

The Sheffield College

REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1999-00

THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also inspects other further education provision funded by the FEFC. In fulfilling its work programme, the inspectorate assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Inspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. A member of the Council's audit service works with inspectors in assessing aspects of governance and management. All colleges are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

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

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

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

Student Achievements

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

- as number of starters, which is the number of enrolments on qualifications where the student was expected 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

The Sheffield College *Yorkshire and Humberside Region*

Inspected May 2000

The Sheffield College is one of the largest colleges in the further education sector. As a result of its designation by the FEFC as a college requiring exceptional support, and special measures adopted, the college provided an updated self-assessment report that included revised grades for three cross-college areas. Inspectors agreed with many of the conclusions made in the curriculum reports but considered that some of the strengths had been overstated and identified some additional weaknesses. In cross-college provision, some further significant weaknesses were identified in management and support for students. Overall, inspectors agreed with the grades awarded by the college except in two cases where grades were one lower than in the self-assessment report.

Provision in eight of the 10 FEFC programmes areas was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. The proportion of lessons judged by inspectors to be good or outstanding was below the average for colleges inspected in 1998-99. Pass rates in a number of curriculum areas are good, for example, on GCE A level courses in sciences and English and on some of the vocational courses in leisure and health and social care. In other areas, they are

only satisfactory and sometimes poor, for example, on level 2 vocational courses in construction and NVQ engineering. Enrolments are declining in a number of the curriculum areas inspected; there is little provision in the evenings and at weekends. Initial guidance and careers education for students is well organised; liaison activities with schools are extensive. Procedures for reviewing curriculum performance are detailed; staff development is closely matched to identified needs. The acting principal has made good progress in evaluating the current strategic and financial management problems at the college. Significant weaknesses remain. The financial position of the college is weak. Strategic and operational planning has been inadequate and the college is failing to meet the educational needs of its community. The management structure is over complex, lines of communication have been poor, and staff are inefficiently deployed. Management information, although improving, does not enjoy the confidence of all staff. In addition, the college should improve: the co-ordination and sufficiency of learning and tutorial support; the quality and effectiveness of course reviews, target-setting and staff appraisal; and the use and quality of accommodation. Governors should play a greater part in determining the college's strategic direction and securing its solvency; they should monitor the college's and their own performance more closely.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Science	2	Support for students	3
Information technology (franchised)	3	General resources	3
Construction	3	Quality assurance	4
Engineering	3	Governance	4
Business studies	3	Management	4
Leisure	2		
Health and social care	2		
English	2		
Basic skills	3		

The College and its Mission

1 The Sheffield College is one of the largest colleges in the further education sector in England. It was formed in 1992 by the amalgamation of six separate tertiary colleges in the city. The college has rationalised its accommodation and now has five main centres: Castle in the centre of the city; Parson Cross in the north; Loxley in the north west; Norton in the south; and a new centre in the south east, Peaks, which was opened in September 1999 to provide facilities for students aged 16 to 18. Each centre offers a range of core provision, and some offer a wider number of specialisms. For example, Castle is the major centre for construction, engineering, catering, hairdressing and beauty therapy programmes as well as being the headquarters for the college. Norton is a key centre for art, design and media courses. Specialist business management training is provided at Parson Cross. The college makes use of 47 neighbourhood centres across the city to provide much of its adult and community education programme.

2 Sheffield has a population of 530,000. The unemployment rate currently stands at 5.9% compared with 4.7% for Yorkshire and Humberside and 4% nationally. Some wards in the north of the city register unemployment rates of nearly 20%. The FEFC has identified the college as one of a group which typically recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas. Sheffield was historically dominated by the steel industry but this has declined significantly over the last 10 years. The local economy is now mainly represented by small to medium-size businesses. The major employers are in the public sector and include two universities, the city council and the local hospital trust as well as the college itself. The city is also the location of the headquarters for the University for Industry and a major base of the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE).

3 In 1998, the participation rate in education for students aged 16 to 19 in Sheffield was 67%, considerably below the national average of 78%. In 1999, the proportion of school-leavers in Sheffield gaining grade C or above in five or more general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects was 38%, well below the average for England of 48%. An education action zone was created in January 1999 to address the problems of underachievement in schools. Sheffield Local Education Authority (LEA) maintains five schools with sixth forms in the south west of the city; there are also two independent schools with sixth forms. The college works closely with the remaining 11 to 16 schools, special schools and support units in the city, clustered according to their proximity to the college's five main centres. Barnsley, Chesterfield, Doncaster and Rotherham all have major colleges within 15 miles of Sheffield offering a mix of further and higher education. There are 11 external institutions in the Sheffield area sponsored by the college, offering a range of community-based programmes on a relatively small scale.

4 The college provides courses in all programme areas funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) ranging from entry level to higher education. In 1998-99, there were 38,485 students enrolled at the college. In February 2000, with significantly reduced franchised provision, there are 27,072 students of whom 22,699 are funded by the FEFC. Of the college's students, 73% are part time; 25% of students are aged 16 to 18. Although minority ethnic groups form 7% of the general population and 14% of college enrolments, 21% of students aged under 25 are from minority ethnic groups. The directorate of the college comprises the principal, deputy principal and the directors of data management and information systems, finance, curriculum planning and operations, centres and corporate operations and communications, human resources, and self-assessment, respectively.

Context

Each of the main centres is managed by a centre head who reports to the director responsible for centres. The curriculum is organised through four schools: construction, engineering and science; business, leisure and hospitality; design, media and social services; and humanities and key skills. A fifth school is responsible for support for students.

5 At the time of the inspection, the FEFC had identified the college as requiring exceptional support. The college had reached a position of financial insolvency. An acting principal, nominated by the FEFC, came into post on 1 January 2000 for a period of two terms to review the strategic, organisational and financial management of the college. In addition, an external consultant has been appointed to review the future of further education in the city to ensure that its structure, content and coverage are appropriate to meet the needs of the city. Finally, two additional governors have been nominated by the FEFC to strengthen the membership of the corporation. As a result of these changes, the college revised the grades for governance, management and quality assurance in the self-assessment report it submitted to the FEFC in November 1999. Currently, the mission of the college is 'to develop education and training which will contribute to social and economic regeneration in Sheffield'. The acting principal is in the process of developing a strategic plan to support the future priorities of the college. The existing 'development plan' is seen as inappropriate by both the FEFC and the college as a basis for meeting its current and projected needs.

The Inspection

6 Because of the size of the college and its diversity of provision, the inspection was conducted over two consecutive weeks beginning 2 May 2000. Programme area inspections were undertaken during the first week; cross-college aspects were inspected

during the week beginning 8 May. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and considered information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used data on students' achievements drawn from the individualised student record (ISR) for 1998. The college acknowledged that ISR data for 1997 was unreliable. College data for 1999, approved by FEFC and external auditors was also used. The college was formally notified of the sample of its provision to be inspected approximately 13 weeks before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by 29 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 122 days. Ten inspectors from the Training Standards Council (TSC) worked with the inspection team during the week beginning 8 May. The TSC inspectors concentrated on work-based training supported by the college in construction, engineering, business administration, hospitality, leisure, care and hairdressing, media and arts.

7 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the lessons inspected, 61% were rated good or outstanding. This is lower than the average of 65% for all colleges inspected in 1998-99, and lower than the number awarded at the previous inspection. The proportion of lessons judged to be less than satisfactory was 8%, above the national average of 6%.

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	5	21	7	0	0	33
GCSE	2	8	3	1	0	14
GNVQ	5	16	9	0	0	30
NVQ	1	8	8	2	0	19
Other vocational	8	30	21	6	0	65
Other	7	18	16	8	0	49
Total (No)	28	101	64	17	0	210
Total (%)	13	48	31	8	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 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

8 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. The highest attendance of 77% was recorded in science; the lowest figure of 61% occurred in basic skills.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
The Sheffield College	10.1	71
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

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

Curriculum Areas

Science

Grade 2

9 Inspectors observed 33 lessons covering GCSE, general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and vocational science courses. They generally agreed with the judgements made in the college's self-assessment report although they considered that some strengths were overstated.

Key strengths

- high pass rates on GCE A level courses
- good-quality teaching
- effective course organisation
- good development of students' information technology (IT) skills
- well-maintained laboratories

Weaknesses

- poor retention on some GCE A level courses
- little science provision at intermediate and foundation level

10 The number of students taking science at GCE A level and on the access to higher education courses is high. GCSE, general national vocational qualification (GNVQ), pharmaceutical science, dental technology and dental nursing qualifications are also offered. The number of students on vocational courses is low. Courses are well organised; staff meet regularly to co-ordinate the work across different centres. Teachers make good use of excellent course files. These contain extensive course documentation including detailed schemes of work, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Teachers carefully analyse students' achievement data produced at course team level. The breadth of provision is narrow. There is a good range of provision at advanced level but there are few opportunities for students to study science at foundation and intermediate levels. Formal links with

employers are not well developed except those linked to dental courses.

