

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Richard Huish College

August 1994

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

The Further Education Funding Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements to assess the quality of provision in the further education sector in England. It discharges the duty in part through its inspectorate, which inspects and reports on each college in the sector every four years. The Council's inspectorate also assesses and reports on a national basis on specific curriculum areas and advises the Council's quality assessment committee.

College inspections involve both full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have specialist knowledge and experience in the areas they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member from outside the world of education and a nominated member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are described in the Council Circular 93/28. In the course of inspecting colleges, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also summarise their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses using a five-point scale. The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 61/94

RICHARD HUISH COLLEGE

SOUTH WEST REGION

Inspected February and April 1994

Summary

Richard Huish College has achieved many positive changes in a short time, including the development of its GCE A level provision and substantial growth in the recruitment of 16-19 year olds. It has high examination success rates. It has also begun to widen its range of provision into vocational areas with the introduction of GNVQ advanced programmes.

Students are well taught, enjoy college life and are strongly motivated and confident. Working relationships between staff and students are good. Teaching staff are well qualified although there is a need for them to acquire more industrial and commercial experience as the new vocational programmes are introduced. Support staff are effectively deployed. College life is enriched by a varied and stimulating programme of extra-curricular activities. Liaison with local schools, including admissions procedures, is flexible and effective. The governors through their experience and support contribute extensively to the college's operation. College senior managers are working hard to establish the new management structure but need to give more attention to strategic planning. There is a useful range of management information available to all staff. Quality assurance is at an early stage of development. Health and safety policies and procedures should be formally adopted and implemented. The learning environment is well cared for and pleasant, although some accommodation requires improvement. Social and study facilities to support the planned growth in adult and part-time students are not yet adequate. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities require more active encouragement and improved physical access if they are to join the college in any numbers. Other areas to be addressed are the management of small curriculum areas, the management of learning resources including improvements in library resources, and the provision of effective student counselling.

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

| Aspects of cross-college provision | Grade |
|---|--------------|
| Responsiveness and range of provision | 2 |
| Governance and management | 2 |
| Students' recruitment, guidance and support | 2 |
| Quality assurance | 4 |
| Resources: staffing | 2 |
| equipment/learning resources | 4 |
| accommodation | 3 |

| Curriculum area | Grade | Curriculum area | Grade |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Science, | 2 | Art & design | 2 |
| earth sciences, | 2 | Performing arts | 2 |
| Mathematics & information technology | 2 | | |
| Business studies | 2 | Humanities | 3 |
| | | English & media studies | 2 |
| | | Languages | 2 |
| | | Social studies | 2 |

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INTRODUCTION

1 Richard Huish College was inspected in February and April 1994. In February, six inspectors spent 19 days inspecting specialist curriculum areas. Aspects of cross-college provision were subsequently inspected in April by a team of six. Inspectors visited 100 learning sessions, examined samples of students' work and held discussions with governors, college staff, students, parents, representatives from Somerset Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and from the Somerset County Careers service, employers and other community representatives.

2 The inspection was carried out according to the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. The framework describes a four-year inspection cycle. When this cycle becomes fully established, colleges will have the opportunity to respond to the findings of earlier inspection reports before their quadrennial inspection and the subsequent published report. As the inspection of Richard Huish College occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response was not available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Richard Huish College was established as a Church of England voluntary controlled sixth form college in the late 1970s and joined the further education sector upon incorporation in April 1993. It occupies a single site, that of the former boys' grammar school, a mile from the town centre of Taunton. It is one of only two sixth form colleges in the south west region, and the only one in Somerset.

4 According to the 1991 census, the population of the Taunton Deane District was 93,696. The service sector, the largest employer, has grown rapidly in recent years partly as a consequence of the relocations by banks and insurance companies. A high proportion of businesses (95.5 per cent) in Somerset employ fewer than 24 people compared with the national average of 88 per cent. Eighty-six per cent of Somerset employees work for companies employing fewer than 10 people. Seventeen per cent of those in employment are self-employed. Vulnerable sectors of the economy are those concerned with manufacturing and defence-related work. The construction industry suffered the severest job losses in the recent recession. Somerset TEC expects job growth in the next decade to be concentrated in professional and managerial posts, and in the service and sales sectors. A decline is forecast in clerical, secretarial, craft-related and low-skill occupations. Unemployment is falling faster in Somerset than in the nation as a whole. Over the year to January 1994 unemployment in Somerset fell by 9 per cent against the national average fall of 6 per cent.

5 The college's core market is for full-time 16-19 year olds. Other 16-19 providers in the area are the large general further education college in Taunton, Somerset College of Arts and Technology; Bridgwater College, 11 miles away, East Devon College, Tiverton, 15 miles away; Strode College, 10 miles away and Yeovil College, 25 miles away. The college has based its strategies for growth on the number of 16 year olds in the locality rising

faster than national demographic trends and the number of 16 year olds in socio-economic groups 1 and 2 rising faster than for other groups. The college recruits the majority of its students from Taunton Deane 11-16 schools. Significant numbers also come from neighbouring areas of Somerset and East Devon, some from Avon and Dorset and some from the three independent schools with sixth forms in Taunton and one in Wellington. The nearest state school sixth forms are in Minehead, 25 miles away and Chard, 14 miles away.

6 There is a full-time equivalent staff of 52 teachers and 22 support staff. Teaching staff are managed through tutor teams each of which is led by an assistant principal, and delivery of each course or subject is led by a course manager. Support staff are managed by the business manager, with the exception of technicians who work with tutors and course teams. Staff expressed as full-time equivalents are shown in figure 1.

