairs and open days. The Newark Learning Partnership with local schools is developing collaboration. In one school, distance and flexible learning arrangements have been made for school students to enrol on an IT course. For students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, there are good transitional and link arrangements. Customer services handles enquiries and applications efficiently. All full-time students have a short, impartial initial guidance interview before having an admissions

interview with a subject tutor. Induction is generally effective. A student guide for full-time students includes induction and tutorial checklists. A welcome checklist for part-time students, linked to information in the student handbook, is used to evaluate students' experience at induction. A comprehensive range of personal and welfare services is provided through customer services. These are well used and highly valued. They include financial advice and support, an accommodation service and professional counselling. The counsellor visits centres in the community, as required. A senior member of staff has a role liaising with the students' union and chairing the students' council. The customer services department provides the clerk for the student board which gives opportunities for students to express their views about the services provided and to highlight any needs and influence developments. Students' views are valued and acted upon. The customer services area is well planned and conveniently located. It accommodates an excellent, well-resourced careers library. Some careers resources are available at other centres.

45 Both full-time and part-time students are allocated to a personal tutor. Full-time students have a minimum basic entitlement to a termly individual progress review. There is no specific entitlement to an individual progress review for part-time students. Reviews are carried out regularly. They are generally effective in monitoring students' progress and in planning actions for improvement, but a minority of action plans are superficial and lack rigour. For most full-time students, careers education and progression advice is given by individual tutors through the individual progress review. Some students have a group tutorial programme which includes advice and guidance on careers and progression. For other full-time students, a careers education module is included in their course and this provides detailed careers advice linked to their vocational area. Because careers

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and progression advice is provided in a variety of ways there needs to be more systematic monitoring of its effectiveness to ensure that all students receive their entitlement. There is a good take-up of referrals to Guideline Careers Services for individual guidance interviews. These inadequacies in careers and progression advice and support through the tutorial review process were not identified as weaknesses in the self-assessment report.

46 Inspectors agreed that there are good arrangements for identifying the learning support needs of individual students. The needs of all full-time students for help with literacy or numeracy are identified against three skill levels. The support provided is generally good and given in a variety of ways. Where a number of students in the same group are identified as requiring support it is provided by key skills tutors during timetabled lessons. In some cases, additional support tutors work with identified individuals in subject lessons. Individual support is also provided through 'drop-in' sessions in the college learning centres. Personal tutors are responsible for ensuring take-up of the support offered and for reviewing the students' progress as part of the individual progress review. Some tutors do not do this systematically. Although the percentage of students receiving additional support with literacy and numeracy has increased, take-up is still low. Some personal tutors are not sufficiently active in promoting the value of additional support and encouraging those identified as requiring it to attend. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Students on part-time courses are not assessed for their additional support needs. A few part-time students refer themselves to the 'drop-in' sessions.

47 Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well managed and effective. Careful assessment of what is required is carried out. Learning support assistants are well qualified. Specialist support

is brought in from other agencies, when necessary. There is an effective relationship with the Royal National Institute for the Blind. The institute's staff assess the learning requirements of the course and arrange equipment and staff support jointly with the college. The Royal National Institute for the Blind learning support assistants are part of the college learning support team. There are good relationships with the careers service and other external bodies to advise students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on how they might progress to further study or to employment.

General Resources

Grade 2

48 Inspectors broadly agreed with the overall judgements in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- attractive sites and well-maintained accommodation
- good general classroom accommodation
- well-resourced learning centres
- good access to most facilities for students with restricted mobility

Weaknesses

- poor monitoring of room utilisation
- some poor accommodation on town centre sites

49 The college is located mainly on three sites around Newark town centre. They are the Park centre, the Mount centre and the Kirkgate Violin School. The Grange centre is located to the south of the town centre. Other centres are located at Clipstone and Edwinstowe. There are also three centres at Blidworth, Rainworth, and Boughton Pumping Station. Much has been done to improve the centres since the last

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inspection. The media suite has moved from the Kirkgate centre to the Park centre to allow the violin school to take over the whole of the Kirkgate centre. The violin school occupies a beautiful grade II listed building. It has a new lecture room, student common room, enlarged workshop space and partially landscaped gardens. Other accommodation changes include the reorganised engineering workshops and a new learning centre which includes a multimedia presentation suite. Access for students with physical disabilities has been improved on a number of sites.

