

Newham College of Further Education

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.

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

© FEFC 2000 *You may photocopy this report and use extracts in promotional or other material provided quotes are accurate, and the findings are not misrepresented.*

Contents

	Paragraph
<hr/>	
Summary	
<hr/>	
Context	
The college and its mission	1
The inspection	9
<hr/>	
Curriculum areas	
Science and mathematics	12
Construction	18
Engineering	24
Business	30
ESOL	37
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	43
Basic skills	49
<hr/>	
Cross-college provision	
Support for students	56
General resources	63
Quality assurance	70
Governance	78
Management	86
Conclusions	94
<hr/>	
College statistics	

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

Newham College of Further Education

Greater London Region

Inspected January 2000

Newham College of Further Education is a large general further education college in the London Borough of Newham in East London. It is committed to the economic regeneration of the area and is highly successful in widening the participation of people in Newham in further education. The college offers an extensive range of educational opportunities for a diverse community. Many of the students progress to employment, or to further or higher education. In preparation for the inspection, the college produced a detailed and comprehensive self-assessment report. Staff, corporation members and representatives of external organisations were involved in the self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. However, the college overstated the quality of teaching and learning on some courses. Since the last inspection, there have been measurable improvements in some areas of the college's provision.

Governors and managers work effectively together and are appropriately involved in planning the strategic direction of the college. The college is well managed and effectively led. Inspectors found no significant weaknesses in support for students, general resources and governance. In keeping with its ethos, the college provides high-quality courses for students, many of whom enter the college with few qualifications and poor basic skills. The college is innovative in dealing with the complex range of problems faced by its students. For example, the Newham College access diploma, introduced in 1998, is a direct response to concerns about the quality and relevance of, and flexibility of entry to, foundation level courses. This significant development is leading to modularisation of the college's entire curriculum so that learners can accumulate credits for shorter and more flexible units of study. There is much good teaching and little that is less than satisfactory. The college has developed productive partnerships with public and private employers. Quality assurance systems are good. The college should improve: the standard of teaching and learning in some areas; pass and retention rates on some courses; the poor attendance of some students; and the accuracy of some student retention and achievement data.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science and mathematics	3	Support for students	1
Construction	3	General resources	1
Engineering	3	Quality assurance	2
Business	3	Governance	1
ESOL	2	Management	2
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2		
Basic skills	2		

The College and its Mission

1 Newham College of Further Education is a large general further education college. The college is located throughout Newham, with a main campus in each of the main town centres at East Ham and Stratford, and the following six local centres: Green Street Business Support and Training Centre; Royal Docks Campus; Little Ilford Centre; Eastlea Training Centre; the 'Get Ahead' shop in Stratford shopping centre; and the Royal Docks Learning Zone.

2 The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has identified the college as one of a group which typically recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas. Over 90% of the college's students come from the immediate locality of Newham and its adjacent boroughs. Newham is classified as the second most deprived borough in England and the most deprived in Greater London. In 1998-99, the college enrolled a total of 15,471 students, of whom 4,387 were full time. Of the full-time students 2,456 were over the age of 19. Over 61% of the adult students were eligible for concessionary fees. Around 15% of full-time 16 to 19 year old students and 24.7% of full-time adult students were on entry and level 1 programmes, indicating the extent of the college's commitment to encouraging disadvantaged, under-qualified adults and young people to come to further education.

3 The educational achievements of school-leavers in Newham are significantly below achievements nationally. Only 34% of secondary school pupils achieved five subjects at grade C or above in their general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) examinations compared with 46% nationally. Of the local secondary pupils, 45% receive free school meals, compared with 18% nationally. The local rate of unemployment at 11.4%, is more than double the national rate and much higher than the rate for Greater London, 6.4%. The 1991 census shows that 25% of Newham families are one-

parent families, and 76% of lone parents are unemployed. Most of Newham is classified under the European Union's objective 2 programme for special assistance in response to unemployment and other indicators of deprivation. Of the businesses in Newham, 90% employ fewer than 25 people. The largest employment sectors are in the public sector.

4 Of the students, 73% are from minority ethnic groups and 50% are women. Nearly 2,000 students had refugee or asylum-seeker status in 1998-99 and 266 students declared a learning difficulty or disability on their learning agreement. The college also makes provision for 100 statemented school pupils, and nearly 500 clients of social services day centres. The college makes provision for a further 279 students under the age of 16 who have been excluded from school. About 25% of the college's students claim benefit.

5 The college has a clear mission statement that stresses the importance of meeting local needs and identifies 'a learning revolution spurring local economic and social regeneration, and full participation by local people'. The college's mission is 'to expand and improve lifelong learning', and it aims to achieve this by making open access provision relevant to the needs of its local communities. The concept of inclusive learning is at the centre of all of the college's activities. The corporate strategy comprises 10 strategic aims focused on customers, learning and achievement, and the key resource and systems functions required to support these.

6 The college's strategic collaboration with Newham Local Education Authority's (LEA's) community education and youth service provides an integrated programme of lifelong learning through 33 centres across the borough. This leads to many forms of collaboration, and is an example of how colleges and local authorities can collaborate effectively to meet local needs. To date, the college has established

Context

13 distributed learning centres in non-traditional locations such as West Ham United Football Club, public libraries, and the Silvertown Urban Village development. In 1998-99, the college had 768 students taught through franchised provision, where local partnering arrangements could add value to its range of work. One example is the relationship with Laing Training Services, part of the Laing Construction Group, which operates through the college's premises.

7 In 1997-98, the college took part in research undertaken by the responsive college unit into student retention. The college has undertaken further work with the responsive college unit in 1999, utilising its 'analysis partner' status to investigate through the national individualised student record (ISR) patterns of student retention and achievement against the student profiles and performance of other colleges nationally which have a record of high achievement in widening participation.

8 The college offers courses in nine of the FEFC's programme areas. This provision includes basic education, the Newham College access diploma, national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at all levels, GCSE and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), access to higher education courses, and courses leading to professional qualifications. In 1998-99, a large volume of entry and foundation level provision was implemented through the Newham College access diploma programme, and this is planned to reach close to 100% of such provision by the end of 1999-2000. This development will link through eventually to the associate degree pathways that have been validated through the college's work with Middlesex University.

The Inspection

9 The college was inspected in January 2000. Before the inspection, inspectors reviewed the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. The college submitted data on students' achievements for 1999 which were validated against primary sources, such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The ISR information on students' achievements for 1997 and 1998 was also used by inspectors. In some curriculum areas it was not possible to produce sufficient validated data to compile a table showing retention and achievement data. The inspection was carried out by 14 inspectors and an auditor working in the college for a total of 62 days.