7 During 1992-93, the college had 917 enrolments of which 854 were full-time and 63 part-time. Full-time enrolments have increased by 43 per cent since 1992. In September 1993, enrolments were 7 per cent above the growth target agreed with the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). Percentage enrolments by age are shown in figure 2. In order to support its growth the college has undergone considerable change over the past two years. For example, restructuring has resulted in a large number of new staff, some with experience in general further education. There has been major refurbishment of accommodation in some areas and considerable investment in market analysis and promotional material.

8 Amongst its aims the college identifies success with 16-19 year olds at General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) as its core business together with development of significant provision in academic education for adults. There are no courses for the 16-19 age group, proposed for September 1994, which have an entry requirement of fewer than five General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) passes at grade C or above. The mission statement sets the college the target of becoming the major centre of excellence for the south west region by providing high quality courses of further and higher education, and other services within its area of expertise.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 Awareness and understanding of current educational priorities is at a high level amongst senior staff and at a more variable level amongst staff in general. Staff development activities have been used to familiarise staff with the implications of incorporation.

10 Students were recruited from 56 schools in 1993-94, although 14 schools provide the majority of students. Links with the major partner schools are flexible and effective. Final-year pupils have opportunities for a wide range of different contacts prior to entry and schools receive feedback regarding student destinations on leaving Richard Huish. Recruitment for full-time post-16 provision in Taunton Deane is highly

competitive. Ninety-one per cent of the college's students are full-time 16-19 year olds. The college has begun to seek out school leavers from a wider catchment area and to provide transport for some of them. Recruitment from these areas is increasing.

11 The college does not provide higher education courses. There are proposals, yet to be validated, to offer a higher education foundation year in science to overseas students in partnership with the University of Bristol. Similarly, a proposal to create an adult returners' access to higher education course awaits validation. Links with higher education establishments to assist progression for current students are well developed.

12 The co-operative relationship with the local TEC is recently established and has not, as yet, resulted in new programmes or new types of student. A proposed link between the college and the TEC is intended to develop the accreditation of prior learning and to support further General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) developments.

13 Some curriculum areas involve employers in their work. For example, students in business studies and design and technology have benefited from links with employers who have provided opportunities for them to solve problems in a commercial and industrial context. However, the extent of such links is limited. There is no structure for local employers to influence curriculum planning or to comment on the quality of vocational programmes. Following the recruitment of a head of business studies, a few full-cost courses in business studies have recently been introduced.

14 The college has decided to offer courses only at advanced level (level 3 as defined by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications) and above. There are 33 General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects, six of which have syllabus options. Of the 10 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects offered, six can be completed in one year. The college does not have a clear policy on AS courses and consequently fails to offer students effective guidance on whether or not to take these courses. General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects are limited to those which can provide support for GCE and GNVQ advanced courses. GCSE mathematics and English are available to all. The course handbook for 1994-95 describes three GNVQ advanced level programmes and there are plans to introduce a new GNVQ advanced programme in science in September 1994. A Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma in performing arts, to be run jointly with the Somerset College of Arts and Technology, is also advertised for September 1994. Proposals to develop GNVQ intermediate qualifications in co-operation with partner schools are at an early stage: the vocational areas and choice of schools are not yet decided. The college has taken part in a project managed by the Further Education Unit (FEU) entitled 'Extending the Vocational Curriculum in Sixth Form Colleges'. This valuable work has developed the college's use of data, including market analysis, and assisted the planning of new course developments.

Percentage enrolments by level of study are shown in figure 3. Full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 4.

15 There is a regular weekly act of worship of a Christian nature, open to students and staff. Christian theology is available as a GCE A level subject.

16 Full-time students are offered varied extra-curricular activities, some of them leading to awards. Modern languages and European studies provide opportunities to take part in exchanges with students from other countries. Students are encouraged to create a full and lively programme. There is an active Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme. Various opportunities exist for students to take part in musical and dramatic performances. Good provision for team games includes a programme of fixtures with other schools and colleges. The uptake of programmes on offer at a local leisure centre is variable. There is a commitment, supported by financial subsidy, to provide residential experience for all full-time students.

17 Part-time students account for less than 1 per cent of full-time equivalent enrolments and some 7 per cent of all enrolments. An offer of free GCE A level evening classes, made in September 1993 resulted in a group of students being recruited and demonstrated that there is a demand for such provision. Currently, 45 students attend evening classes. If this provision is to increase, the college will need to consider how it can provide the facilities required by adult students in the evening. Existing facilities are inadequate.

18 There are opportunities for students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities if they achieve the entry requirement for advanced level courses, but the college's publicity material does little to encourage such students to see the college as an appropriate place for their studies. Ramps have been installed at several points, but some areas of the college remain inaccessible to those with restricted mobility. For example, entrances to the science laboratories make it impossible for such students to study science.

19 The college marketing group has appropriate membership and is well supported by an experienced governor member. The group is new and internal links with curriculum development groups have only recently been established. Publicity materials, professionally produced, are attractive, informative and provide a high level of detail. Marketing is seen as a priority for development and it is given a substantial budget. However, the college's course handbook contains a number of inconsistencies and the entry requirements for the proposed BTEC national diploma and for GNVQ advanced programmes differ. A comprehensive market analysis has been commissioned.

20 Although there are examples of good practice in the work experience provided for some students, the co-ordination and leadership of this area

require strengthening. There is little review or monitoring of work experience activities.

21 The college makes no provision for home or work-based study using distance learning packages. There are a few examples of flexible arrangements for study and attendance, but the college has no overall policy or plan for developing such approaches. If the college is to fulfil its strategic commitment to broaden access it should review this.

