

ShIPLEY College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1997-98**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

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

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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

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

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

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

Retention and Pass Rates

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

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

Summary

ShIPLEY College

Yorkshire and Humberside Region

Inspected February 1998

ShIPLEY College is a general further education college in West Yorkshire. Production of the college's self-assessment report involved staff at all levels and governors. It covered service areas as well as curriculum areas and cross-college functions. Inspectors concluded that many of the grades awarded in the self-assessment report were well founded. They considered, however, that the significance of some strengths and weaknesses was underestimated.

The college offers a range of vocational and academic courses for 16 to 19 year-old students and adults in eight of the FEFC's programme areas. The inspection considered courses in three of these. The quality of provision in health and care is good and in horticulture and humanities it is satisfactory. Students' achievements are good on floristry and childcare courses. Overall pass rates in GCSE subjects have improved significantly and are now good. The college attaches particular importance to supporting students on foundation and pre-foundation level courses. Support for students is very good, particularly for those for whom English is a second language. Governance is of a high standard. The college is well managed; the management style is open and democratic. There is a coherent quality assurance

framework and service standards have been introduced. The staff development programme is strong. The accommodation has been imaginatively adapted to provide an attractive learning environment. Information and learning technology facilities are good. The college should improve: pockets of less than satisfactory teaching; low levels of students' retention and achievements on some courses; inconsistencies in the completion of course reviews; the monitoring of some aspects of college performance, the computerised management information systems and some of the accommodation.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Horticulture	3	Support for students	1
Health and care	2	General resources	2
Humanities	3	Quality assurance	2
		Governance	1
		Management	2

The College and its Mission

1 Shipley College in West Yorkshire is about one mile from Shipley and four miles from Bradford. It was established over 100 years ago to provide education and training for the local population and the workforce of Sir Titus Salt's textile mill in his model village, Saltaire. Most current students are recruited from the Shipley and Bradford areas. The college operates largely from its two main buildings, the Exhibition and Salt buildings, which have been recently refurbished. It also uses three other buildings in Shipley: Victoria Hall and the Aire and Mill buildings. Apart from the Aire building, all the buildings are listed. Only the Mill building is owned by the college; most of the others are leased from the Salt Foundation. The buildings are only a few minutes' walk from each other, except for the Aire building, which is half a mile away. The college also makes use of six community centres and, for part-time evening provision, two local schools.

2 The college is one of many providers of post-16 education and training in the Bradford area. Within seven miles is a city technology college, 27 upper schools, two further education colleges and many other providers of training. Courses are provided at the college in eight of the Further Education Funding Council's (FEFC's) 10 programme areas. Construction and engineering are not offered. The college contributes to the community courses provided by the Bradford Local Education Authority (LEA), runs its own relatively large adult education programme, and provides training funded by the Bradford and District Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Its courses lead to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) or their equivalent at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. It also offers nine subjects at general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and eight general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects. Other courses lead to national

vocational qualifications (NVQs) and other qualifications. The college was a founder member of the national Language Development Network Limited, a national network of about 60 colleges, which shares the production of open learning materials.

3 Textiles and engineering remain important to the Bradford economy but are declining, while electronics, financial and business services, and retailing are growing. The unemployment rate in the Bradford district is above the national average. It is particularly high among young Asians at 34 per cent. The proportion of pupils in the Bradford secondary schools who are in receipt of free school meals, 21 per cent, is nearly double the national average. Thirty-one per cent of the pupils aged 16 in the Bradford LEA achieved five or more GCSE subjects at grade C or above in 1996. This is 14 per cent below the national average for that year. People from minority ethnic communities make up 16 per cent of the total population of Bradford.

4 In 1996-97, the college enrolled 2,771 students. Since 1992-93, full-time student numbers have increased by 38 per cent and part-time numbers by 31 per cent. In each of the last three years the college has significantly exceeded its funding unit target. Its average level of funding is well below the median level for the sector. Seventy-one per cent of all students at the college are enrolled on intermediate or foundation level courses; over half the full-time students are enrolled at the advanced level. Eighteen per cent of the college's students and 40 per cent of full-time students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. English is not the first language for 35 per cent of the full-time students.

5 The senior management team comprises the principal, the college administrator and three assistant principals with responsibility for corporate development, curriculum, and resources. The college has seven curriculum 'sectors': adult and creative education; business;

Context

care; general education; horticulture; science and computing; and special needs. These are grouped into two faculties, each headed by an assistant principal. Seven teams manage cross-college services.

6 The college's mission is 'to deliver high-quality education and training that meets the needs of individual students, communities and businesses in the Bradford area'. Its core values are quality, relevance and equality. It sees itself as distinctive in being a small, innovative, responsive college which gives high levels of support to individuals. In particular, it takes pride in the support offered to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to students whose first language is not English, to adults without academic qualifications and to school-leavers who have not done well in compulsory education. In order to achieve its mission the college has prioritised the development of innovative and flexible provision, the use of information and learning technology, the provision of good learner support, the development of key skills, and the efficient use of resources.