50 The college sites are attractive. Staff and students benefit from the well maintained accommodation. The good-quality general classrooms are suitable and fit for purpose. As the self-assessment report states, they are comfortable and well equipped. The standard requirement is for classrooms to have an overhead projector, screen, whiteboard, video and television/monitor. Furniture and fittings are modern, often colour co-ordinated and of the same type in each room. The corridors and common areas are clean, free from graffiti and generally well decorated. Where new decoration has taken place the college colours have been used to bring about a cohesive and pleasant environment. The refectory and catering services are well used. The Park centre refectory has a clean and bright atmosphere. The Clipstone centre café bar is small but has imaginative decor and brightly coloured furniture.

51 The effective planning and monitoring of maintenance is achieved by the visual checks undertaken by caretakers and as a result of task reports generated from staff electronic mail. Whilst much has been done to improve the physical aspects of all the sites, there is still some poor accommodation on the town centre sites. The Mount centre buildings have roofing problems. The walls in the corridors have flaking paint and there is some damp. The piano tuning workrooms are poor. The heating

system has been improved and some minor work has been undertaken to open up one workshop. The students' common room at the Park centre, which acts as the base room for the students' union, is drab and has damaged walls and paintwork. The sports hall at the Park centre is used extensively by the community. The showers and toilets have been refurbished but the hall is cold. The noisy heating system makes it difficult to coach students.

52 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the learning centres are well resourced. They provide facilities which integrate book and computer-based resources. All centres in the community are connected to the Park centre through a computer network. Staff and students are beginning to use the resources effectively in the curriculum. All students have access to a good number of high specification machines and relevant software. Specialist software is available for visually impaired students and industrial software for art, design and media students. The Grange centre has computer-based access to the library book loan system. Funds from a variety of external sources have enabled the college to offer extensive flexible arrangements for courses to disadvantaged groups in Nottinghamshire villages.

53 The self-assessment report recognises that there is poor monitoring of room utilisation. The college is developing its computer-based software to produce room utilisation information. Only one report has been produced so far. It was of little value and did not identify whether general classroom accommodation was being used effectively. There is a lack of clarity about what has informed recent and ongoing decisions on changes to the accommodation.

54 There is good access to most facilities for students with restricted mobility. This has been improved since the last inspection and is now a strength, as identified in the self-assessment

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report. The Park centre has wheelchair access to all but three rooms by lifts and ramps. Special signage at the Park centre is recognisable by the visually impaired. There is little designated car parking at the Park centre where space is at a premium. Access is available to all areas of the Grange centre, including the portacabins. In the Clipstone centre there is good access to general facilities such as the computer centre, photocopier and café bar.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

55 Inspectors broadly agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- commitment to quality assurance leading to improvements
- thorough internal verification
- the involvement of students in reviews of quality
- well-established and constructive staff appraisal system for all staff
- staff development clearly linked to college and national priorities

Weaknesses

- inadequate implementation of quality assurance procedures in some business support areas
- lack of effectiveness in some programme reviews
- lack of systematic evaluation of the student charter commitments

56 The college demonstrates clear commitment to improving quality and this is identified as a strength in the self-assessment. There has been considerable development of quality assurance procedures since the last inspection.

57 Staff are generally aware of the quality assurance arrangements. Curriculum staff actively contribute to the process. Policies and procedures are clearly stated. The quality review board is the centre for all quality assurance initiatives and reports. It meets regularly and is effective. A quality improvement and audit team is tasked by the quality review board to carry out the evaluation and review of aspects of quality assurance and to report on their effectiveness.

58 The quality assurance strategy has led to significant improvements. During the three academic years to 1999 there has been a year-on-year improvement in the percentage of successful students at all levels of study. Lesson observations by peers are having a positive effect on the quality of the provision. Where lessons are judged to be unsatisfactory, further observations are made. If necessary, a programme of staff support is initiated. Managers complete a sample of observations to monitor that standards are applied consistently. Comparisons are made with the national grade profile for lesson observations. Internal benchmarks to identify year-on-year improvements have not been set.

59 Students' views on the quality of courses and college facilities are actively sought in many ways. Issues raised formally through programme review groups, questionnaires, occasional focus groups, and a system of student representatives are taken seriously. This strength was identified by the self-assessment report. The college electronic mail system is used effectively to circulate the minutes of meetings between student representatives and senior staff. Minutes clearly identify the member of staff responsible for action and the reporting date and actions taken.

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60 Internal verification processes and procedures are applied rigorously. Verification is carried out conscientiously. There is an informative guide to internal verification. It provides useful examples of forms to record internal verification information and track students' progress. In the best examples of internal verification there is a helpful written commentary in addition to the completion of the mandatory checks. Internal verifiers share information about good practice. These strengths were not identified by the college.