22 The day-time timetable spreads the teaching of GCE A level subjects throughout the week. This is a disincentive to adults who might otherwise consider a programme of day-time study. The college's commitment to adults has been demonstrated by the appointment of a co-ordinator to develop adult returners' access to higher education courses.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

23 The governing body has 16 members: governors drawn from the industrial and commercial community have backgrounds in accountancy, marketing, surveying, the health service and business management, and there are representatives from secondary and higher education. The nominee of the local TEC is a local business person. The governing body is exceptional in the degree to which it involves its members constructively in the operational life of the college. Its expertise has proved valuable to the college, particularly in matters relating to personnel, accommodation, marketing, administration and financial procedures. Governors are directly involved in a number of projects with senior managers. The relevant committees of the board have been established and meet regularly. Agendas and minutes require more careful management. Minutes of meetings of the governing body do not always clearly state the actions agreed by governors.

24 The change in institutional ethos which will follow the development of adult and vocational provision is well understood and supported by governors. The strategic plan clearly sets out anticipated curriculum changes, although they have not been costed. Detailed business plans are being prepared for each of the curriculum areas.

25 The college has produced policies on equal opportunities, health and safety and student support. Implementation of the equal opportunities policy has lacked leadership in recent months, a weakness which has only recently been identified. However, there has been some progress in increasing the support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Women are now well represented in the senior management team. Equal opportunities policy with regard to employment is incorporated within the personnel and procedures handbook for staff.

26 Health and safety matters across the college have received insufficient attention. However, these are now being addressed and a health and safety manual including the policy statement is at the draft consultation stage.

27 The senior management team consists of the principal, seven assistant principals and the business manager. There is a shared sense of purpose amongst members of the team, and a willingness to adapt and innovate. The flexibility of the team's approach may have contributed to the lack of clarity which exists about the responsibilities of the assistant principals. The staff's uncertain perceptions of these responsibilities occasionally causes delays in reaching decisions and making progress. The delegation of authority at a time of rapid development has resulted in some overloading of those senior managers who also have a significant teaching responsibility. External consultants have been used extensively for senior management tasks and the senior management team's attention has been focused largely on operational issues and less on strategic planning.

28 Course management issues are rarely discussed at the subject level. The small number of staff in some subject areas limits the opportunities for discussion and debate on teaching and learning styles, the structuring of programmes and schemes of work, and assessment policy and practice.

29 The college's estimated income and expenditure for 1993-94 are shown in figures 5 and 6. Strategies for the more efficient use of resources are being developed. For example, some specialist accommodation is being opened to more general use. The nine managers who are delegated budget holders generally have a clear understanding of their accountability. They have confidence in the system and in their ability to manage their budgets. Some budgets such as those for long-term sickness and centrally-organised staff development, are managed centrally. Financial reports from the computerised management information system are circulated monthly. The college is in the process of determining new criteria for the setting of budgets to replace the existing historical system. The new system is building on business planning and course costing procedures, currently being introduced in programme areas. Staff welcome the opportunity to participate in the discussions as it gives them the chance to develop their understanding of the wider issues of curriculum management. At present, some programme managers do not know in advance what sums of money are available to them. As a result they are unable to plan effectively.

30 The management information system is on a college-wide network and provides access to different levels of information for most staff. It is commonly used to extract reliable basic data such as names and addresses, course and staff timetables and room allocations. Minutes of team meetings are also available. Updates of admissions information and student course changes are processed daily and staff timetable amendments are brought up to date weekly. Responsibility for the management information system is divided three ways. Its operation and some monitoring of information is the responsibility of an assistant principal who has a direct role in allocating accommodation and timetabling. The business manager produces various financial information. The production of external returns is delegated to a member of the teaching staff. She also acts as the quality

controller for these reports in that she both produces and checks them for accuracy and completeness.

31 Enrolment targets are set for some of the courses. Applications and admissions are regularly monitored and institutional enrolments are currently in excess of those predicted. Student destinations are monitored and recorded, and copies are sent to leading partner schools. Retention rates are monitored and compared by subject.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

32 There is a programme of schools liaison activities. Additionally, the staff are responsive to specific requests from partner schools. The interviewing process for applicants is flexible, held at school or in the college, day-time or evening, according to need. Students value the college's open day and the opportunities to meet existing students. Partner schools and students have commented on the improvement in publicity materials.

33 The central admissions system for 16-19 year old students is managed by six of the assistant principals and their staff teams, who have designated liaison responsibilities for the main partner schools. A further team has responsibility for independent schools. Applications from adult students are dealt with by the access co-ordinator. These arrangements work well and provide effective information, advice, guidance and support to students at the pre-entry stage. Adult students have found staff particularly sensitive to their needs.

34 Staff interviewing teams are well trained and provided with guidelines and appropriate information. Interviewers offer impartial advice and are generally effective in dealing with applicants' queries. Some of them need to update their knowledge of the progression routes available to students as a consequence of the newly-established vocational courses. The recently-introduced system for tracking applicants includes guidance on the time within which the college should respond to applications. This reflects a positive attitude to customer satisfaction. The system has yet to be evaluated, and it does not apply to adult students. Admissions policies for GCE A level full-time students are clear and well supported by documentation. They are less clear for adult students.

35 The college does not have formal procedures for taking account of any relevant knowledge and experience which students have acquired before starting their courses and, so far, there has been little demand for these. An outline proposal for the assessment and accreditation of prior learning has now been developed and this has attracted the interest of the TEC. Although the college has no co-ordinator or infrastructure to support assessment and accreditation, a start has been made in preparing staff for Training and Development Lead Body accreditation. The numbers involved at present are small.