The Inspection

7 Inspection took place during one week in February 1998. Inspectors had previously analysed the college's self-assessment report and

information on the college held by other divisions of the FEFC. The college submitted data on students' achievements for the three years 1995 to 1997 which were checked against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. Eight inspectors spent 25 days in the college and an auditor spent five days. Meetings were held with governors, managers, other college staff, students and with representatives of the local TEC, the local authority, and Bradford Careers Limited. Inspectors observed 39 lessons and examined samples of students' work and a variety of college documents.

8 Of the lessons inspected, 54 per cent were rated good or outstanding and 10 per cent were less than satisfactory. This compares with the average of 61 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, for all colleges inspected in 1996-97, according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. The average level of attendance in the lessons inspected, 77 per cent, and the average class size of 10.5 students were similar to the sector averages for 1996-97 according to the same report. The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A level/GCSE	0	3	4	2	0	9
GNVQ	2	3	1	0	0	6
NVQ	1	2	3	0	0	6
Other vocational*	5	5	6	2	0	18
Total	8	13	14	4	0	39

*national and first diploma

Curriculum Areas

Horticulture

Grade 3

9 The inspection covered most of the college's courses in horticulture and floristry. Twelve lessons were inspected. The self-assessment report for this curriculum area was not comprehensive; it contained few judgements on aspects of teaching and learning. Some of the provision judged by the college to be strong, such as aspects of students' achievements, was not supported by inspection evidence.

Key strengths

- effective linking of theory and practice
- comprehensive records of students' progress
- consistently high standards of performance by floristry students
- productive links with industry and the local community
- realistic practical work in college and other grounds

Weaknesses

- teaching strategies which failed to meet the needs of all students
- lack of clarity in the objectives of some lessons
- weaknesses in tutorial work
- some low pass and retention rates
- insufficient analysis of the reasons for poor performance
- some gaps in the range of provision
- shortages in equipment and materials

10 Close links with a large number of employers and other local groups are used effectively to support teaching. The range of part-time courses in amenity horticulture is good; there are courses from NVQ level 1 to

level 3. However, there are gaps in the range of provision. For example, the full-time courses are not well suited to the needs of some adult students, and there are insufficient opportunities for full-time students to obtain additional qualifications which would enhance their employment prospects. Full-time enrolments are well below target and the first diploma course was discontinued due to low recruitment.

11 Lessons which last for up to half a day are used effectively to provide a balanced mix of theory and practical work and to develop the skills of group work. Inspection findings agreed with the college's self-assessment that work experience is well managed. Class exercises and assignments provide opportunities for students to use their knowledge and numeracy skills to solve practical and vocationally relevant problems. In some cases, however, the objectives of assignments are not specified clearly. In a few lessons, the teaching did not meet the needs of some students. For example the weaker students were not fully involved in discussions and sometimes they were unable to pay attention to the teaching and take notes at the same time. Some teachers' comments on students' work are insufficiently detailed to be useful. Detailed records are maintained of each student's progress and these are used to review students' performance. There are weaknesses in the tutorial process. For example, the outcomes are not recorded in sufficient detail and recording starts too late in the first term to be useful to weaker students. These weaknesses were not recorded in the self-assessment report.

12 Some students' assignment work is of a high standard, comprehensively researched and effectively presented. NVQ portfolios are well presented. A high proportion of floristry students complete their studies successfully. All the students on the first diploma course in horticulture passed last year. The pass rate has improved on the national diploma course, but at 80 per cent, is below the average pass rate of 89 per cent achieved by the eight colleges included

Curriculum Areas

in the FEFC's national survey on agriculture. Achievements on the NVQ provision in horticulture are above average at level 1; a low proportion of students at level 2 gain the full award by the end of their course, but many subsequently pass. There are some low retention rates. Teachers do not analyse the reasons for poor performance in sufficient detail.

13 The self-assessment report recognised the value of the community-based projects. Realistic practical work is done in the college's grounds and in local school and public grounds. Inspection findings confirmed the weakness identified in the self-assessment report that the range and diversity of plants is narrow and the facilities are small-scale. Off-site facilities partially compensate for these deficiencies but the travel required in order to use them is time consuming. There is a good supply of handtools but a shortage of some machinery. The college is currently enhancing the resources. The horticulture team's operational plan identifies shortcomings in specialist staffing; lack of expertise in a few specialisms; and the need for technical updating. There is a heavy reliance on part-time teachers for both teaching and course management. These staff are given insufficient professional support.