61 Some programme reviews are not fully effective. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Programme team logs provide the basis for reviewing a portfolio of courses. The structure of the log is generally helpful in identifying areas to be evaluated such as student feedback. However, it does not specifically identify teaching and learning as a topic. The logs include targets for the programme teams to achieve against each of the six FEFC performance indicators. The general degree of aggregation of targets, data and judgements is too broad to provide course tutors with a useful set of actions for improvement or to identify good practice easily. The depth of evaluation and analysis of performance against targets in some reviews is inadequate. Some logs place insufficient emphasis on the evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. Reviews have accompanying action plans identifying responsibilities and dates for completion.

62 Arrangements are in place for monitoring the quality of franchised provision. Each franchise is allocated within a school so that the appropriate head of school manages the provision. Monitoring of each partner is carried out by scheduled and unannounced visits, checking external verifier reports, examining documentation and undertaking teaching observations. The partners do not use college-based quality assurance systems. Most do not produce a self-assessment report or an annual overview report. The assessment of the

quality of the provision is subsumed within the 'host' school self-assessment produced as part of the college self-assessment report. Some contracts have been reviewed because of poor retention and achievement.

63 The quality assurance systems for support staff are developing. Currently, they are not applied consistently. Some teams, such as the customer service team, have service standards against which compliance is monitored. However, a formal review of the effectiveness of the service is not undertaken. In some teams, quality is monitored but there are no standards against which to measure outcomes. In others, there is no formal monitoring and little formal reporting.

64 The college charter clearly states the college's commitments to students. It is contained in the student handbook which is given to all students. It identifies some clear service standards. Some of these, such as entitlements prior to enrolment, are monitored for compliance. However, there is little systematic monitoring of many of the charter commitments, as the college identified as a weakness in its self-assessment report.

65 Staff appraisal systems are well established. Policies and procedures are understood and implemented successfully. Staff are encouraged to improve their effectiveness. All staff are appraised annually, including part-time staff. The process formally records achievements and identifies development needs. Most staff participate in training and development activities. Identified training needs are systematically logged to identify the level of common requirements and used to formulate the in-house training programme which supports college strategic and national priorities. Individual staff and each school are required to identify the value of staff development to the individual, their team and the college. The college has been reassessed and its Investors in People status reaffirmed.

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Governance

Grade 4

66 Inspectors and auditors did not agree with most of the strengths in the self-assessment report. Several additional weaknesses were identified.

Key strengths

- governors' range of skills and experience
- frequent and well-attended meetings

Weaknesses

- insufficient rigour in the monitoring of their own and the college's performance
- ineffective conduct of some corporation business
- insufficient financial monitoring information
- inappropriate clerking arrangements
- poor procedures for openness and accountability

67 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is weak. The corporation does not conduct its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It does not fulfil its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

68 Auditors agreed with the self-assessment report that the corporation has a good range of skills and experience amongst its membership. Governors bring legal, personnel, financial, and estates skills to the corporation. Governors are committed to the college. The monthly meetings of the corporation are well attended.

69 The corporation has been increasing its involvement in determining the strategic direction and vision of the college. However, inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that governors still tend to approve rather

than set the college's strategic agenda. The corporation recognised in 1998 that it was insufficiently involved and measures were taken to increase governors' knowledge of the college and the context in which it operates. These measures include regular presentations by the principal and other members of the college management team. Governors appreciate the need to be even more actively involved in the next phase of strategic planning.

70 The self-assessment report overstated the rigour with which the corporation monitors the college's performance. The corporation considers course enrolments, retention rates and the achievement of funding unit targets on a regular, monthly basis. Governors also receive information on students' achievements. However, the accompanying commentary is sometimes brief and does not contain comparisons with national benchmarking data produced by the FEFC. The form in which the information is presented does not always encourage informed debate. In July 1999, the corporation agreed to the merger of the academic board and the quality review board. The chair of the corporation is a member of the quality review board. A brief summary of quality review board meetings is considered at each meeting of the corporation. These summaries do not contain sufficient detail to allow adequate assessment of the impact made by quality review board activities. The corporation has not established a standards committee. There are no formal links between governors and individual areas of college activity. The corporation does not assess its own performance adequately. Governors have recently adopted a number of performance indicators, including one for attendance. Attendance is monitored but the performance indicators have not been evaluated systematically.

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71 The corporation incorrectly re-determined its membership in response to the modified instrument and articles of government. The required number of governors in the new categories have yet to be identified. The college has yet to establish a search committee as required by the revised instrument and articles of government. This weakness is not identified in the self-assessment report.

