

# South Downs College

REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
**1999-00**

THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL***

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

*Cheylesmore House  
Quinton Road  
Coventry CV1 2WT  
Telephone 024 7686 3000  
Fax 024 7686 3100  
Website [www.fefc.ac.uk](http://www.fefc.ac.uk)*

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## Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

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

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

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

## Student Achievements

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

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

# Summary

## South Downs College

### *South East Region*

#### **Inspected May 2000**

South Downs College is a general further education college located between Waterlooville and Havant, close to the northern border of the city of Portsmouth in Hampshire. Inspectors planned the inspection using the college's self-assessment report for 1998-99. The self-assessment process involved teachers and non-teaching staff. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, although they found some additional strengths and weaknesses. In some cases, weaknesses identified in the report had been addressed before the inspection.

The college provides courses in nine of the 10 FEFC programme areas. Provision in six programme areas was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. The college benefits from strong leadership and effective management. Most teaching is at least satisfactory but the proportion of outstanding lessons is slightly below the average for the sector. In the best lessons, the teaching is well planned and students are given appropriate learning activities. In less effective lessons, the needs of individual students are not met and teachers do not set students sufficiently demanding tasks. Student achievement rates on most courses are above the national average for general further education colleges. Since 1994,

there has been a slight improvement in achievement rates at all levels. Retention rates have been more variable over the same period. Measures taken to improve retention are beginning to work. The college has a thorough system of lesson observation. The tutorial programme is well planned and carefully monitored. Although all full-time students are tested on entry, and many are identified as needing learning support, the number who take it up is low. The college provides good levels of financial support to students who need it. Staff have a strong commitment to continuous improvement. The standard of accommodation is outstanding. The college has continually improved and added to its buildings to accommodate the increasing numbers of students. The college should improve: the support it provides for part-time teachers; the overall retention rate and retention of 16 to 18 year old students on advanced courses; the take up of learning support; the monitoring of student retention and achievement rates; and the use of IT on some courses. The college should also: set targets for student retention and achievement rates; and ensure that target-setting forms a part of students' action-planning.

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cross-college provision</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Engineering	2	Support for students	2
Business studies	2	General resources	1
Leisure and tourism	2	Quality assurance	2
Music and dance	2	Governance	2
English	3	Management	1
Basic skills	2		

# Context

## The College and its Mission

1 South Downs College is a general further education college located midway between Havant and Waterlooville, close to the northern border of Portsmouth, Hampshire. The college opened in 1974. It is located on a single site. It recruits half its students from the Borough of Havant and almost a quarter from the neighbouring City of Portsmouth. These areas have a combined population of more than 300,000. There are two further education and three sixth form colleges within a 10-mile radius. The college offers a wide range of courses in most of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) programme areas. It does not offer courses in construction and provision in agriculture is small. Each of the college's four departments offers a range of courses from entry or foundation level to national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 4, or equivalent.

2 The area had strong historical links with the Royal Navy and at one time more than a third of the local workforce was employed directly or indirectly in defence-related industries. A number of international manufacturing and business companies are located in Portsmouth and the surrounding area and some have their headquarters in the area. Almost three-quarters of the workforce are now employed in service sector industries. A major waterfront development, Gunwharf Quays, is being built on the Portsmouth waterfront. This is intended to attract major investment particularly in leisure and tourism, and service industries. The college has good and productive links with Havant Council, Portsmouth City Council and other community groups. Through its links with the Havant Council, it is implementing strategies to widen access and to improve the skills of those who live on a large local housing estate. It also has good links with the university and other public bodies. Unemployment in the area has fallen to about 4% although it is considerably higher in some

parts of Havant and Portsmouth. The college has good and productive links with many employers through the college's industrial liaison committee. These ensure that the college is constantly aware of the changing skill needs of employers in the area.

3 The college has grown significantly since incorporation. At the time of the inspection, more than 3,134 full-time students had been enrolled since the beginning of the academic year, an increase of more than a third since 1993. In addition, there are almost 7,000 part-time students enrolled on academic and vocational courses. More than 60% of all students are aged over 25 years. The college also has a further 3,450 students enrolled on community-based recreation and leisure courses offered at 57 local centres. The college has good links with local schools. Teachers regularly visit 30 secondary schools, and pupils from these visit the college for 'taster' days and to shadow a student on a course for which they have expressed an interest. The proportion of pupils at two neighbouring schools, who gain grade C or above in at least five general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects is below 20% and in Portsmouth, it is 32%.