Examples of students' achievements in horticulture, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
NVQ level 2 horticulture	Retention (%)	*	73	74
	Pass rate (%)	*	75+	59+
NVQ level 2 floristry	Retention (%)	100	92	80
	Pass rate (%)	94	100	100
First and national diploma courses	Retention (%)	89	79	65
	Pass rate (%)	63	69	91

Source: college data

*course not running

+pass rates at the end of two years; subsequent pass rates were 77 per cent and 77 per cent

Curriculum Areas

Health and Care

Grade 2

14 The inspection of health and community care included the observation of 10 lessons. Inspection generally confirmed the college's assessment of this provision. Some of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report had already received attention by the time of the inspection. A few strengths and weaknesses identified by inspection had not been recognised in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- well-planned lessons
- well-managed work experience
- the good teaching of key skills
- good pass and retention rates on childcare courses
- high progression rates
- the regular professional updating of teachers
- well-resourced provision

Weaknesses

- instances of low pass and retention rates on some courses
- a high proportion of part-time teachers

15 The college provides a wide range of full-time and part-time courses in this programme area, from foundation to advanced level. Some are offered in the evening to attract adults. Students have the opportunity to acquire additional qualifications in, for example, information technology (IT), first aid at work and food hygiene, thereby increasing their chances of employment.

16 Overall, the teaching is effective. Lessons are well planned and include an appropriate variety of activities. In some lessons, however, opportunities were missed to use questioning as a check on students' understanding and

knowledge or to ensure that students were concentrating. The key skills of IT, communications and numeracy were effectively taught. The strengths associated with key skills teaching were not identified in the self-assessment report. Materials used to teach IT related to health and care topics and many lessons at the foundation level were double staffed in order that the teaching of key skills could be linked to the vocational teaching. In a practical class in cookery, for example, students developed their communication and numeracy skills by discussing their choice of diet and costing the meal. The work done in this lesson was developed in the following numeracy class.

17 Work experience reinforces the classroom teaching well. Students choose from a variety of care settings, guidance is documented and the quality of the students' experience is monitored carefully. Students' experience in work is used to good effect in the lessons. These strengths were identified in the self-assessment report. A schedule for assessed work is provided so that students can plan their work. Assignment tasks and the associated assessment criteria are clearly explained to students. A programme of tutorials with individual students enables teachers to review regularly the progress students are making. The teacher and student jointly agree an action plan, which is reviewed at the next meeting. On courses with poor retention rates, staff monitor attendance closely and often contact students during the day of absence in order to identify problems and encourage attendance.

18 Students' work is of a good standard. Students respond well to small group work and demonstrate appropriate oral and written communication skills. Pass rates on the national diploma in childhood studies are consistently high. Pass rates on GNVQ advanced and foundation level courses have fluctuated and are currently below the national averages. Over half the students on the foundation level course need some form of learning support. Pass rates on

Curriculum Areas

some of the NVQ courses, for example in childcare, are adversely affected by difficulties in arranging suitable opportunities for assessment in the workplace. A high proportion of students progress to relevant employment or higher level courses.

19 The programme area is efficiently managed, and communications between course teams and managers are good. The self-assessment report correctly identifies that there is a wide range of up-to-date learning resources available to students. Part-time staff are included in meetings and become effective members of course teams. Teachers are well qualified. They are supported by the college in updating their professional practice in the workplace. Part-time staff also bring current practice to the course teams. The high percentage of part-time teachers presents some difficulties for the co-ordination of the curriculum.

Examples of students' achievements in health and care, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced, national diploma and certificate in childhood studies	Retention (%)	87	70	78
	Pass rate (%)	91	89	81
NVQ levels 2 and 3 childcare	Retention (%)	92	91	88
	Pass rate (%)	62	46	43
GNVQ foundation and intermediate	Retention (%)	72	87	72
	Pass rate (%)	86	50	60

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Humanities

Grade 3

20 Seventeen lessons were observed, covering the full range of provision in this programme area. Inspection findings were generally in accord with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report, although inspectors identified a number of additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good teaching of languages
- above average pass rates at GCSE
- good use of the study centre for GCSE English
- some good coursework
- fluent and confident use of foreign languages by adult students

Weaknesses

- poor results in GCE A level subjects
- low retention rates on some courses
- the lack of common approaches to teaching and learning
- lack of cohesion on the general education 'link' course

21 Humanities provision is divided between the general education sector, which offers a small range of GCE A level and GCSE courses largely to full-time students aged 16 to 19, and the adult and creative education sector, which includes foreign language courses at beginners or intermediate level, mainly for adults.

