

Queen Mary's College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98**

**THE
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COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also 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 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

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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.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision, curriculum areas and lesson observations, for colleges inspected during 1996-97, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	59	30	2	–
Cross-college provision	18	51	27	4	–
Lesson observations	19	42	31	7	1

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report.* Grades were awarded using the guidelines in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*.
Sample size: 122 college inspections

Retention and Pass Rates

Where data on students' achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in two ways:

- as a retention rate, which is the proportion of students who completed a course in relation to the number enrolled on 1 November in the first year of the course
- as a pass rate, which is the proportion of students which passed examinations in relation to the number entered. Pass rates for GCE A level are quoted for grades A to E unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for GCSE courses are quoted for grade C or above unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for vocational and professional awards are for successful completion of the full award.

Summary

Queen Mary's College

South East Region

Inspected February 1998

Queen Mary's College is a large sixth form college. Its self-assessment process was well managed and comprehensive. Course and departmental reviews are well established, and evidence from these was used to produce a self-assessment report. Some of its judgements were more generous than those made by inspectors, although it provided a helpful basis for the conduct of the inspection.

The college has diversified its provision to include vocational courses and part-time work which attracts many adults. The college contributes to several successful partnerships with local organisations. Teaching is generally good, and students are successful and satisfied with what the college offers. Too many students transfer to other courses after realising what is involved in their initial choice. Examination results are generally good, but the previous attainments of many students suggest that results could be even better. Learning support is well organised, but not taken up by many of the students who need it. Very able students have opportunities to extend their work, and are stimulated by some skilful teaching, particularly in science and mathematics. Courses for students with learning difficulties are carefully

organised to foster progress. Managers communicate well with the rest of the staff, and a new organisational structure is beginning to achieve its objectives. Some staff need continuing support and training to help them to make the most of their new responsibilities, particularly where these span several subject departments. The responsibilities of department heads are considerable. Quality reviews are well established, but those conducted in some departments are not sufficiently rigorous; observations made of classroom teaching could be better used in the process. Governors are interested in their role, committed to the college, and experienced. Their work would benefit from a review of some of their procedures, and a training plan. Staff training opportunities have only recently been linked to the college's strategic aims, and appraisal is not systematic. The general resources of the college are good; its accommodation is pleasant, despite some problems with old buildings. The college should: ensure that the objectives of the reorganisation are followed through; improve the procedural arrangements for the work of governors; apply consistent standards to the process of course review; improve the use of space to speed up the evacuation of unsuitable teaching rooms; encourage more students to take advantage of learning support; and continue its efforts to improve student retention.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Mathematics and information technology	3	Support for students	2
Sciences	2	General resources	2
Business	2	Quality assurance	3
Leisure and tourism	4	Governance	3
English language and literature	2	Management	2
Modern languages	2		
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2		

Context

The College and its Mission

1 Queen Mary's College is a large sixth form college in Basingstoke in North East Hampshire. Since incorporation in 1993, it has expanded its work to provide education and training for students of all ages. Since the last inspection in 1994, the number of students has grown from 1,400 full-time and 300 part-time, to 1,600 full-time and almost 1,000 part-time students in the academic year 1996-97. A high proportion of the young adults who enrol as students are returning to education following a break in their studies. The college's commitment to widening participation in general education and training post-16 is reflected in its mission statement 'to build a learning community in Basingstoke and its region'.

2 Although the college serves a wide area and specialist courses recruit from as far as Southampton or Berkshire, the majority of students come from Basingstoke and Deane and from Hart, two local authority districts with a combined population of 225,000. Basingstoke developed as a new town in the 1960s and 1970s. The largest group in the adult population is aged between 25 and 35. Characteristics of the local economy include: the high proportion of people of working age; low unemployment; the highest rate of economic activity in Hampshire; high value-added services in both manufacturing and service sectors.

3 Most of the college's full-time students come from 15 partner secondary and special schools. Some 75 per cent of pupils in year 11 remain in education after leaving school and about 40 per cent enrol at Queen Mary's College. There is a large college of further education in Basingstoke and there are other colleges serving post-16 students in Alton, Winchester, Andover and Farnborough.

4 The college has very strong relationships with other providers of education in the borough, most notably through its involvement with the Basingstoke Consortium of Schools and

Colleges and through the Basingstoke Community Education Partnership, a grouping of community schools and Queen Mary's College. Through outward collaboration, Basingstoke Community Education Partnership accounted for some 25 per cent of the college's total student population in 1996-97. The college plays a leading role in the development of the borough's Action for Skills group, working closely to widen participation with Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), local employers and other post-16 providers. There is a strong commitment to provide for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

5 Queen Mary's College offers courses in general education and training in eight of the 10 programme areas funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The courses are run at all levels from foundation to national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 5 and access to higher education. People who live in the locality use the college's facilities for a great variety of leisure and recreational purposes. Current funding partners include Hampshire County Council, Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and the Southern Arts Board. The college employs 101 teaching staff and 36 support staff. A restructuring of organisational and staffing arrangements was completed in May 1997.

Context

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected in February 1998. Inspectors had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report, drawn up the sample of work to be inspected, and validated the college's data on students' achievements. These data were checked against primary sources, including class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies, and found to be mainly reliable; there were only minor errors. The inspection was completed by 10 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 42 days. They observed 87 lessons, examined students' work, and scrutinised a wide range of college documents. They held meetings with governors, managers, teachers and students, as well as parents and community representatives, including the heads of local schools.

7 Of the lessons inspected, 68 per cent were judged to be good or outstanding, and 6 per cent were less than satisfactory, a significant improvement since the last inspection. This profile also compares favourably with 61 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, for all colleges inspected during 1996-97, according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England*

1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report. The average attendance during the inspection was 83.7 per cent and the average class size was 11.5. The following table shows the grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	9	19	13	1	0	42
GCSE	2	7	2	1	0	12
GNVQ and NVQ	4	10	4	3	0	21
Other	2	6	4	0	0	12
Total	17	42	23	5	0	87

Curriculum Areas

Mathematics and Information Technology

Grade 3

8 Inspectors observed 14 lessons which covered a representative sample of work in both the mathematics and computing departments. The self-assessment report was comprehensive and clearly identified the strengths and weaknesses of each department. Inspectors judged that the college underestimated the weakness associated with students' achievements.