11 The quality of teaching and learning is good. Inspectors judged that 67% of lessons were good or outstanding compared with the national average of 62%. There are distinct differences in the quality of teaching and learning across the science curriculum. GCE A level subjects are particularly well taught; nearly all of the lessons observed were good or outstanding. Teachers provide demanding work and students are regularly encouraged to use and apply appropriate scientific concepts. Teachers use questions effectively to check students' understanding of the topic and to encourage them to apply their knowledge to new situations. In a lively GCE A level biology lesson on the structure and function of the placenta, important points were recapped regularly. Practical activities are well managed. Students think about the problems they encountered with their experiments and potential sources of error. Lessons on the access to higher education course are also of high quality; most of those observed were good or outstanding. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects. High-quality video and slides are used appropriately to support students' discussions.

12 Teaching on GCSE and many vocational courses was less effective. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Only one-third of the lessons on these courses were good or outstanding and a third were less than satisfactory. Students on the connections programme, designed for younger students with low levels of achievement, found it difficult to understand the complex concepts with which they were presented. Students in a vocational lesson spent most of their time copying down notes from a screen. The teacher made little attempt to draw upon the students' own experiences at their workplace.

13 Science students attend lessons regularly and most hand in work on time. Project work and major assignments are well presented with

Curriculum Areas

good use of IT both for wordprocessing and for analysing data. Students enjoy their practical work. However, there is considerable variation in the levels of practical skill that GCE A level students have acquired: the skills of students in some second-year groups are below those expected for the level of course. Progression to higher education from GCE A level and access to higher education courses is high. Students perform well in external competitions. For example, one student won the Yorkshire physics prize awarded by the Institute of Physics in 1999. Pass rates for GCE A level courses are good and well above the national averages for sector colleges. For example, the pass rate for GCE A level chemistry is 21 percentage points above the national average. Pass rates for

GNVQ advanced science and GCSE subjects are unsatisfactory; the GNVQ results are 8 percentage points below the national average. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that retention on some GCE A level courses is a weakness.

14 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that teachers are well qualified and experienced. They regularly take up opportunities for staff development, including industrial secondments. There is excellent technical support. Laboratories are maintained to very high standards and most contain modern computer equipment. The libraries contain a good range of books, CD-ROMs and periodicals.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE science (grade C or above)	2	Number of starters	*	193	262
		Retention (%)	*	70	68
		Achievement (%)	*	33	46
GNVQ intermediate science	2	Number of starters	*	31	32
		Retention (%)	*	71	84
		Achievement (%)	*	64	83
GCE A level biological sciences	3	Number of starters	*	*	267
		Retention (%)	*	*	79
		Achievement (%)	*	*	85
GCE A level chemistry	3	Number of starters	*	*	174
		Retention (%)	*	*	75
		Achievement (%)	*	*	92
GCE A level physics	3	Number of starters	*	116	123
		Retention (%)	*	78	72
		Achievement (%)	*	87	89

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Information Technology (Franchised)

Grade 3

15 Provision franchised to Square Mile Training at two centres, Hillsborough and Arundel Gate, was inspected. The college provided a separate, ungraded, self-assessment report for each of these centres. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the reports, but identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- flexible patterns of study
- significant success in widening participation in learning for adults
- effective management of provision
- excellent specialist resources

Weaknesses

- inadequate learning materials
- insufficient references to current work practices
- shortcomings in initial diagnostic assessment
- poor retention rates

16 IT is offered through a franchise arrangement at two leased buildings in the city centre and at a shopping centre in the north west of Sheffield. Courses lead to computer literacy and information technology awards at levels 1, 2 and 3. Both centres are open for 63 hours each week over 50 weeks in the year, including Saturdays. Students may attend at any time by appointment or 'drop-in'. Weekly hours are negotiated to suit students' personal needs, subject to a minimum of four to six hours a week. A significant minority of students find this minimum attendance arrangement difficult to maintain over extended periods. Over 2,500 students use the centres each year and many adults have returned to learning because of the attendance arrangements.

17 The primary method of learning is supported self-study. Learning materials are not sufficiently developed to take account of the different abilities of students, a weakness not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Students use standard texts and can go to tutors to clarify their understanding. A small range of supporting handouts offers further study notes and exercises. The materials are inappropriate for some students who either find the tasks dull and undemanding or, conversely, find the texts difficult to understand. Small group workshop sessions are being developed to provide more specific tuition which takes account of students' particular needs; those observed were well planned and valued by students. Tutors are proficient in explaining the steps to be followed to use software packages, but do not successfully extend the students' understanding of how their skills may be applied in a work situation. There is no formal initial diagnostic assessment of literacy and numeracy and no arrangements are made to offer additional support in these areas at the centres. These weaknesses were not recognised in the self-assessment report.

18 The working atmosphere in the centres encourages students to apply themselves diligently to the tasks set. Teachers place an emphasis on students achieving certification, a strength not identified in the self-assessment report. The management of provision is effective. Recent organisational changes have led to significant improvements in systems and procedures which are now benefiting students. Tutors effectively explain the criteria for assessment to students to help them understand the demands of the qualification. Individual scheduled tutorials prior to formal assessments are productive and build students' confidence. Assessed work is marked promptly and in detail. Internal verification and arrangements to standardise marking are thorough. There are insufficient opportunities to share good practice in curriculum development, assessment and verification with teachers at other college centres offering the same IT courses. Some

Curriculum Areas

tutors have no advanced level IT qualifications or have no assessor, verifier or teaching qualifications.

19 Retention rates are identified as a weakness in the college's self-assessment report. All courses have retention rates below national averages. In 1998-99, more than half of the students on the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) level 1 course failed to complete their course of study. Attendance is now monitored more closely in the early stages of this course and at the time of the inspection, the retention rate had improved to 66%. Pass rates are at, or are slightly above, national averages. Of the students who completed the C&G level 1 course, 77% passed, compared with the national average of 54%. Opportunities for students to develop further their skills at home are hampered by the policy of retaining all materials

and disks at the centres. An increasing number of students are progressing to advanced IT courses both at Square Mile Training and at other college centres.

20 The accommodation is well designed and includes large open plan learning areas. Each centre has a social area with vending machines and quieter areas for assessment activities and specialist group workshops. Both centres are well used and many students commented on the high standard and attractive learning environments. The Hillsborough centre also houses well-equipped rooms for call centre training and business development. Computer equipment is modern with industrial standard software and Internet facilities. Technical support is good. There are sufficient workstations for students.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in information technology (franchised), 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Computer literacy and information technology	1	Number of starters	*	*	632
		Retention (%)	*	*	75
		Achievement (%)	*	*	59
C&G IT	1	Number of starters	*	*	697
		Retention (%)	*	*	47
		Achievement (%)	*	*	77
C&G IT	2	Number of starters	*	*	84
		Retention (%)	*	*	62
		Achievement (%)	*	*	46

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)
*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Construction

Grade 3

21 Inspectors observed 23 lessons covering courses in construction crafts and technician areas at levels 1, 2 and 3. They agreed with the overall judgements in the self-assessment report. However, they considered that the report had taken insufficient account of some aspects of students' retention and achievement.

Key strengths

- the wide range of provision
- many high-quality training and assessment facilities
- a majority of good teaching
- improving and above average retention on many courses

Weaknesses

- inadequate management of construction provision
- unsatisfactory specialist accommodation and resources
- poor retention on level 1 courses
- pass rates on level 2 construction crafts well below national averages

22 The college offers a wide range of courses in construction at levels 1, 2 and 3. These include some highly specialised provision in such areas as neon sign-making. A successful workshop for women is also well established. Many school pupils and unemployed adults gain new learning opportunities through construction. These strengths were identified in the self-assessment report. Staff have coped well in developing new workshop facilities following the transfer from a centre dedicated to construction. However, programmes are now dispersed over four locations at, or near, two of the main college centres which has created difficulties in developing and co-ordinating

provision. Mainly as a consequence of the transfer, recruitment at levels 1 and 2 has significantly declined. Some specialist sections operate effectively and maintain detailed course records whilst others do not; not all have a clear vision of how they might develop. The destinations of full-time students are generally not well known and progression to level 3 courses is poor. Internal moderation is underdeveloped. There are few course handbooks. Links with employers are generally poor.

23 The majority of teaching is good. In the best lessons, teachers are well organised, have clear aims and use a variety of appropriate methods to interest students. They provide clear information on written and practical assignments. For example, on the access to higher education course, students were given clear instructions on how to survey one of the college centres using computer-controlled measuring equipment. There were good-quality teaching materials which helped them to set up the equipment and enabled them to work effectively in teams while the teacher gave good support to individual students. Although some craft lessons are timetabled to develop key skills, records of skills gained are not kept by students or teachers. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report. In the weaker lessons, teachers failed to plan the work adequately. Some lessons were excessively long and there was insufficient variety in these lessons to meet the individual needs of students. A few teachers tolerate students arriving late and allow students' mobile phones to disrupt learning. Attendance was poor in some lessons.