22 Much of the teaching of foreign languages is good. Teachers adopt a supportive approach to adults, and plan their classes well to practise different language skills. They make good use of audio-visual aids. The learning needs of students of Urdu are carefully assessed at the start of the course and suitable activities and goals determined for individuals. Some

language teachers overemphasise grammar and translation, and use English unnecessarily. In other humanities subjects, the style of teaching ranges from the imaginative to the pedestrian. GCSE English students are well supported outside the classroom by timetabled individual study in the study centre, which includes the use of videos and CD-ROMs. Some teachers organise enrichment activities such as visits to law courts, theatres and museums. In some lessons, teachers failed to achieve a lively response from students, or to instil appropriate study skills. They resorted to methods which required students to do little other than give short responses or to copy down notes. Although the inspection broadly confirmed the college's assessment of teaching and learning, the self-assessment report said little about the quality of students' experience in the classroom.

23 Languages teachers, all of whom teach part time, receive good support. They meet approximately once a term. The subjects located in the general education sector are jointly co-ordinated by three course co-ordinators, under the management of the head of sector. Despite these arrangements, there are no commonly agreed approaches to teaching and learning, or to the format and purpose of schemes of work. As a result, some students have suffered from a discontinuity of teaching approach when changing teachers. The full-time general education 'link' course lacks cohesion and identity. The self-assessment report recognises that not enough is being done to develop the key skills of 16 to 19 year olds. Timetables do not always allow for necessary movement between buildings, or for students of different subjects to come together for tutorials or other enrichment activities.

24 In 1997, pass rates were above the national average in all GCSE subjects. In this year, retention rates were poor on all two-year GCE A level courses. Pass rates on these courses were variable; in some, such as communication studies and law, they were

Curriculum Areas

above the national average for further education colleges, but on others, such as psychology and sociology, they were below the national average.

25 The college library has sufficient stock of resources for the humanities programme area. Students can watch videos and use CD-ROMs in specially-designed study areas. Handouts and materials used in class are of good quality. Teaching takes place in general-purpose classrooms, which lack any subject identity. There is no base room for languages to enable resources to be stored and shared. Specialist resources for humanities are not evaluated in the self-assessment report.

Examples of students' achievements in humanities, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level	Retention (%)	41	47	42
	Pass rate (%)	57	70	66
GCSE	Retention (%)	57	71	68
	Pass rate (%)	44	63	73
Modern foreign languages adult education, languages (part time)	Retention (%)	**	*	*
	Pass rate (%)	**	98	98

Source: college data

**course not running

*data not available

Cross-college Provision

Support for Students

Grade 1

26 Inspection confirmed many of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report. They concluded that some of the strengths, however, had been undervalued by the college.

Key strengths

- the high quality of the personal support provided for individual students
- the effective personal and social development programme
- good-quality careers advice and guidance
- outstanding language support for students for whom English is a second language
- effective learning support which is closely linked to students' main programmes

Weaknesses

- inconsistencies in the quality of the support offered to students on different programmes

27 Concern for the individual is at the core of the college's approach to its work. A number of students have personal, social and/or behavioural difficulties which hinder their ability to learn effectively. The college is effective in identifying students' support needs and providing help in a way which best meets the needs of the individual. Students speak highly of the commitment of staff and their willingness to help them with their studies and personal difficulties. Community representatives commend the dedication of staff who persevere with students whose behaviour is often difficult to manage and has resulted in them being rejected by other establishments. Inspectors concluded that these major strengths were

undervalued in the college's self-assessment report.

28 The college's self-assessment report claims as a strength the good-quality printed materials which provide students with detailed information about the programmes offered. Inspectors generally agreed with this judgement. The current prospectus lucidly charts the progress of individual students through the college and beyond. Students comment favourably about the entry procedures. The welcoming approach includes an opportunity to attend with a friend or relative, an informative talk by staff and an opportunity to tour the college. Care is taken to ensure that students receive impartial advice and guidance from the central admissions team. Staff are available to provide advice and guidance in a range of minority ethnic languages.

29 The induction process helps students to settle into college and to understand the requirements of their programmes. The 'Faxfile' has been developed as a means of helping students to keep safely the documentation relating to their programme and also acts as a record of achievement. Although some students find this useful, many resent having to buy it. The induction process is less effective for students who join courses after the normal starting date. This weakness was identified in the self-assessment report and is being addressed.

30 Inspectors confirmed the college's judgement that learning support is effective, particularly for students for whom English is a second language. Specialist staff undertake detailed assessments of students' support needs. Course tutors and staff in the study centre work closely together to ensure that the support given is linked closely to each student's course. Good use is made of a wide range of learning materials which set the development of language skills in a vocational or academic context. On some programmes, tutors timetable tutorials in

Cross-college Provision

the study centre so that they can support the students with their key skills work. Students' progress is carefully recorded in the 'Faxfile'. Learning support and tutorials on academic and part-time programmes are less effective than those on full-time vocational programmes.

