

# Redcar and Cleveland College

REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
**1999-00**

THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL***

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## Grade Descriptors

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses
- grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses
- grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses
- grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths
- grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1998-99, are shown in the following table.

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

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

## Student Achievements

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

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expecting to complete the qualification that college year. For example, a student on a two-year programme who began their programme in October 1995, would appear in the results for 1996-97 because this is the year in which they expected to complete their qualification
- as a retention rate, which is the percentage of qualifications which students have completed as expected or where they are continuing their studies beyond the expected end date of the qualification. For programmes of study of two years or more, retention is calculated across the whole programme, that is, from the start to the end of the qualification
- as an achievement rate, which is the number of qualifications students have fully achieved as a percentage of completed qualifications with a known outcome. Partial achievements are not included.

# Summary

## Redcar and Cleveland College

### *Northern Region*

#### Inspected March 2000

Redcar and Cleveland College is a tertiary college based in Redcar near Teesside. It is a major provider of education and training in the borough, and in other parts of the north east of England through franchise arrangements. The self-assessment report provided for the inspection is the second the college has produced. Arrangements for self-assessment are mostly effective. All staff participated in the 1998-99 self-assessment and contributed to the self-assessment report. A validation panel, chaired by an external consultant assessed the quality of contributing reports. The board of the corporation approved the final report.

Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the report but found additional strengths and weaknesses. They concluded that the college had overstated the strength of two areas of provision: basic skills and quality assurance.

The college offers a broad range of academic and vocational courses in nine of the 10 FEFC programme areas. Provision in five of these areas was inspected. The college has improved much of its provision since the previous inspection, including aspects of governance, management, quality assurance, accommodation and support for students. The college is

responsive to local needs and has widened participation in partnership with local employers and community groups. It has overcome a substantial financial deficit. These aspects have been achieved through self-critical governance, good management, effective strategic and operational planning and good communications. Curriculum areas are generally well managed. Students are well supported by teachers and undertake effective action to improve performance. They produce a high standard of practical and written work. Achievements are good on the majority of courses. Teaching and learning has not improved since the previous inspection. The proportion of good and outstanding lessons is below the national average. If the college is to improve its provision it should: improve the outcomes of quality assurance; establish measurable standards within the college's charter; monitor more effectively the college's academic performance and aspects of its franchised operations; improve the quality of teaching and learning; overcome weaknesses in basic skills provision; and increase retention rates.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Engineering	3	Support for students	2
Engineering (franchised provision)	2	General resources	2
Business administration	2	Quality assurance	3
Business (franchised provision)	3	Governance	3
Health and social care	2	Management	2
Humanities	2		
Basic skills	4		

# Context

## The College and its Mission

1 Redcar and Cleveland College is a tertiary college based in the seaside town of Redcar in the borough of Redcar and Cleveland. The borough lies south of the river Tees near its entry to the North Sea. The college was formed in 1994 following the merger between Cleveland College of Further Education and the Sir William Turner Sixth Form College. It operates on two sites. The main site, incorporating the Sir William Turner Centre, is near to the town centre, and the Connections campus is 1.5 miles away. The college uses several other centres away from the two sites, most notably at Loftus and South Bank.

2 Of the 138,500 people who live in the borough, 33,200 live in Redcar. The population of the borough is forecast to decline by 4.7% between 1999 and 2011. The number of school pupils in the borough is also expected to fall by 15.4% during this period. The area originally provided extensive employment in steel manufacturing, chemical production and mining. Currently, the main occupations are metal manufacturing, fabrication, wholesale and retail distribution, chemicals and synthetic fibre production. The borough has an unemployment rate of 9.1%, compared with the national rate of 3.9%. In some wards the rate is much higher. For example, in Coatham, where the college is located, the unemployment rate is 16.3%. The minority ethnic population of the borough is 0.7%. The borough is forty-third of the 366 English local authorities in the table of social deprivation.

3 The college is one of the two main providers of post-16 education located in the borough. The other is a sixth form college located 7 miles away in Guisborough. The college recruits full-time students from twelve 11 to 16 schools and from two special schools. In 1999, 61.4% of 16 year olds in the borough stayed in full-time education compared with 68% nationally. A further 13.8% went to full-time training. The proportion of pupils in the

borough gaining five or more grades C or above in general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) examinations in 1999 was 44.6% compared with the national rate of 47.9%. However, the figure is below 35% in most of the schools from which the college recruits. The east Cleveland area has been awarded education action zone status, with a priority to increase the proportion of 16-year-old school pupils remaining in education and training.

4 The college offers provision in nine out of the 10 Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. It does not offer agricultural provision. In 1998-99, there were 8,707 students enrolled at the college, 1,332 full time and 7,375 part time. Of these, 54% were female. The college offers a wide range of academic and vocational programmes from level 1 to level 5. It also has a small amount of higher education work in business, teacher education and engineering. The college provides training for modern apprentices, national trainees and New Deal students. It is a member of the University of Teesside Partnership. It also has links with the University of Huddersfield. Approximately 26% of the college's funding units are delivered through two major local franchises. The two franchisees are training providers that have been linked with the college since 1994, one providing mainly engineering courses, the other business administration courses.

5 Currently, the college employs 226 full-time staff and 47 part-time staff. Of these, 132 are full-time equivalent teachers or instructors. The executive team comprises the principal, vice-principal and two assistant principals. The senior management team comprises the executive team and five directors of faculty, each of whom also has a major cross-college responsibility. Heads of department in each faculty have the main responsibility for managing the curriculum.

6 The college's mission is to be a 'centre of excellence in education and training and to

# Context

contribute to the development of the local community'. It aims to:

- 'be responsive to and influence the community
- provide effective guidance and support to individual students
- maintain a qualified, flexible and highly motivated staff supported by high-quality resources
- stay financially viable, making efficient and effective use of resources and safeguarding assets'.

## The Inspection

7 The college was inspected during the week beginning 6 March 2000. Before this, inspectors evaluated the college's self-assessment report and updates on the report, and reviewed information about the college provided by other directorates of the FEFC. Data on students' achievements were derived from the individualised student record (ISR) for 1997 and 1998. The college supplied its own data for 1999. Inspectors checked the data against primary sources, such as class registers and pass lists from examination bodies, and found them to be generally accurate. In comparing the retention and examination pass rates of students, inspectors used benchmark data derived from general further education and tertiary colleges. The basic skills curriculum area section of the report does not include a summary of students' achievements because the college does not have enough meaningful data on students' learning activities and related achievements in this area.

8 The inspection was carried out by a team of 13 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 58 days in the college. Inspectors observed 73 lessons and eight tutorials. They examined samples of students' work and a wide range of college documents. They discussed aspects of the college's provision with representatives of a number of organisations

with an interest in the college, including heads of local schools and officers of the Tees Valley Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). They also held meetings with students, board members, managers and staff.

9 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 observed, 52% were judged to be good or outstanding and 11% were rated less than satisfactory. This is worse than the corresponding national averages of 65% and 6%, respectively.