10 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the lessons inspected 55% were judged to be good or outstanding and 9% less than satisfactory or poor, compared with national figures of 65% and 6%, respectively, for 1998-99.

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level and GCSE	0	4	3	1	0	8
GNVQ	0	5	1	2	0	8
NVQ	2	6	5	1	0	14
Other vocational	4	4	3	1	0	12
Other*	3	17	18	2	0	40
Total (No.)	9	36	30	7	0	82
Total (%)	11	44	36	9	0	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 education, ESOL and basic skills

11 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Attendance varied across the areas being

inspected. For example in science and mathematics attendance was above the national average at over 80% but in basic skills it was well below, at 60%.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Newham College of Further Education	12.8	72
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

Science and Mathematics

Grade 3

12 Inspectors observed 11 lessons from a range of courses, including GCE A level and GCSE courses in science and mathematics, intermediate and advanced GNVQ science programmes, an access to health studies course and a course for employed science technicians. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but considered that weaknesses in teaching and learning had been understated.

Key strengths

- well-planned and effective science teaching
- good individual support for students
- high expectations of students
- effective use of handouts and worksheets to support learning
- excellent laboratories

Weaknesses

- low GCE A level chemistry pass rates
- ineffective mathematics teaching
- inadequate marking of students' work
- insufficiently demanding work for more able students

13 There is a good range of science and mathematics courses. The curriculum area is generally well managed and course teams meet frequently. However, the minutes of some course team meetings show that insufficient attention is being given to teaching and learning.

14 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that theory and practical work in science are effectively integrated with well-planned lessons. In a GCE A level biology lesson, students were asked to write down what they could recall about photosynthesis. The teacher then developed the concept of the way plants

generate food from light energy by careful, directed questioning. This effective teaching was supported by a video. Students then examined plant cells under a microscope and accurately drew the key cell structures involved in the process. Worksheets and handouts used to support the teaching were of a good standard. In a few lessons, the work was insufficiently demanding for the more able students.

15 Practical work is effective and well organised. Appropriate attention is given to health and safety. In a physics lesson, students were measuring the efficiency of a simple pulley system. They worked successfully together and soon completed the task. In another effective practical lesson, students studying chemistry, generated carbon dioxide gas by pouring hydrochloric acid on to marble chips. Students wore protective overalls and goggles without needing to be asked and took great care with the acid. Teaching in mathematics, however, is less effective. In one lesson, students on a GCSE mathematics course were introduced to graph plotting. The lesson was not well planned, students lacked interest and some were confused. In other less effective lessons, teachers paid insufficient attention to the knowledge and experience which students already had. There is little use of IT to support teaching and learning.

16 Students' achievements in GCE A level biology and mathematics are consistently above the national average. Retention rates on most courses are good. On mathematics courses, retention rates are above the national average. However, in chemistry, retention rates are lower than the national average. Student progression is good, with over 70% of the students who completed the access course last year entering nursing or higher education. Over 80% of students completing the GCE A level course in mathematics gained entry to higher education last year. Achievement rates in GCE A level chemistry and on the GNVQ intermediate course are below national averages. The

Curriculum Areas

self-assessment report recognised the weakness in chemistry. Attendance during the week of the inspection was 85% overall, which is above average for the sector.

17 Students benefit from excellent specialist resources. There are modern specialist laboratories for the three sciences and good associated preparation areas. The accommodation is spacious and bright. It is well maintained and kept clean and tidy. All staff are well qualified including the recently appointed science instructors. Specialist technicians provide highly effective technical support. There are sufficient materials and equipment to enable students to carry out experiments. There are adequate numbers of textbooks that are well used by students.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Science technicians	2	Number of starters	*	*	14
		Retention (%)	*	*	100
		Achievement (%)	*	*	57
GNVQ intermediate	2	Number of starters	*	81	19
		Retention (%)	*	73	80
		Achievement (%)	*	22	53
GCE A level mathematics and statistics	3	Number of starters	*	21	16
		Retention (%)	*	73	89
		Achievement (%)	*	81	63
GCE A level biology	3	Number of starters	*	36	41
		Retention (%)	*	67	70
		Achievement (%)	*	75	76
GCE A level chemistry	3	Number of starters	*	41	38
		Retention (%)	*	64	65
		Achievement (%)	*	49	86**
Access to health certificate	3	Number of starters	*	84	122
		Retention (%)	*	75	80
		Achievement (%)	*	94	82

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

*data incomplete because course profile has changed

**includes November module results

Curriculum Areas

Construction

Grade 3

18 Inspectors observed 13 lessons covering both college-based and franchised provision. A range of craft and technician courses was inspected covering both theory and practical work. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. However, they considered that the report overstated some strengths.

Key strengths

- a range of courses designed to meet students' and employers' needs
- effective lesson planning
- good specialist resources and workshops
- good practical teaching
- success in widening participation

Weaknesses

- insufficient access to IT
- few work-placements for full-time students
- inadequate key skills development on most courses
- poor attendance in many lessons

19 Significant changes have taken place in the programme area since the last inspection. The engineering and construction departments have now merged and many craft courses are franchised to a large private training provider. The college offers a good range of courses from foundation to advanced level. However, there is limited provision at level 2. The programme area has responded well to the college's desire to widen the participation of people in Newham in further education. Students come from diverse backgrounds and include disaffected school pupils and students who have been unemployed for a long time. These developments were not sufficiently

acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Course files and documents, including students' records, are comprehensive and well maintained.

20 There is much good teaching. In the best lessons, teachers gave clear presentations, encouraged students to question what was expected of them, and took into account the different abilities of students. Teaching and learning is well managed and lesson plans contain clearly stated objectives and outcomes for students. However, schemes of work lack detail and lists of topics to be covered are sometimes insufficiently thorough. Although much good teaching was observed in many lessons, students had little opportunity to develop key skills. Attendance was low in many lessons, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. Some excellent examples of students' work were seen in their portfolios, in practical work and in written assignments. The best examples of assignment work demonstrated sound knowledge and high standards of presentation. However, teachers' written feedback on students' work was not always sufficiently detailed to enable students to improve their work. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that course monitoring and review is good. There are few opportunities for work placement experience for full-time students, a weakness recognised in the self-assessment report.

21 Student retention and achievement is generally satisfactory and evidence indicates a slight improvement in both retention and achievement over the past two years. Some students' achievements, for example on the NVQ courses, are above national average. Students' progress from NVQ level 1 in bricklaying, plastering, painting and decorating and carpentry to the franchised provision offered under separate funding arrangements. Data on enrolment, retention and achievement are not adequately recorded by course managers.