31 Staff across the college have shared teaching materials and details of the good practice they have developed. These have been incorporated into a college personal and social development programme which is provided during timetabled lessons for most full-time students. Events such as a 'winter fayre' and an activity week have provided opportunities for students from different programmes and minority ethnic groups to work together in an enjoyable way. Students speak highly of the benefits they have gained from the personal and social development programme.

32 Links with the careers service are effective. The careers adviser contributed to the development of the personal and social development programme and is actively involved in the lessons. Useful booklets help students who are applying to higher education to understand the action they need to take. Packs designed to support the development of job-seeking skills have been produced for most programmes. Staff have successfully developed close working relationships with local employers, and this has resulted in the provision of useful work experience placements for students.

33 Many college staff have undertaken training which helps them to deal sensitively and fairly with students who are experiencing personal difficulties. Counselling is available from the college's team of specialist staff. Close links with outside agencies enable the college to refer students for specialist counselling.

34 Although the college identifies the lack of a crèche as a weakness in the self-assessment report, inspectors found that the college's approach to the provision of childcare services

is welcomed by students. The allocation of funds to pay for childcare through a means test provides the flexibility they feel is important to enable them to arrange childcare services to suit their personal circumstances.

General Resources

Grade 2

35 The accommodation and learning resources have improved substantially since the last inspection in 1994. The self-assessment report was comprehensive and inspection confirmed the college's assessment of its strengths and weaknesses in general resources.

Key strengths

- the good standard of the accommodation in the main buildings
- extensive provision of modern computers and software
- a wide range of services and facilities to support learning
- well-maintained and clean buildings

Weaknesses

- some poor accommodation
- few recreational facilities for students

36 The self-assessment report claims that the college's two main buildings, the Salt and Exhibition buildings, provide good-quality accommodation that is imaginatively designed. Inspectors agreed with this judgement. These buildings provide an attractive learning environment for most of the students. Many of the teaching rooms are bright, attractive, appropriately furnished and possess appropriate teaching aids. The poorer quality of the Aire and Mill buildings is recognised in the self-assessment report. The Mill building is in poor decorative order and some classrooms offer an unsatisfactory learning environment and lack

Cross-college Provision

wall displays. During the current academic year the college plans to vacate the Aire building, the one outlying site, and to refurbish the Mill building. This will improve the accommodation for art and design, general education, some care courses and courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college is kept clean. Staff accommodation has been improved since the last inspection and staff are provided with suitable work areas. The accommodation is well maintained to a planned schedule. Access for students with restricted mobility is good.

37 The college has a wide range of services and facilities to support learning, including the learning resource centre located next to the study centre in the Exhibition building, and the IT and business skills workshops. The learning resource centre is welcoming and provides a good service for staff and students. The bookstock has been increased substantially and the budget has doubled in the last three years. Nevertheless, the annual review of materials in the learning resource centre has identified some inadequacies in the stock. Audio and video collections are extensive and other facilities include access to the internet on all the networked computers, and an increasing range of CD-ROMs. Usage is carefully monitored. Inspection confirmed the strength in the self-assessment report that qualified library staff give students good support and liaise closely with teachers to ensure learning resources are relevant and match changes in the curriculum. There is no separate room for private study. All staff have ready access to central reprographic and audio-visual facilities. There are additional photocopying facilities for staff and students at each site.

38 The college has made a substantial investment in information and learning technology. Enhancement and replacement of IT equipment is carefully co-ordinated. Nearly all computers are to a high specification, of a modern standard, networked and with up-to-

date software. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students is good, at 1:8. Computers are provided in a number of teaching rooms in the Exhibition and Salt buildings, affording good access for students' use. A relatively recent innovation is the linking of study spaces in some community centres and small- to medium-sized enterprises, through computers and a telephone link, to tutors in two of the college's IT centres. Staff have ready access to computers in dedicated work rooms. Upgrading of major equipment through capital replacement is approached systematically to ensure good value for money.

39 The refurbished parts of the college provide a blend of modern facilities within a historic setting and the college makes good use of this by hiring out its facilities, for example, for conferences, craft fairs and community events. Corridors and other circulation areas are carpeted and well decorated. The college strives to provide effective security for staff, students and visitors. The Victoria Hall houses the college's indoor sports facilities. These have improved since the previous inspection but are still limited. The large refectory in the Exhibition building is well decorated. Students use it as a social centre, in the absence of dedicated social areas.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

40 The self-assessment report emphasises the college's commitment to quality. Inspectors found that the report identified all the strengths and most of the weaknesses in the quality assurance arrangements.