24 Students speak positively about their work and the personal support provided by teachers. Most practical work is of a high standard and some, for example, in painting and decorating, sign-work and furniture skills is excellent. The college did not provide inspectors with sufficient portfolios of students' work to enable a

Curriculum Areas

comprehensive assessment to be undertaken. The quality of the portfolios seen was uneven. Students do not receive feedback on the standard of their work. The self-assessment report failed to identify these weaknesses. In 1999, retention improved significantly in all the main areas of provision and was above national rates in intermediate level crafts and in level 3 technician courses. Retention was below the national average in level 1 courses. The overall pass rate on intermediate construction crafts in 1999, was well below the national average. This obscures the good pass rates on some individual courses, for example, in carpentry and joinery.

25 The college provides extensive and realistic training and assessment facilities, some of

which are excellent. However, many theory lessons take place in unsatisfactory temporary accommodation. Students are often disturbed by noise from adjoining areas and rooms are uncomfortable. Some workshops at the Castle centre, whilst offering significant potential, are poorly laid out, underused and lack storage space. The machine woodworking area for joinery students restricts appropriate supervision. There is a lack of learning centres adjacent to workshops. Technician students have good access to high-quality IT but craft students do not. Surveying equipment is good. Facilities for testing building materials are insufficient. Handtools are well maintained except in carpentry and joinery. Staff are well qualified and technician support is good.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
Foundation vocational (crafts and general operations)	1	Number of starters	*	139	75
		Retention (%)	*	57	64
		Achievement (%)	*	32	67
Intermediate vocational (crafts)	2	Number of starters	*	564	324
		Retention (%)	*	65	79
		Achievement (%)	*	31	50
Advanced vocational (crafts)	3	Number of starters	*	77	99
		Retention (%)	*	74	85
		Achievement (%)	*	56	70
Advanced vocational (technician)	3	Number of starters	*	42	83
		Retention (%)	*	62	84
		Achievement (%)	*	77	69

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 3

26 Inspectors observed 22 lessons in mechanical, electronic, and motor vehicle engineering. They agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that a few of the strengths had been overstated.

Key strengths

- the wide range of courses
- increasing numbers of full-time students
- good success rates on the majority of courses
- modern computer-aided design equipment

Weaknesses

- much mundane teaching
- some low retention rates
- poor pass rates on GNVQ courses
- inadequate physical resources

27 The engineering division offers a wide range of courses from entry level to higher education. These include provision specifically for women, a computer technology course which enables students with non-standard entry qualifications to progress to university, and several courses at foundation level. The number of full-time students has increased significantly in the last three years. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that the broad range of provision is a strength. Practice in some important aspects of curriculum management is not uniformly effective. For example, not all tutors of students aged 16 to 18 report to parents regularly. The relocation of provision was completed at the beginning of 1998-99 and the move delayed the start of some courses by up to two months.

28 In the better lessons, teachers used appropriate learning materials. Teachers had a

good knowledge of each student's progress and provided them with considerable individual attention. Many schemes of work and lesson plans are insufficiently detailed. Much of the teaching is mundane. In many lessons, inadequate thought had been given to preparing students for the tasks undertaken and teachers failed to make effective use of questioning to ascertain students' understanding. In practical lessons, students were given clear instructions and benefited from good documentation to record their activity. In a few lessons, however, equipment was not readily available. The self-assessment report over estimated the strengths of the teaching. Assignments and practical work were of an appropriate standard. Assignment briefs were of mixed quality. Grading criteria and the opportunities for students to develop key skills were not always made clear. In marking work, some teachers did not give enough guidance on how students could improve their performance. The self-assessment report identified these weaknesses in assessment. Some course teams monitor and record students' progress clearly; on other courses the monitoring is insufficiently frequent.

29 Attendance in the lessons observed was 71%, below the average for engineering. Students generally worked in a conscientious and diligent manner, especially in practical work. In one practical lesson on motor vehicle body work, students repaired customers' cars. They worked to a high standard, displaying mature attitudes and requiring a minimum of supervision from the teacher. The quality of the practical work produced by most students was satisfactory. Some written work was well presented and of an appropriate standard, but other examples displayed poor presentation skills and a poor command of language. Pass rates are good on national certificate courses and the majority of craft courses, but poor on GNVQ courses. However, the number of students who succeed in achieving their qualification, compared with those originally enrolled, is at or above the national average in

Curriculum Areas

engineering for most courses. Much of the retention data proved unreliable. The franchised work in this programme area has been discontinued this year. Pass and retention rates for short franchised courses have been in line with national averages. Some of the NVQ level 2 courses were also franchised. The pass rate for franchised NVQ level 2 courses in 1998-99 was much worse than for similar provision in the college.

30 Most teachers have taught at the college for more than 10 years and the self-assessment report recognises that there is an overall lack of recent industrial experience among teachers. Engineering is located a short distance from the

main Castle centre with no local access to library, social, or refectory facilities. Teaching rooms and laboratories are reasonably furnished but are often unsuitable for some of the activities planned or for the size of some of the classes using them. Computing resources for design and microprocessor studies are of good quality. The engineering learning centre contains computers but few other learning resources. Teaching resources in science, metrology and advanced machining are poor. Much of the equipment in the workshops and electronic laboratories is reaching the end of its useful life.

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 and NVQ craft courses	1	Number of starters	*	108	72
		Retention (%)	*	69	65
		Achievement (%)	*	39	71
C&G craft courses	2	Number of starters	*	400	352
		Retention (%)	*	85	76
		Achievement (%)	*	49	67
NVQ craft courses	2	Number of starters	*	266	279
		Retention (%)	*	*	*
		Achievement (%)	*	72	40
Full-time technician courses	2	Number of starters	*	27	31
		Retention (%)	*	85	61
		Achievement (%)	*	19	23
C&G and NVQ craft courses	3	Number of starters	*	165	132
		Retention (%)	*	85	*
		Achievement (%)	*	64	67
GNVQ advanced	3	Number of starters	*	31	36
		Retention (%)	*	97	*
		Achievement (%)	*	47	60
National certificate	3	Number of starters	*	46	37
		Retention (%)	*	*	*
		Achievement (%)	*	83	92

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Business Studies

Grade 3

31 The inspection covered GNVQ courses at intermediate and advanced levels, GCE A level and GCE advanced supplementary (AS), GCSE and national certificate courses in business and GCE AS and GCSE accounting. Nineteen lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- a broad range of business courses at locations across the city
- imaginative and effective teaching
- good retention and pass rates on some courses
- effective monitoring of students' progress
- thorough and constructive marking of students' work

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement rates on GNVQ advanced
- narrow range of learning activities in some lessons
- insufficient sharing and development of learning resources and materials
- lack of integration of IT with courses
- inadequate updating of teachers' commercial experience

32 The college offers a broad range of business courses and students can progress to higher level programmes, including higher national certificate and diploma courses. A full range of courses is offered in most of the main centres. Enrolments to accounting have fallen, in part, due to the subject's removal as a form of additional study for GNVQ programmes. Similarly, the removal of a two-year part-time route for GCE A level business studies in 1998 has contributed to a significant fall in

enrolments. Courses are well managed. The achievement of targets for retention and examination success is monitored at course and division level. There is insufficient sharing and development of learning resources and materials between staff teaching the same course at different centres, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. The progress of students is effectively monitored through regular reviews. Enrichment activities are provided which include visits to local and national organisations and residential visits abroad. GNVQ students are provided with a period of work experience. Students' written work is thoroughly and constructively marked.

33 Of the lessons observed, inspectors judged 58% to be good or outstanding, below the national average for business lessons in sector colleges. Much teaching was well planned, imaginative and effective, a strength recognised in the self-assessment report. For example, in a key skills lesson on problem-solving, GNVQ students role-played workers on a production line. There was intense activity, competitive enthusiasm, and enjoyment in the context of clear learning outcomes. Students were well prepared for both the activity and the final reports and evaluations. In another lesson, the range of activities was appropriately linked to previous learning and new concepts were effectively developed. Students found the pace and range of activities demanding. However, in other lessons teachers used a more narrow range of learning activities, missed opportunities to stimulate students' interest and spent too much time on exposition. In a minority of lessons, the pace of work was that of the slowest student, teacher expectations were low, as a result, and other students were insufficiently engaged. There was poor punctuality in some lessons. These weaknesses were not recognised in the self-assessment report. There is poor integration of IT with courses.