4 The college's mission statement is: 'South Downs College is committed to increasing participation in, and broadening access to, lifelong education and training for the benefit of individual students, customers and clients. The pursuit of excellence and parity of esteem between all types of provision are fundamental values. The college will provide a quality service to fulfil the personal aspirations of all its users'.

# Context

## The Inspection

5 South Downs College was inspected during the week beginning 8 May 2000. Before the inspection, inspectors considered the self-assessment report and information from other directorates of the FEFC. The college provided data on students' achievements for 1999. Inspectors checked these data against primary sources of evidence, such as registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies and found the data accurate. The college's data for 1999 and the individualised student record (ISR) data for 1997 and 1998, were used to compile the tables in the curriculum area reports. Inspectors considered that an analysis of student achievement rates for basic skills using ISR data would not give a realistic indication of students'

progress in this curriculum area and a table has not been included in this report. The inspection was carried out by 11 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 47 days. They observed 73 lessons, examined students' work and scrutinised college documents. Meetings were held with governors, managers, staff and students.

6 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1998-99. Of the 73 lessons inspected, 62% were judged to be good or outstanding and 5% were judged to be less than satisfactory. The proportion of outstanding lessons was lower than average for all colleges inspected in 1998-99.

### Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	5	6	5	1	0	17
GCSE	0	0	3	0	0	3
GNVQ	2	11	6	2	0	21
NVQ	0	5	2	0	0	7
Other vocational	2	8	4	0	0	14
Other*	1	5	4	1	0	11
Total (No)	10	35	24	4	0	73
Total (%)	14	48	33	5	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99 (%)	20	45	29	6	0	100

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

\*includes basic skills provision

# Context

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

## Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
South Downs College	13.8	76
National average, all inspected colleges 1998-99	11.2	78

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



# Curriculum Areas

## Engineering

### Grade 2

8 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering courses in mechanical and electrical and motor vehicle engineering. They agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but judged that the college had understated its strengths in assessment and students' achievements.

#### Key strengths

- good teaching in most lessons
- students' high achievements on most courses
- good assessment methods and practice
- well-planned and well-monitored work experience

#### Weaknesses

- some shortcomings in course organisation and management
- insufficient use of new learning technology on some courses

9 The college offers a wide range of engineering courses. These include full-time and part-time engineering technician and craft courses from foundation to advanced level in motor vehicle, mechanical and electrical engineering. The majority of engineering students attend full time. The courses provide school-leavers with a good entry to engineering. All full-time students are provided with work experience as part of their course. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that this is effective and well monitored. The college is a centre of excellence in the south east regional technology network and works closely with the careers service to identify engineering employment opportunities. Although the college has developed good links with industry, it has not taken full advantage of these to involve employers in course development, or to provide

students with industrially based projects. Course team meetings are held regularly but these are not well recorded and no action plans are produced. Students do not attend course team meetings but their views are sought and taken into account in course planning.

10 Teaching was good in eight of the 12 lessons observed. Most lessons were well planned. In the best lessons, teachers took account of each student's learning needs and used examples of industrial practice to illustrate the application of theory. In most lessons, teachers clearly explained what the learning objectives were. Good handouts were used in some lessons. Teachers questioned the students well to make sure they understood the lesson and gave help to those individual students who needed it. In one good lesson, the teacher used his own and the students' experience of machine tool operation to develop and define good kinematics design. A video was used to show the relationship between theory and practice and the teacher used many good examples to emphasise the key points. In some lessons, students are encouraged to develop their investigation skills. In an electronics lesson the teacher provided the students with additional technical books and a computer package with which to investigate and verify the operation of an electronic circuit before they constructed and tested one.

11 In a minority of lessons, lesson plans and schemes of work did not contain sufficient detail. In the weaker lessons, teachers did not pay sufficient attention to the different learning needs of students, some of whom did not understand the topic being taught. In some lessons, teachers did not check students' learning or take the opportunity to link theory to industrial applications. In one workshop session, inadequate attention was given to health and safety and students were not required to wear protective clothing or safety shoes. This weakness was not identified in the college's self-assessment, and was rectified

# Curriculum Areas

immediately it was pointed out to the college. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that motor vehicle students have insufficient access to computer programmes to assist their learning.