# Context

## Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	1	3	2	0	0	6
GNVQ	2	1	3	1	0	7
NVQ	2	10	6	2	0	20
Other vocational	3	13	11	1	0	28
Other*	2	5	8	5	0	20
Total (No)	10	32	30	9	0	81
Total (%)	12	40	37	11	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 tutorials, access to higher education, GCSE and basic education

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

### Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Redcar and Cleveland College	9.3	78
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

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



# Curriculum Areas

## Engineering

### Grade 3

**11 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering mechanical, electrical and computer-aided engineering. They agreed with several of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered some strengths to be overstated and found additional weaknesses. Many weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report had already been resolved before the inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- good teaching materials and specialist resources
- well-planned vocational assignments
- effective personal action-planning
- good international links and enrichment activities

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient checks on individual student's learning
- poor and declining retention rates
- low pass rates
- the lack of classrooms close to workshops

12 Although the college offers courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced level, the range of provision is narrow. There are no college courses leading directly to national vocational qualifications (NVQs). The college relies on a franchise partner to provide NVQs. This hinders curriculum development, because teachers are not involved in the assessment of industrial standard competences or work-based assessment. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report. A newly appointed director of faculty is developing more formal links with industry. Some informal contacts between teachers and employers have

led to significant investment in modern specialist equipment. Courses are well managed. Internal verification is effective. Students' views about the quality of provision are sought and acted upon. The tutorial system is used effectively to monitor students' progress and review personal action plans. Students complete their action plans thoroughly. Course teams work hard to provide new opportunities for students with low achievements prior to entering college.

13 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the quality of teaching and learning is good. Of the 12 lessons observed, seven were good or outstanding, which is similar to the national rate. However, the proportion of outstanding lessons was higher. Schemes of work and lesson plans follow a standard format but teachers do not always complete them effectively. In the best lessons, teachers relate theory to practice effectively, drawing on students' own experience of work. They monitor students' progress well and provide good support to individuals. Careful questioning of students and reviews of progress at the end of lessons help to consolidate learning. During a lively experiment on the changing state of elements, the enthusiastic teacher encouraged students to work co-operatively, recording the findings of their research. Well-planned task sheets provided guidance on the key skills being developed. Students worked effectively in their groups, whilst the teacher provided support to individuals. In less effective lessons, teachers often fail to check whether learning is taking place, or students spend prolonged periods copying notes from overhead transparencies.

14 The college is correct in claiming that retention has improved on courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs). However, retention rates on many programmes are lower than national benchmarks and declining. Pass rates on most courses are also below national benchmarks.

# Curriculum Areas

A notable exception was the 100% pass rate for the national certificate in engineering in 1998-99. Pass rates on most advanced technician courses, however, were poor, at 46%. In 1998-99, level 2 computer-aided engineering courses had a 90% pass rate, which is significantly above the national benchmark. However, the pass rate on the GNVQ intermediate engineering course in the same year was only 33%, and the pass rate for City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) courses at level 2 was 48%. These rates are significantly below national averages. Students' files and portfolios are well presented. A number of students benefit from participating in enrichment activities; for example, activities

related to the college's international links with Germany and the United States of America. Some students have studied robotics in an advanced engineering facility at the Cleveland College, Tennessee.

15 Workshops are adequate but there is a lack of classroom accommodation in the vicinity of the workshops. Some theory lessons take place in seating areas within workshops and students are disturbed by noise from adjacent workshops. There are good specialist resources, including the computer-aided design, thermography and fibre optics facilities at the Connections campus. Staff are suitably qualified. Most hold or are working towards assessor and verifier awards.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
C&G 203, 0607 and 2240	1	Number of starters	106	253	232
		Retention (%)	98	82	62
		Achievement (%)	70	69	80
C&G 214, 224 and 2290	2	Number of starters	230	326	384
		Retention (%)	82	76	57
		Achievement (%)	31	67	48
Intermediate technician	2	Number of starters	48	45	35
		Retention (%)	67	79	94
		Achievement (%)	72	100	58
C&G 0670, 214 part 3, 2240 part 3 and 2290 part 3	3	Number of starters	12	17	21
		Retention (%)	100	94	86
		Achievement (%)	25	21	10
Advanced technician	3	Number of starters	85	45	77
		Retention (%)	84	84	62
		Achievement (%)	60	45	46

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Engineering (Franchised Provision)

### Grade 2

**16 Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering mechanical and process engineering. They agreed substantially with the judgements expressed in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- well-planned and well-managed provision
- theory well integrated with practical work
- good teaching materials
- the high standard of students' work
- the high pass rates on courses below level 3
- good specialist resources

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient work-based assessment and verification of training
- poor pass rates on level 3 courses

17 The college's long-standing franchised engineering work is undertaken by Teesside Training Enterprise, a private provider of specialist training for the process industries on Teesside. Teesside Training Enterprise has links with many local companies. It provides four-year apprenticeships that combine initial periods of off-the-job training in two training centres, with work placement and day release at local further education colleges. Off-the-job training is carefully planned. There are regular team meetings, which ensure that staff are well informed and that learning programmes are systematically developed. A wide range of activities is designed to develop the theoretical knowledge, practical skills and personal attributes of students. Students participate in residential outward bound activities and

undertake industrial visits to develop their personal skills.

18 Lessons are well planned and much of the teaching is of a high standard. Teachers have developed an extensive range of lesson notes, demonstration videos and practical assignments, and these are used well. Some of the better teaching materials contain gaps in the text to prompt appropriate responses from students. Short learning modules effectively link theory and practice and reinforce important points. They were used well in a lesson on the measurement of fluid levels. Students moved confidently between the classroom and workshop making notes, considering the teacher's explanations and conducting practical work on process control rigs. Many teachers make good use of probing questions to check students' understanding and develop their interest. Students' knowledge, understanding and practical skills are assessed through a mixture of spoken tests, written assessments and practical skills tests. Opportunities to extend the learning of more able students are sometimes lost. Students' attendance and progress in the training centres are carefully monitored. Inspectors agreed with the college that formal arrangements to assess and accredit key skills are not provided.

19 Students value their work placements and Teesside Training Enterprise staff visit them regularly to monitor their progress. During this period, students gain a good breadth of industrial experience. However, formal arrangements for assessing engineering competences in the workplace and verification procedures are underdeveloped and, as the self-assessment report states, there are few students who gain the NVQ level 3 during periods of work placement. These weaknesses are currently being addressed. For example, Teesside Training Enterprise is reviewing the management of the third and fourth years of the apprenticeship with a view to improving the commitment of companies and students to the achievement of level 3 qualifications. Students'

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attendance is good and they respond well in lessons, displaying interest, maturity and a good understanding of their subjects. Their written work is of an appropriate standard and their notes are well organised. They undertake practical work enthusiastically and to a good standard. They are correctly dressed and work safely. Retention rates are generally good and many students obtain relevant employment. Pass rates below level 3 are good. Retention rates and pass rates are also good on the process plant courses. Some students make exchange visits to industry in France. During the later part of the apprenticeship, students undertake several extended work placements in

different industries. As the self-assessment report notes there are many opportunities for students to develop personal skills such as self-discipline and teamwork.