Curriculum Areas

22 Workshops are excellent. They are spacious and well equipped. Simulated industrial installation work is effectively designed and helps students to develop the competences required for their respective trades. Health and safety instruction features strongly in all workshop activities. Notices are clearly displayed and teachers are vigilant in ensuring that health and safety regulations are followed. In a workshop session, a student, who was inappropriately dressed, was not allowed to take part in the practical session and had to carry out portfolio work in an adjoining classroom. In some cases, portfolio development work and self-study periods, designed to improve the students' job knowledge, were hindered by a lack of textbooks and learning support materials, a weakness recognised in the self-assessment report. Information technology (IT) facilities are good and being developed rapidly. However, access to the facilities is sometimes limited and students on franchised courses have little or no access to learning support materials, including IT.

23 Teachers are well qualified and have good construction experience. Most have recognised assessment and teaching qualifications. Staff working on the franchised courses have no formal teaching qualifications, although they are well qualified in their respective trades and have suitable assessment qualifications. Liaison between staff on the main sites is systematic and regular development meetings take place.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ construction crafts (various)	1	Number of starters	11	65	99
		Retention (%)	55	85	36
		Achievement (%)	27	1	36
NVQ plumbing	2	Number of starters	23	40	39
		Retention (%)	100	69	88
		Achievement (%)	56	27	56
BTEC national certificate (various)	3	Number of starters	23	40	39
		Retention (%)	96	58	72
		Achievement (%)	91	25	69
BTEC national diploma (construction)	3	Number of starters	14	11	18
		Retention (%)	71	55	72
		Achievement (%)	29	9	82

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

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 3

24 Inspectors observed 13 lessons covering all the main areas of engineering. They agreed broadly with the college's self-assessment report, finding it to be objective and evaluative.

Key strengths

- well-planned courses designed to meet the needs of local industry
- outstanding accommodation and specialist equipment
- highly motivated students
- effective learning and assessment materials

Weaknesses

- some low retention and achievement rates
- insufficiently demanding teaching in some lessons
- lack of punctuality in many lessons

25 Since the last inspection, the college has introduced a number of courses designed specifically to meet the needs of local companies. These include modular courses in railway signalling and global communications as well as college-devised units where standard BTEC units are not available. The college also provides a range of customised full-cost training programmes for local engineering and manufacturing firms. The needs of unemployed school-leavers and adults who are returning to education after a considerable time has elapsed, are effectively met through a range of entry level courses. Progression routes in the college are good and students are well informed of qualification and progression options. There are timetabled individual and group tutorials but some tutorials lack structure and objectives are not always clearly stated or understood by students.

26 Course files and documents are comprehensive and produced in a well-designed standardised format. Records show that course teams are effectively organised and meet on a regular basis. The self-assessment report recognises the improvements made in improving access and progression for engineering students through the Newham College access diploma.

27 The planning and teaching of most lessons is good. Students are attentive and highly motivated. Teachers have a good rapport with their students and make effective use of directed questioning during lessons. This technique was effectively used in one computer-aided design lesson. The teacher talked the class through the exercise continually checking that the students understood. He illustrated his presentation with sketches on the whiteboard and ensured that learning was not missed. Learning was clearly taking place and assessment materials were also good. However, some teaching was less stimulating with no evidence of planning and a general lack of structure. There is a lack of punctuality in many lessons. Weaknesses in teaching and learning were understated in the self-assessment report.

28 Retention and achievement on engineering courses are close to the national average. Students produce a high standard of practical work and portfolios of students on NVQ courses are thoroughly organised and clearly presented. Students achieve good standards in their assignments and they make good use of IT in their assessed work. Attendance is generally good and class sizes are higher than average for engineering courses. However, although retention on the recently introduced GNVQ advanced course in 1998-99 was at the national average, few students achieved the full qualification.

29 Specialist accommodation is furnished and decorated to a high standard. Classrooms benefit from having windows in internal walls

Curriculum Areas

and large viewing panels in the doors. This has improved security and gives the impression of space. In workshops and the computer-aided design centre, imaginative displays of students' work and posters are effectively used to support teaching and learning. The workshops are of a good size and well decorated and maintained. Specialist equipment is good, with some outstanding pieces of equipment, and equipment is well organised across the provision. The electronics area is particularly well equipped. The college has a large, impressive stock of commercially produced and college-devised learning packs which are effectively maintained by a specialist technician. Although all classrooms have overhead projection facilities, few are provided with screens. Teachers project slides onto a whiteboard but these are not ideal for projection and students have difficulty reading the slides. Although there is an adequate stock of general engineering library books, there is a shortage of books in some specialist areas such as refrigeration and air conditioning and some bookstock is out of date. In addition to a very well-equipped

computer-aided design centre, engineering students have access to computers in other locations. They make effective use of all these facilities.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ intermediate	2	Number of starters	35	45	40
		Retention (%)	77	73	80
		Achievement (%)	70	58	41
NVQ	2	Number of starters	64	152	147
		Retention (%)	80	55	52
		Achievement (%)	82	51	65
C&G	2	Number of starters	260	267	265
		Retention (%)	69	66	68
		Achievement (%)	21	33	59
NVQ	3	Number of starters	121	31	62
		Retention (%)	75	74	52
		Achievement (%)	44	30	84

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

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 3

30 Inspectors observed 11 lessons at foundation, intermediate and advanced level for full-time and part-time students. They concluded that the self-assessment report placed too much emphasis on some of the strengths and too little on some of the weaknesses. Insufficient attention was given to students' retention and achievements.

Key strengths

- a broad range of business courses
- much good teaching
- good achievement rates on professional courses
- effective support for students working on their own

Weaknesses

- some declining retention rates
- some low achievement rates
- lack of punctuality

31 The college offers a broad range of full-time and part-time business courses, and a wide range of short courses, from foundation level to higher education. These lead to GCE A level qualifications, GNVQs and NVQs in accounting and business administration, professional, management and personnel qualifications and a wide range of other qualifications in office skills. The courses attract students of all ages and from a variety of backgrounds. There are good opportunities for students to progress within the college.

32 Most courses are well managed. Course reviews take place annually and these include a detailed analysis of students' achievements and retention with comparisons being made against the available national benchmarking data produced by the FEFC. Targets for enrolment,

achievement and retention are set, but only targets for enrolment are monitored. Employers are also involved in the planning of new courses.