34 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that there are some good students' achievements. For example, the

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pass rate on the full-time two-year GCE A level business course was 84% in 1999 and 46% achieved grades A to C. However, for students taking the course over one year the pass rate fell to only 23% in 1999. Pass rates for GCE AS accounting have been significantly higher than the national average for the past two years and 48% of the students who completed the course in 1999 achieved a high grade. Pass rates on GNVQ intermediate have improved significantly and now match the national average. Pass rates on GNVQ advanced and GCSE accounting courses are poor. Retention rates are good on GNVQ intermediate and GCE AS courses but have fallen on GCSE accounting, GNVQ advanced and national certificate programmes.

35 Accommodation for business students is good. Teaching rooms are well furnished and many contain topical wall displays, including students' work. A few rooms are too small. Good teaching resources are available. The learning centres are well equipped with multiple copies of recent texts for study and computer-based research materials. Full-time students have good access to IT facilities outside of lessons. Staff are well qualified in their subject areas and all have a teaching qualification. Some teachers are examiners with awarding bodies. Most teachers lack recent industrial updating.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE accounting (grade C or above)	2	Number of starters	*	58	43
		Retention (%)	*	84	67
		Achievement (%)	*	56	38
GNVQ intermediate business	2	Number of starters	*	83	60
		Retention (%)	*	88	82
		Achievement (%)	*	51	71
GCE AS accounting	3	Number of starters	*	32	26
		Retention (%)	*	78	81
		Achievement (%)	*	60	76
GNVQ advanced business	3	Number of starters	*	*	171
		Retention (%)	*	*	63
		Achievement (%)	*	*	64
National certificate in business and finance	3	Number of starters	*	*	87
		Retention (%)	*	*	63
		Achievement (%)	*	*	76
GCE A level business studies and accounting	3	Number of starters	*	*	128
		Retention (%)	*	*	80
		Achievement (%)	*	*	84

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Leisure

Grade 2

36 Inspectors observed 23 lessons covering sport, leisure and tourism. Inspectors agreed with much of the self-assessment report but identified a number of additional strengths and weaknesses. Some of the key strengths identified by the college represent expected normal practice.

Key strengths

- good pass and retention rates on most full-time courses
- opportunities for students to gain additional leisure and tourism qualifications
- effective arrangements for work experience
- excellent sports facilities at the Norton centre

Weaknesses

- insufficiently demanding work for students in some lessons
- unsatisfactory pass rates on C&G level 3 courses
- little part-time, evening, weekend or work-based provision

37 The college offers a broad range of courses, primarily for full-time students. Provision is made at all the main college centres and, overall, comprises programmes from entry to sub-degree level. Students have excellent opportunities to study for additional qualifications. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that the achievement of these additional qualifications improved students' future employment and progression prospects. For example, tourism students are able to study for the Association of British Travel Agents certificate, itinerary planning, a European language, an English tourism board 'Welcome Host' certificate and IT

qualifications. Leisure students can choose additional qualifications in life-saving, community sports leaders awards, coaching awards and governing body qualifications. The tourism curriculum in particular, maintains strong links with key employers who provide work experience and support students by their involvement in developing interview techniques and careers advice. By contrast, there is little part-time, evening, weekend or work-based provision, a weakness not identified in the college's self-assessment report.

38 Of the lessons observed, 65% were judged to be good or outstanding. Attendance was satisfactory, averaging 72%. The self-assessment report overstated some of the strengths of teaching. In the best lessons, there was evidence of detailed and imaginative planning and teachers used well-designed resources and had high expectations for students' achievements. They checked students' understanding and knowledge regularly through effective questioning. In one lifeguard lesson, the teacher gave clear and thorough instructions that enabled students to demonstrate high levels of competence. Some lessons were less effective; teachers failed to provide sufficiently demanding tasks for students or failed to allow time for the re-enforcement of concepts or knowledge. Learning programmes are complemented by a well-structured review process in which students' progress is regularly assessed. Tourism students take part in visits to southern Europe which form an integral feature of the assessment requirements of the programme. Leisure students undertake a four-week residential work placement at different holiday centres in the United Kingdom. Assignment briefs are written clearly and are well structured; coursework is returned promptly by teachers and marking is accurate.

39 Students' achieve high standards in their written work and perform well in practical situations. For example, the football team are the current champions of British colleges, and two students have represented England in the

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youth team. Travel and tourism students successfully undertake a group project that involves a high profile presentation to teachers, parents and employers. Inspectors agreed with the college that most pass and retention rates are good. For example, GNVQ advanced and intermediate pass rates over the past three years are at, or above, the national average. Pass rates on C&G recreation and leisure courses at levels 1 and 2 have improved since 1997, and in 1999 were significantly above the national average. However, the pass rate on the C&G recreation and leisure level 3 course has been unsatisfactory since 1997, a weakness not recognised in the college's self-assessment report. Students who complete their courses progress successfully. Most follow a related course in further or higher education, or move into relevant employment.

40 Teachers possess appropriate vocational and academic qualifications. Many of the travel and tourism staff undertake industrial placements on a regular basis, although more generally there is a low take-up of staff development opportunities. The college's self-assessment report identifies that insufficient industrial updating is undertaken by sport and leisure staff, and that there is a shortage of qualified internal verifiers; inspectors agreed with these judgements. Students at the Norton centre benefit from the excellent range of sports facilities that include several outdoor grass and astroturf pitches, a sports hall, tennis centre, swimming pool and fitness room. Teaching accommodation and specialist resources at the Loxley and Parson Cross centres are in need of refurbishment.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
C&G 4810 recreation and leisure industries	1	Number of starters	*	96	58
		Retention (%)	*	80	90
		Achievement (%)	*	38	87
C&G 4810 recreation and leisure industries	2	Number of starters	*	69	101
		Retention (%)	*	88	82
		Achievement (%)	*	53	77
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	Number of starters	*	86	78
		Retention (%)	*	79	73
		Achievement (%)	*	82	88
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	Number of starters	*	35	35
		Retention (%)	*	74	74
		Achievement (%)	*	83	69
National diploma leisure studies	3	Number of starters	*	43	24
		Retention (%)	*	74	92
		Achievement (%)	*	94	86
National diploma travel and tourism	3	Number of starters	*	40	54
		Retention (%)	*	83	69
		Achievement (%)	*	90	84
C&G 4810 recreation and leisure	3	Number of starters	*	33	44
		Retention (%)	*	97	77
		Achievement (%)	*	34	38

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care

Grade 2

41 Inspectors observed 30 lessons across the range of health, social and childcare courses. They largely agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the college but judged that weaknesses in curriculum management had not been recognised.

Key strengths

- well-planned lessons
- effective teaching
- careful integration of workplace and college learning
- high pass rates on childcare and GNVQ advanced health and social care courses
- good resources to support learning

Weaknesses

- low pass rate on the GNVQ foundation health and social care course
- poor attendance in some lessons
- insufficient use of key skills development opportunities in vocational lessons
- lack of rigour in some aspects of course management

42 Health, social and childcare courses are offered at all the main college centres and in community centres. Students may progress from foundation level to higher education, employment or professional training. Courses are available at different times which enables adults from groups often under-represented in further education to participate. Franchised GNVQ provision in partnership with a local hospital, provides a progression route for care-workers to enter nurse training. The demise of the local care assessment consortium has resulted in a decline in the range of NVQs in care. The college is a member of the Sheffield Early Years Partnership as part of the national childcare strategy.

43 Inspectors agreed with the college that course teams meet regularly to review courses and monitor students' progress. Targets for enrolment, students' retention and pass rates are monitored as part of the review process. Aspects of curriculum management related to action-planning and the monitoring of students' attendance and punctuality lack rigour. For example, targets are insufficiently specific and lack timescales for completion. Inspectors observed unsatisfactory attendance in childcare lessons, for instance, as low as 20%. Poor punctuality sometimes goes unquestioned and action to follow up non-attendance by students is irregular. The college did not identify these weaknesses in course management in the self-assessment report. Work experience is well integrated with courses. Students are able to develop skills with a variety of client groups. Students' learning in the workplace is supported by effective liaison between college staff and workplace supervisors.

44 Most teaching is good and inspectors observed some outstanding lessons. In the best lessons, good use was made of the students' experiences to promote the application of knowledge and understanding. During an introductory lesson on primary level mathematics, students were encouraged to explore their own anxieties about mathematics. Skilful questioning by the teacher helped them to overcome their fears and devise strategies to encourage children to enjoy developing mathematical skills. On a foundation level course, a highly skilled teacher used contributions from each student to develop their understanding of risks to health. Technical language was carefully introduced only after meanings of words had been thoroughly explored. Some schemes of work provide insufficient information about learning and assessment methods or key skills. Opportunities to develop key skills in vocational lessons are missed. The self-assessment report identifies key skills as an area for further development. Assignment briefs set by teachers are clear.