20 Specialist resources are good. Workshops are spacious and well laid out. They contain a wide range of appropriate up-to-date machine tools and process plant. Students make extensive use of the realistic industrial equipment available in the workshops. Teachers have appropriate technical qualifications and industrial experience. Many have assessor qualifications, but few hold verifier qualifications.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in engineering (franchised provision), 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
C&G 0601 process plant operation	1	Number of starters	*	*	81
		Retention (%)	*	*	89
		Achievement (%)	*	*	90
C&G 0601 process plant operation	2	Number of starters	*	*	23
		Retention (%)	*	*	87
		Achievement (%)	*	*	87
NVQ engineering	2	Number of starters	116	117	119
		Retention (%)	91	94	88
		Achievement (%)	89	98	100
NVQ engineering	3	Number of starters	*	*	115
		Retention (%)	*	*	69
		Achievement (%)	*	*	0

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

\*unable to extract franchised data from ISR data

# Curriculum Areas

## Business Administration

### Grade 2

**21 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering business administration, business information technology (IT), health service receptionist, and secretarial work. They agreed with most of the strengths in the self-assessment report. Some of the weaknesses identified in the report had been addressed by the time of the inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- effective curriculum leadership
- high pass rates on the majority of courses
- good student portfolios
- close monitoring of students' progress

#### Weaknesses

- poor retention on some IT and secretarial courses
- ineffective planning and lack of structure in a few lessons

22 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the college offers a wide range of courses at its main sites and numerous centres. The curriculum is constantly reviewed and adapted to suit local economic conditions and student demand. In 1998, for example, the college introduced a basic administration course to help adults develop the essential skills to return to work. Managers alter timetables to suit each student's work commitments or travel arrangements. Courses are well managed and supported by good documentation. Curriculum leadership is effective. A rigorous review of course team performance is held annually, with teachers and students playing a full part in the process. Prompt action is taken where performance on courses is poor. Internal verification is

thorough. Managers act quickly when external verifiers raise issues about the quality of work.

23 Practical lessons are well organised; the progress of individual students is monitored and recorded thoroughly, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Students are encouraged to move quickly to higher level programmes after completing their original course. Some theory lessons lack a clear structure and the teaching is generally less effective than in practical lessons. In a few lessons, students are not encouraged to work to their maximum capacity, or provided with sufficient variety of activities to sustain their interest. In general, teachers provide good personal support to students and cope well with a wide range of abilities. Full-time NVQ students attend a work placement one day a week. On full-time programmes, opportunities to develop key skills are clearly identified and these skills are fully integrated with other aspects of work. Assignments to develop numeracy skills are written to suit the vocational area.

24 Students make good personal progress with their studies. The portfolios of students studying for NVQs contain a varied range of well-presented evidence, including evidence of the skills gained in the workplace and the results of research. Retention and pass rates are good on the majority of courses. Retention rates are unsatisfactory on some part-time secretarial and business IT courses, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. Pass rates exceed national benchmarks on all NVQ programmes at levels 1 and 2. The NVQ level 3 customer service course has achieved consistently high results over the past three years. The pass rates on all level 1 secretarial and business IT courses exceeded sector benchmarks in 1999. The pass rates on the medical secretarial diploma are well above average and there are high pass rates on the integrated business technology courses at level 2 and 3. Well-kept destination data show that

# Curriculum Areas

progression rates for students moving to higher level studies are excellent. A good proportion of students progress to full-time employment, often from work placements arranged by the college.

25 Teachers are appropriately qualified. A sufficient number have assessor and verifier awards. Part-time teachers are appropriately deployed and well supported by full-time colleagues. Those recruited from commercial

backgrounds are encouraged to gain a teaching certificate. The quality of IT hardware and software is good. Some teaching materials have been placed effectively on the college computer network. Teaching materials used in lessons are of variable quality. Some are good; others are less professional in appearance.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ administration	1	Number of starters	14	25	17
		Retention (%)	50	52	71
		Achievement (%)	14	85	83
OCR wordprocessing	1	Number of starters	171	123	124
		Retention (%)	61	47	60
		Achievement (%)	60	81	79
Amspar diploma in health service (one-year course)	2	Number of starters	28	34	32
		Retention (%)	93	56	94
		Achievement (%)	89	89	82
NVQ administration	2	Number of starters	58	54	39
		Retention (%)	71	69	79
		Achievement (%)	61	70	77
OCR integrated business technology	2	Number of starters	*	16	103
		Retention (%)	*	94	86
		Achievement (%)	*	53	66
NVQ customer services	3	Number of starters	7	45	43
		Retention (%)	100	93	88
		Achievement (%)	100	100	88
NVQ administration	3	Number of starters	16	31	32
		Retention (%)	94	84	94
		Achievement (%)	60	54	53

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

\*course not running

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## Business (Franchised Provision)

### Grade 3

**26 Inspectors observed lessons in accounting, secretarial and business IT, and interviewed a number of students on NVQ work-based programmes. They agreed with the conclusions of the self-assessment report but identified some additional strengths and weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- good recent pass rates in NVQ accounting
- high levels of retention
- the high standard of students' written work
- modern specialist IT resources

#### Weaknesses

- unsatisfactory pass rates on computer literacy and information technology courses
- significant underachievement of recruitment targets
- insufficiently developed schemes of work
- insufficient sharing of good practice

27 The college's long-standing franchise agreement with the North East Chamber of Commerce is, principally, to deliver NVQ accounting qualifications and a range of secretarial and business IT courses at centres across the north east of England. In 1998-99, recruitment targets were substantially achieved. Some growth has been achieved in NVQ customer care programmes. Other programmes, such as typewriting, failed to attract viable numbers and were withdrawn. Numbers on NVQ accounting programmes funded by the FEFC have fallen significantly

compared with previous years. The curriculum is not co-ordinated effectively across the different delivery centres. Good practice in teaching is not shared. A cross-centre curriculum group, established before the inspection, has not met. Course logs have been introduced only recently. Course timetables supplied for inspection were inaccurate. A high proportion of scheduled lessons were cancelled or changed to different times during the inspection and this restricted the number and variety of lessons that inspectors could observe.

28 Teachers use well-designed worksheets that identify key learning activities and provide space for students to add supporting comment as lessons develop. Schemes of work and lesson plans vary in the level of detail. Many contain only a brief list of the topics to be covered. They do not identify teaching methods or the resources to be used. Teachers regularly test students' understanding of lesson topics, often by introducing short written questions of increasing difficulty. In a computer literacy and information technology lesson the workbook used by students was comprehensive and had been updated to take account of the latest version of software in use. Assessment on the customer services NVQ is systematic and relates well to industry. For example, a contract with a local airline has resulted in most of the assessment and verification being conducted in-flight. Record-keeping in secretarial classes is unsatisfactory. The skills acquired by individual students and the assignments completed are not recorded effectively and do not provide enough information for effective discussion to take place at student progress reviews. Students are not encouraged to develop basic keyboard skills to improve the speed of their typing. Some students' work is not marked effectively. Spelling errors, for example, remain uncorrected.