36 The range and quality of the induction programmes provided in the subject areas are variable. The development of a more consistent approach

for September 1994 was under discussion at the time of the inspection. Students wishing to change their courses are provided with specialist advice. A substantial number of students successfully negotiated course transfers during the induction period in September 1993. However, some of the subsequent changes of personal tutor which this entailed were not handled as effectively as they might have been.

37 In its tutorial policy statement the college aims to support student progress through regular assessment, review, reporting and action planning, which are managed by the personal tutors. Tutors are allocated two hours per week for tutorial functions in addition to the one hour set aside for tutor team meetings. There is a range of documentation to support tutorial processes and a detailed system of referral for those students causing concern. The deployment of tutor time and the effectiveness of tutorial work vary significantly, as does the degree to which students value their tutorial provision.

38 The recently-established learning support centre provides a good study environment in which a range of learning needs is being addressed. The centre is staffed by a full-time tutor. Students perceive her to be a general student counsellor, although this is not her formally designated role. In addition to the learning support tutor, a number of staff have some basic counselling training. There is a lack of clarity about counselling roles in the college. Counselling support lacks co-ordination and is not given appropriate emphasis. There is no overall monitoring of the effectiveness of student services.

39 Well-established higher education links, which enable students from GCE A level courses to progress to higher education, are central to the college's ethos. Tutors have undertaken staff development on the higher education application system and on writing references. They should develop greater expertise on the avenues for progress open to students following vocational courses. Careers guidance is initially addressed during students' pre-entry interviews and followed up as part of the process of recording achievement. Tutors provide general advice on careers and there are referrals to the Somerset Careers Service for more specific advice. Liaison with careers officers has been productive. However, some students remain unaware of the full range of careers education resources available to them. The current review of careers co-ordination in the college aims to enhance careers education for all students.

40 Students' attendance is monitored effectively and appropriate action is taken in cases causing concern. Good management information system data on authorised and unauthorised absence is disseminated to subject teachers.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

41 Fifteen per cent of the teaching sessions inspected showed many strengths and very few weaknesses and 51 per cent of sessions

demonstrated more strengths than weaknesses. In only 6 per cent of sessions observed did weaknesses outweigh strengths.

The following table summarises the assessment grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

| Programmes | Grade | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Totals |
|-------------------|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---------------|
| GCE A/AS level | | 12 | 44 | 22 | 6 | 0 | 84 |
| GCSE | | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| GNVQ | | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Other | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Total | | 15 | 51 | 28 | 6 | 0 | 100 |

42 Learning programmes were well structured, and although the amount of course information given to students varied, most students had a clear view of what was expected of them. Some subjects, for example performing arts and some sciences, had particularly useful course or module guidebooks which students appreciated. The college's move to standard course descriptors has helped to make things clearer for students.

43 Working relationships between staff and students were consistently friendly and productive. Students appreciated the extra efforts put in by teaching staff, for example, in assistance with written assignments. Visits to, or exchanges with, students from six European countries, India and Israel had extended the experience of many students. A visit from Singaporean sixth-form college students and a visit to Mount Everest were being planned at the time of the inspection. Theatre excursions and visits to the college by an interesting variety of musicians have enhanced learning in related curriculum areas. Visiting speakers have been of particular value on new vocational courses such as the GNVQ leisure and tourism course.

44 Students at Richard Huish College received good teaching and were kept informed on their progress. Teachers were knowledgeable about their subjects. Teaching sessions had clear learning objectives and were well managed. In class discussions, teachers successfully elicited responses from students while maintaining a clear focus on the aims of the discussion. Effective questioning took good account of students' own knowledge and experience. Theory was effectively related to practice. In one GCE A level mathematics lesson, an effective mix of practical and theoretical activities culminated in the use of computer graphics to illustrate the results achieved by the students. Many of the sessions enabled students to experience a variety of learning activities and to engage in well-structured tasks. Some of the work conducted in small groups was productive and disciplined. Modern languages classes were conducted in the foreign language. A media studies class made successful use of students' own assessments of each others' work. In some art and design work, the emphasis was on

personal research, which allowed students to demonstrate a capacity for working on their own.

45 The learning was less successfully managed in a minority of the sessions. For example, in some classes, discussion and questioning was too tightly controlled by the teacher, participation in the required activities was limited to a few members of the class and the quality of students' responses was poor. Other sessions involved students in excessive copying from boards or taking dictated notes. In a few lessons, teachers failed to make use of visual aids where they would obviously have helped to develop students' understanding.

46 Assessments are set regularly and returned promptly. The degree to which students are given clear and specific assessment criteria before undertaking an assignment varies. Most assignments were carefully and thoroughly assessed. Teachers provided detailed and helpful comment which students could use to estimate their progress. A small minority of assignments were returned with only a brief comment from the teacher.

47 The recording of achievement is an active and supportive process involving students and teachers. In addition, students valued the informal academic support and guidance readily available to them from tutors. Progress reports are presented to students and their parents at regularly scheduled parents' evenings.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

48 Students were generally well motivated and appeared to enjoy their work. They spoke with confidence about their programmes of study. Successful group activities demonstrated students' ability to work together productively. Their level of concentration in most learning situations was high.

49 In practical work, science students had good manipulative skills; they were familiar with equipment and confident in using it. Music students made the most of performance opportunities; in rehearsal, they were tackling effectively some ambitious work. A number of students were making good use of information technology. In some of the work in GCE A level business studies and in all GNVQ business assignments, information technology played a major role.