72 Although there is use of public advertising, there are no documented appointment procedures or nomination procedures. There has been no skills audit of membership. Governor re-appointments are not subject to real scrutiny. The letter of appointment for governors is not comprehensive and governors do not confirm their eligibility to serve. Governors receive an induction pack but this is the same as that used for all staff and does not recognise the different duties of governors. Although governors have received some in-house and external training, the college has yet to establish a formal training and development programme for all governors. This weakness was recognised in the self-assessment report.

73 The self-assessment report does not recognise that the college's clerking arrangements are inappropriate. The clerk to the corporation does not have a comprehensive job description and does not act as clerk to the remuneration committee. The clerk to the corporation is supported by a minuting secretary. Agendas are well organised and clearly identify documents circulated in support of each item of business. Some minutes of the corporation do not clearly identify decisions and actions.

74 The register of interests is updated annually. The fact that little use is made of confidential minutes is good. Other college procedures for openness and accountability are poor. There is no code of conduct for governors, no standing orders, no 'whistleblowing' procedure and an inadequate procedure for dealing with suspected fraud and irregularity.

75 During the inspection the college did not provide formal terms of reference for committees or the minutes of the remuneration committee. The corporation does not systematically receive minutes of the remuneration and audit committees. The corporation inappropriately considers amendments to the financial regulations.

76 The self-assessment report overstated the strength on the governors' monitoring of college finances. Governors do receive a financial report at their monthly corporation meetings. However, it is highly summarised and does not contain sufficiently detailed information on income and expenditure or a balance sheet. Cashflow information that would allow governors to effectively monitor the solvency of the college is inadequate. Governors have given detailed consideration to the college's involvement in substantial franchising arrangements. They receive monitoring information on the overall achievement of unit totals. However, they do not receive sufficiently detailed information to enable them to monitor these activities adequately.

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Management

Grade 2

77 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the overall conclusions of the self-assessment but found some additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- firm leadership and a clear vision for the college
- effective budget setting and monitoring procedures
- effective internal communications
- productive partnerships with a wide range of external bodies
- flexible strategies for meeting the learning needs of the local community
- the constructive role of the quality review board and its task groups

Weaknesses

- some deficiencies in financial regulations
- some unreliable student data
- some shortcomings in operational planning
- adverse effects on curriculum management of the high proportion of part-time teachers

78 The college's strategic plan provides a clear vision for the college as a college with a community role as claimed in the self-assessment report. This vision is communicated to staff effectively. Firm leadership is provided to help the college achieve its aims. Internal communications are good and enhanced by the substantial use of electronic communications. Comprehensive information about policies and procedures, and national developments, is readily available on the electronic database. Staff receive a regular newsletter followed up by briefing sessions by the principal.

79 The college management team is the main management group. It meets monthly and brings together the senior and middle managers responsible for all academic and support functions. This helps to ensure good communications between managers. All college managers subscribe to task-orientated management based on computerised management techniques and promoting accountability for actions. Members report on the progress they have made on the priority areas agreed for the previous month and identify any slippage. They then identify opportunities, threats and priorities for the following month. Between meetings, tasks are allocated to each member and recorded on the college computer network so that the whole team can track progress. Managers have a good understanding of the college's strategic direction. However, the operational plans for their areas of responsibility do not show how the objectives listed in the strategic plan are to be achieved. Not all schools and service areas have an operational plan. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

80 The quality review board plays a constructive and active role as the centre for curriculum and quality matters. It sets up task groups for particular purposes. For example, an academic task group has drawn up an action plan to improve retention and the diversity task group has reviewed the equal opportunities policy. The quality review board includes managers and elected representatives from across the college and performs an important role as a channel of communication between managers and staff. The strength of the quality review board was not identified by the self-assessment report.

81 Inspectors agreed with the strength identified by the college that it has productive partnerships with a range of external agencies, local industries and businesses and schools. They include Newark and Sherwood District Council, North Nottinghamshire TEC and the

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chamber of commerce. Members of local organisations speak highly of their productive relationships. The principal and the heads of three local schools have signed a joint statement indicating their commitment to collaborative working. One local company has a computer linked to the college network for in-house training. To inform its marketing strategy, the college has been closely involved with Business Link to identify the training needs of employers. New programmes have been organised as a result of this research. The college is working to develop links with higher education establishments.