29 Students' work is of good quality, a strength not included in the self-assessment report. Medical secretaries demonstrate

# Curriculum Areas

effective skills of analysis and evaluation as well as having a good grasp of medical vocabulary. On other secretarial courses, completed work was accurate and well presented, especially for assignments requiring a graphical analysis of data. Key skills, particularly IT skills, are not developed well enough on accountancy courses. Students' achievements on NVQ accounting programmes in 1999, however, were significantly above national benchmarks. For example, at technician level pass rates were 20% above the sector average. Retention is consistently high at 90% or better. Attendance in the lessons observed is also high although classes were small. Large numbers of students undertake the computer literacy and information technology award. The pass rates, however, are

unsatisfactory. In 1999 they were well below the sector benchmark.

30 Teaching accommodation is largely fit for its purpose although classrooms at the Middlesbrough centre are a little drab. Specialist computers used in secretarial and business IT courses have been updated recently to provide the latest industrial standard software. All students have good access to workstations and associated learning materials. The self-assessment report recognises that access to the Internet is more restricted. Most teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced although a minority have neither a teaching qualification or assessor awards.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in business (franchised provision), 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Text processing stage 1	1	Number of starters	*	94	95
		Retention (%)	*	97	94
		Achievement (%)	*	56	52
Computerised accounts	1	Number of starters	*	41	43
		Retention (%)	*	100	98
		Achievement (%)	*	24	64
Computer literacy and information technology	1	Number of starters	*	168	254
		Retention (%)	*	95	96
		Achievement (%)	*	55	49
NVQ accounting	2	Number of starters	*	90	126
		Retention (%)	*	99	90
		Achievement (%)	*	60	77
NVQ accounting	3	Number of starters	*	84	115
		Retention (%)	*	99	90
		Achievement (%)	*	29	50
NVQ accounting	4	Number of starters	*	31	73
		Retention (%)	*	100	96
		Achievement (%)	*	26	54

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

\*unable to extract franchised data from ISR data



# Curriculum Areas

## Health and Social Care

### Grade 2

**31 Inspectors observed 11 lessons covering NVQ care at level 3, GNVQ health and social care at foundation, intermediate and advanced level, the national certificate and diploma in caring services and childhood studies (nursery nursing), and access to higher education (nursing) courses. They agreed with the majority of the judgements in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- good course management
- well-integrated work experience
- high pass rates on a majority of courses
- an effective student mentoring system

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient development of key skills
- declining retention and pass rates in 1999

32 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there is effective liaison with a range of external partners; for example, the Tees Valley Early Years Partnership. The college offers a wider range of part-time provision, including many short courses in health and safety and first aid at work. Courses are well managed and there is rigorous internal verification of assessment. Course files and student records are thorough and detailed. Teams enable adults to attend at times which suit their personal circumstances.

33 Most lessons are well planned and provide an appropriate balance of theory and practice. In the best lessons, teachers cater well for the individual needs of students. For example, a teacher related the working experiences of students to the design of resources intended for developing children's understanding of health issues, then supported individual students while

teams designed appropriate resources. Some teachers fail to explain the aims and objectives at the beginning of lessons or to review and evaluate learning at the end. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that work experience, linking students with a range of providers, is effectively integrated with college work. Key skills are less well developed. Teachers tend to consider only the mandatory key skills identified in GNVQ or national certificate programmes. The key skills gained routinely in most courses are not identified in lesson plans or recorded by students. Teachers often fail to correct grammatical and spelling errors in students' written work.

34 The self-assessment report identified that the majority of courses had pass rates at or above national benchmarks. Retention and pass rates in GNVQ foundation and advanced health and social care declined to below the national benchmarks in 1998-99. Rigorous action has been taken to improve performance but it was too early to assess whether this has been effective. The GNVQ intermediate health and social care has a retention rate around the national average and pass rates were well above the national average in 1998-99. National certificate and diploma courses in caring services and childhood studies had retention rates and pass rates above the national average in 1998-99. Rates of progression from intermediate to advanced level courses are good. Students' work is of an appropriate industrial standard. They undertake substantial additional enrichment activities to develop personal skills; for example, sign language, and a safe driving course organised by the police. Achievements in these areas are recorded in each student's record of achievement. Course teams for the national certificate and diploma have developed good practice through their 'student mentorship scheme'. Second-year students act as mentors to support students new to the college.

# Curriculum Areas

35 The head of department and four teachers are new appointments. They are well qualified and bring a range of current industry experience. Specialist accommodation is good. There are inspiring wall displays in most classrooms. The quality of accommodation and equipment at Loftus is less satisfactory. There are sufficient small items of specialist

equipment, such as aids for people lacking mobility and anatomical models, but lack of larger specialist care equipment. The specialist bookstock in the library is good. A wide range of books has been purchased over the last four years. Students make good use of the specialist resource base, where there are four computers and appropriate software.

## A summary of retention and achievement rates in health and social care, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GNVQ foundation in health and social care	1	Number of starters	28	45	19
		Retention (%)	71	64	58
		Achievement (%)	30	62	55
GNVQ intermediate in health and social care	2	Number of starters	60	23	24
		Retention (%)	78	87	71
		Achievement (%)	53	100	82
GNVQ advanced in health and social care	3	Number of starters	15	13	28
		Retention (%)	60	62	54
		Achievement (%)	0	63	40
Access to higher education in nursing and health services	3	Number of starters	*	32	46
		Retention (%)	*	66	70
		Achievement (%)	*	95	75
National certificate and diploma in caring services and childhood studies	3	Number of starters	62	78	61
		Retention (%)	76	97	72
		Achievement (%)	91	82	93

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

\*course not offered

# Curriculum Areas

## Humanities

### Grade 2

**36 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in history, geography, government and politics, psychology, religious studies, sociology and teacher education. Inspectors generally agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- well-planned and well-organised lessons
- good use of Internet resources in sociology
- good pass rates on GCSE and some general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) courses
- well-developed key skills

#### Weaknesses

- teaching insufficiently varied to meet individual needs
- poor pass rates on one-year repeat courses

37 The college offers a wide range of subjects at GCE A level. Some classes are small and this prevents teachers from employing more effective methods of teaching used with larger classes. Access courses range from foundation to advanced level and provide clear progression routes for students. The curriculum and courses are generally well organised and well managed. Course teams have regular and meaningful meetings to develop the curriculum; for example, to hold discussions on curriculum 2000. Teacher education courses offered in the evenings are less effectively managed. Students travelling from outlying areas have difficulty arriving on time and teachers delay the start of lessons until they arrive, holding back the progress of punctual students.