50 When required to work on their own, students showed initiative. Some students produced interesting individual assignments in AS English. The staff of two high street banks helped with the assessment of an economics assignment, a process which included interviewing the students concerned. Students in performing arts were making their own arrangements to contact professional practitioners and to set up their own project work. Art students were working on their projects purposefully and with confidence. GNVQ leisure and tourism students had visited a sports centre, and after advice from the centre's business manager produced their own business analyses.

51 Some students were reluctant to join in class or group discussions and not all teachers attempted to overcome this reluctance. Some activities, for example discussion groups in English, the design of questionnaires on the European studies course, and the writing of project reports in geography, demonstrated the successful development of core skills. Many of the students' files were well organised, and provided evidence of well-developed study skills.

52 In 1993, the average pass rates at GCE A level was 84 per cent and for AS courses it was 79 per cent. The national average pass rates for sixth form colleges were 82 per cent and 72 per cent, respectively. This placed the college at the top of the region's points table for publicly-funded further education institutions. Some individual subjects, for example art and design, English, chemistry and Spanish combined pass rates above national averages with a substantial number of higher grades. Other subjects in which a good proportion of candidates scored high grades included physics, further mathematics and mechanics, German, geography, geology and French. Achievements in decision mathematics and human biology were less good and AS results generally were more variable, law and geography having low percentage pass rates. At GCSE there was an overall pass rate at grades A-C of 72 per cent compared with a national average for sixth form colleges of 50 per cent. Ninety-two per cent of those who sat English GCSE achieved a pass at grade C or better, an exceptionally high success rate for English resit candidates at 16+.

53 The college now monitors retention rates closely on a comparative subject-by-subject basis. Of the cohort of GCE A level students enrolled in 1991, 14 per cent did not complete their programme of studies.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

54 Staff awareness of the requirements of the national charter for further education is widespread, following staff meetings and the effective consultation process which formed part of the work on a college charter. Students enrolling last September received a brief college charter detailing entitlements and responsibilities, which they were required to sign, and which cumulated in a learning contract. The national charter was also distributed.

55 Richard Huish College is moving rapidly to develop its quality assurance arrangements. At present, it has quality development procedures and processes of varying degrees of effectiveness, but no coherent system.

56 At the time of the inspection, a draft policy statement on quality assurance had been issued for consultation. It represents the beginning of a process to establish quality report requirements, accountability, deadlines, performance standards and action plans. The policy document announces a total quality model but the college is at an early stage in communicating this approach to staff.

57 Existing quality improvement procedures vary considerably in their effectiveness. There have been some positive outcomes as a result of course reviews and student questionnaires. There are standard procedures for the conduct of course reviews but they are not adopted consistently. Some reviews were thorough; they generated action plans and were amplified by useful quality reports. Others were briefer, and more limited in their scope. Accountability for the outcomes of reviews was not clear and some reports stimulated little response or action. The college is working to develop more systematic course review procedures.

58 Existing quality targets are neither comprehensive nor systematic. Enrolment targets are set for each of the curriculum areas. Some administrative service standards are emerging for example, for the student admissions process and internally on photocopying and typing, and some curriculum areas have established targets of their own. Examination results are reviewed but the college has not developed target pass rates. The business planning process, currently being developed at the course level, involves quality target statements but they are not yet quantified and the relationship between business planning and other quality assurance procedures needs clarification.

59 The college's commitment to quality assurance is indicated by the recent allocation of responsibility for quality to an assistant principal. The college has made progress towards achieving the Investors in People award. There is a lack of clarity concerning the various levels of management responsibility for quality assurance, the accountability for responses to course reviews and the quality assurance role of the curriculum development group. The requirement for the provision of quality reports to managers should be clearly established.

60 Students' views on provision are collected using college-wide questionnaires and collected in a useful published report. There is also some useful random sampling of views on specific issues. Parents' views are also collected.

61 A good range of statistical information is available to support quality management at the programme level. The quality of information on student destinations has been improved recently. Comparative course retention and attendance figures are available and the college has made progress in the development of value-added measures for assessing students' achievements at college, by comparing their qualifications on entry with their final examination results. Staff development has been used to make staff aware of performance indicators and of their value in quality management.

62 An approval process for new course developments has recently been put into place. Proposals come before the curriculum development group, as part of an emerging system of internal validation.

63 An appraisal scheme for teaching staff is in place. There is a two-yearly cycle of professional review and development interviews which

includes observation of teaching. Appraisal is linked to staff development using target sheets which detail training needs. The college is also committed to appraisal for non-teaching staff. Training for this is due to start soon.

64 The college has a staff development policy statement linked to strategic objectives rather than an overall strategic plan for staff development. Approval for individual activities is dependent on there being a link with the objectives set out in the strategic plan. There has been a good range of staff development activities. In-house events have dealt with issues such as team building, counselling, appraisal management, personal effectiveness and inspection.

65 Individual staff development events are evaluated. It is intended that a review of the whole programme will in future be submitted to senior management. An induction programme for staff, which involves mentoring, has recently been developed and approved.

RESOURCES

Staffing

66 The teaching staff are well qualified: almost all have a first degree and most have a teaching qualification. The growth of vocational courses highlights the lack of commercial and industrial experience amongst full-time teaching staff. However, staff have a commitment to improving their skills and expertise. Support staff are also well qualified and/or appropriately trained. Clerical and maintenance staff work flexibly and effectively to meet the college's needs. Information technology and library staff take an active role in encouraging staff and students to use the facilities. There are too few library staff to deal with the numbers of users and too much of the available staff time is taken up with basic supervision. In some of the curriculum areas the level of technician support is inadequate.

67 An effective staff selection and appointment procedure is in place. Personnel procedures are documented. Job descriptions are available for some staff but many of these are now out of date.