Key strengths

- well-planned lessons
- well-designed coursework, assessments and assignments
- achievements of students on the double mathematics programme, and GCSE
- students' achievements for general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate in information technology (IT)

Weaknesses

- low achievements on the computing course at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level)
- low achievements on the GCE A level pure and applied mathematics course
- specialist computing resources for mathematics teaching

9 The quality of teachers' planning is generally good. Schemes of work have been written for all courses and most are appropriately detailed. In the self-assessment report, the college identified a need for even more detail. Outline schemes of work are shared with students on some courses. Teachers begin their lessons well, by informing students of the topic to be covered and briefly

revising the work of the last session. Most lessons develop at an appropriate pace. Teachers involve students in question and answer sessions and in discussion to check their learning. In lessons which grew monotonous or where the teacher failed to check students' learning, some students lost interest and were bored. Most teachers made good use of teaching aids.

10 Students' achievements in examinations are mixed. In mathematics for the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE), which is taken by full-time and evening students, the results were well above the national average for sixth form colleges in 1997. The achievements of students taking double mathematics are also consistently good; last year the pass rate was 96 per cent. Most mathematics students studying for the GCE A level take the Schools Mathematics Project 16 to 19 programme. Student success on this course has been close to the national average for sixth form colleges in each of the last three years. Student success rates in the single subject pure and applied mathematics are low, below 60 per cent for each of the last two years. Students from the department have been among the top five students for various mathematics syllabuses of the Associated Examining Board for the last four years. In 1997, one student achieved the gold certificate in the United Kingdom senior mathematical challenge; four others achieved silver, and six bronze certificates.

11 Advanced level computing results have been poor for the last two years. The college introduced the GCE A level in IT in 1997. This course is designed to attract students who might previously have taken the computing course but who would prefer to gain knowledge and understanding of the application of IT rather than computer programming. Student results and retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate in IT have been good since its introduction two years ago. A high proportion of students have progressed from this course to the GNVQ

Curriculum Areas

advanced in IT. During the last three years, computing students entering the British Informatics Olympiad have produced one finalist, two distinctions and a merit award.

12 Mathematics and computing are separate departments within the same division. The head of each department holds regular departmental meetings but minutes are poor. There is no record of some meetings, and no common format for minutes that could help to indicate action points. The managers of each department require the support of senior management to implement action to improve achievements, and to rectify the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

13 The resources to support both departments are generally good. Each occupies a suite of adjacent rooms. The mathematics rooms, although small, are well decorated, and all have good mathematical wall displays. Hand-held graphics calculators which are given to students to use during lessons are the main resource. Most rooms are equipped with a number of out-of-date computers. Mathematics staff identified as a weakness their difficulty in keeping up with developments in software. The computing department has rooms adjacent to the open access computing centre. All but one of these rooms are equipped with modern

computers which receive heavy use as the number of students studying computing and IT has increased rapidly in the last three years. Each department has its own resource centre with a range of text books that supplement those in the library.

Examples of students' achievements in mathematics and information technology, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level mathematics and computing	Retention (%)	81	89	78
	Pass rate (%)	87	80	76
GCSE	Retention (%)	78	74	72
	Pass rate (%)	41	37	57
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	*	89	94
	Pass rate (%)	*	75	69

Source: college data

*course not offered

Curriculum Areas

Sciences

Grade 2

14 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses that were identified in the self-assessment report. Some strengths were understated, and some important GCSE data were omitted. Thirteen lessons were observed.

Key strengths

- well-organised courses
- carefully-planned lessons
- effective teaching
- regular setting and marking of work
- good practical work
- progression of a high proportion of students to science courses in higher education
- good-quality laboratories and specialist equipment

Weaknesses

- retention rates on some courses
- pass rates in some subjects
- late arrival of some students to most lessons

15 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that classes are well planned and follow detailed schemes of work. Appropriately varied teaching techniques are used in most lessons, especially the long sessions. In some lessons not all students are involved in discussions or question and answer sessions. Teachers provide good support. There are effective arrangements for students to gain additional help with their work through directed study time and 'open lab' provision. Practical work is carried out with a proper regard for issues involving health and safety. All these strengths are identified in the self-assessment report. Students are helped by careful marking

of their work and their progress is monitored carefully at regular intervals. Some students did not arrive on time for their lessons.

16 Most students enjoy their courses and are well motivated. They work well individually and in groups. Their practical skills and written work are generally of a good standard. Students compile well-organised files and produce some sound project work, particularly in GCE A level physics and Nuffield biology. These strengths were mentioned in the self-assessment report. Pass rates for physics GCE A level in 1995 and 1996 and science GCSE results in 1996 were significantly above the national average for sixth form colleges. Retention rates in Nuffield biology and chemistry at GCE A level have been at or above 90 per cent for the past three years. Several students' results have been amongst the best in England. However, results in GCSE physics in 1995 and 1997 were very poor and GCSE biology results in 1997 declined badly. Retention rates are poor on several courses, for example GCE A level human biology, GCE advanced supplementary (AS) electronics and GCSE physics.

17 As identified in the self-assessment report, science courses are well managed. Appropriately detailed schemes of work are provided for the students. Teachers have tried hard to widen opportunities. Courses other than GCE A level and GCSE have been offered, but have recruited too few students to be viable. Science in the environment has been successfully introduced as a GCE AS course for non-science students. The Basingstoke Science Centre is being developed as a result of co-operation between local schools and the college to help to promote science in the area; associated initiatives include 'Science Masterclass' and 'Working with Science'.

18 Technical staff provide good support. The laboratories are bright and well decorated; informative posters have been produced by students. All subject areas have specialist

Curriculum Areas

apparatus although some physics equipment is now ageing. Biology makes good use of the video microscope, and all departments share a video camera which, among other features, enables small-scale demonstrations to be shown in fuller detail. Each department has access to a personal computer and printer, but, in general, IT equipment is obsolescent and students have insufficient access to the internet. The library has a good range of reference books, videos, and resources available on the computer network.

Examples of students' achievements in sciences, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level	Retention (%)	88	84	82
	Pass rate (%)	91	85	84
GCSE	Retention (%)	90	78	77
	Pass rate (%)	45	59	37

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 2

19 Inspectors observed 14 lessons covering all courses in business studies. They agreed with most of the college's self-assessment although they considered that the strength of teaching of classes at GCE A level had been overestimated.