38 Schemes of work are thorough and lesson plans are detailed. However, only seven of the

12 lessons observed were good or outstanding, which compares unfavourably with the national profile. The best lesson plans identify learning outcomes, timescales for topics and teaching methods. Teachers have high expectations of their students and conduct lessons at a brisk pace. Students are enthusiastic about their studies and participate effectively in classroom activities. IT is used increasingly to enhance teaching and learning. Students, for example, are guided to useful website addresses. During a sociology lesson, a student downloaded statistical information and a company's mission statement from the Internet. The information was shared with other students and used effectively as part of the lesson. Teacher education students are encouraged to experiment with different teaching methods and to analyse the results honestly and openly. In poorer humanities lessons, teaching is uninspiring; some lessons are dull and there is insufficient variety of activity to meet individual needs. Not enough guidance is given to students about how to take notes. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report. Teachers' marking is thorough and helpful. Assessment sheets often explain the marking criteria used by the examination boards. Key skills are developed and accredited through tutorials.

39 As identified in the college's self-assessment report, retention in most subjects exceeds national benchmarks and is improving. Pass rates on full-time GCE A level courses rose between 1997 to 1999, and in 1999, the pass rates in politics, history, sociology and religious studies exceeded national benchmarks. Geography and psychology results have fluctuated and are currently below national benchmarks. One-year repeat courses have low levels of achievement. Access courses have declining retention rates and rising pass rates. There are rising levels of retention and achievement in teacher education, which currently match or exceed national benchmarks. Students' work is of a high standard and

# Curriculum Areas

portfolios are well organised. Much of the work is wordprocessed. GCE A level students' essays are extensive and of an appropriate standard. Students' work on access courses at level 3 shows high levels of effort and attainment.

40 Teachers are well qualified in their specialist subjects. Many are examiners and moderators for their subjects. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that humanities rooms are well furnished. All subject base rooms have an adjoining small seminar room

for tutorials and individual study. Each class base room has a computer connected to the Internet. Good wall displays establish a clear subject identity. Library provision for teacher education is comprehensive; there are multiple copies of many texts and a well-organised system of short loans. The library on the main site, which contains the core humanities stock, lacks a full range of texts and reference books. In all subjects, full-time students are provided with textbooks.

## Examples of retention and achievement rates in humanities, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Access	1, 2 and 3	Number of starters	75	68	49
		Retention (%)	97	75	70
		Achievement (%)	57	61	63
GCSE	2	Number of starters	59	22	29
		Retention (%)	72	55	78
		Achievement (%)	44	45	69
Teacher education	3	Number of starters	144	82	89
		Retention (%)	72	76	84
		Achievement (%)	56	66	84
GCE A level history	3	Number of starters	29	26	21
		Retention (%)	83	77	90
		Achievement (%)	58	70	89
GCE A level psychology and sociology	3	Number of starters	52	30	39
		Retention (%)	62	43	77
		Achievement (%)	62	85	77

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Basic Skills

### Grade 4

**41 Inspectors observed 10 lessons across a range of provision including that provided in vocational areas and in community centres. Inspectors concluded that many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report had been overstated and some significant weaknesses had been omitted.**

#### Key strengths

- constructive working relationships in lessons
- improved pass rates in Numberpower

#### Weaknesses

- much ineffective and poorly managed provision
- teaching materials inadequately geared to individuals or vocational areas
- poor retention and pass rates on a number of courses
- an underused 'drop-in' workshop

42 The college has increased investment in basic skills provision in recent years. However, there is no overarching development plan to ensure that the provision is managed effectively throughout the college. The arrangements for providing basic skills vary widely. On some vocational programmes, there are free-standing basic skills courses. On others, students work towards Wordpower and Numberpower awards within the context of their vocational studies. Some support is provided on courses as part of the development of key skills but this does not lead to an additional qualification. For students with learning difficulties, basic skills are part of a multi-skills development programme. Each department decides on which approach to adopt. The college also operates a learning workshop on the main site where help with

literacy and numeracy is available at specific times in the week. Students may themselves join the workshop or be referred by their tutor. A small amount of basic skills is offered in community centres. The college has run a successful basic skills summer school for the past two years.

43 Working relationships between teachers and students are constructive. In most lessons, students work purposefully and teachers give friendly and supportive guidance. Where lessons are offered in the learning workshop, students work at their own pace. IT is used effectively to encourage learning. Many materials have been developed to support the teaching of Numberpower and Wordpower. Teachers are encouraged to customise these to make them relevant to specific vocations though, in practice, it does not always happen. Students work steadily through assignments and results are carefully recorded. However, the work is not checked against an initial assessment of each student's capability and, in some lessons, teaching is not varied enough to cater for individual students' requirements. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report. Teachers often introduce assignments without explaining how the skills practised can be applied. The attendance in some groups is low.

44 In 1998-99, there were significant differences in retention rates between groups. For example, the rate for students working towards Numberpower at entry level was 89% in one group, which is at the national average, and 47% in another. Many students who fail to attend basic skills lessons leave their main programme of study. The college has not yet identified whether it was students' difficulties with basic skills which contributed to their departure. All students identified as needing additional support to develop their basic skills are entered to study for Wordpower and Numberpower awards. In some cases, this is inappropriate. Pass rates vary considerably

# Curriculum Areas

across the college. The number of students achieving Numberpower in full is rising: in 1997-98, 16 students achieved the award; in 1998-99 it was 28. This strength was recognised in the self-assessment report. The college has not assessed the impact of basic skills support on students' achievements of their main qualification. Targets for improving the outcomes of basic skills support have been set, but it is not clear how they will be met.

45 The provision of basic skills is poorly managed. The college allocates 13 teachers to teach basic skills, each having varying levels of commitment. This equates to 3.5 full-time teachers. Nine of the teachers spend 25% or less of their teaching hours on basic skills. Teachers are uncertain about how to fulfil their role and some are unfamiliar with the basic skills content of each student's vocational programme. The learning workshop provides a pleasant, well-organised and well-equipped learning environment. It contains four computers connected to the Internet. The workshop is open for only 13 hours a week and few students know where it is, or are familiar with its purpose. For a period of five weeks, only one student attended the evening 'drop-in' session. Staffing difficulties in one department resulted in students who have fundamental difficulties with numeracy not receiving any effective support until halfway through their vocational course. Only one member of staff has a basic skills qualification. These weaknesses were not adequately identified in the self-assessment report.

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 2

**46 Inspectors generally agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified some additional weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- effective arrangements for initial advice and guidance
- strong links with local schools
- good induction arrangements
- excellent careers education and guidance
- good levels of support from tutors

#### Weaknesses

- the uneven quality of tutorials
- the low uptake of learning support
- insufficient counselling provision

47 The student services team is located conveniently near the main college reception area. Members of the team provide good support for students on careers, personal issues, welfare, financial advice and guidance. Organisational procedures are well developed and effective. Students facing hardship are given financial assistance from the access fund. Many students receive subsidies towards the cost of meals, travel arrangements, childcare, or study materials.