33 Inspectors saw some effective teaching and the majority of lessons were well planned. In most lessons, teachers followed lesson plans sensibly and, where it was appropriate, gave each student individual attention. More time was appropriately spent on concepts that students found difficult to grasp and less on those that they coped with easily. In many lessons, humour was effectively used by teachers to enliven the session and inspire students' interest. In several lessons, teachers drew on individual students' work experience for the benefit of the entire class. In the better lessons, teachers made effective use of questioning to check that learning was taking place. In an Association of Accounting Technicians foundation lesson, the teacher used these techniques to ensure that students remained attentive and grasped the issues involved in producing a payroll. In a few lessons, the teacher failed to ensure that all students were involved in the work. Inspectors considered that the college had been overgenerous in its assessment of teaching and learning.

34 Normal timetabled lesson hours have been reduced by one or two hours a week and students now attend the college's learning centre for three or four hours a week. The activities to be undertaken by students in the learning centre are determined by teachers, and study coaches are on hand to offer support. Accounting students who used computer-based learning packages during their periods in the centre, spoke highly of the benefits these offered. The college hopes that this additional period of study will help to improve students' achievements, but it is too early to see any measurable impact.

Curriculum Areas

35 Students produce some good work. In one lesson, a student gave a presentation on the advantages to business of customer service. The presentation was well prepared and the delivery was excellent. The feedback from her fellow students was constructive, supportive and critical. Attendance in the lessons observed was around the national figure of 76%. However, in many lessons, punctuality was a problem. Poor punctuality was not referred to in the self-assessment report. Students' written work is well presented, and of good quality, and it is marked with critical but constructive comments. On the GNVQ advanced and GCE A level courses, retention has improved. On Association of Accounting Technicians, and GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses, retention rates have declined over the last two years. On the National Examining Board for Supervisory Management and Institute of Personnel and Development courses achievement rates are good. The number of students achieving the full qualifications on the GNVQ intermediate courses is low. A significant number of GNVQ advanced students go on to complete the qualification in the following year. Full achievement on the NVQ accounting courses is also low. The self-assessment report acknowledges some of the weaknesses in retention and achievement. The majority of full-time students undertake work experience. The majority of Association of Accounting Technicians students are not in employment and this represents their only opportunity to put their skills into practice. Many of the students who complete their studies successfully progress to higher education.

36 Staff have appropriate qualifications and an up-to-date knowledge of their subject. Classrooms are suitable for the type of work carried out by students. General equipment and resources are satisfactory. There is an appropriate range of materials in the library and the facilities in the learning centre are excellent.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Book-keeping and computerised accounts	1	Number of starters	33	91	116
		Retention (%)	73	81	73
		Achievement (%)	42	62	58
Association of Accounting Technicians foundation	1	Number of starters	105	127	143
		Retention (%)	81	71	61
		Achievement (%)	26	22	32
GNVQ intermediate	2	Number of starters	128	166	142
		Retention (%)	78	66	56
		Achievement (%)	58	58	46
GNVQ advanced	3	Number of starters	117	110	117
		Retention (%)	56	54	64
		Achievement (%)	66	59	58
GCE A levels	3	Number of starters	87	76	72
		Retention (%)	69	70	76
		Achievement (%)	27	51	67
Professional courses (National Examining Board for Supervisory Management certificate and diploma and Institute of Personnel and Development certificate)	3	Number of starters	50	76	82
		Retention (%)	80	75	74
		Achievement (%)	88	82	89

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

Curriculum Areas

ESOL

Grade 2

37 Inspectors observed 10 lessons in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) at all levels including modules in the Newham College access diploma curriculum. They inspected work at both college sites as well as the work in the community. The self-assessment report was comprehensive and detailed. It acknowledged issues raised in the last inspection and demonstrated that improvements had been made. Strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report were supported by appropriate evidence. Some weaknesses were understated in the report.

Key strengths

- much good teaching
- good individual support for students
- improvements in retention and achievement
- well-managed, innovative curriculum development
- good specialist resources for language development

Weaknesses

- lack of liaison between teachers in curriculum areas
- failure to share good practice
- some lack of continuity in teaching and learning

38 The Newham College access diploma has been particularly effective in helping ESOL students to make progress in further education. Students attend full time or part time, on day or evening courses. There are productive links with the LEA, schools, community and voluntary organisations. These links have resulted in the creation of an associate faculty of community education in the college and are leading to

coherent ESOL provision across the borough. The same curriculum offered in the college is being piloted in the community centres and on year 10 and 11 programmes at a local school.

39 Most teaching is good and is effective in developing students' language skills. Language development features significantly in most lessons and there is a particular emphasis on the use of language in different contexts. In one lesson on an introduction to childcare course, the teacher was particularly effective in using vocationally specific vocabulary with students on the beginners' level language course. Although the work was demanding, the students were clearly learning and developing confidence. All teachers working with students on the vocational options of the Newham College access diploma programme are acutely aware of the language development issues in the curriculum. Teachers are also aware of the different language and literacy levels of individual students and set appropriate tasks to develop their skills. There are good schemes of work and lesson plans. In the majority of lessons, students worked well together and were confident in answering questions and completing the work set. The more successful and linguistically aware teachers provided ample opportunities for students to practise all four language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking in the classroom. The college's provision is successful in meeting the needs of the ESOL learners at lower levels. Students in the community classes are enthusiastic about improving their language skills. However, a few of the ESOL classes held in community accommodation have large numbers of students who have varying levels of language ability and the language needs of a few students in these classes are not always being met.

40 Teachers mark students' work regularly and give good feedback to students. Written feedback clearly helps students to make improvements in their work. Homework is set and students are encouraged to work without

Curriculum Areas

supervision. They use the Internet regularly and are well supported in their individual study.

Teachers are aware of the importance of improving students' linguistic effectiveness and of improving their achievement. They are implementing rigorous assessment and internal verification procedures.

41 College data on student retention and achievement show steady improvement over the past three years. The achievements of ESOL students are recognised and celebrated through a number of awards ceremonies held by the business and technology faculties. Students' progression and information on students' destinations is monitored and there are several examples of students who have progressed to GNVQ or access courses. However, there have been some problems with the recording of students' achievements on the Newham College access diploma programme, a weakness recognised in the college's self-assessment report.

42 Most teachers have experience in dealing with language issues but few have specialist teaching qualifications. The best practice in language teaching is not sufficiently shared amongst staff and the high turnover of part-time staff on community courses is having a detrimental effect on the continuity of teaching and learning. Specialist resources for teaching and learning are good. The programme area has a good language development network in the college that is generally effective in supporting the different vocational options.