Key strengths

- generally good and some outstanding teaching
- effective teamwork by staff
- high achievement and retention rates on many vocational courses
- GCE results consistently above national averages
- teaching in GNVQ and NVQ which catered well for differing student abilities

Weaknesses

- inadequate range of teaching methods in some lessons
- teachers with little recent commercial and/or industrial experience

20 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that the quality of teaching is generally good. Most lessons are well planned and take into account the varying abilities of students in the groups. Teachers illustrate their lessons with effective up-to-date examples drawn from business. There is much individual tuition especially in vocational subjects where good use is made of the high-quality computer resources. In the small number of weaker lessons, teachers had not planned well and there was insufficient emphasis on learning. Inspectors noted a high level of unauthorised absences. Students' written work is generally of a good standard.

21 The college offers two-year courses at GCE A level in business studies and accounts. Numbers in business studies are large, with approximately 130 students enrolling each year for one of the two syllabuses on offer. A third syllabus is available as a one-year evening class. The number of students taking accounts is small and has declined over the past three years. Business studies GCSE will be dropped at the end of the academic year 1997-98. GNVQs in business are available at intermediate and advanced levels and both have retention rates at or above national averages. Approximately 70 per cent of students obtain merits and distinctions on the advanced awards. Examination results at GCE A level are generally good and exceed national averages for sixth form colleges. The results of value-added analyses suggest that teaching is effective for the most and the least able, but not for the middle band of students on business courses. The department is aware of this weakness and is striving to make appropriate improvements.

22 Evening and daytime courses leading to NVQs are available at levels 1 to 5. They are popular with adults, who usually constitute about 50 per cent of the classes. The introduction of a management NVQ at level 5 has consolidated an already strong relationship with local businesses.

23 Courses in business studies are divided between three sections: advanced business GNVQ and accounts; business communications and GNVQ intermediate; and economics. Teaching staff are appropriately deployed across the sections. Although the teachers in charge of the sections for GNVQ intermediate and advanced report to different heads of division, this management structure does not appear to have an adverse effect on student learning. The GNVQ teams meet regularly, produce informative minutes and undertake careful evaluations of the courses which they offer. The self-assessment report recognises that the lack

Curriculum Areas

of lesson observation has not helped teachers to reflect upon their own performances, and the report is based on insufficient classroom evidence. A scheme is now in place to correct this shortcoming.

24 No one in the department has recent industrial and/or commercial experience. Most teachers contributing to the GNVQ advanced have obtained assessor qualifications, or are working towards them. The recent introduction of standard assignments and a key skills component into business studies courses at GCE A level has ensured consistency and helped to raise levels of achievement. Both oral and written feedback given to students is positive and helpful; and there is a strong emphasis in the teaching on students developing the appropriate techniques that will strengthen their performance in external examinations.

25 The accommodation for business courses is generally good although the rooms will only comfortably hold groups of 20 students. The college has a wide range of modern business computer software which students use as part of their course. CD-ROMs are available on the college network but access to the internet is restricted. There are ample supplies of books

and other resource material for GNVQ students in the library. Wall displays in classrooms are carefully arranged, up to date, and include examples of students' work.

Examples of students' achievements in business, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level business studies and accounts	Retention (%)	81	94	83
	Pass rate (%)	82	81	81
GNVQ advanced	Retention (%)	*	95	77
	Pass rate (%)	*	80	63
GCSE	Retention (%)	98	88	79
	Pass rate (%)	23	42	65
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	81	86	100
	Pass rate (%)	50	82	94

Source: college data

*course not offered

Curriculum Areas

Leisure and Tourism

Grade 4

26 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements made by the college in its self-assessment. They considered that significant weaknesses relating to organisation and management were omitted or understated. They observed 12 lessons. The self-assessment contained insufficient references to the quality of teaching and learning.

Key strengths

- high retention and pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate course in 1997
- integration of key skills on GNVQ courses
- management of the GNVQ intermediate course

Weaknesses

- some ineffective teaching
- no course handbook and assignment schedule for GNVQ advanced students
- retention rate of GNVQ advanced students
- GCSE travel and tourism results in 1996 and 1997
- GNVQ advanced course management in 1996-97
- no staff with appropriate industrial qualifications and experience
- no base room and few resources

27 The quality of teaching varies. Some interesting and relevant assignments are set. For example, in one assignment, supported by good resources, students considered the arguments for and against the relocation of a football club. They adopted the viewpoints of groups with different interests in the plan. There is a sound approach to the teaching of key skills. Separate teaching of IT at the start of

the course provides students with the necessary basic skills. Thereafter the teaching and assessment of key skills is integrated. In the weaker lessons teachers have difficulty in holding the attention of all students. Some tasks set for students are unclear and rooms are not suitably arranged for group work. The proposed activity for advanced students to manage an external event will not enable the unit requirements to be met.

28 Most students are attentive in class and keen to contribute to discussions. They generally work well both as individuals and in groups. A few students make slow progress when class work is required. Second-year students studying Spanish have low levels of motivation and achievement; some of them did not realise on joining the course that Spanish was compulsory. Students' portfolios for 1997-98 show that reasonable progress is being made and appropriate standards are being achieved. Work experience is part of the advanced programme, but it is not offered to intermediate students. The college identified as a strength the enjoyment of work experience by second-year students. There are too few external visits to gain first-hand experience of the industry; there have been no overseas trips for the 1996 to 1998 group of GNVQ advanced students.

29 The GNVQ intermediate course is well managed and achieved good results in 1997. In 1996-97, unsatisfactory management of the first year of the GNVQ advanced course and inadequate monitoring of students' progress resulted in nearly half of the required assignments not being submitted. The college has taken effective measures to retrieve the situation, and the management of this course has improved significantly. Schemes of work, lesson plans, and an internal verification programme are in place, although there is no course handbook or assignment schedule. Some first-year assignments are still to be submitted by students who are now in their second year on the course. At the time of the inspection only

Curriculum Areas

20 out of the 37 students who started this course remained in the class. Recent changes to the college timetable have led to some unduly long lessons which include the lunch period. During the current academic year, 1997-98, the course team has had few meetings. Weaknesses in the organisation of the two-year course are not assessed in the self-assessment report.