48 There are good arrangements for providing impartial guidance to students before they enrol. School pupils applying to college are normally interviewed first at the school, and there are clear guidelines on how these interviews are to be conducted. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that there is a comprehensive range of liaison activities with schools. In the past year, the school liaison team has organised successful 'taster' days for over 1,281 year 10 pupils from

its partner schools, including special schools. These include presentations by college staff at parents evenings, link courses and careers events. The comprehensive and well-designed information provided to potential students ensures that they know about the full-time and part-time courses which the college offers. Open evenings in the autumn term for students and their parents are well attended, as is the adult learners' week, a special event organised to encourage adults to join courses. Following enrolment, the college evaluates its recruitment activities thoroughly and remedies any shortcomings.

49 Students participate in, and are satisfied with, a well-organised induction programme which introduces them to the college and their courses. They are well informed about their rights and responsibilities and receive useful documents such as the college charter, course handbook and diary of assignments. Tutors have a helpful induction checklist to guide them through the induction. Student questionnaires are used regularly to review and improve the effectiveness of induction.

50 Curriculum teams carry out diagnostic assessments to identify the literacy and numeracy skills of all full-time students and those on substantial part-time courses. Curriculum teams or the learning support team provide extra help in developing students' literacy or numeracy skills. However, links between curriculum teams and the learning support team are not sufficiently developed. Many students identified as needing support decline the help offered and attendance at some learning support lessons is poor. The college has not evaluated the effectiveness of the learning support provided. Many students take an accredited library skills course to develop their research and study skills and most achieve the qualification.

51 Students on full-time and substantial part-time courses are entitled to tutorial support. A helpful and informative handbook

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sets out what they can expect of tutors. All full-time students have a timetabled one-hour tutorial each week, which incorporates group activities and individual progress reviews. Students appreciate the regular formal and informal personal support provided by tutors. Some tutors, however, fail to follow the appropriate guidelines for tutorials and tutorials vary significantly in their quality. Weaker tutorials tend to be those provided for vocational courses, a matter not identified in the self-assessment report. Some academic pastoral group tutorials are of high quality. For example, a well-organised and adventurous health education tutorial on the 'Myths and Facts of Alcohol' involved tutors working effectively together to introduce an informative video on alcoholism. Following this, a recovering member of Alcoholics Anonymous spoke powerfully to the group about his alcoholism and about the tragic effect this had had on his family and himself. It was an experience which had a profound effect on the group.

52 The careers advice and guidance provided to students is excellent. A college team manages the careers centre and plays a key role in providing careers guidance to groups and individuals. Members of the team report regularly to senior managers on their collective performance. The information about careers is of a high standard and is easily accessible to students. Additional careers material is placed on the college noticeboard and intranet. Students also receive careers education and advice in tutorials. The advice is reinforced by talks from guest speakers and by visits to universities and employers. There is a good relationship with the local careers service, which provides additional advice clinics in the college. Curriculum teams prepare detailed careers programmes that specify the roles of the careers co-ordinator and course tutors. The destinations of full-time students are carefully monitored and analysed. The self-assessment report recognises the strengths of the careers education arrangements.

53 The college provides a restricted professional counselling service for students. A total of six hours each week is allocated to two qualified counsellors. External agencies are called upon to provide additional support if required. There is no overall programme of enrichment activities to develop the personal skills of students. However, each curriculum area provides a wide variety of opportunities to broaden students' experiences. These include industrial visits, residential courses and trips to relevant organisations, including exchanges with colleges in Europe and the United States of America. The students' union, currently being developed, is taking action to extend enrichment opportunities.

## General Resources

### *Grade 2*

**54 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They also identified a further strength and more weaknesses.**

#### **Key strengths**

- significant improvements to accommodation
- an effective maintenance programme
- good access for those with restricted mobility
- well-resourced libraries
- high-quality, accessible IT

#### **Weaknesses**

- poor recreational facilities at the main site
- inappropriate accommodation for some courses

55 The college has significantly improved its accommodation since the previous inspection, reducing its estate to two sites. The main site is a mix of 1960s buildings. It lies in a pleasant



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residential area, is clearly signposted and is served well by public transport. Car parking is extensive. A refurbished wing of the main site has been renamed the Sir William Turner Centre, preserving the identity of the former sixth form college. The reception areas at both sites are conveniently positioned near main entrances. The reception area at the Connections campus is particularly attractive. Reception staff are friendly and helpful. A notable strength of the accommodation is the improved access for people with restricted mobility. At both centres, there are spacious halls, one of which is used by performing arts students.

56 The college operates an effective maintenance programme. Its maintenance team has undertaken many high-quality improvement projects, including thoughtful refurbishment of classrooms. The roofs over several workshops have been rebuilt to provide more natural light and reduce maintenance. Energy conservation forms part of the accommodation strategy. For example, a new heating system at the main site is reducing energy consumption. The college has yet to act upon the recently produced room utilisation survey. Inspectors identified that some classrooms are inappropriate for the courses using them and others have insufficient storage space. These weaknesses were not recognised in the self-assessment report.

57 The self-assessment report understates the college's considerable investment in IT, much of which is of high quality. IT provision is well co-ordinated and a recently introduced IT development strategy responds to the needs of curriculum teams. Currently the ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is 1:8. Workstations are up to date, many having multimedia capability. Some are placed conveniently near classrooms. Well-qualified technical staff provide good support. Technicians monitor the use of computer workshops effectively and occupancy is high. Computers are networked and there is

well-managed access to the Internet. A network link between college sites has still to be established. Staff make effective use of the college intranet to request IT technical support and identify maintenance needs.

58 The college's well-managed libraries are of high quality. They offer a wide range of media to support learning, including text-based materials, CD-ROMs, videos and audio tapes, all catalogued for the previous three years. The library staff have developed an audio induction tape for students. The bookstock is regularly reviewed and updated. More than 70% of stock is less than four years old. There are effective and regular links with tutors to identify curriculum requirements. In addition, some departments provide their own books to students. There is no central catalogue of books stored in different parts of the college, however. Students using the library's computers are given help by two specialist support staff. There is a quiet study room and a project room that students can book.

59 The refurbished restaurants at both sites are attractive and well designed. The quality of the food is good. Additional common rooms have been provided for students and staff. An independently owned nursery on the Connections campus is available to students requiring childcare. This site also has a good sports hall and a new fitness centre that is well used during the evenings by the members of the local community. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that recreation and sports facilities at the main site are poor. The small gymnasium is dilapidated. In addition, there are few outdoor sports areas for students to use other than the pitch used for football.

## Quality Assurance

### *Grade 3*

**60 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but**

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**identified additional weaknesses. The college had taken actions to address some of the weaknesses by the time the inspection had started.**

## Key strengths

- substantial improvement in arrangements to assure quality, since the previous inspection
- well-developed and well-established systems for improving the quality of provision
- and evaluating cross-college support functions
- good use of national data in course reviews

## Weaknesses

- underdeveloped procedures for ensuring the quality of work of franchise partners
- some unrealistic target-setting within courses
- lack of measurable standards within the college charter
- inadequate action to improve the quality of teaching

61 The college's commitment to quality assurance is reflected in its mission statement and strategic plan. Quality assurance has improved substantially since the previous inspection. The quality assurance policy is supported by extensive procedures that are understood and valued by staff. The academic board reviews the quality of all the provision through three subcommittees: staff development, quality council, and academic standards. The quality council sets and monitors standards for student services and support. The academic standards subcommittee sets standards and performance indicators for courses. The college has Investors in People status, and its finance administration and services to business is accredited to ISO 9001. The self-assessment

report identified that some students did not receive the college charter in 1998-99. As a consequence, the charter is now included in the student diary. The charter contains insufficient measurable standards or quantifiable targets. The college is producing a charter for employers.