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Marked work is graded fairly and the majority of teachers' comments provide constructive feedback on how work might be improved.

45 In lessons and written work, most students demonstrate appropriate levels of knowledge and understanding. In the workplace, students effectively apply theory to work practices. Pass rates on childcare courses are outstanding. In 1999, all students undertaking the childcare certificate course and 97% of students on the diploma in nursery nursing achieved their qualification. In the same year, the pass rate on the advanced level GNVQ was good with 82% gaining the award, 9% above the national average. At foundation level, health and social care pass rates are poor: only 42% of the students achieved the award in 1999. Students'

achievements on NVQ level 3 courses are above the national average. At level 2, many students do not achieve the award within normal timescales. Retention rates on most courses are at, or above, national averages and improving. The college recognises the strengths and weaknesses in students' achievements.

46 Inspectors agreed with the college that most teachers are appropriately qualified. However, a minority of teachers have not recently updated their vocational skills and knowledge. Classrooms are well equipped with audiovisual aids and equipment for developing students' practical skills. Clear handouts support learning. Well-presented displays celebrate students' achievements.

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 health and social care	1	Number of starters	*	*	60
		Retention (%)	*	*	77
		Achievement (%)	*	*	42
NOCN childcare and education, playwork and residential care	2	Number of starters	*	130	120
		Retention (%)	*	71	72
		Achievement (%)	*	59	67
CACHE certificate in childcare and education	2	Number of starters	*	49	50
		Retention (%)	*	76	92
		Achievement (%)	*	97	100
GNVQ intermediate in health and social care	2	Number of starters	*	130	120
		Retention (%)	*	71	72
		Achievement (%)	*	59	67
GNVQ advanced health and social care	3	Number of starters	*	79	78
		Retention (%)	*	87	79
		Achievement (%)	*	61	82
CACHE diploma in nursery nursing	3	Number of starters	*	52	94
		Retention (%)	*	94	76
		Achievement (%)	*	96	97

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

English

Grade 2

47 Inspectors observed 22 lessons covering GCE A level, GCSE, access to higher education and National Open College Network (NOCN) accredited courses. They were in close agreement with the judgements expressed in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- high standard of teaching
- good pass rates
- effective co-ordination of English across the college
- extensive responsiveness to students' needs
- high-quality learning materials
- good opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum

Weaknesses

- declining retention rates
- insufficient use of IT in teaching and learning
- restricted opportunities for adults

48 English courses are offered at the college's five centres and at six of the neighbourhood centres. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that cross-college co-ordination and curriculum planning is a strength. Provision is organised in four teams, each led by a section leader. The divisional manager, with responsibility for English provision across the college, holds frequent meetings of section leaders to ensure a common approach to the teaching and learning of English. Meetings of all English teachers have been held to share good practice and build on the findings of lesson observation. Each GCSE team has developed common materials and teaching methods. Course documentation is thorough and detailed. The range of English

courses is wide. GCE A level students have a choice of four syllabuses. The access to higher education course in English studies attracts significant numbers of students. As an alternative to GCSE, the college offers several English programmes leading to NOCN qualifications at levels 1 and 2. The self-assessment report identified the need to review provision at level 2 in English and communications to address some unnecessary duplication with key skills provision on vocational courses.

49 Since the last inspection, the provision for adults studying English in the evenings has been substantially reduced. There are currently only 12 evening classes running. Access to these classes has also been restricted by the centralisation of provision previously offered at neighbourhood centres. The college offers few opportunities for open and distance learning. In 1998-99, the proportion of students studying English aged 19 was much smaller than for the college as a whole. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Lessons are well planned and supported by detailed schemes of work. Teachers vary activities effectively to maintain students' attention and provide opportunities for them to interact in pairs and small groups. In a lesson on persuasive writing, GCSE students working in small groups wrote a letter to an employer asking for their job back. They demonstrated a sense of enjoyment, good understanding and confident use of the linguistic techniques of persuasion. There is little use of IT by teachers in English lessons. A mentoring scheme has been introduced to address this weakness. Poor punctuality disrupted the start of some lessons and, as the self-assessment report indicates, attendance patterns on some programmes are irregular. Little use is made of the opportunity in some lesson plans to identify the key skills to be developed.

50 Students speak highly of the support they receive from their tutors. Regular reviews of progress include opportunities for students to

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evaluate their own learning. They are given helpful feedback on their assignments. Those intending to study at levels 1 and 2 benefit from the close attention given to their individual study needs. Initial assessments are undertaken to determine the correct study programme for students, offering them a choice of accredited course and course length. An extensive programme of enrichment activities includes visiting speakers and trips to theatres, cinemas, museums, art galleries and conferences. Twenty-six such activities have taken place since the beginning of the current academic year.

51 Pass rates are consistently above the national averages for tertiary colleges. The achievements in GCE A level English literature are high: in 1999, 57% of candidates gained grades A to C compared with the national average of 46%. Retention rates have declined over the last two years to near the national average at GCSE and slightly below at GCE A level. Access to higher education programmes have high rates of retention and achievement. Students produce coursework of a high standard, some of which demonstrates good IT skills. For example, GCE A level communication studies students produced an anthology of articles about youth subcultures, which was attractively presented and showed that they were developing good individual research skills. They published the anthology on the college intranet.

52 Teachers are well qualified and experienced and many have worked as examiners and external verifiers. Lessons take place in attractive well-equipped classrooms. Teachers have produced extremely effective workbooks and study packs to support students' learning. These are valued by students who find them interesting and highly relevant to their studies. The learning centres provide adequate support for students of English, and resources are moved easily and quickly between college centres when required.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE English (grade C or above)	2	Number of starters	*	619	696
		Retention (%)	*	75	74
		Achievement (%)	*	47	59
NOCN access English	2	Number of starters	*	43	55
		Retention (%)	*	58	56
		Achievement (%)	*	60	97
GCSE English literature	2	Number of starters	*	55	55
		Retention (%)	*	80	74
		Achievement (%)	*	70	59
GCE A level communication studies	3	Number of starters	*	83	61
		Retention (%)	*	78	59
		Achievement (%)	*	76	68
GCE A level English literature	3	Number of starters	*	122	101
		Retention (%)	*	*	71
		Achievement (%)	*	79	96
GCE A level English language and GCE A level English language and literature	3	Number of starters	*	413	412
		Retention (%)	*	83	72
		Achievement (%)	*	77	89
Access to higher education English/cultural studies	3	Number of starters	*	107	99
		Retention (%)	*	72	77
		Achievement (%)	*	92	92

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

*data unreliable

Curriculum Areas

Basic Skills

Grade 3

53 Inspectors observed 29 lessons in basic skills across the college at 16 different venues. The self-assessment report did not disaggregate judgements about basic skills from those about English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and did not include judgements about basic skills within its assessment of learning support. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report. They judged some acknowledged weaknesses to have greater significance, and identified additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- achievement of targets for enrolment, retention and pass rates
- well-organised basic skills programme
- widening participation through responsive and flexible provision
- highly qualified teachers

Weaknesses

- failure of some teaching to meet the learning needs of the students
- ineffective provision of basic skills support for students on vocational courses
- poor attendance and punctuality
- underdeveloped co-ordination of basic skills provision across the college

54 The scope of the inspection included: basic skills provision for adults; English and mathematics key skills elements of the 16 to 19 year old connections programme; and literacy and numeracy support for students on vocational courses. These separately managed strands of provision are not effectively co-ordinated across the college. There are few opportunities for the sharing of plans, resources

and expertise. This weakness was not identified in the college's self-assessment report. Key skills provision is made independently of basic skills. Students on vocational courses have an assessment of basic skills needs and are able to receive support in learning centres. In 1998-99, 323 students registered to attend these support sessions. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that there are deficiencies in this provision. The support is not sufficiently linked to the outcomes of initial assessment. There is a low take-up of support by students. Tutors do not keep adequate records of students' progress, and students' achievements are not recognised with accredited qualifications.

55 The connections programme recruited 540 students in 1999-2000. Students follow courses in basic English and mathematics, IT and vocational subjects. Inspectors agreed with the strengths stated in the self-assessment report that the programme is flexible and responsive, although teachers do not yet share a common approach. The basic skills programme is provided in 30 centres across the city. Students are recruited who would not otherwise attend the college. Inspectors agreed with the college that this widening of participation is a strength. There are good partnerships and links with other organisations. Enrolments have increased, and amounted to 2,100 in 1998-99. Planning has improved since the last inspection. Targets for enrolment, retention and achievement are met. The programme is well organised and has a sound structure. Students report high levels of satisfaction with their basic skills courses.