30 The staff have very little industrial and commercial experience. None of the staff teaching in the programme area have worked in the leisure or tourism industries. This weakness was identified by the college. The college has good sports facilities, a pool and a fitness centre. It does not have a travel office or any computer software relevant to the industry. The library has a limited range of books on leisure and tourism and some students have to share the class textbooks that have been issued by the college. Accommodation for leisure and tourism students is satisfactory, but there is no base room where students' work can be displayed.

Examples of students' achievements in leisure and tourism, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced	Retention (%)	*	*	60
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	67
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	91	75	86
	Pass rate (%)	57	50	84
GCSE travel and tourism	Retention (%)	75	100	88
	Pass rate (%)	67	8	31

Source: college data

*course not running, or no final year results

Curriculum Areas

English Language and Literature

Grade 2

31 Inspectors observed 11 lessons.

Although inspectors agreed with the college's assessment of many of its strengths, they identified weaknesses in the planning and organisation of lessons which the college had not considered.

Key strengths

- examination results consistently above national averages
- a well-developed course review process
- some high-quality learning packs
- well-managed, willing and attentive students

Weaknesses

- frequent absence of clear and explicit aims and objectives in lesson planning
- the organisation of many lessons

32 Teaching is generally effective. The majority of lessons observed had more strengths than weaknesses. In the best lessons an appropriate variety of teaching methods ensured the constant and active participation of all the students. In one GCSE English lesson, the teacher, by skilful questioning and using knowledge of the personalities and outside interests of the different students, succeeded in drawing a contribution from all the students which would have been impressive even in a second-year GCE A level class. Outline schemes of work which are followed by all teachers help to ensure that students in different classes work within the same structure. This policy has the added benefit of enabling students who have to transfer between classes, to make the change without disruption to their studies. The schemes of work are well thought out, and incorporate work on study skills and

examination preparation at appropriate points. Many lessons lacked clear and explicit aims and objectives, and many lesson plans were no more than brief lists of activities to be undertaken. As a result, potential opportunities for student learning or the development of specific skills were sometimes missed, and on occasion there was little in the work to stretch or challenge the students. These weaknesses in teaching skills and methods were not identified in the self-assessment report.

33 Most students enjoy their courses, are highly motivated and generally successful. As stated in the self-assessment report, they generally receive strong support and encouragement from their teachers. They work well together in pairs or small groups and generally possess good note-taking skills. One second-year GCE A level class co-operated successfully in small groups to prepare presentations, but then mostly appeared to be lacking in the skills that would have made the presentations themselves a success. Students' written work shows a good variety of relevant activity and the successful development of a range of appropriate skills.

34 Many examination results are consistently above the national averages for sixth form colleges. In GCE A level English literature, 98 per cent of the full-time students passed in 1997 and 73 per cent obtained grades A to C. In the same year, all the part-time students passed the examination. The value-added analysis used by the college indicates that students in GCE A level English literature are consistently performing at least as well as predicted by their GCSE grades. In GCSE English language and English literature, results have been significantly above the national averages; those for GCE A level English language, and GCE A level English language and literature, have generally been below.

35 The English courses are managed efficiently and effectively. A thorough and well-developed process of course review takes

Curriculum Areas

account of the responses to student questionnaires and has resulted in a number of significant changes and improvements in the quality of teaching. Team and departmental meetings are held regularly, and focus on specific issues. The department organises staff development for teachers running new syllabuses and courses. Students' written work is marked carefully, and teachers' comments are detailed and constructive.

36 Most English classes take place in a suite of well-furnished and well-equipped rooms in a new teaching block. The development of an open learning centre for students of English and modern languages has encouraged the department to start to develop a policy on teaching key skills. Although the self-assessment report considered that English resources in the open learning centre are limited and in need of further development, inspectors found that resources supplied to the students are extensive. Course guides, and some high-quality learning packs, for example on 'language and gender', have been produced to support English language courses. Although these are much appreciated by the students, there is a risk that they will not develop the habits and skills involved in using libraries to discover information for themselves. Some second-year GCE A level English language and literature students stated that they never used the college library.

Examples of students' achievements in English language and literature, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level	Retention (%)	87	90	83
	Pass rate (%)	89	86	91
GCSE	Retention (%)	87	85	81
	Pass rate (%)	68	68	67

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Modern Languages

Grade 2

37 Twelve lessons that included languages taught at GCE A level, GCSE and for vocational courses were observed. Inspectors agreed with most of the findings in the college's thorough self-assessment, but concluded that some strengths were based on limited evidence.

Key strengths

- consistently well-planned and effective teaching
- good examination results at GCE A level
- students' work of an appropriate standard
- well-organised provision
- excellent accommodation and displays
- high level of support for students

Weaknesses

- little spontaneous use of the target language by students in lessons
- some shortcomings in the provision of resources
- lack of progress by some students on intermediate courses

38 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that lessons are well planned and clearly presented. Teaching and learning are of a consistently good standard. Lessons have clear aims, linked to the schemes of work presented to students in useful handbooks. All lessons cover an appropriate variety of relevant activities, giving students opportunities to develop the full range of language skills. Much of the work is based upon materials carefully and professionally produced by the department to cover the requirements of examination syllabuses. Teachers conduct most, in some cases all, of their lessons in the target language. Students demonstrate good levels of

understanding and respond well in lessons to questions from teachers, and in activities that involve pair and group work. Few were prepared to make use of the target language to ask questions, seek clarification or volunteer contributions. Sometimes teachers resorted to English too quickly to ensure that students had understood their instructions.

39 Most students' written work is carefully produced, and often wordprocessed, a point noted in the college's self-assessment. Teachers mark students' work carefully and fairly. They encourage students to produce corrected versions but some work continues to display serious weaknesses in grammar and idiom. Oral skills are carefully developed through varied techniques, including whole-class discussion, question and answer sessions and role-play. In a first-year GCE A level lesson, students gave sensitive accounts of their reactions to a novel and second-year students discussed complex moral and social issues with considerable sophistication. The standard of the students' work at intermediate levels is more variable. Adult students in an evening class were making excellent progress, whereas some daytime students had not reached the levels of fluency and comprehension that could be expected at this stage of their course. An annual programme of foreign visits and exchanges to France, Germany and Spain provides useful opportunities for students to broaden their experience.