62 The quality of courses is evaluated through two separate systems: course review and evaluation, and the academic quality assessment process. Student retention and achievement figures are routinely compared with national benchmarking data. Course logs follow a standard format. They contain course details, performance indicators and evaluations of students' opinions about the quality of provision. They are well maintained and audited. Students' views are carefully analysed. Teachers completing course logs must establish targets and action plans and identify the strengths and weaknesses of provision. Some course targets are unreliable; they are set too low or too high and take insufficient account of previous performance.

63 The academic quality assessment process is an internal inspection arrangement based on Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. Full-time courses are inspected on a two-year cycle and part-time courses every four years. The process includes observation of lessons and an audit of documentation. Strengths and weaknesses are identified, course performance is graded, and an action plan is generated. There are shortcomings in the college's control of its franchised provision. The college registers are not standardised or returned regularly for checking. Internal verification of trainees' assessment is inadequate. The college's procedures for course review and evaluation and the academic quality assessment are not implemented effectively within the franchise partnerships. The internal observation of lessons run by the North East Chamber of Commerce has only recently been undertaken.

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64 Inspectors agreed with judgements in the self-assessment report that cross-college support services have their own charters and performance standards that are used well to monitor and report on progress. Each of these charters is supported by detailed quality standards that are used effectively to evaluate the work. Reports are written twice a year to inform managers of progress. All support staff and managers value this work which has had a major impact on improving the support functions within the college. An audit of activities was carried out at the end of the 1998-99 academic year. Additional staff have been trained in auditing techniques to extend this work.

65 Observation of teaching is an important part of the college's academic quality assessment. A number of assessors have been trained to carry out this work and a substantial number of teachers have been observed over the past three years. Despite this, the quality of teaching and learning has shown no improvement since the previous inspection. In 1996, 57% of lessons were graded 1 and 2, compared with 52% for the current inspection. The college has substantially over graded its teaching and learning. Internal figures show 74% of lessons graded 1 and 2.

66 The college spends a substantial amount on staff development activities. The staff development subcommittee has identified key areas for development. These take into account national initiatives and the college's strategic objectives when prioritising development activities. A recently approved policy determines that all new full-time staff study for a teaching qualification within two years of appointment. Training and development are linked to individual roles and college priorities. Individual training needs are determined through a needs analysis questionnaire and the appraisal process. Neither system leads to action plans that effectively address the weaknesses identified during lesson observations.

67 The self-assessment report issued for the inspection was the second one produced by the college. All staff were involved in producing evidence for it and in contributing to the final report. It is a thorough document that covers all aspects of the college's activities. Inspectors agreed with the majority of the judgements but felt that weaknesses had not been given sufficient weight. Insufficient use was made of the evidence the college gathered through its lesson observations.

## Governance

### *Grade 3*

**68 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the majority of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified some additional weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- overseeing a successful period of financial recovery
- a self-critical approach to governance
- effective use of members' expertise

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to academic performance
- an unsystematic approach to governor training
- inadequate monitoring of equal opportunities

69 Since the previous inspection, the board of the corporation has been proactive in steering the college through a successful period of major change. It has overseen the financial recovery of the college, major staffing changes including over 30 redundancies, the appointment of a new principal, and significant changes to its estate. At each meeting, the board monitors the college's progress and achievement in relation to key performance indicators such as student numbers and funding units generated, with a

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year-on-year comparison. The board is kept well informed by managers about issues facing the college. Governors' insight into the work of the college is enhanced by their regular attendance at eight cross-college groups. These include community liaison, employer liaison, publicity and marketing. Governors also attend social events, open days and the twice-yearly staff development days.

70 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. The board 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.

71 The board has determined a membership of 20. There are two vacancies. Inspectors and auditors agreed with the judgement expressed in the self-assessment report that the board has a broad range of experience and expertise, much of it at a senior level, in the public and private sectors. The audit and finance, and general purposes committees are both chaired by qualified accountants. Other areas of experience represented by board members include audit, law, property services, local industry and education. Members sign an annual statement of eligibility. The board met nine times during 1998-99 but, as indicated in the self-assessment report, a few members had a poor record of attendance. The board promptly replaces poor attendees.

72 The board was fully involved in the production, with managers, of the 1997 to 2000 strategic plan. It has continued to plan effectively for the development of the college, and has approved annual updates of the plan. However, the board does not conduct an annual review of the objectives in the plan, and has had little involvement in the formulation of the annual updates. The board receives an annual report on students' achievements. However, it does not monitor in sufficient detail the

achievement of targets, or the performance of the college against national benchmarking data. It has recently agreed to set up a subcommittee to enable it to fulfil its responsibilities to monitor academic performance more effectively. The board receives a detailed annual report on students' complaints and the college's responses. It also reviews the annual self-assessment report. It does not, however, monitor implementation of its equal opportunities policy. The board has not considered a report on the potential implications of losing the franchised provision which forms a substantial part of the college's work. This weakness was not acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

73 The board delegates its work to five committees: finance and general purposes; audit; employment; remuneration; and performance and nomination. The committees operate in accordance with defined terms of reference. The finance and general purposes committee met six times in the last year and one of its meetings was not quorate. The committee carries out the financial monitoring role on behalf of the board, and at each meeting it considers the latest available management accounts. The performance and nominations committee has been largely successful in recruiting new governors and is in the process of finalising a skills audit of board members. The audit committee has yet to introduce a formal system for monitoring and following up recommendations, and has not yet finalised performance indicators in respect of its external audit service.

74 Four different people have carried out the clerking function of the board in the past year. This has had some adverse effect on the conduct of board business. A recently appointed clerk, from outside the college, is now serving the board. The minutes of the board and its committees do not consistently record decisions taken, including the formal approval of some key documents such as the three-year financial forecast. Furthermore, it is not always clear that board resolutions have been carried out.

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The board has an open style of governance and has adopted a code of conduct and a 'whistleblowing' policy. The board has standing orders that are in need of updating. There is an appropriate use of confidential minutes. Board minutes and papers are available in the college library and this is advertised in each of the college's reception areas. The register of interests is completed annually by each member of the board and senior members of staff.

75 The board has taken a self-critical approach to assessing and improving its own performance. Members have received presentations from college managers before the formal start of board meetings. Members have visited other colleges to look at good practice and have reported back to the board. They have appointed an observer who gives feedback about the conduct of meetings. They have also employed an external consultant to advise them on good practice in governance. Each board committee assesses its own performance annually. Members have recently attended governors' events and considered a series of papers on aspects of good governance. However, members have not yet analysed their training needs or developed a training plan. They acknowledge the need for more training to help them monitor academic standards.