Curriculum Areas

Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Grade 2

43 Inspectors observed 11 lessons. They agreed with many of the strengths identified by the college in its self-assessment report but concluded that the college failed to identify some significant weaknesses in teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- thorough planning of teaching and learning
- effective support for individual students
- well-designed, coherent curriculum
- good work experience for students
- improvements in students' achievements

Weaknesses

- lack of specific learning targets
- failure in some lessons to meet the needs of all students
- lack of teaching qualifications amongst teachers

44 The area inspected covered courses at entry level for students with additional learning needs. The full-time provision caters for students aged 16 to 19 and one group of adults. There is extensive provision for part-time students in the college's two main centres and in a range of community venues.

45 Inspectors saw many examples of good teaching. Lesson plans are detailed and prepared according to a standard format. Each lesson builds on work carried out in earlier lessons. Where good practice was observed, teachers explained the purpose of the lessons and maintained students' interest using a good range of teaching materials. In many sessions

with more able students, teachers developed students' problem-solving skills through discussion and evaluation. Inspectors observed good practice in the way teachers marked students' work and commented on it in lessons. Practical sessions were carried out safely and effectively. Teachers place a firm emphasis on the key skills of literacy and numeracy and students are able to work at a range of levels to improve their ability to learn effectively. The high quality of learning support provided by student support workers helps students to get the maximum benefits from their course. Support workers are very clear about their role in relation to each student. Their detailed knowledge of the needs of each student ensures that the student is able to achieve at an appropriate level. However, there is a lack of individual student learning plans for each unit of study. In some lessons, there was ineffective use of group work and little use of IT to support learning.

46 The college has clear targets in relation to retention and achievement. Retention for 1999 was high, at 93%. The introduction of three levels at entry level, and thorough assessment to place students correctly within a modularised programme, has enabled many more students to achieve accredited qualifications. There are clear criteria for achievement which create realistic demands on students and validate what they achieve. Students attending the college's 'team enterprise programme' over the last three years have won prizes at the annual awards ceremony. Students' attendance is good. Practical sessions are lively and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills and understanding. Termly review documentation shows that many students make significant progress in gaining confidence, becoming independent and developing their communication skills and assertiveness. Students' progression within the college is improving. There has been an increase from 33% to 66% of students moving from entry level

Curriculum Areas

to level 1 programmes in the past two years, while those remaining within entry level are able to follow a higher level of work.

47 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that a major strength of the provision is the innovative curriculum offered at entry level to students with additional learning needs. It provides units of accreditation across the range of key skills in communication, numeracy, IT and in personal and social education. There are also units covering work experience and residential experience, and additional support in basic skills. Units can be taken at varying levels to match differing abilities in the various skills. Management of the programme is effective and regular team meetings enable staff to address operational issues. Records of internal validation meetings and comments made by the external verifier indicate a self-critical and objective approach to this programme.

48 Resources are generally good and there is a high standard of accommodation. Appropriate materials are in good supply. Teachers and students have access to computers and for those with various disabilities there is access to specialist software. Visual symbols are in common use for those students who have more severe communication difficulties. However, the self-assessment report does not identify the lack of specialist teaching qualifications amongst teachers and the effect this may have on the quality of teaching and learning, particularly for those with more severe learning difficulties.

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills

Grade 2

49 Inspectors observed 13 lessons covering the range of provision in basic skills, including separate specialist courses in basic skills, courses in vocational basic skills, tutorial sessions, and supported independent study. They observed lessons on both main campuses and in the venues used by the associate faculty of community education. They agreed with many of the findings of the college's self-assessment report, though some strengths were overstated and some weaknesses were not identified.

Key strengths

- innovative basic skills curriculum
- effective integration of basic and vocational skills
- high-quality specialist resources
- integration of IT with teaching and learning
- productive working relationships with external organisations

Weaknesses

- students not always given sufficiently challenging work
- the failure of some teaching to take account of students' varying abilities

50 The college has developed an innovative and comprehensive basic skills curriculum below level 2. The curriculum offered includes basic skills integrated with vocational courses as well as separate specialist full-time and part-time courses. All of these courses are linked together through the Newham College access diploma. Students can enter the programme at four levels, entry A, B and C and level 1. At entry level they are placed in three different 'pathways' for students with English as

an additional language, basic skills and additional language needs. Students can take vocational units in a variety of subjects, such as catering, business, IT, and motor vehicle, as well as basic skills units in communications, numeracy and IT. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the curriculum is wide-ranging and comprehensive. It brings together a range of previously disparate courses for basic skills students into an inclusive and coherent programme. There are good links with external organisations through the Newham Basic Skills Partnership. This means that students will have access to other local institutions, thus facilitating movement and progression within the borough. The modular system means that students who move out of the area quickly, for instance refugees, can still leave with an accredited qualification.

51 The total number of students receiving basic skills tuition is 1,877. Of these students, 81% are from minority ethnic groups and 83% are from areas of social and economic deprivation. The college also offers learning support to those students at level 1 and below who are not yet taking Newham College access diploma units. The number of students receiving additional support for literacy and numeracy is 169.

52 Basic skills managers have good links with vocational teams through a management structure which places them within the vocational faculties. Basic skills and vocational teachers meet together to plan and to discuss students' progress, and to agree the content of basic skills lessons. The benefits of this collaboration were seen in a number of lessons. For example, when students on a catering course were asked to do a reading comprehension exercise with a text from a newspaper about dirty kitchens, and in a supported independent study session, where the teacher showed catering students how to use the Internet to research information about diets.

Curriculum Areas

53 Students are motivated and worked hard in all the lessons observed. When asked, most students on level 1 courses stated that they wished to continue to level 2. Inspectors saw some good teaching, particularly in supported independent study, numeracy and tutorial units. In one tutorial unit, on understanding job advertisements, the teacher skilfully coaxed and pushed students to draw on their own experience of working in catering to provide real examples of competence. In some lessons, the teaching was uninspiring and students' attendance was low. The teaching in these lessons did not take account of the different abilities of students. Teachers made little use of visual aids to support teaching and learning. In one communications lesson, students spent most of their time filling in worksheets.

54 Work in lessons and work done in unit assessments is of a good standard. Last year, 75% of students on basic skills courses achieved the Newham College access diploma accredited by the National Open College Network (NOCN). All successful students are guaranteed a place on a higher level course and of the basic skills students who returned to the college, 94% progressed to a higher level. The same end-of-unit assessments are used across the college, ensuring consistency of assessment. They are designed by teachers, and are clear and well presented with the criteria for assessment clearly stated in language that students can understand.

55 As stated in the college's self-assessment report, students have good access to excellent IT facilities. The library also has a good range of books for students which they can either borrow or read in the library. It also has class sets of books, dictionaries, video tapes and audio tapes which teachers can draw upon in their lessons.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 1

56 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report. They considered the self-assessment process to be comprehensive and thorough and the judgements in the report were supported by readily available evidence. The report contained detailed action plans designed to improve further the quality of support arrangements. Inspectors saw evidence of improvements made since the report was prepared.