40 As the college states in its self-assessment, GCE A level results over the past three years have been consistently at and usually above the national average for sixth form colleges, at grades A to E and A to C. German and Russian results have been outstanding, with 100 per cent pass rates at grades A to E and pass rates A to C well above the national average. Results in Spanish have been maintained at the national average for grades A to E in 1997 against a background of growing numbers, a point not mentioned in the self-assessment. Retention

Curriculum Areas

rates declined significantly on the two-year GCE A level courses in 1997, as the self-assessment acknowledges. The department has adopted new strategies to improve retention and early indications suggest that they are proving successful. GCSE results vary sharply. They have been consistently well above the national average in German and Russian but below and steadily declining in Spanish for the past two years. Pass rates in French have also declined, from 82 per cent at grade C or above in 1995 to 43 per cent in 1997. Some good results have been achieved on vocational courses in the past two years in French and German.

41 The department has good resources. There are foreign language assistants for three languages, although at present they are not employed to full advantage in the department. Accommodation is spacious and most is new. It is enhanced by attractive displays. The open learning suite shared with the English department is well equipped with modern computers. There is some access to the internet and to facilities for hearing and viewing recordings. Limits on the departmental budget for resources mean that, for example, textbooks

are no longer automatically issued to students and dictionaries are sometimes in short supply. This shortage is especially noticeable during examinations.

Examples of students' achievements in modern languages, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level	Retention (%)	88	100	76
	Pass rate (%)	88	86	95
GCSE (excluding evening classes)	Retention (%)	77	90	90
	Pass rate (%)	86	71	73
Intermediate and other vocational (London Chamber of Commerce and Industry foreign languages at work, RSA certificate of business language competence)	Retention (%)	67	90	78
	Pass rate (%)	*	62	74

Source: college data

*college data incomplete

Curriculum Areas

Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Grade 2

42 The self-assessment report is detailed, but contains too little formal evidence of the progress which students make. Inspectors observed 11 lessons. All the strengths identified during inspection were also recorded by the college. Inspectors noted that some of the weaknesses, although appearing to be known within the college, were not recorded in the report.

Key strengths

- the structure of the provision for students with learning difficulties
- specialist support for dyslexic students and students with language difficulties
- links with parents, carers and outside agencies
- effective reviews of students' progress
- some skilful and dynamic teaching
- careful record-keeping
- some innovative work with autistic students

Weaknesses

- too little evidence on students' achievements
- some inappropriate lesson content, teaching methods and accreditation
- missed opportunities for learning outside the classroom
- lack of opportunities for progression to foundation level

43 The structure of the provision for students with learning difficulties is a major strength. Core programmes of work are available at different levels so that students can be allocated

to the level which suits them best. They can then progress from one level to the next. The core programmes are complemented by a range of individual subjects which are also at different levels. This structure allows all students to have the individual programme which best suits their learning needs. The flexibility of the provision is identified as a strength in the self-assessment report, but its effectiveness is not sufficiently emphasised.

44 Some skilful and dynamic teaching motivates students and enhances their learning. In one outstanding lesson a group of adults with learning difficulties discussed people and events which they found stressful, and formulated strategies for dealing with their feelings. In another lesson, younger students enjoyed practising their number skills by bowling at numbered skittles, identifying the numbers on those which they knocked over, adding up their score, and identifying the highest number to discover the winner of each round.

45 Strong and productive links have been developed with parents, carers and outside agencies. Regular, effective reviews of students' progress result in the setting of new targets for achievement. Although all staff keep careful records of students' achievement of units of their accredited courses, these records do not show the progress which students make in becoming more competent and independent young people. In some lessons the content did not help students to learn the most appropriate skills for adult life, and some activities, such as literacy and numeracy, were too theoretical for the students to transfer what they had learned to their everyday lives. In some lessons the students were all carrying out the same task, in the same way, regardless of their ability. Some opportunities are missed to extend students' learning through greater independence within the college and to achieve greater contact with other students. Arrangements for progression to mainstream courses are inadequate. During the inspection, only two students were on a

Curriculum Areas

GNVQ foundation level programme in the college.

46 Effective specialist support is provided for dyslexic students and those with language difficulties. Support is also provided for the small number of students who enrol at the college with visual and hearing impairments or physical disabilities. The college is developing an innovative programme for students with the communication difficulties associated with autism. More general support with literacy and general study skills is available for students who are identified as needing further help. Most of the additional support takes place in a pleasant and well-equipped area, which is, however, part of a short corridor and within the same suite as the base rooms for students with learning difficulties. Many students who need some additional support do not take up the available opportunities. The college identified this issue in the self-assessment as an issue to be resolved.

47 A small group of dedicated class rooms for students with learning difficulties includes a kitchen. The accommodation is satisfactory, although space is limited when the groups contain one or more wheelchair users. Some adjustable furniture enables students in wheelchairs to work effectively. A practical work shop for woodwork and other crafts is not sufficiently used. At lunchtime one area of the refectory is used exclusively by students with learning difficulties, so that they miss opportunities to practise appropriate social behaviour in a wider community. The college is aware of this situation and plans are already drawn up to find an appropriate solution.

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 2

48 Inspectors concluded that while it recorded many strengths, the college's self-assessment underestimated some weaknesses, and did not take full account of the uneven quality of tutorial support and student reviews.

Key strengths

- good links with partner schools
- the combining of the roles of course and personal tutor
- information on careers and higher education
- progress on differentiated learning
- effective use of study time and student support time

Weaknesses

- the wide variation in the quality of student reviews
- inconsistency in the quality of tutorial support
- some course tutors unaware of learning support needs

49 Support for students is managed by a director assisted by heads of division who are responsible both for curriculum areas and students' guidance and support. Teachers act as both curriculum and personal tutors. The combining of the two roles is an important and beneficial development. For part-time adult students, course tutors fulfil the role of personal tutor. The structure is well understood by staff and students and is largely effective. Policies and procedures on all aspects of support for students are comprehensive.