## Management

### *Grade 2*

**76 Inspectors and auditors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. Some of the weaknesses had been addressed by the time of the inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- significant improvements since the previous inspection
- successful restructuring of management roles
- good communications

- effective strategic and operational planning
- responsiveness to local needs

#### Weaknesses

- some unreliable computerised management information
- insufficient monitoring and reporting of equal opportunities

77 Since the previous inspection, the college has significantly improved its financial position, reorganised its management structure, developed its curriculum to meet local needs, rationalised its estates and met its targets for growth. This process was informed by a major consultation exercise with the local community and the college's partners about the college's purpose and role. One result was the change of the college's name. The new management structure is well understood and is welcomed by staff. Lines of responsibility are clear, and there is greater involvement in the management of the college by staff at all levels. For example, 65% of the staff are members of cross-college committees. Staff have a shared vision for the college and are committed to its success.

78 Strategic and operational plans are well structured and flow logically from the college's strategic objectives. An annual update of the three-year strategic plan results from a cycle of planning to which all areas of the college contribute. Communications within the college are effective. Twice-yearly staff development and planning days and a comprehensive schedule of meetings ensures that staff are well informed and have opportunities to contribute to the college's development. Senior managers are accessible and consult appropriately on important decisions. Minutes of their meetings are published in staff rooms and are available on the college intranet.

79 The college is highly responsive to local needs. Through a wide range of partnerships, it

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is providing education and training in the local community for traditionally under-represented groups such as the socially disadvantaged and people with mental health problems. The college is responding well to the high rate of local unemployment by offering retraining opportunities for the community. For example, following the closure of a local clothing factory, the college assisted people to develop alternative skills. Over 100 women were recruited to construction courses as part of this initiative. The college has a close and productive relationship with the local TEC. It is also well represented in a large number of strategic partnerships that are developing education and training opportunities in the region.

80 Effective market research and publicity enable the college to offer appropriate programmes and promote them widely. For example, the college is equipping a bus with advanced technology equipment so that it can promote its courses in local schools, better preparing individuals for new employment opportunities. The responsibility for marketing is devolved throughout the college with the result that heads of department and course leaders regard it as part of their job. A marketing group, chaired by the principal, brings together staff from across the college to co-ordinate marketing activity. The schools and employer liaison groups help to identify market needs and thus inform the development of the curriculum. The college produces an annual labour market report but, as the self-assessment indicates, departmental teams do not use it effectively.

81 Despite recent improvements in the college's information systems, inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that computerised management information is not wholly reliable. It requires regular checking by the executive team to ensure its accuracy. Specialist inspectors found discrepancies in the college's statistical data on students' achievements, particularly in franchised work.

The college is making progress in addressing this area of weakness, and staff have growing confidence in the accuracy and reliability of the reports they receive. A calendar of reports has been produced and staffing to support this function has been increased. Staff can only access college data on students from staff rooms at the main site.

82 The college has an equal opportunities policy and a series of supporting principles. The policy is suitably publicised and accompanied by a helpful resource pack for staff to use in raising students' awareness. Faculties carried out a comprehensive audit of equal opportunities issues in 1997, with an accompanying action plan, but this was not followed up systematically. The college does not sufficiently monitor its progress in promoting equal opportunities. For example, it does not produce any statistical reports to demonstrate that it is meeting its commitments. Although the policy states that a monitoring and review report will be presented to the academic board at least once a year, no such reports have been made.

83 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is adequate. The college's financial position has improved significantly since it identified a £791,000 cumulative deficit in 1994-95. The college now has cash balances in excess of £1 million and reserves of more than £500,000. While an operating loss of £134,000 was incurred in 1998-99, the three-year financial forecast for 1999 to 2002 indicates that small operating surpluses should be achieved in each year of the forecast. The format and content of the management accounts could be improved; for example, by including more appropriate commentary and comparison of performance against a wider number of financial targets. The college's internal auditors indicate that the college has adequate systems of internal control. The college's financial regulations were last reviewed in 1999. They do not include a

# Cross-college Provision

comprehensive fraud and irregularity procedure and response plan, or terms of reference for the internal auditors.

## Conclusions

84 The college's arrangements for self-assessment are relatively robust. The self-assessment report produced for inspection was the second to follow the framework of Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. The self-assessment report is thorough and covers all aspects of the college's provision. Judgements are clearly expressed and, in most instances, are well supported by qualitative and quantitative evidence. The self-assessment report contained clear action plans with targets for improvement and named persons responsible for their achievement. The report helped inspectors in preparing for and in undertaking the inspection. A validation panel, chaired by an external consultant assessed the quality of contributing reports. After each validation meeting, guidance and recommendations were given to the teams responsible. The board of the corporation approved the final report. An updated report was provided before inspection. Inspectors agreed with many of college's judgements about the quality of its provision but found additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors concluded, for example, that the college had overstated the quality of basic skills and quality assurance, and had been overgenerous in its grading of lessons.

85 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 (March 2000)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	0
16-18 years	28
19-24 years	17
25+ years	53
Not known	2
Total	100

*Source: college data*

## Student numbers by level of study (March 2000)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	29
Level 2 (intermediate)	31
Level 3 (advanced)	28
Level 4/5 (higher)	2
Non-schedule 2	10
Total	100

*Source: college data*

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	135	638	14
Construction	120	354	9
Engineering	453	396	15
Business	83	952	19
Hotel and catering	71	131	4
Health and community care	207	1,042	23
Art and design	82	84	3
Humanities	131	398	10
Basic education	63	91	3
Total	1,345	4,086	100

*Source: college data*

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 31% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (March 2000)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	105	4	23	132
Supporting direct learning contact	25	11	0	36
Other support	49	14	0	63
Total	179	29	23	231

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



# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£7,497,000	£7,995,000	£8,228,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£17.63	£16.47	£16.38
Payroll as a proportion of income	50%	49%	51%
Achievement of funding target	105%	99%	101%
Diversity of income	13%	17%	17%
Operating surplus	£154,000	£278,000	-£134,000

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Number of starters	504	806	902	799	1,033	1,137
	Retention (%)	87	87	81	80	85	82
	Achievement (%)	62	59	74	51	63	81
2	Number of starters	1,296	1,486	1,452	1,104	1,076	1,190
	Retention (%)	86	77	79	84	75	80
	Achievement (%)	50	62	67	54	51	64
3	Number of starters	869	941	918	820	725	893
	Retention (%)	85	77	67	80	79	79
	Achievement (%)	58	59	58	47	59	63
4 or 5	Number of starters	9	7	15	24	98	102
	Retention (%)	100	100	100	88	93	85
	Achievement (%)	22	0	29	5	42	50
Short courses	Number of starters	674	827	864	2,597	3,675	5,728
	Retention (%)	99	97	96	97	97	98
	Achievement (%)	78	75	87	83	87	90
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	184	482	268	460	308	634
	Retention (%)	91	83	94	87	80	93
	Achievement (%)	92	47	33	50	60	49

Source: ISR

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