12 Students' achievements on most courses are good and above the national average. The achievement rate on the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) course at intermediate level has increased in each of the last three years to 77% in 1999. The achievement rate on the NVQ motor vehicle course at level 2 is also good and above the national average. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that achievements are a strength. The retention rates on most courses improved in 1999. In 1999, the retention rates on the NVQ motor vehicle course at level 1 and the GNVQ intermediate course rose to 80% and 93%, respectively. Teachers set assignments of an appropriate level and provide students with

detailed grading criteria. The standard of most students' work is high. Most teachers mark work thoroughly and fairly and provide the students with detailed written feedback.

13 Teachers are well qualified but inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there are some teachers who lack recent industrial experience. Part-time teachers teach two-thirds of engineering lessons. They have, however, no responsibility for establishing links with industry. In engineering, the college has not been able to strengthen such links significantly. The workshops and laboratories are well equipped for the courses provided although students do not necessarily have the opportunity to use the most recent industrial equipment. Some specialised computer packages can only be used in certain classrooms and are not available to students to work through by themselves in their own time.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ motor vehicle	1	Number of starters	*	53	49
		Retention (%)	*	64	80
		Achievement (%)	*	82	87
NVQ motor vehicle	2	Number of starters	51	41	25
		Retention (%)	55	39	72
		Achievement (%)	50	75	83
Computer-aided drafting and design	2	Number of starters	35	69	60
		Retention (%)	63	78	75
		Achievement (%)	73	63	84
GNVQ engineering	2	Number of starters	21	25	14
		Retention (%)	95	48	93
		Achievement (%)	50	75	77
BTEC national diploma and certificate in engineering	3	Number of starters	57	90	86
		Retention (%)	68	76	70
		Achievement (%)	49	74	70

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

\*course not running

# Curriculum Areas

## Business Studies

### Grade 2

**14 Inspectors observed 13 business studies lessons. They agreed with most strengths and weaknesses in the college's self-assessment but identified some additional weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- good teaching in the majority of lessons
- effective integration of key skills with course content
- full-time students' good pass rates on general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) economics and business studies courses
- students' good achievements at foundation level
- high retention rates on GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses
- well-written handbooks for GCE A level courses

#### Weaknesses

- insufficiently demanding standards on the GNVQ advanced level business studies course
- part-time students' poor retention and achievement rate on the GCE A level business studies course
- insufficient involvement of employers in the design and implementation of the curriculum

15 The college offers a wide range of business studies courses. They include GNVQ business studies at foundation, intermediate and advanced level, the national certificate in business studies for part-time students, and GCE A level business studies and economics. The range of courses provides good progression opportunities to the college's higher national

certificate in business, and its accountancy courses. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that business courses are well managed. Teachers have regular formal team meetings and they often meet informally to seek ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They evaluate student retention and achievement rates against national averages.

16 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that there is much good teaching. Eight of the 13 lessons observed were good or outstanding. Lessons are well planned. Learning activities are varied and chosen carefully to ensure students can develop and practise new skills. In an outstanding economics lesson, students were asked what advice they would give to the chancellor of the exchequer on the impact of changes to the national economy. They engaged in discussion of economic theory and the teacher questioned them skilfully to make sure they understood relevant economic concepts. The students were absorbed in the lesson and they learnt some difficult principles. Teachers develop the self-confidence of their students. In several lessons, students who made presentations were given sensitive and helpful feedback. On vocational programmes, key skills are covered as an integral part of lesson content and assignments. On the GNVQ advanced course in business, some teachers make insufficient demands on students. The college did not identify this weakness in its self-assessment report. One-word answers are often accepted as answers to questions. Ideas are not always challenged and little attention is given to developing students' analytical skills.

17 There is little involvement of employers in the planning and implementation of the curriculum. Many assignments are not given a realistic work-based context and do not present the students with demanding problems related to the world of work. Work experience is voluntary and not all students take up the opportunity to go out on a work placement.

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GNVQ students plan an extensive programme of national and international visits as part of their assignment work. This year, students have visited the Chichester Festival Theatre, the European Commission in Brussels and the Paris stock exchange. The visits are not compulsory but many students go on them. The college provides financial support where necessary to enable individual students to go on the visits.