Key strengths

- well-established course review procedures
- effective staff appraisal and staff development

Cross-college Provision

- an appropriate self-assessment process
- systematic consideration of actions arising out of course reviews

Weaknesses

- insufficiently rigorous evaluation in some course reports
- college charter which has not been systematically reviewed and updated

41 The college's commitment to quality assurance is expressed in its mission statement and strategic plan. There is a well-established quality framework. As the self-assessment report notes, the framework has recently been extended to cover college services using measurable service standards and it will cover part-time vocational courses of under six hours a week for the first time this year. The quality assurance cycle is integrated with the college's strategic planning cycle. The college charter is comprehensive but few of its commitments are measurable. It is issued to all students during induction and is included in the students' 'Faxfile'. However, it has not been reviewed since its initial development. Questionnaires are used to ascertain students' and employers' views of the quality of the college's provision. Student focus groups have been established to provide another channel of communication with students. Whilst this is a recent development, they are already helping to improve the quality of students' experience at college.

42 Course teams review their courses annually, reporting their views on a standard pro forma, which is submitted to the assistant principal with responsibility for corporate development. Course reports vary in quality. Whilst many are comprehensive, some contain insufficient evaluation. In some cases, students' views collected at course level are not summarised clearly. Individual GCE A level and GCSE subjects are not specifically identified in annual course reports. Targets for retention and

achievement are set for all courses after consultation with the heads of sector. Each year quality review panels undertake an additional, rigorous review of approximately one-third of the college's substantial courses. Course co-ordinators are required to submit the three preceding annual course reports, together with other documentation such as minutes of meetings, analyses of students' views and the reports from external verifiers, for scrutiny by the review group.

43 Inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment that there are appropriate arrangements for managing the process of improving the provision. A summary of the planned actions to address issues arising from the annual and triennial reviews is reported to the academic board in October each year. The board prioritises the proposed actions. A second report, summarising the developments which have taken place, is presented the following June. Course co-ordinators spoken to during inspection were able to identify improvements which have resulted from this process. For example, the double staffing of some GNVQ classes which have a high proportion of students who speak English as a second language, and the strengthening of tutorial provision on the general education link programme.

44 A detailed list of standards for induction, tutorials, assessment and teaching has been developed. The standards have been linked to the commitments made in the college's charter. Each year course co-ordinators report on how their courses measure up to these standards and a summary of how each course complies with them is circulated. Course teams have been prompted to improve the quality of their provision as a result.

45 The appraisal scheme for full-time academic and support staff is carried out by line managers. Performance indicators are set and used as the basis of appraisal. Part-time teachers are not covered by the scheme,

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although there are plans to include them. The scheme is linked with staff development through a process of personal development planning. Staff speak positively about appraisal and its benefits. The appraisal process includes the observation of teaching, piloted during autumn 1997. All teachers have now been observed at least once. A team of 21 observers is used and an internal verification system and appeals procedure is in place.

46 The college's strong commitment to staff development is identified in the self-assessment report. There is an extensive programme of training events for all staff. The staff development plan is closely linked with the quality assurance and appraisal systems. Applications for staff development are considered against the college's strategic priorities. Teachers undertake a minimum of 60 hours attendance at college-organised sessions and 35 hours of personal development. Attendance is closely monitored. There are half-yearly college review days when staff undertake review and planning activities.

47 The college produced its first self-assessment report under the new self-assessment arrangements in preparation for the inspection. It was underpinned by self-assessment reports produced by the corporation, senior management team, curriculum sectors and service areas. It conforms closely to the headings of Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment*. The process has been overseen by the self-assessment review group, chaired by the chair of governors. The report identifies strengths and weaknesses and indicates supporting evidence together with action to be taken. Supporting college documents are listed. There is little analysis to support some of the statements about strengths and weaknesses. For example, statements on students' achievements rarely include the appropriate pass rates. Teaching observations commenced after the self-assessment report was produced,

too late to inform judgements about the quality of the students' experience in the classroom.

Governance

Grade 1

48 Inspectors broadly agreed with the judgements about governance in the self-assessment report although they concluded that some of the strengths were understated.

Key strengths

- a good range of skills and experience
- effective committee structures and reporting arrangements
- open style of governance
- effective clerking arrangements
- close involvement in strategic planning
- well-established performance measures for the corporation

Weaknesses

- some inadequacies in the monitoring of the college's performance

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

50 The corporation has 15 members, eight of whom are women. Two are members of the college staff. There are currently three vacancies, including one for a student governor. Vacancies are filled by a search committee, and a recent skills audit guides the work of this committee. As the self-assessment report notes, corporation members possess a good range of skills and expertise and are representative of the local community. Newly-appointed governors

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receive a comprehensive pack of information about the college and their responsibilities. Governors' training requirements are considered annually and they receive presentations from members of the college management team and external specialists.