Equipment/learning resources

68 The learning resources centre has been improved over the last two years: the space available to the centre has been increased, there is now a student induction programme, library systems have been introduced and the centre provides information technology resources on a small but accessible computer network which maximises its availability to students. Library space is under pressure, partially as a consequence of the lack of communal space for students. Library book stock is inadequate in some subjects. The quite extensive book stocks held in some teaching areas are uncatalogued and there are no procedures for co-ordinating acquisitions in these areas with library acquisitions. The librarian is a member of the curriculum development group and there are plans to re-establish a library

committee as a means of strengthening the implementation of the learning resources policy. However, the library and the college's information technology learning resources are managed separately and there is a lack of strategic direction in the overall management of learning resources. This limits the effectiveness of the learning resources centre in supporting students when they are studying individually, and in supporting teachers seeking to develop materials for active learning by their students.

69 There is an information technology manager but the college does not have a written policy for information technology. The information technology centre has developed rapidly. There is now an integrated network which serves both administrative and curricular needs. Improved organisation has encouraged more staff and student use of the centre's facilities. A users' committee was established in September 1993 and this has helped the information technology manager to formulate his budget. The computer network information pack is an encouraging and informative document. There is an independent network run by and for students, which makes productive use of older machines. The number of computers is inadequate. The ratio of machines to students in the college as a whole is approximately 1:15.

70 The specialist equipment in science is not up to the standard expected of an area seeking to be a centre of excellence. The level and quality of other equipment is generally satisfactory. The college does not have a formal programme for the replacement of equipment.

Accommodation

71 There are two connected main buildings, nine temporary buildings, a former sports pavilion and Elmfield House, a nineteenth century building which is sparsely used because of its poor condition. Accommodation varies in its suitability, ranging from the comfortable and stimulating to poor learning environments. There is a new foyer and reception area which is welcoming in appearance. Other recently-refurbished accommodation includes the well-resourced GNVQ base room and the conference room.

72 The college has not yet developed an accommodation strategy. College statistics show that some accommodation is under-used, while other areas are cramped and overcrowded. In a recent survey 58 per cent of students identified access to study space as a significant problem. This issue is exacerbated by the lack of communal space apart from the refectory which serves food until 15.30 hours daily. In term time, the library is staffed from 08.30-16.30 hours, with an extension to 21.00 on Monday evenings. These times are inadequate for present students and there will be an increasing need to review them in the light of planned developments for adult and evening provision.

73 The college is only partially accessible to students with restricted mobility. Ramps provide wheelchair access to most ground-floor facilities but wheelchair users are not able to enter the business studies area, the

temporary buildings or the second floor. The college makes a commitment to accommodate all academically qualified students. However, it is difficult to see how a student in a wheelchair who wished to study science could be accommodated since all laboratory areas are, at present, inaccessible.

74 The standard of decor is variable. Some teaching areas, for example English, provide welcoming and attractive environments. Others such as geography compensate for the poor decorative state of rooms by providing stimulating and enterprising wall displays. The pavilion accommodation has a badly neglected appearance. Standards of cleanliness are good. The grounds provide a green, cared-for environment.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

75 The college is going through a period of rapid development as it seeks to attract new students and to improve further the successful provision for its core market of 16-19 year old GCE A level students. Particular strengths of the provision inspected are:

- generally good standards of teaching and learning
- well-motivated, confident students
- high levels of success in external examinations
- commitment to the effective development of GNVQ advanced level programmes
- a varied and stimulating programme of extra-curricular activities
- effective and flexible schools liaison and admissions procedures
- the high level of governors' expertise and their involvement at an operational level
- committed and energetic senior managers who actively involve teaching staff in the new management structure
- management information which is widely available and useful to staff
- well-qualified teaching staff
- a pleasant, welcoming and well-cared-for environment
- recruitment in excess of enrolment targets.

76 If it is to achieve its mission to develop further the range and quality of its provision, the college should address the following matters:

- the degree to which the senior management team is actively involved in strategic planning
- the co-ordination and management of small curriculum areas
- the co-ordination of college-wide management information systems
- the development of coherent and systematic quality assurance procedures

-
- the development of effective provision for student counselling
 - facilities for planned adult and part-time provision
 - the recruitment of, and provision for, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
 - overall co-ordination and management of learning resources
 - improvements in library provision
 - further improvements in some areas of accommodation
 - the adoption and implementation of policies on health and safety
 - the need to develop further students' independent study skills.

FIGURES

1 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)

2 Percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)

3 Full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (at October 1994)

4 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)