Key strengths

- effective management of student support services
- high-quality information, guidance, careers advice and support services
- outstanding tutorial support with a positive impact on retention
- highly effective induction programme
- excellent careers information and guidance
- outstanding enrichment programme

Weaknesses

- unco-ordinated systems for disseminating information between teams

57 Inspectors agreed with the college's view that student support services are effectively managed. The roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly defined and widely understood. Teams providing tutorials, careers guidance, learning support and counselling work exceptionally well together to meet the varied and complex needs of students. The college has a strong commitment to raising students' aspirations and to helping them achieve their full potential. Students confirmed that they are treated with respect and feel the college provides a stimulating environment in which to work.

58 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that advice and guidance and information services are a notable strength. Guidance procedures ensure that students choose the appropriate level and type of course. All course enquiries go through a rigorous central admissions system. Course information is well designed and available in a range of languages. Information about the college and its courses is also available on the Internet and the college's intranet. The college provides a well-focused, effective induction programme for all students. The programme includes career development and personal development units. Guidance teams are well qualified and offer accurate, impartial advice on an extensive range of matters covering finance, accommodation, immigration issues and personal problems. Staff are trained in referral techniques and there are good links with external agencies. The college is developing productive partnerships with local business and community organisations. The faculty of access to learning is working with local schools in providing support for students with profound learning difficulties who wish to join college courses.

59 Tutorial support is outstanding. An innovative and flexible tutorial system ensures that all full-time students have access to a personal tutor who provides pastoral support, a learning tutor who provides support on academic issues, and a peer supporter who is a current student. The college is particularly successful in developing strategies that enable students to help one another. The high quality of student support contributes to continuing improvements in retention and achievement. Personal tutors work with learning tutors and central administrative staff in investigating issues which affect punctuality and attendance. The college recognises that the dissemination of information across the extensive range of services lacks co-ordination. There is a well-established complaints and appeals procedure.

Cross-college Provision

60 The college has introduced a ‘student life’ initiative which aims to encourage students to take responsibility for developing their own recreational and social events. There is an enthusiastic team of students who have delegated responsibilities for organising events. They each hold responsibility for either cultural, sporting or academic activities. Students are encouraged to keep abreast of national initiatives and some have attended external conferences covering drug-related issues and equal opportunities.

61 The college helps students to find work and many students find paid employment through the college’s careers centre. The centre is successful in providing work experience and job search opportunities for all students. The college’s careers service is highly valued and has helped students in financial difficulty or who have a family history of unemployment. Students confirmed that without the support they receive they would have had to leave their course. Around 2,000 students are currently using the college’s careers service. The college has established good links with the local careers service and last year it attracted over 40 local and national companies to its annual job fair.

62 All full-time students undertake initial screening and effective diagnostic assessment is completed during induction. This year 721 asylum seekers and 311 refugees are enrolled on the Newham College access diploma programme. Last year 661 students completed the programme. High-quality learning support is available in the college’s many well-equipped learning centres. Support services are available at the East Ham and Stratford sites. These services are well managed. Students’ attendance is monitored and recorded by staff. Attendance reports are sent to course managers and tutors on a regular basis.

General Resources

Grade 1

63 Inspectors agreed with the judgements made by the college in its self-assessment report. The main weaknesses had already been addressed by the time of the inspection.

Key strengths

- significant investment leading to high-quality resources throughout the college
- high specification for teaching rooms
- well-designed and well-equipped learning centres
- effectively planned IT development
- access for people with restricted mobility
- effective policies and procedures for the recruitment and support of staff

Weaknesses

- there are no significant weaknesses

64 Both of the college’s main sites are easily accessible by public transport. At the time of the last inspection, inspectors found that the college’s accommodation and equipment were of a very high standard. The college has invested a further £16.6 million in its resources since then. As identified in the self-assessment report, there have been significant improvements to general purpose classrooms and specialist accommodation across the college. The college’s accommodation strategy is closely linked to strategic objectives and the college’s mission. The aim of all developments is to improve access to lifelong learning for the local community, and to be at the forefront of technological developments in education. Many of the developments have been in collaboration with partners in the community, and the college has attracted substantial development funds from external sources.

Cross-college Provision

65 Accommodation at the East Ham site has been upgraded substantially over the past three years. Inspectors found that resources for art and design were inadequate at the time of the last inspection. New developments include the refurbishment of accommodation for art and design, photography and music technology courses to provide spacious, attractive specialist facilities. Much of the accommodation at the Stratford campus has been updated, and there are high-quality specialist facilities for construction and engineering. All classrooms are of a high standard, are carpeted and equipped with whiteboards and overhead projection facilities. The associate faculty of community education offers courses in a number of smaller sites surrounding the main college sites. The standard of accommodation and equipment matches that on the main campuses. Computers on all satellite sites are connected to the college networks.

66 The college has a comprehensive IT strategy. The number of computers available for administrative staff has increased from 60 in 1996 to 280 at the time of this inspection. Students now have access to over 1,800 modern computers compared with fewer than 600 two years ago. The ratio of computers to students is 1:6, which is comparable with the national average. The five-year cycle for updating and replacement has ensured that all are of a suitable specification. Almost all computers in the college are part of either the administrative or educational college networks, and all staff and students have access to the Internet. Effective support for users of the system is provided by a specialist company. The college has produced a website for publicity purposes, and has recently launched an intranet which provides staff with a range of information including college policies and procedures.

67 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the quality of learning centres across the college is a significant strength. At each main site, students have access to IT and other study facilities on a timetabled basis in large, imaginatively designed suites which are

staffed by 'study coaches'. Each suite also has some seminar rooms for small groups of students to work together, and there is a room for staff development. Students have easy access to IT, video viewing, audio and library resources in the learning centre on each site. All computers are part of the college curriculum network, allowing students to continue work on any other computer in the college. Staff work co-operatively to ensure that appropriate resources are available

68 Comprehensive but discreet security arrangements help to ensure a welcoming and safe atmosphere at both main sites. Campus managers are employed to liaise with security staff to ensure a good standard of student behaviour. The maintenance of college facilities is efficiently organised. There is a rolling programme of maintenance. A review of subcontracted services such as security, cleaning, and catering, which compared costs against those of other colleges, has resulted in reduced costs and an improved service to the college. Both main sites have been designed so as to provide sufficient spaces for staff and students to meet. Pleasant, well-kept cafeterias offer a wide range of meals. Staff workrooms and offices are of a good standard, are comfortably furnished, and have networked computers. With the exception of a few rooms, mainly in administration, there is full access for people with restricted mobility. Crèche facilities are provided at the two main sites, and at some of the satellite sites.