50 The college has established good links with its partner schools. There are many and varied opportunities for students from schools to learn

about the college and its courses. The majority of students acknowledge that the advice and guidance they receive when choosing courses is good. Nevertheless, the college identified as a concern the high proportion of students who changed courses or left the college during the first term of 1997-98. This development occurred after the self-assessment report had been written. The most common reasons for the changes of course, which are systematically recorded by the college, are that students found that their original programme was too demanding or that it differed from what they had expected. Procedures for managing the course changes of full-time students are clear.

51 Induction programmes provide essential information and enable students who come from many different schools to settle quickly. Students are made aware of the college's expectations and of their rights under the college charter. All students are screened on entry to assess their learning support needs. Information is passed to all personal tutors but does not reach all course tutors. In its self-assessment report the college acknowledges that some students do not accept the support which they need if they are to make adequate progress.

52 The college has begun to use data from its value-added analyses as the basis of target-setting. It has gone to great lengths to explain the benefits and the risks of this approach in order to try to ensure its effectiveness. Staff, students and parents have been briefed. Nonetheless, some students and a few staff do not yet fully understand or appreciate the approach. There is a very wide variation in the quality of self-assessments made by students, which follow discussions with their tutors, and in the quality of the tutors' comments. Some tutors' comments are excellent and of great benefit to the students, but others lack a rigorous diagnosis of what the student needs to do in order to make greater progress. This inconsistency detracts from the generally high standard of tutoring.

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53 Support for individual students is good. Many course tutors give much of their own time for individual student guidance. Good progress has been made, as stated in the self-assessment report, by some but not all departments to increase the learning opportunities for groups of students with different levels of ability. Some departments, such as modern languages, routinely teach using differentiated groups and learning materials. Other departments, such as history and politics, hold regular 'reading groups' where more able pupils develop their analytical and discursive skills to a higher level. Directed study time, used for independent study, and the half hour of student support time built into teaching time for all subjects make an important contribution to students' progress.

54 Records of achievement from partner schools are used when students join the college, but the subsequent maintenance of these records has not yet been ensured. The action plan in the self-assessment report acknowledges that more needs to be done to ensure the completion of records of achievement by the time that current second-year students leave the college.

55 Support for students following the publication of examination results in the summer holidays has been improved. More heads of departments participate. All students who need to, can now make early appointments to see specialist staff. Some departments, however, are not aware of the destinations of students who left at the end of the previous year and are not seeking this information to inform future planning.

General Resources

Grade 2

56 While inspectors confirmed the college's identification of its strengths and weaknesses in general resources, they found others which the college had not identified.

Key strengths

- extensive accommodation in pleasant surroundings
- well-equipped practical areas
- good access to most parts of the college for students with restricted mobility
- the new library block
- sports facilities
- extension of some IT networks

Weaknesses

- inefficient room utilisation
- some poor-quality accommodation
- inadequate social areas for students
- the budget allocation to the library
- the IT strategy

57 The college is situated on a single campus in an attractive parkland setting. Its numerous buildings vary in age and condition. They include parts of the original secondary school dating from the 1950s and the library which was opened in 1995. Some accommodation is of a high standard but there are a number of buildings in poor condition. A large single-storey building originally used as the planning offices for the new town of Basingstoke seems to be nearing the end of its useful life. The campus includes the central studio, which is a major artistic and cultural focus for regional and local community activities. This studio is currently closed for refurbishment and extension for which the college has obtained lottery and other funding. There are extensive sports facilities include a gymnasium, indoor swimming pool,

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tennis courts and fields for rugby, football and cricket. The college identified its range of facilities as a key strength.

58 The quality of the teaching accommodation is uneven. There are modern good-sized rooms in the new buildings but also drab rooms in some of the older buildings. Laboratories and other practical areas are generally well equipped, and there are new suites for photography and media studies. Eating and indoor recreational areas are inadequate. The college timetabling has led to some improvement in room utilisation. The room utilisation is low at about 35 per cent, and the college has at least 30 per cent spare capacity. Staff workrooms generally provide good working conditions and there is a large well-used staff common room. Some of the internal areas of the college are in need of redecoration. Various items from the planned programme for maintenance have been deferred. Signposting is poor. There is access to all the major teaching, information and social areas for students with restricted mobility.

59 The new college library is housed in an attractive single-storey building with a mezzanine floor. The large ground-floor area is dedicated to: the journal collection; a good range of computing, video and audio equipment facilities; the careers library; and a 78-seat study area for students. The book collection is located on the mezzanine floor. The 10,000 books generally provide an adequate but ageing resource for students. The library budget of £12,300 for 1997-98 is less than the budgets for the last two years. Most students are provided with the textbooks necessary for their courses, and may never need to use the library. Each department has its own study area and a range of books and other learning materials; this provision reduces the need for students to use the library.

60 The college has two computer networks, one for students and the other for management information purposes. There are 158 computers

on the curriculum network which provide a good range of up-to-date business, subject specific and careers software. In addition there are seven multimedia computers located in different parts of the college. This gives a ratio of computers to students of 1:9 which is below the average for further education colleges. Forty-four computers are available to students in three different bases in the college. The open access computer centre operates at full or near full capacity for much of the week but there are often unused computers available in empty classrooms. The college has identified the need to make more effective use of its existing computing equipment but has not yet done so. The science and mathematics department still uses a large number of out-of-date computers. These no longer provide a good learning resource for students.

61 The college management information system is networked with 44 terminals located in all senior managers' and most staff work rooms. Some staff work rooms are not connected to the network because of the cost of extension to some of the outlying buildings. In addition, there are 19 computers not on the college network in staff workrooms. The college has four single-line connections to the internet, but it is not generally available to students. The college's IT strategy is at an early stage of development.

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Quality Assurance

Grade 3

62 The college is in its fourth year of self-assessment. Whilst it has made good progress with the development and use of curriculum reviews, and improved aspects of teaching since the last inspection, inspectors identified weaknesses in the quality assurance process additional to those in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- clear well-managed procedures and processes
- a well-established cycle of review, leading to identifiable improvements
- wide-ranging quality assurance standards
- the work of the quality group
- comprehensive data for monitoring

Weaknesses

- inadequate rigour in one-third of curriculum reviews
- underdeveloped quality assurance for collaborative provision and support services
- inadequate analysis of teaching observations
- insufficient feedback to students on the outcomes of their questionnaires
- staff development and appraisal systems

63 A detailed manual explains the annual review cycle of quality assurance and the systems that lead to subsequent improvement. The college uses a management approach which involves all staff and students. Annual curriculum team reviews, linked to the strategic planning cycle, are complemented by reviews of performance by managers. As the college's self-assessment report indicates, this process is

supported by comprehensive and reliable data on attendance and retention rates and on students' achievements.