51 The corporation meets at least once a term; additional meetings are scheduled as necessary. It is well supported by the clerk, who attends relevant training courses and has an appropriate and detailed job description. Attendance at corporation and committee meetings is closely monitored and reported annually. The conduct of meetings is determined by a comprehensive set of standing orders. The committee structure fully complies with statutory and FEFC requirements, and reporting arrangements to the corporation are good. All committees have appropriate terms of reference. The finance and general purposes committee frequently reviews the college management accounts and is closely involved in the budget-setting process.

52 The public are invited to attend both corporation and committee meetings through advertisements placed annually in the local press. This good practice supports the college's claim that the corporation operates in an open manner. The register of interests is updated annually and covers all governors and their close relatives, but not staff with significant financial responsibilities. A code of conduct was agreed in June 1995, and the corporation recently established a unified complaints procedure.

53 Governors make a strong contribution to strategic planning. They reviewed the mission and core values which preface the current three-year plan. The corporation's committees commented in more detail about relevant aspects of the plan. Further revisions were made during an 'away day' in June 1997. Performance indicators for governance were established in 1995 and revised in November 1997. Governors set targets for the receipt and

approval of different committee reports as well as attendance at corporation and college functions. The targets have substantially been met. A detailed questionnaire was issued to governors in July 1997 to support an evaluation of the effectiveness of governors' procedures. Action has been taken to address the issues identified. Governors have been closely involved in the validation of the self-assessment report. The chair of the corporation chairs the college's self-assessment review group and other governors have been active members of the group. They have also established a student affairs committee in order to communicate directly with the clients of the college; a similar staff affairs committee is planned. Governors play a constructive role on the advisory panels and other committees of the college such as the equal opportunities' committee.

54 Some aspects of the monitoring of college performance require further improvement. For example, governors do not receive an annual summary of students' views and they are due to receive, for the first time this year, a mid-year progress report on meeting operating targets. Similarly, as the self-assessment report recognises, the outcomes of the current course target-setting procedures have not yet been reported in full to the corporation.

Management

Grade 2

55 Inspectors endorsed many of the judgements on management in the college's self-assessment report, which was well supported with evidence and linked directly to the quality statements in the inspection framework.

Key strengths

- targets for funding and enrolments consistently exceeded
- comprehensive strategic plan

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- open and democratic management style
- wide-ranging external links
- good financial management
- effective marketing
- promotion of equal opportunities afforded a high priority

Weaknesses

- aspects of the computerised management information systems
- failure to secure improvements in some poor performance
- some shortcomings in curriculum management

56 The college has exceeded its funding targets by over 130 per cent in each of the last three years. Since the last inspection, full-time student numbers have increased by over 42 per cent and part-time numbers by nearly 20 per cent. A mechanism for monitoring the performance of the teaching sectors has been introduced whereby, for example, enrolments and retention rates are monitored against targets. The minutes of senior management team meetings record detailed discussion of students' achievements.

57 The current three-year 'millennium' strategic plan is comprehensive and includes financial models which demonstrate how the college intends to reduce further its average level of funding to meet the FEFC's convergence target. A needs analysis appropriately considers the Shipley constituency within the broader Bradford district. A detailed evaluation of curriculum provision is included with projections of future growth, supported by labour market information. There has been thorough consultation with staff about the plan. The college has introduced a series of specific cross-college 'implementation plans' to support the broader one-year operating statement. The teaching sectors are required to produce annual development plans. In some plans, the

resources needed to support these developments are not fully considered.

58 In two of the curriculum areas inspected, some aspects of curriculum management were ineffective. For example there were weaknesses in the range and coherence of provision and less than half the lessons inspected in these two areas were rated good or outstanding. In some cases, for example in the general education link programme, weaknesses in the achievements of students taking GCE A level subjects have not been addressed sufficiently vigorously. Targets are set for achievement, attendance and retention. From 1997-98 retention targets have been set for both full-time and part-time courses. The degree to which targets have been used to evaluate the quality of provision at course level has been variable. Some teachers feel that the targets are not realistic for some courses. Following dissatisfaction with students' retention rates, the college commissioned the Further Education Development Agency to undertake a project on retention in 1996-97. As a result, various initiatives have been taken and course teams are now monitoring attendance and retention more closely.

59 Inspection findings confirmed the judgement in the self-assessment report that the management structures are appropriate. Management committees give good support to the work of the senior management team. The management style is open and democratic, and staff confirm that their views are listened to and lead to action. The middle management tier and support staff structures have been revised recently to allow a more consistent range of services to be provided to teachers. The large number of part-time teachers creates problems of co-ordination and consistency of delivery in some programme areas. A college calendar schedules key meetings so that issues raised at course and sector level can be discussed at faculty and then senior management team meetings. A regular staff newsletter disseminates information and views; staff

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emphasised the importance of informal communication structures. To secure their effective deployment, staff are required to log their workload on a weekly plan. These plans are regularly monitored by line managers.