56 The proportion of lessons judged to be good or outstanding was 48%, lower than the programme area average of 54%. Much of the teaching is well planned. In the best lessons, teachers organise a good range of activities and students are encouraged to support each other. Inspectors observed good work in pairs and small groups. Some teaching is confident and skilled. For example, in a numeracy lesson, the

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teacher led a discussion before introducing a problem-solving exercise designed to consolidate learning about the basic rules of arithmetic. Some teaching is less effective and inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that teachers do not vary their teaching methods appropriately. Teachers do not organise learning effectively for students with differing abilities. Inspectors observed students laboriously completing workbooks simply to meet assessment criteria. In a literacy lesson, students were asked to complete a task sheet. One of the students could not read or write and was unable to participate in that activity. Individual learning plans do not always focus sufficiently on students' learning goals. Inspectors did not agree with the college's self-assessment that these plans were a significant strength.

57 Students on the basic skills and connections programmes have their achievements accredited mainly through the NOCN. Most credits are achieved at level 1. In 1998-99, more than 80% of students achieved at least one credit in English or in mathematics. The programme aims to help students to progress to level 2 courses, but only 34% did so in 1998-99. On the basic skills programme in 1998-99, 76% of students on literacy courses and 68% of students on numeracy courses achieved at least one NOCN credit. The college aims for students to achieve three or four credits in one year, but the average number of credits achieved is two. Inspectors did not agree with the judgement in the self-assessment report that students' achievements are a significant strength. Many students repeat similar basic skills courses while making slow progress. In 1998-99, only 21% progressed to other vocational and academic courses within the college. Retention rates on both programmes are close to the average for students on similar NOCN courses. Punctuality was poor in the lessons observed by inspectors. Attendance was unsatisfactorily low.

58 Teachers are well qualified. Most are graduates and have a teaching certificate or equivalent qualification; many have a relevant specialist qualification. Inspectors agreed with this strength stated in the self-assessment report. Some teachers on the connections programme are less experienced in teaching students with a wide range of ability. The self-assessment report identified the need for more training for these teachers. Facilities and teaching equipment are adequate at most centres, but a few lack sufficient resources. Most neighbourhood centres have dedicated accommodation for basic skills courses.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NOCN literacy: basic skills programme	Unclassified	Number of starters	*	*	1,491
		Retention (%)	*	*	72
		Achievement (%)	*	*	76 #
NOCN literacy: connections programme	Unclassified	Number of starters	**	321	534
		Retention (%)	**	70	69
		Achievement (%)	**	67 #	81 #
NOCN numeracy: basic skills programme	Unclassified	Number of starters	*	*	789
		Retention (%)	*	*	71
		Achievement (%)	*	*	68 #
NOCN numeracy: connections programme	Unclassified	Number of starters	**	400	562
		Retention (%)	**	68	68
		Achievement (%)	**	85 #	82 #

Source: college

*data unreliable

**courses not running

#includes students achieving one or more credits

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 3

59 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the college's self-assessment report. However, they also identified further significant weaknesses.

Key strengths

- comprehensive guidance and entry procedures
- wide range of accessible and helpful student services
- good liaison activities with schools
- well-organised careers education and guidance

Weaknesses

- the lack of a co-ordinated strategy for learning support
- insufficient learning support
- some ineffective and inadequate tutorial support
- ineffective arrangements for addressing student absences

60 Support and guidance is provided in attractive, welcoming, well-resourced areas at each of the college's main centres. Each area has a student services charter clearly displayed. Teachers and students speak highly of the staff and of the help and support they provide. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there are comprehensive guidance and well-organised entry procedures for full-time and substantial part-time students. The admissions process is effective. Prospective students receive good printed information about the college and services available. This is also available in community languages, Braille and on tape. Admissions interviews take place at both school and college, with staff using standard documentation and interview packs.

61 Most full-time students receive a one-day or two-day induction, which they value. They receive a student handbook, but many are unaware of the college charter contained in the handbook. Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that induction arrangements for part-time and late entry students are inadequate. The lack of arrangements for part-time students results in many not taking an initial assessment, not receiving the college charter or handbook and generally being unaware of their entitlements. In addition, there is no formal tutorial provision for part-time students.

62 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment report that there are good links with local schools. In 1999, the college provided vocational 'taster' programmes to over 1,000 pupils. External evaluation reports on these activities are very positive, especially about improvements to pupils' motivation. A comprehensive range of liaison activities is undertaken in 27 local schools. These include attendance at parents evenings, open evenings, consultation events and curriculum presentations. The college is working closely with the LEA to develop programmes for 70 pre-16 pupils, who have become unsettled at school.

63 The management of learning support lacks co-ordination. There is no central record indicating the number of students receiving support. The college expects all full-time and substantial part-time students to undergo an initial numeracy and communications assessment. In 1999-2000, many students were not assessed or learning support was not provided. The college has recently introduced learning support assistants to work in the main learning centres. An industrial dispute over the role of these staff has led to tutors not referring students to a centre, resulting in many students' support needs not being met or remaining undiagnosed. Attendance by students offered learning support has been low. These

Cross-college Provision

weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report. Well-qualified staff provide additional support for a wide range of students with sensory impairments and specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia and autism. Specialist help and learning resources are made available in response to students' diagnosed needs. The college has valuable links with external support services.

64 Inspectors did not agree with the self-assessment report that tutorials are effective. The college uses a standard system for recording students' progress which has an extensive number of forms. These are not used consistently across the college. There is no audit of the system to review its effectiveness. All full-time students have a personal tutor and timetabled tutorial time. Students' experiences of tutorials vary considerably. Only a minority of those observed by inspectors were good or outstanding. In some group tutorials, there was an absence of lesson plans, schemes of work and use of common materials. Attendance in some was poor. The college does not yet have a system for the monitoring of non-attendance. Attendance in subject or vocational lessons observed by inspectors in most areas was below the national average. This weakness was recognised in the self-assessment report. In some courses, students' progress is regularly reviewed. Frequent one-to-one sessions are highly valued by students. Parents or carers of students aged 16 to 18 are invited to attend parents' evenings and they receive written progress reports.

65 Careers education and guidance is effective. Students speak positively of the higher education guidance and support they receive. Opportunities for employment are well promoted. A good range of careers materials is available in the student services centres. These include software packages, university prospectuses and books on specific careers. Student services' staff work closely with careers advisers from the local careers company, who provide students with individual guidance

interviews and careers talks. There are productive relationships with the specialist careers adviser responsible for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

66 The college provides helpful advice on finance and benefits, counselling, support with transport and childcare. Childcare facilities are available at four centres. Access funds are well managed and administered, encouraging student participation. Counselling is available at each centre, offered by appropriately qualified staff. However, counselling staff do not meet regularly. A multi-faith chaplaincy has been introduced with two publicised events being held. The college also has five prayer rooms.

General Resources

Grade 3

67 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. A few strengths were overstated. They identified an additional weakness.

Key strengths

- attractive and well-resourced learning centres
- up-to-date IT equipment and facilities
- much good teaching accommodation
- secure and clean environment for staff and students

Weaknesses

- some poor-quality buildings and environments
- under-utilisation of accommodation
- insufficient social areas
- lack of access for students with restricted mobility in some areas

68 The accommodation strategy for 1995 to 2000 has been implemented. The main aim of the strategy was to reduce the size of the estate. Two of the original six main centres have been

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closed and 115 neighbourhood centres rationalised to 47. The new Peaks centre is a response to the growing population in this part of the city. New accommodation has been established at the Castle centre. Overall, the floor area has been reduced by almost 30%. Nevertheless, the college is still substantially over provided with space. The self-assessment report recognises these strengths and weaknesses.

69 College reports suggest that many of the main buildings are of poor structural design, suffering from flat roofs, asbestos and poor insulation. Substantial work has been completed, for example on structural repair, and improvements to building services. Much of this has been essential maintenance to meet health and safety requirements. The self-assessment report recognises that half of the accommodation requires refurbishment and that the mechanical and electrical services to much of the estate require replacement. Teaching areas suffer from extremes of temperature. Many of the older buildings are in need of painting.

70 The exterior appearances of the main centres at Norton and Peaks are very attractive. Others, such as parts of Castle, are poor. Some of the entrances are welcoming and provide a range of student services close by. Student car parking is available at all the main centres except during the day at Castle. A majority of the classrooms have been refurbished. These are appropriately equipped, well decorated and well furnished. Others are of a satisfactory quality and a few, for example, the mobile classrooms at the Castle centre, are poorly furnished. Some of the estate has been thoughtfully redeveloped. For example, at Norton, buildings have been zoned and colour-coded for particular curriculum areas. The recently modified accommodation for art and design at Loxley, and the Peaks development, provide good learning environments. Leased accommodation at Square Mile is welcoming and of a high standard.

71 Much of the accommodation is accessible to students with restricted mobility. In many areas there are lifts and ramps and there are some automatic doors. However, some areas, such as the top two floors at Loxley, are inaccessible and in other areas access is difficult. For example, many of the doors are heavy and difficult to open.