64 Management arrangements for quality assurance are clear and understood. The college curriculum group, chaired by the vice-principal, has the key role in assuring and monitoring the review of teaching and the process of self-assessment. The quality assurance group, supported by its co-ordinator, effectively steers the development of quality assurance. Course teams produce reviews using detailed guidelines, which include the characteristics that define a wide range of standards. These reviews lead to subject self-assessment and action plans. Inspectors agreed with the college that the quality of these reviews has improved since the last inspection. They are now more systematically used in debate within the college. They have contributed to improvements in: the design of courses; outcomes in geography, English, art and media; the pro-active monitoring of students' progress; and the restructuring of tutor periods to increase their effectiveness.

65 Action plans arising from reviews are considered in detail by the principalship at individual meetings with heads of division and of department. This procedure attaches status to the process and encourages consideration of cross-college issues. Progress against the plan is discussed between heads of division and heads of department at regular intervals and management committees also monitor progress. The college's self-assessment understates the extent to which some subject reviews are inadequately completed. Around one-third are insufficiently analytical, poorly linked to agreed quality standards, and the action plans are not precise. There is little sense of the relative importance of planned actions. Reviews by support teams are in their first year and will require further development. Quality assurance for franchised provision is less advanced than for courses in the college. Governors are

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developing their monitoring role and regularly review students' achievements.

66 A well-ordered programme of questionnaires to students and tutors contributes to review, but students receive little subsequent feedback. The clear and concise college charter is issued as an attractive booklet and is included in the students' handbook. It contains a number of quality standards and targets and won the Department for Education's charter competition in 1994. As the college's self-assessment notes, complaints are effectively dealt with.

67 The college is a long-standing member of a collaborative scheme whereby teachers from other colleges review its quality. One of the benefits of this project has been the development of teachers' skills in peer review which are now able to be applied to the college's own scheme, recently introduced, for observing classroom teaching. Most of the evidence from these observations was too late to influence the self-assessment and the college has not aggregated or used the data on a college-wide basis to assess the quality of teaching. Curriculum inspectors considered that grades awarded by assessors within the college were often too generous. Over 90 per cent were graded one or two. Inspectors considered that the college's target to observe all teachers working in franchised provision once, over a three-year period, is not adequate.

68 The comprehensive self-assessment report prepared for the inspection is the college's fourth. Self-assessment is an established part of the annual cycle of planning and review. In order to meet the deadline for inspection the college produced an additional report, earlier than its normal cycle required.

69 The staff development budget is 1.6 per cent of payroll costs. The college recognises that staff development has formerly been inadequately linked to strategic objectives and that responsibilities for its operation have been

unclear. A new draft policy has been introduced, accompanied by a training plan, which for the first time embraces corporate and individual priorities. Departmental staff development plans, which vary considerably in their quality, are not yet successfully integrated with the college plan. The previous staff appraisal scheme has recently been replaced with a review scheme, to be undertaken by line managers. It has yet to make an impact. Many teachers have not been appraised for two years and most support staff have never been appraised. The college committed itself to the Investor in People award in April 1997, and plans to achieve the award in December 1998.

Governance

Grade 3

70 The corporation produced its first self-assessment report for the inspection. Inspectors agreed with the majority of strengths and weaknesses that were identified. However, several weaknesses identified by inspectors were overlooked by the college, and some features that are standard requirements for corporation boards were listed as strengths. The corporation has missed its deadline for developing performance indicators. The action plan does not address all the weaknesses in the report.

Key strengths

- governors' breadth of expertise and commitment to the college's aims
- involvement of governors in strategic planning
- close monitoring of college targets
- the independence of the clerk
- an appropriate range of committees

Weaknesses

- failure to establish a register of interests

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- inadequate recording of meetings of the finance and premises committee
- some deficiencies in administration of corporation meetings
- underdeveloped induction and training plan for governors

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

72 The membership determined for the corporation includes 10 independent members, a nominee of the local TEC, three co-opted members, two parent and two staff members, a student member, and the principal. At the time of the inspection there was a vacancy for a parent governor. As identified in the college's self-assessment report, governors are strongly committed to the college and have a broad range of expertise. They overstated the strengths of the administrative arrangements for the governing body. There is an appropriate range of committees which have clear terms of reference, although their precise number of members has not been fixed, as required by the articles of government. The role of non-voting members needs to be reconsidered. There is a search committee. Vacancies have been filled by public advertisements, to which there have been good responses. The procedures for filling vacancies should be reviewed. They do not include a written description that is available to the public of the appointment process or a job specification for governors. All governors receive the monthly budget and report on income and expenditure. There is no indication in the minutes of the finance and premises committee for 1997-98 that members formally consider the latest available finance report at

their meetings. There are no minutes of the most recent meeting of the remuneration committee. The practice of setting up working parties without reference to the full corporation should be reviewed in order to clarify their relationship to the board. The self-assessment report does not refer to these operational weaknesses.

73 The corporation holds a public annual meeting and issues an annual report. A decision has been made not to establish a register of interests. This is contrary to best practice. The code of conduct for governors has not been updated in the light of the recent recommendations of the Nolan Committee. Governors would benefit from more detailed guidance on the conduct of meetings than is contained in the college instrument of governance. Agendas do not make clear which items are for discussion and which require decisions. The timing for the distribution of papers for meetings is inadequately managed. Some papers are technical and lengthy, and governors have difficulty understanding their contents. The post of clerk to the corporation involves no other management responsibilities in the college; the independence of the postholder is secure. There is a newly-appointed clerk.

74 Governors have recently approved a revised mission statement which sets out the college's intention to extend its adult provision to meet the needs of the community. They have taken an appropriate part in the college's strategic planning process and in finalising the college's self-assessment report. They monitor appropriately both the financial and academic performance of the college. The chairman of the corporation appraises the principal. Longer-standing members are well informed about the college's business. Presentations to the board by college staff in key posts have contributed to the induction of newer members, though a formal training plan has yet to be established. The college has embarked on an ambitious

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rebuilding project and agreed completion within budget with the FEFC.