60 Links with external bodies are effective and well documented in the self-assessment report. Advisory panels made up of employers meet regularly and inform curriculum developments. Close links exist with the LEA through the academic development and 14 to 19 strategy groups. However, direct communication with secondary schools has been adversely affected by increased competition for students. A substantial amount of college income comes from TEC contracts, notably to support modern apprenticeships. The college is a partner in the Shipley East Regeneration Board. Links with Careers Bradford support the progression of pupils from special schools and facilitate the promotion of opportunities in the college. The marketing function is informed by a wide-ranging research programme, a promotional calendar, and a three-year marketing plan.

61 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good; this is properly identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. The finance function has been strengthened by the recruitment of a qualified finance manager who reports to an assistant principal. Management accounts are produced bi-monthly, although not directly from the accounting system. The finance manager has recently incorporated a range of additional information in the accounts in order to promote understanding of the college's financial position. Budget holders receive monthly reports detailing actual and committed expenditure to date. The senior management team formally reviews the college management accounts and also receives other financial reports at intervening meetings. The financial position of the college is robust and the reduction of the average level of funding

has been successfully managed. The reports of the internal and external auditors do not indicate any significant control weaknesses.

62 Management information is recognised as an area requiring further development by the college in its self-assessment report, a view confirmed by the inspection. At present there are two separate computer-based systems for academic and administrative information. These are not linked. A significant amount of data is held only on paper, including attendance registers. A newly-appointed information services manager holds a brief to establish computerised information systems. Four working groups have been constituted to identify user needs and the required computer infrastructure. Information returns to the FEFC are made on time and are deemed credible by the FEFC. Achievement data provided to support the inspection were reliable.

63 The promotion of equal opportunities has a high priority in the college. An annual action plan links the college's policy to progress over the previous year and targets for the coming year. Training programmes have addressed race, gender and disability awareness. College surveys illustrate that most of the curriculum areas have integrated equal opportunities issues with learning activities. The college target is for all to do so. Service areas are required to review their operations in order to promote equality of treatment for customers.

Conclusions

64 The inspection team found the self-assessment report, the college's first under the new self-assessment arrangements, to be an effective document to assist planning and carrying out the inspection. Inspectors broadly agreed with the findings of the report, but found that some weaknesses were underestimated and some strengths were understated. The grades awarded by the college were mostly confirmed by the findings of the inspection. Inspectors

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judged the college grading to be overgenerous in only one of the eight areas inspected.

65 Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of this report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

College Statistics

Student numbers by age (November 1997)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	0
16-18 years	25
19-24 years	11
25+ years	62
Not known	2
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (November 1997)

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Foundation	49
Intermediate	22
Advanced	26
Higher education	1
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	2
Total	100

Source: college data

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	59	384	16
Agriculture	33	173	7
Business	223	250	17
Hotel and catering	84	0	3
Health and community care	262	89	13
Art and design	30	380	15
Humanities	61	716	28
Basic education	10	17	1
Total	762	2,009	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1997)

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	39	22	0	61
Supporting direct learning contact	15	0	0	15
Other support	46	1	1	48
Total	100	23	1	124

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£3,754,000	£4,137,000	£3,984,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£17.63	£16.94	£20.82
Payroll as a proportion of income	68%	72%	66%
Achievement of funding target	143%	141%	134%
Diversity of income	27%	27%	23%
Operating surplus	-£36,000	-£274,000	£94,000

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

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

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

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

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

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

Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	27	35	25
	Average point score per entry	2.7	2.1+	1.6+
	Position in tables	bottom third	bottom 10%	bottom 10%
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	81	58	105
	Percentage achieving qualification	95%	79%	71%
	Position in tables	top 10%	middle third	middle third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	110	106
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	45%	48%
	Position in tables	*	bottom third	bottom third

Source: DfEE

Note: the majority of the college's students are 19 years of age or older

The achievements of these students are not covered in published DfEE performance tables

+the inclusion of some students who study both at the college and in school would increase the points score in 1996 to 2.6 points and in 1997 to 3.5 points

*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

College Statistics

Three-year Trends *continued*

Students' achievements

		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Advanced academic	Pass (%)	58	61	54
	Retention (%)	60	56	43
Intermediate academic	Pass (%)	40	53	68
	Retention (%)	84	73	74
Advanced vocational	Pass (%)	83	80	76*
	Retention (%)	68	66	65
Intermediate vocational	Pass (%)	58	46	52*
	Retention (%)	77	74	79
Foundation vocational	Pass (%)	41	36	44*
	Retention (%)	63	71	73

Source: college data

**some students gain the qualification during the term following the planned course completion. In 1997 this would increase the pass rate by 5 per cent (advanced vocational), by 13 per cent (intermediate vocational) and by 5 per cent (foundation vocational)*

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