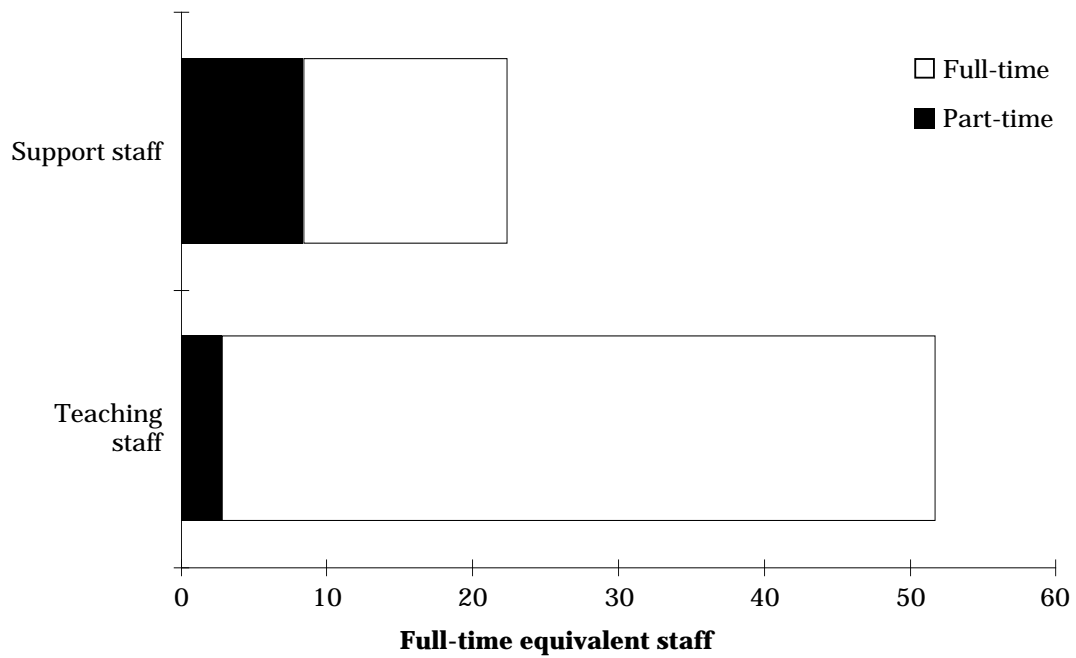
5 Recurrent income (for 16 months to July 1994)

6 Estimated expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

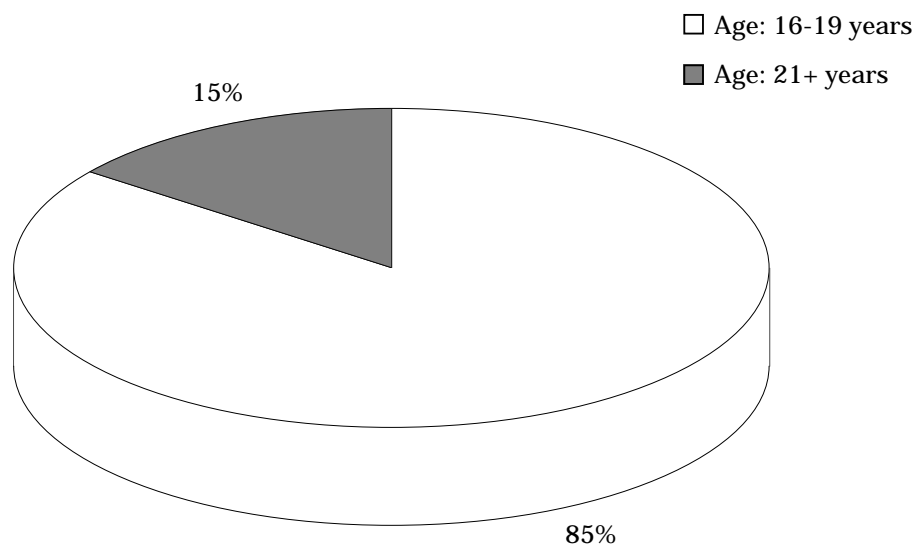
Richard Huish College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 74

Figure 2

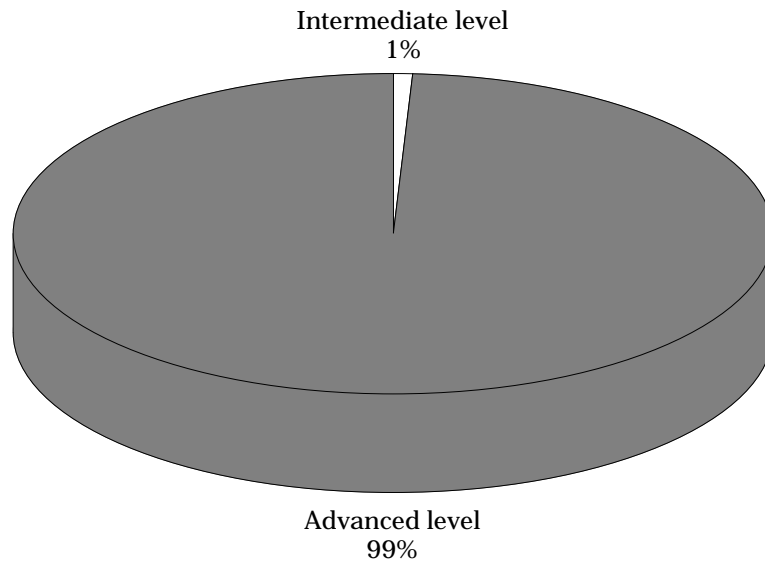
Richard Huish College: percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)