Management

Grade 2

75 Inspectors agreed with most of strengths and weaknesses contained in the self-assessment report. Some issues identified by the college related to quality assurance. Some additional weaknesses identified by inspectors were overlooked by the college, and therefore do not feature in the action plan.

Key strengths

- wide consultation with staff in the strategic planning process
- good internal communication
- greatly improved management information
- effective co-operation within senior management team
- good working relationships between the college and the community
- consistent achievement of unit targets

Weaknesses

- lack of training for heads of department
- unclear roles within GNVQ course teams
- monitoring and management of equal opportunities and health and safety policies
- limited reporting on predicted financial performance

76 Since the last inspection in 1994, the college has appointed a new principal, who has reorganised the management structure. There are now four curriculum divisions, a support services division, and three divisions covering marketing, finance and administration. The

heads of curriculum divisions are responsible for both curriculum management and student pastoral care. The curriculum divisions include 20 academic departments. Three management groups meet regularly and senior staff work well as a team. The job descriptions for senior managers do not all contain specific reference to their cross-college responsibilities, and there is some indication that these duties are not fully understood. Communication in the college is good. Staff generally express confidence in the new arrangements. The new structure is showing signs of fulfilling its objectives.

77 The regrouping of subject areas and departments within divisions is logical, although some GNVQ responsibilities divide awkwardly. The policy statement and allocation of GNVQ responsibilities issued in January 1998 are not yet fully understood by staff nor have they been implemented. The weaknesses which led to this policy revision were overlooked in the college's self-assessment report. Heads of department now manage the quality of teaching, curriculum and staff development, and resources. They also act as personal tutors. With an average of 20 hours teaching each week, their workload is substantial. They would benefit from support and training in management practices. Nevertheless, curriculum departments are generally well managed. Multiple commitments prevent full attendance at meetings.

78 The college has recently reviewed its mission statement, after consultation with staff and governors. Although the strategic plan contains extensive and detailed market analysis it focuses on strengthening the college's internal operations. This focus largely arises from recent financial difficulties, and the need to establish the new management structure and to strengthen internal operations. The college recognises that it has to deal with a high student drop-out rate. It is considering increasing the provision of part-time courses for adults, but in doing so, is anxious not to lose the distinctive character of a sixth form college. The link

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between the strategic plan and the three-year financial forecast is not sufficiently clear.

79 The college's accounts have shown an operating deficit since incorporation. Improvements in financial management turned this deficit into a small surplus last year. There is a need for continuing close monitoring, and more specific cash targets. The college's average level of funding for 1997-98 is £18.63 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges is £17.50 per unit. Staffing costs for 1996-97 have been reduced to 65 per cent of income. The college has achieved its unit funding targets for the last three years, but not its enrolment targets. Procedures for allocating budgets are understood by managers, and they receive monthly financial reports. The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The finance team is adequate for the college's needs. College managers review the budget and income and expenditure report each month. The report includes a 12-month cashflow forecast and balance sheet but no updated forecast of the year-end position. The commentary to the report is underdeveloped. Financial accounts have not been submitted on time for the last two years.

80 Since the last inspection, the management information system has been successfully adapted to produce comprehensive and timely data on students' enrolments and achievements, and the rates for attendance and retention. A network allows access to relevant data by members of the college management team, and plans are in hand gradually to extend access to data to all staff. Less progress has been made in developing the system for personnel and staff development management information.

81 There are policies and procedures for both equal opportunities and for health and safety. There is an equal opportunities working group but it meets rarely. The college's self-assessment recognises that monitoring of the

implementation of the policy is neither systematic nor thorough. It has also recognised the need to update the health and safety policy and the associated manual, not least to reflect the new college structure and responsibilities, and to establish risk assessment procedures.

Conclusions

82 The process of self-assessment was well managed and comprehensive, although it made insufficient use of observations of teaching which the college has conducted. Course and departmental reviews are well established, and detailed action plans have been produced by several departments. The summary contained in the self-assessment report indicated few weaknesses, and remedial actions were not prioritised. Departmental action plans, which were not part of the self-assessment report, were often more detailed. However, if students' achievements and the retention rates are to be raised to the levels which might be expected of the students that the college primarily recruits then further action will be required.

Organisational difficulties in aspects of work which should be consistent across the college, such as GNVQ, were overlooked in the self-assessment report. The self-assessment process produced several grades which were more generous than those awarded by inspectors.

83 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 1997)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	64
19-24 years	6
25+ years	27
Not known	3
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1997)

Level of study	%
Foundation	20
Intermediate	10
Advanced	61
Higher education	0
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	9
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (November 1997)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	454	176	29
Engineering	0	19	1
Business	143	105	11
Hotel and catering	86	0	4
Health and community care	47	21	3
Art and design	165	101	12
Humanities	670	116	37
Basic education	57	9	3
Total	1,622	547	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (October 1997)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	81	5	0	86
Supporting direct learning contact	14	1	0	15
Other support	32	3	1	36
Total	127	9	1	137

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£5,174,000	£5,978,000	£5,625,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£19.50	£18.41	£18.64
Payroll as a proportion of income	77%	69%	65%
Achievement of funding target	100%	101%	101%
Diversity of income	14%	17%	12%
Operating surplus	-£410,000	-£549,000	£20,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), Funding Allocations 1996-97 (1996-97)

Payroll – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), college (1996-97)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	585	582	626
	Average point score per entry	5.2	5.1	5.1
	Position in tables	top 10%	top third	top third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	+	43	67
	Percentage achieving qualification	+	70%	70%
	Position in tables	+	middle third	middle third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	57	61
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	60%	79%
	Position in tables	*	middle third	top third

Source: DfEE

+no students entered

*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

College Statistics

Three-year trends *(continued)*

Students' achievements

		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Advanced academic	Pass (%)	87	85	87
	Retention (%)	85	91	83
Intermediate academic	Pass (%)	54	54	53
	Retention (%)	86	83	78
Advanced vocational	Pass (%)	*	85	79
	Retention (%)	*	73	65
Intermediate vocational	Pass (%)	59	69	81
	Retention (%)	87	85	87

Source: college data

**no students entered*

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