69 The college has developed comprehensive procedures for the recruitment and retention of staff. Equality of opportunity has a high priority. The college is committed to helping staff progress by offering appropriate staff development opportunities. All permanent staff have access to a non-contributory private health care scheme, a counselling service and an occupational nurse. Inspectors agreed that new staffing roles such as instructor and study coach have enabled the college to respond to the needs of the innovative curriculum developments.

Cross-college Provision

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

70 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report. They considered that the college overstated strengths relating to teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- comprehensive quality assurance system and self-assessment process
- evidence of quality assurance leading to improvements in the quality of provision
- strong customer care ethos
- effective, well-resourced staff development
- strong involvement of governors in quality assurance

Weaknesses

- overestimation of the quality of teaching and learning in some areas
- lack of critical analysis and action-planning on some courses

71 The strategic plan commits the college to continuous monitoring and improvement of the quality of all its services. A clear commitment to improving retention and achievement is evident at all levels, and whilst there is room for further improvement, overall retention and achievement rates have increased over the past three years. The academic standards and performance committee undertakes a critical review of policies and systems. The academic board advises the principal on the quality of the college's work.

72 The college has continued to modify and refine its quality assurance and self-assessment procedures since the last inspection. A learning support service review system has been introduced. It is based on appropriate standards and includes target-setting and

performance indicators. Corporate services are working towards the attainment of an international quality mark which the college believes will bring greater coherence to quality assurance systems. An internal quality audit of the curriculum and learning support services takes place annually. The quality audit teams include non-managers and, in some cases, parents and employers. The internal quality audits of the curriculum involve lesson observations using the quality standards outlined in Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment* and supplemented by student questionnaires and interviews. A thorough evaluation of the quality assurance process is presented to the executive, academic board and the corporation, with clear proposals for further improvement.

73 Inspectors agreed that weaknesses identified through the self-assessment process have led to some radical changes taking place. These include the introduction of the Newham College access diploma programme, a strengthening of the tutorial system, changes in accreditation, arrangements to reflect customer needs, and closing of courses which persistently produce poor results. Courses awarded a grade 4 in their internal quality audit are subject to intensive review and course managers are asked to take immediate action. Recently, the procedure has contributed to improvements in the quality of provision in hairdressing and in catering.

74 The review and evaluation of courses is now established as part of the normal quality assurance procedures. Most teams conduct course reviews thoroughly. They set improvement targets and specify actions to achieve these. The actions are monitored at set dates. Partners involved in franchised provision have quality assurance arrangements appropriate for the size and type of their operation. The college acknowledges in its self-assessment report that the review of some courses lacks rigour, that data are not analysed

Cross-college Provision

thoroughly, and that some action plans are imprecise. Insufficient weighting is given to retention, achievement and attendance in reaching judgements about the overall quality of the provision.

75 The college carries out lesson observations as an integral part of its quality assurance procedures. However, it generally leads to a significant overestimation of the quality of teaching and learning. The college has already taken action in preparation for its next internal quality audit.

76 Students are actively encouraged to express their views about all aspects of the college's provision. They are represented on all major committees and meet with corporation members. Whole-college surveys of students' perceptions are carried out twice a year, for which there is a good response rate. The results of the surveys are published in a newsletter for students. Results are analysed at course level and form part of the course review and evaluation process. Clear information is provided for students on how to make a complaint. A college charter for students is included in the students' handbook and prominently displayed around the college. Standards underpinning the charter are monitored regularly by the quality assurance manager.

77 All permanent staff have an annual performance review. These are viewed positively by staff and result in agreed action plans. They identify staff development needs related to corporate objectives. The principal is set some extremely challenging targets in his performance review by the chair of the corporation. The college achieved the Investors in People award in 1997. The staff development budget in 1998-99 was £477,000, which represents 2% of the college's total expenditure. Clear links exist between performance reviews, and quality assurance processes and staff development.

Governance

Grade 1

78 Inspectors agreed with the judgements made in the self-assessment report on governance, and recognised that much progress has already been made in rectifying weaknesses identified in the report.

Key strengths

- governors' involvement in strategic planning
- clear understanding by governors of the distinction between governance and management
- sound and efficient procedures for conducting corporation business
- effective monitoring of college finances
- support given by governors to widening participation
- rigorous monitoring of students' achievements and retention

Weaknesses

- there are no significant weaknesses

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

80 The corporation has a determined membership of 12 and there were no vacancies at the time of the inspection. After considering the requirements of the modified instrument of government, the corporation now comprises four business governors, three co-opted governors, a staff governor, a student governor, a local authority nominee, a community nominee and the principal. The self-assessment

Cross-college Provision

report recognised that the membership does not yet fully reflect the ethnic and gender balance of the local community and student body and the corporation is addressing this issue through recent governor appointments.

81 Governors constructively influence the college's strategic planning process. The board has an established academic standards and performance committee which rigorously monitors students' achievements and retention. Governors monitor action plans produced for all courses where retention is below 70% and/or achievement below 50%. They are kept well informed about sector issues including the development and use of national benchmarking data produced by the FEFC.

82 There are effective communications between governors, managers, staff and students. This is evident through intranet communication, the re-launch of a governors' and staff newsletter, and focus group meetings. The student and staff consultative committees and staff and student governors have improved links between staff, students and governors. Corporation members and the college executive team work exceptionally well together. Governors and managers clearly understand their respective roles. Governor's expertise is used to good effect.

83 The self-assessment process for governors has allowed them to review progress in the college's strategic plan and provides them with an opportunity to evaluate governors' own performance. The self-assessment report is drawn up by governors at their annual residential conference. Governors are committed to their own training and have recognised the need for a continuous training programme. There is effective induction for new governors. A skills audit is being used to identify further training needs. Appraisal of senior postholders is well developed, including performance review and target-setting.

84 Attendance at corporation meetings is good. There are sound and efficient procedures for conducting the corporation's business. The corporation meets six times each year and the board is supported by appropriate committees which reflect key strategic priorities and operate with focused agendas and effective structures. Management accounts are considered by the full corporation at each meeting and are distributed to all governors each month. The conduct of corporation business and quality of documentation provided for meetings is identified as a strength in the college's self-assessment report and inspectors agreed with this.

85 Governors express a strong commitment to issues of equality and the college's vision of widening participation. Governors have a clear understanding of developments in the curriculum. They take an active role in the promotion of the college and provide leadership in the development of collaboration with local community organisations in the borough.