Enrolments: 917

Figure 3

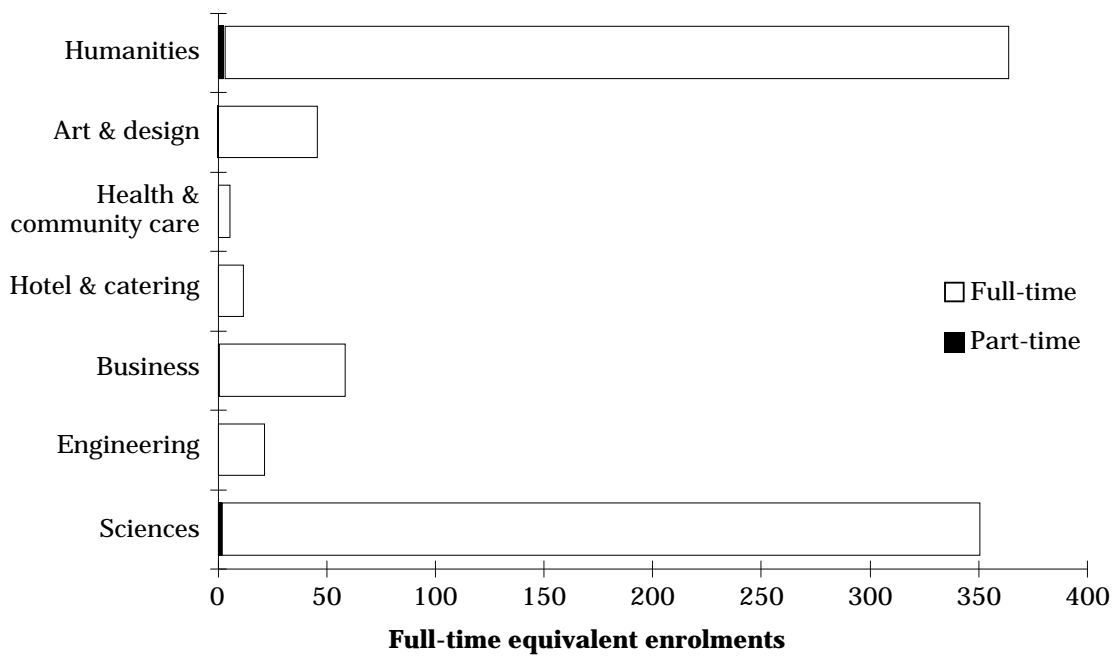
Richard Huish College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)



Enrolments: 917

Figure 4

Richard Huish College: student enrolments by curriculum area and mode of attendance (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent enrolments: 860

Figure 5

Richard Huish College: estimated income (16 months to July 1994)

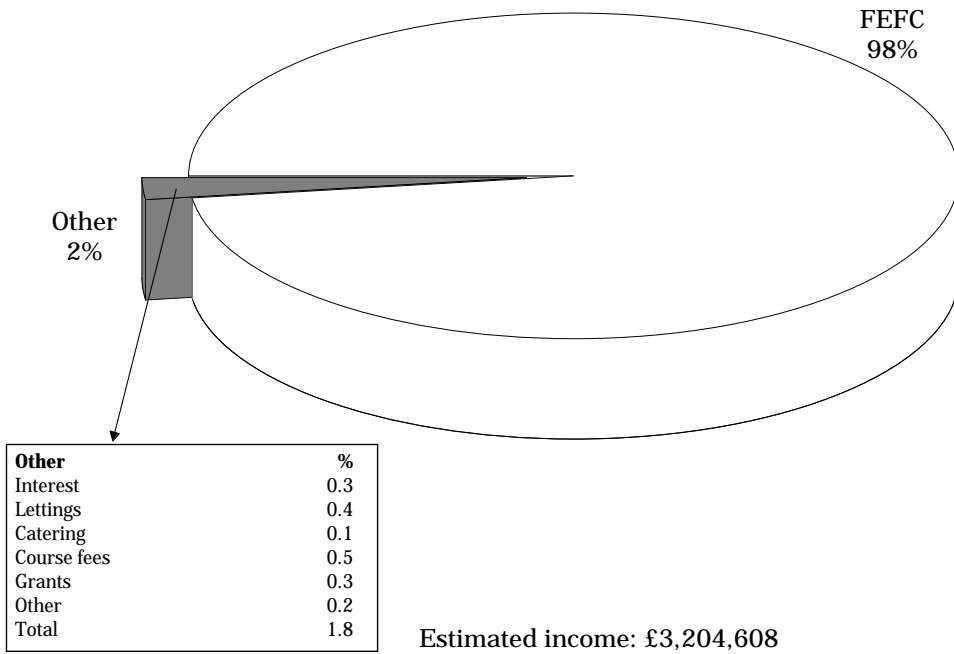
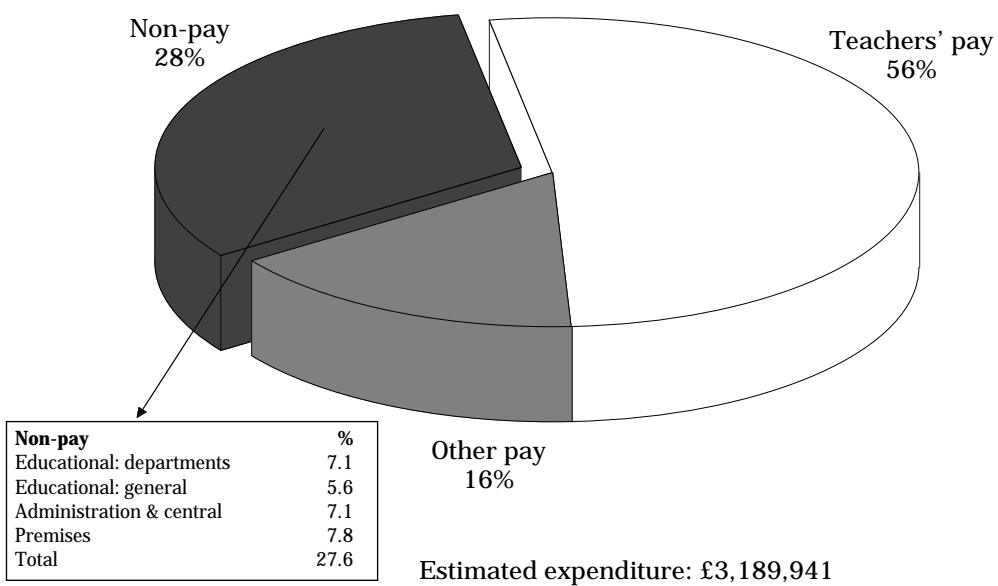


Figure 6

Richard Huish College: estimated expenditure (16 months to July 1994)



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