82 Inspectors agreed that the college has made good progress towards its aim of making the college more accessible to all by offering a variety of modes of study. In particular, it has developed open and distance learning programmes using the college's expertise in IT. Open and distance learning programmes account for around 10% of enrolments. It is one of only three colleges to be a campus-based development centre for the University for Industry initiative. It has responded to the learning needs of the community by offering programmes in 43 primary schools and community centres and eight college centres. This approach has enabled the college to extend its provision to geographically and socially excluded groups, including travellers. The college's range of commercial and community franchises also makes education and training accessible and widens participation.

83 The self-assessment report identified a number of difficulties resulting from the high proportion of part-time teachers. The college currently employs 38 full-time teachers and 141 part-time teachers. The college supports part-time staff by including them in the appraisal process, paying them to attend meetings and enabling them to communicate by electronic mail. However, it is difficult for some programme leaders to maintain sufficient personal contact with all the members of their

team. In some curriculum areas the large number of part-time teachers makes full team meetings difficult to arrange and impedes curriculum development. Part-time teachers played little part in the self-assessment process.

84 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The college has good reserves and solvency. Operating deficits are forecast for the next three years. The college is likely to remain highly dependent on franchising. The financial forecasts for 1999 to 2002 recognise the risks of this form of provision. The finance team is suitably skilled and experienced. Timely financial reports are produced monthly but do not include cashflow information. Summaries of these reports are distributed to senior managers with summary enrolment reports. There is a well-established cycle for the formulation of the annual budget statement with monthly reporting to budget holders. Some key performance indicators have been set and are reported against. Financial regulations are updated annually but are not comprehensive. They do not include an adequate policy for dealing with suspected irregularity or procedures for the use of college credit cards, governors' expenses, overseas travel or business planning. The college has a good record of making timely returns to the FEFC.

85 Managers became aware in February 1999 that college data concerning students' retention and achievements contained anomalies. By the time of the inspection, although some of these had been resolved, the reliability of some of the data remained in doubt.

Cross-college Provision

Conclusions

86 The college produced its second self-assessment report for the inspection. It provided a useful basis for planning and carrying out the inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but concluded that there was insufficient emphasis on teaching and learning. Inspectors also found some strengths and weaknesses which the college had not identified. In four of the five areas of cross-college provision, inspectors agreed with the grade awarded by the college. Inspectors agreed with all but one of the grades awarded by the college in curriculum areas.

87 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 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	1
16-18 years	15
19-24 years	16
25+ years	67
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1999)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation)	26
Level 2 (intermediate)	43
Level 3 (advanced)	21
Level 4/5 (higher)	0
Non-schedule 2	10
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (July 1999)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	90	1,831	24
Construction	25	105	2
Engineering	51	174	3
Business	156	1,029	14
Hotel and catering	54	1,081	14
Health and community care	317	1,401	21
Art and design	310	171	6
Humanities	121	1,215	16
Basic education	11	15	0
Total	1,135	7,022	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 9% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1999)

	Per- manent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	34	21	0	55
Supporting direct learning contact	24	3	0	27
Other support	63	5	0	68
Total	121	29	0	150

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£5,621,000	£5,727,000	£5,883,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£15.41	£15.36	£16.20
Payroll as a proportion of income	61%	54%	54%
Achievement of funding target	100%	102%	102%
Diversity of income	22%	25%	19%
Operating surplus	-£217,000	£11,000	£62,000

Sources: Income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

ALF - Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), Funding Allocations 1998-99 (1999)

Payroll - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Achievement of funding target - Performance Indicators 1997-98 (1997 and 1998), college (1999)

Diversity of income - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Operating surplus - Council Circular 98/43 (1997), college (1998 and 1999)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	251	286	393	889	1,052	1,486
	Retention (%)	73	84	85	72	78	77
	Achievement (%)	50	77	74	65	81	79
2	Number of starters	732	711	567	2,026	2,735	1,466
	Retention (%)	71	71	77	76	82	80
	Achievement (%)	52	61	77	46	58	87
3	Number of starters	561	751	543	1,118	1,193	1,229
	Retention (%)	80	74	78	77	80	80
	Achievement (%)	66	65	74	56	66	82
4 or 5	Number of starters	5	1	0	53	39	43
	Retention (%)	40	100	0	72	82	81
	Achievement (%)	0	0	0	47	69	71
Short courses	Number of starters	380	725	676	1,905	4,528	2,839
	Retention (%)	97	99	99	93	97	97
	Achievement (%)	76	87	97	78	83	96
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	100	143	70	612	104	89
	Retention (%)	70	76	70	91	78	78
	Achievement (%)	23	59	91	37	84	100

Source: ISR

Note: 1998 data not audited

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