Cross-college Provision

Management

Grade 2

86 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the key strengths and weaknesses of management identified in the college's self-assessment report. Actions were already being taken at the time of the inspection to address the weaknesses.

Key strengths

- effective leadership
- good communication
- clear strategic planning
- good financial management
- productive collaboration with the local community and other external organisations
- effective promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities

Weaknesses

- underdeveloped understanding and use of data at course level
- some non-compliance with college procedures on recording data

87 The college benefits from effective leadership. Senior managers have set a clear strategic direction for the college which emphasises the need to improve quality. The ethos and vision of the college is understood and shared by staff and includes a long-standing and successful commitment to widen participation and social inclusion. Since the last inspection the college has grown significantly, invested £16.6 million in new learning facilities, restructured existing faculties, created the new faculty of creative and cultural industries and achieved the Investors in People award. It has also formed an associate faculty of community education in partnership with Newham LEA; an initiative designed to enhance opportunities for local people and extend the college's provision of basic skills and progression opportunities for

students. The college is an associate college of Middlesex University and of the University of North London.

88 The principal and senior managers have developed an open and supportive environment. The principal leads an executive board comprising the two deputy principals, four faculty directors, four corporate services directors and the director for the centre for innovation and partnerships. The executive board meets monthly to formulate policy, co-ordinate management decisions and to review the progress being made in achieving strategic objectives. The board oversees and co-ordinates the college's quality assurance and quality improvement systems. The deputy principals meet fortnightly with the faculty directors to monitor the operational management of the college. Managers have a clear understanding of their respective roles. They are each responsible for implementing college policy as it applies to their area. They also have responsibility for the efficient use of resources and for the achievement of performance targets. The college's self-assessment report identified problems in its student record system that have led to inaccuracies and omissions by some staff. The college is taking steps to improve the collection and recording of data.

89 A thorough analysis of local education and training needs and labour market trends underpins the college's strategic and operational planning process. Strategic planning involves consultation with staff and governors. The strategic plan carefully maps the college's successes and potential challenges. The college sets targets for all areas of its work. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the achievement of targets and performance indicators are kept under constant review. However, as the college recognises, the use and understanding of national benchmarking data published by the FEFC on student retention and achievement is underdeveloped by some course managers.

Cross-college Provision

90 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the college's financial management is good. The college has an accumulated surplus and continues to forecast surpluses. Financial reports are produced for college managers and governors each month. These include an overall summary of the college's financial position, the college's performance measured against objectives set in the college's financial strategy, and explanations of key variances. The reports include comprehensive management accounts. Monthly management accounts are provided to budget holders. Finance staff are suitably qualified and experienced. The college has a robust budget setting process. Financial rules are comprehensive and reviewed annually by the corporation.

91 Communications across the college are good. A focus group led by the chair of the corporation undertook a comprehensive review of communications across the whole college. Its findings and recommendations have informed the college's strategy for improving communications. Staff have access to electronic mail and to a comprehensive intranet system which provides easily accessible information on all aspects of the college's work.

92 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that it collaborates extensively with external organisations. The college has forged strong links with an extensive range of public sector and private sector employers and with external agencies. To support this work, the college has established a centre for innovation and partnership. The centre identifies and develops new programmes in response to market needs. For example, working with the national lead body for the industry, the college has developed the first NVQs for the exhibitions and events industry. Other successful initiatives include New Deal and a University for Industry learning centre hub. These collaborative projects reflect the college's aim of serving the community and have helped to bring financial investment to the college and the borough.

93 There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy and regulations for the monitoring of health and safety at work. The college works actively to ensure equality of opportunity for all. Specific management strategies have been developed to combat any form of discrimination or harassment in the college. Twice yearly surveys seek students' opinions and perceptions on equality issues. There are clear procedures for monitoring and dealing with complaints.

Conclusions

94 The self-assessment report used by inspectors was the sixth one produced by the college. The inspection team found it to be a realistic assessment of the college's provision, providing an effective basis for planning the inspection. The report was the outcome of a comprehensive process of assessment involving all staff, corporation members and representatives of external organisations. It was supported by comprehensive evidence. The college's difficulty in providing some data hampered the formation of some judgements. Strengths in teaching and learning were sometimes overstated. Most of the findings of the inspection team were in line with those of the college. Inspection grades awarded by the team matched the college's grades in four of the seven curriculum areas and in three aspects of cross-college provision.

95 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 (November 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	1
16-18 years	23
19-24 years	25
25+ years	51
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1999)

Level of study	%
Level 1 (foundation)	46
Level 2 (intermediate)	23
Level 3 (advanced)	25
Level 4/5 (higher)	6
Non-schedule 2	0
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	1,029	2,032	26
Construction	72	569	5
Engineering	354	1,183	13
Business	666	732	12
Hotel and catering	5	27	0
Health and community care	413	262	6
Art and design	370	280	5
Humanities	531	745	11
Basic education	661	1,911	22
Total	4,101	7,741	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 90% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1999)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	161	2	81	244
Supporting direct learning contact	114	21	10	145
Other support	113	15	0	128
Total	388	38	91	517

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£23,509,000	£22,295,000	£26,301,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£21.24*	£18.59*	£17.56*
Payroll as a proportion of income	59%	47%	42%
Achievement of funding target	121%	101%	101%
Diversity of income	27%	25%	31%
Operating surplus	-£907,000	£21,000	£718,000

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)

*provisional data

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	340	557	1,007	2,337	3,758	6,420
	Retention (%)	68	69	68	61	59	67
	Achievement (%)	50	37	73	35	73	65
2	Number of starters	1,783	1,425	1,341	1,762	1,817	1,761
	Retention (%)	72	72	75	68	68	69
	Achievement (%)	54	46	57	44	45	54
3	Number of starters	868	1,614	1,225	1,886	2,077	1,733
	Retention (%)	86	82	77	74	68	72
	Achievement (%)	46*	30*	39*	33*	41*	5
4 or 5	Number of starters	46	30	n/a	326	262	n/a
	Retention (%)	7*	9*	n/a	78	79	n/a
	Achievement (%)	43	33	n/a	32	36	n/a
Short courses	Number of starters	464	579	615	3,102	3,372	4,694
	Retention (%)	76	67	80	71	54	80
	Achievement (%)	35	79	58	21*	126	60
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	656	683	n/a	5,159	3,523	n/a
	Retention (%)	84	84	n/a	80	77	n/a
	Achievement (%)	27*	54	n/a	21*	57	n/a

Source: ISR

*achievement understated

n/a not applicable

FEFC Inspection Report 45/00

**Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
Website www.fefc.ac.uk
© FEFC March 2000**