72 The learning centres are pleasant and well furnished. They integrate library, IT and student support services. Some of the centres are busy at peak times; they are managed effectively by well-informed staff. An appropriate range of books, periodicals, video and CD-ROM items is catalogued on a networked computerised system. Students have good access to these and to items from other centres, including the inter-library loan service. Additional books are bought by the curriculum areas. The separate budgets for each learning centre are not related to student numbers, resulting in wide variations in funding per full-time equivalent student.

73 The college has significantly upgraded the facilities for IT in the last year. All centres are linked by a high-speed, high-capacity network. The system is closely monitored, enabling the college, for example to detect viruses before they affect the system. Computers for students and software are up to date; all have Internet access. Technician support is good in all centres except at Loxley. The ratio of workstations to full-time equivalent students is currently 1:7. Students enjoy good access to computers in their curriculum areas. Staff workrooms, situated near their curriculum areas are shared by full-time and part-time teachers. Some are small, as the self-assessment report recognises and there is a shortage of storage facilities. Computers in each staff room are networked, although the number of workstations is currently low.

74 The college makes use of excellent, hired, sports facilities. In contrast, sports halls owned by the college need some refurbishment. Three good-quality fitness centres are very popular

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with students and the community. There are insufficient common rooms and social areas for students, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. The lack of exterior seating and meeting spaces at Castle gives a poor impression to visitors as entrances are used for social gathering. At Parson Cross, horticulture students have created an attractive garden and seated area. Overall, the refectory facilities are satisfactory but some need redecorating and refurbishing; they are sometimes overcrowded. At the Peaks centre, in order to avoid substantial value added tax charges, the college has decided not to provide a refectory. The self-assessment report did not identify this weakness.

Quality Assurance

Grade 4

75 Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report but did not consider that all the strengths outlined were key strengths.

Key strengths

- detailed procedures for curriculum review
- staff development closely matched to identified needs

Weaknesses

- insufficient impact of quality assurance procedures on the curriculum
- some inadequate course reviews and action-planning
- unreliable students' achievements data
- insufficient monitoring of service standards
- inadequate arrangements for the appraisal of staff

76 The college has a strong commitment to improving the quality of its operations through self-assessment. The mission statement commits the college to promote 'high-quality' learning programmes. Whilst students' pass rates have improved over the last two years, they have been accompanied by a decline in retention. Quality assurance procedures have had insufficient impact on the curriculum. Curriculum grades awarded by inspectors were lower than those achieved in the last inspection, although inspectors agreed with the college's own self-assessment conclusions, except in respect of basic skills. There has been slow progress in addressing many of the areas identified for improvement in the last inspection report. The college's quality assurance procedures cover the curriculum and some student support services; they are subject to periodic review. Recent improvements include changes to the self-assessment report format, better links between the actions resulting from self-assessment and business planning and the formal evaluation of annual reviews. It is too early to identify the impact of these changes although staff appear more confident about quality assurance procedures as a result of these revisions.

77 The procedures for curriculum self-assessment are detailed; they take into account the complexity of the college. Four quality coordinators oversee self-assessment, the production and evaluation of annual quality reviews and monitor the action plans for 150 curriculum quality review teams. Each review team has responsibility for a group of courses. All full-time and most part-time teachers participate in reviews. Team meetings include standing agenda items referring to issues about quality. Reviews are validated by a group of staff, including support staff, drawn from across the college and then by the academic board. There are no external members involved in the validation process. Inspectors agreed that the system of lesson observation is a strength.

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Summaries of key outcomes from these observations inform school staff development activities and allow for grade comparisons with national statistics. Individual teachers are given detailed feedback and are positive about the system. A confidentiality agreement currently restricts the wider use of information. There are no arrangements for internal observation of other college operations.

78 As the self-assessment report identifies, curriculum reviews vary significantly in their quality. Reviews are designed to provide an evaluation of students' achievements using national benchmarking data produced by the FEFC, students' perceptions, lesson observations and aspects of student support. Student perception questionnaires are analysed effectively across the college. However, in many of the individual reviews, key components such as action plans are missing or completed in a perfunctory manner. The evidence on which judgements are based is not always secure. The historically poor quality of data has hindered accurate judgements about students' achievements, adversely affecting the ability of course teams to pinpoint unsatisfactory performance and set targets for improvement. A promising pilot system, identified during the last inspection, enabling teachers to compare actual GCE A level grades with those predicted from students' GCSE results, has not been implemented.

79 Service standards have been formally set for a number of business support functions but these have not been monitored regularly. The school of student support, for example, has standards and a framework for pastoral support and is currently setting service standards for other aspects of its work such as admissions. There is no formal system of self-assessment in business support areas. The college identified in its self-assessment report that further progress is required to develop service standards. The college charter and associated documents contain few measurable targets and these are

not monitored regularly. Franchise contracts are adequately scrutinised. There are monthly auditing visits that include monitoring the quality of learning facilities, observing lessons and obtaining the views of students. Lesson observations have not been completed regularly for a few partners. While there is no requirement for partners to produce regular self-assessment reports, the college has supported one partner in producing a report.

80 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that staff development is well planned and effective. The training needs of staff are clearly identified and prioritised. Annual training plans for each functional area take into account needs identified during quality review, business planning and appraisal. College priorities for staff development are then derived from these plans. An externally accredited management development programme has been completed by over 20 managers. Expenditure on staff development was 1.7% of the payroll in 1998-99. The college is making preparations to achieve Investors in People status but, as the self-assessment report recognises, progress has been slow.

81 Arrangements for staff appraisal are inadequate, as identified in the self-assessment. A biennial professional review undertaken by line managers has recently been introduced for teachers, and managers are appraised annually. The review is primarily concerned with identifying staff training needs. Outcomes from lesson observation do not routinely inform the scheme. The majority of teachers have not been appraised. There is no formal appraisal scheme for support staff.

Governance

Grade 4

82 Inspectors and auditors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report.

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Key strengths

- good attendance at corporation and committee meetings
- governors' awareness of educational issues

Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement in determining the college's strategic direction
- failure to secure the solvency of the college
- inadequate monitoring of the college's and the corporation's performance
- lack of appraisal of senior postholders

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

84 The corporation has 20 members, of whom five are women. Eleven governors have been appointed since June 1999. At the time of the inspection there were two vacancies. Membership includes two governors nominated by the FEFC. The corporation has conducted a skills audit and substantially meets the new determination requirements. However, some governors have been appointed for periods exceeding statutory requirements. The corporation has not staggered appointments, for example, terms of office of nine governors expire at the same time. Induction arrangements are good. Governors attend external training events, but there is no formal annual assessment of training needs. They assessed their own performance for self-assessment, but there are no performance indicators to measure their effectiveness. The recently formed quality and standards committee is to identify suitable indicators.

85 The corporation and its committees have met frequently in the last year, and attendance has been high, averaging 80%. The corporation now receives reports from the clerk to the corporation on the progress achieved in addressing resolutions made at previous meetings. Detailed standing orders govern the conduct of corporation and committee business. The corporation acts in an appropriate open manner; policies on confidentiality of and access to information have been determined; the register of interests covers senior staff as well as governors. The code of conduct requires updating to bring it into line with the Nolan recommendations. The clerk's job description does not encompass all aspects of her role.

86 The corporation has failed to secure the solvency of the college. As the self-assessment report identified it has approved annual estimates based on unrealistic funding unit targets. It has not secured the effective and efficient use of the college's resources. The finance and general purposes committee has not met its remit to monitor effectively the college's financial position and provide appropriate advice to the corporation. The corporation has only recently begun to receive regular reports on the progress of the college in meeting its targets for FEFC funding units, and the progress on contracts for the college's franchised provision. The audit committee has not fully met its remit. It has not set criteria for monitoring the performance of external auditors, or sufficiently monitored implementation by managers of recommendations in internal and external audit reports. The committee has also become involved in policy-making, for example, advising on the content of the college's financial regulations, thus compromising its independence.

87 Governors' involvement in setting the strategic direction of the college has been limited. For example, while they have focused on individual aspects such as improvements to the college's accommodation they have not

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ensured the college meets its mission. In 1999, governors recognised that the strategic plan for 1998 to 2001 did not sufficiently identify key priorities for the college. They were not sufficiently involved in the production of a new development plan, which was subsequently deemed by the FEFC to be an inadequate basis for funding, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report.

88 The corporation has not sufficiently monitored progress made by the college in implementing its strategic aims. It has not ensured that senior managers focus their work on the college meeting its strategic objectives and financial targets. Governors have relied too much on the steer given by senior managers. In 1998, they discussed the need to appraise senior postholders and the clerk. However, as stated in the self-assessment report, apart from recently appraising the clerk they have failed to implement their proposals. Governors acknowledge the need to increase communications and team-working between themselves and college managers.

89 Governors keep themselves well aware of educational issues through presentations by managers. They also receive regular reports on health and safety and personnel issues. Individual governors have usefully contributed to the college's estates, franchising and IT strategy committees. The corporation's retention and achievements advisory group discusses students' achievements which include comparisons with national benchmarking data published by the FEFC. However, as the self-assessment report states, inaccuracies in data have prevented the governors gaining an overview of the college's performance. There are few arrangements for governors to develop links with staff or students. The corporation has received action plans arising from the self-assessment process but does not monitor progress against the plans. Recent changes to some corporation committees have been designed to support more effective monitoring of the college's performance.

Management

Grade 4

90 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the conclusion of the self-assessment report but did not agree with many of the key strengths identified. They agreed with some of the weaknesses and identified other serious shortcomings.

Key strengths

- clear evaluation of the college's difficulties by the acting principal
- aspects of cross-college management

Weaknesses

- inadequate strategic planning
- weak financial management
- failure to meet the educational needs of the community
- ineffective operational planning
- inadequacies in the management structure
- poor communication
- ineffective and inefficient deployment of staff
- inaccurate management information

91 Currently, the day to day management of the college has been delegated to the deputy principal with assistance from senior managers, many of whom are in acting posts. In the last academic year approximately 20% of the college's units were provided through franchise arrangements, some of which were at a considerable distance from the college. As a result, senior managers have been distracted from giving clear direction to planning and monitoring the college's core business. The recent arrangements to review the college's strategic, organisational and financial management have resulted in good progress being made to identify the issues which have led to the college's difficulties. Prompt action has

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been taken by the acting principal to inform staff of the critical financial situation and to engage them in the review process.

92 There are serious weaknesses in strategic planning. Although the college's mission statement clearly sets out what it seeks to achieve, there is no agreed strategic plan for the development of the college's provision. This significant weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Senior managers have identified initiatives such as community partnerships, distance learning and key skills as priorities for planning across the college but these have been interpreted in different ways by different managers. The number of students enrolling for many courses has declined. Links with employers are generally weak and there is little part-time evening, weekend or work-based provision. Action to identify the learning needs of communities in Sheffield has not been co-ordinated effectively. Although individual members of staff have worked hard to develop links with community groups and have introduced some successful provision, community representatives report significant difficulties in working with the college.

93 Inspectors judged that curriculum organisation is a strength in science, IT (franchised), and English. Management of some aspects of cross-college provision such as the development of the Peaks centre, facilities for IT, staff development, and aspects of student support linked to admissions, access funds and schools liaison are effective. Operational or business planning has been hindered by the lack of an agreed strategic framework and inaccuracies in the data relating to the numbers of students, retention rates and achievements. These difficulties resulted in too much provision being planned for 1998-99. Some operational plans are comprehensive and detailed, but others lack rigour and display little evidence of creativity in developing the college's provision to meet the needs of the city's communities. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

94 As the self-assessment report acknowledges, the college's management information system has not provided managers with accurate data. There have been significant discrepancies between the centrally held data relating to students' retention and achievements and the data recorded by course teams. For example, the system has been slow to remove from registers those students who have withdrawn from courses early in the first term and this has resulted in inaccuracies in retention rates. Although there have been improvements in the collection, recording and use of data in the past year, managers recognise that a considerable amount of work is still needed to ensure staff have confidence in the accuracy of centrally held data. The college has made a major investment in the development of IT and has taken a lead in working with external partners to establish an information and communications technology strategy for the city.

95 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is weak. Whilst the college has made historic cost surpluses in the last two years, helped by the disposal of property and the income from franchising, the college's financial position remains weak. It had net current liabilities of £2 million and negative income and expenditure reserves of £3.4 million as at 31 July 1999. In autumn 1999, the FEFC alerted the college to its concerns about the seriousness of the college's financial situation and indicated that it was in need of exceptional support from the FEFC. Prior to this, the magnitude of the problems was not acknowledged by the college. In recent years, the college has prepared inaccurate estimates based on unrealistic funding targets, resulting in it having to repay the FEFC almost £7 million. A more appropriate funding target for 1999-2000 has now been determined which has resulted in an increase in the college's average level of funding. The acting principal and director of finance have taken interim measures to improve the short-term financial position and

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are currently preparing a recovery plan for FEFC approval to achieve long-term financial viability. Detailed and timely management accounts are prepared each month and reviewed by the college directors. The financial regulations are largely comprehensive and, as noted in the self-assessment report, have been recently reviewed and updated in the light of current sector issues. The 1998-99 annual internal audit report indicates that procedures and controls within some of the college's systems are not entirely adequate. Although the college has a history of late data returns to the FEFC, the latest return was submitted on time and was judged to be accurate.

96 The management structure is overly complex. The roles and responsibilities of managers lack clarity; there are overlaps in areas of functional responsibility. Some procedures such as those for the withdrawal of courses are very bureaucratic and hinder timely responses. There are weaknesses in the co-ordination of some cross-college provision such as basic skills. The staff survey carried out in May 1999 identified that 69% of staff were dissatisfied with communications. Some decisions which have a significant impact on their work have been taken without consultation. Staff often receive repeated requests for the same information.

97 The self-assessment report indicates that staff perceive their workloads to be heavy. However, the college reported in January 2000 that remission and under-utilisation of staff amounted to 140 full-time equivalents or 22.5% of the potential teaching hours available. This figure is significantly above that in most colleges. Little action has been taken to address this. Failure to address the serious mismatch between staff skills and programme requirements has inhibited the development and teaching of some courses. Lack of action to remedy the inflexibility of some staff contractual arrangements has further exacerbated the college's difficulties.

Conclusions

98 The self-assessment report was a detailed document which included the sources of evidence as well as its analysis to support the judgements made. It identified strengths and weaknesses of provision in accordance with the statements on quality in Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. The report also identified actions for improvement. In the curriculum sections, students' achievements were benchmarked against aggregate data for colleges with a high proportion of disadvantaged students, although not against national course specific data. Inspectors found that the report provided a useful basis for planning and undertaking the inspection. Following its designation by the FEFC as a college requiring exceptional support, and the special measures adopted, the college provided an updated self-assessment report that included revised grades for three cross-college areas. Inspectors largely agreed with the conclusions made in the curriculum sections but considered that some individual strengths had been overstated and identified additional weaknesses. In the cross-college sections, although some grades were revised, the strengths and weaknesses were not substantially changed. In management in particular, inspectors identified further significant weaknesses. Overall, inspectors agreed with the grades awarded by the college except in two cases where one grade lower was awarded. ISR data for the college in 1997 proved unreliable.

99 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 (February 2000)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	0
16-18 years	25
19-24 years	14
25+ years	61
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (February 2000)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	52
Level 2 (intermediate)	18
Level 3 (advanced)	28
Level 4/5 (higher)	2
Non-schedule 2	0
Total	100

Source: college data

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	1,067	3,353	19
Agriculture	37	121	1
Construction	248	353	3
Engineering	182	528	3
Business	615	1,990	11
Hotel and catering	620	673	6
Health and community care	809	2,657	15
Art and design	875	1,444	10
Humanities	1,092	3,172	19
Basic education	697	2,166	13
Total	6,242	16,457	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 40% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (February 2000)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	575	157	9	741
Supporting direct learning contact	170	23	49	242
Other support	492	69	74	635
Total	1,237	249	132	1,618

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£43,281,000	£42,436,000	£44,183,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£19.58*	£17.27*	£16.91
Payroll as a proportion of income	72%	63%	63%
Achievement of funding target	114%	91%	83%
Diversity of income	21%	22%	31%
Operating surplus	-£1,695,000	£13,000	£358,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

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

Payroll – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

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

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 98/43 (1997), 00/10 (1998), college (1999)

*provisional data

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1997	1998	1999	1997	1998	1999
1	Number of starters	*	1,614	1,882	*	4,023	4,415
	Retention (%)	*	80	70	*	78	71
	Achievement (%)	*	56	73	*	61	71
2	Number of starters	*	3,787	3,611	*	4,638	4,753
	Retention (%)	*	79	73	*	74	72
	Achievement (%)	*	73	80	*	68	77
3	Number of starters	*	4,869	4,479	*	3,571	2,983
	Retention (%)	*	83	71	*	80	74
	Achievement (%)	*	77	81	*	59	66
4 or 5	Number of starters	*	1	38	*	212	515
	Retention (%)	*	100	79	*	86	65
	Achievement (%)	*	100	67	*	72	58
Short courses	Number of starters	*	1,685	2,085	*	18,416	12,025
	Retention (%)	*	96	89	*	96	92
	Achievement (%)	*	78	74	*	89	81
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	*	2,424	3,877	*	11,436	10,172
	Retention (%)	*	79	79	*	79	75
	Achievement (%)	*	69	76	*	79	81

Source: college

*data unreliable

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