18 In general, students' examination results are good. The pass rates for full-time students of GCE A level economics and business studies are good and consistently above the national average for the sector. Students' retention and achievements on the part-time GCE A level business studies course are below the national average and fell to 17% in 1999. The college recognised this weakness in its self-assessment report. On foundation and intermediate programmes, retention rates have been consistently above 85%, and on the GNVQ advanced course, the retention rate rose to 89% last year. The achievements of students on the GNVQ foundation programme are high and 85% of those who completed were successful in 1999. The work of most foundation students is good. Many students are articulate and they show understanding of the basic principles of business. On vocational courses, students' portfolios are well organised. Teachers design assignments carefully to test a range of skills. They mark students' work carefully and give positive feedback to students but sometimes do not give sufficient advice on how students can improve their work.

19 Teachers are well qualified and they make good use of the many opportunities to update their knowledge and skills. Several have undertaken work placements to develop their awareness of current business practice. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that resources are particularly good and are well used in teaching and learning. The college has a good range of business software although students are not

shown how to use some specialist financial and accounting software. There are well-produced handbooks and workbooks for GCE A level courses.

# Curriculum Areas

## 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
GNVQ business	1	Number of starters	10	17	14
		Retention (%)	90	94	92
		Achievement (%)	100	69	85
GNVQ business	2	Number of starters	23	29	21
		Retention (%)	91	86	86
		Achievement (%)	71	75	61
GNVQ business	3	Number of starters	79	55	59
		Retention (%)	58	65	76
		Achievement (%)	72	69	89
GCE A level business studies	3	Number of starters	70	52	87
		Retention (%)	81	69	77
		Achievement (%)	74	77	70
GCE A level economics	3	Number of starters	12	9	24
		Retention (%)	100	89	92
		Achievement (%)	100	75	86

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

\*course not running

# Curriculum Areas

## Leisure and Tourism

### Grade 2

**20 Inspectors observed 13 tourism, leisure, sport and recreation lessons. They agreed with most strengths and weaknesses in the college's self-assessment report but identified some additional strengths and weaknesses. Some weaknesses had been rectified before the inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- well-planned and effective teaching in most lessons
- well-organised enrichment activities
- effective support for students
- good retention and achievement rates on GNVQ courses
- good course and curriculum management

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient recognition of the differing needs of individual students
- failure of some teachers to secure the full participation of students in learning activities

21 The college offers a wide range of full-time leisure and tourism courses including those leading to GNVQ foundation, intermediate and advanced levels and NVQ level 2 in sport and recreation. Students are able to gain additional industry-based qualifications as part of their course. They are also able to gain sports coaching awards and the pool lifeguard qualification. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the opportunity for students to gain these qualifications is a strength.

22 Courses and the curriculum are well managed. The roles and responsibilities of teachers are clearly defined. Course teams plan the curriculum effectively and monitor students'

progress carefully. All teachers take part in course reviews, including the monitoring of overall course performance, achievement of operational targets and in implementing action plans. The particular skills and good practice of teachers identified through lesson observations were shared with other staff during staff development sessions. None of these strengths were acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

23 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that teaching is good. Of the 13 lessons observed, eight were judged to be good or outstanding. Schemes of work and lesson plans are detailed. Teachers have produced good and informative course booklets for each course. In a GNVQ advanced first-year lesson, the teacher gave students a new assignment on business travel. In order to help the students with the first assignment task, the teacher went over what they had already learnt. A number of strategies were then used to encourage student participation such as giving clues that they could recognise and helping them spell and pronounce unfamiliar city names. As the students became more confident they were able to produce a comprehensive list of worldwide business travel destinations and they fully understood how to complete this element of the assignment. Educational visits are also used to relate theory to practical situations. In the best lessons, students participated with enthusiasm in group work, contributed to lively debate and discussion and were absorbed in their learning tasks.

24 In the weaker lessons, teachers do not take full account of students' different abilities and learning needs. In a minority of lessons, teachers failed to provide work that challenged the students to think and use their initiative; tasks were undemanding and repetitive. In one instance, although the learning tasks were clearly stated at the beginning of the lesson, students were not given sufficient instructions to allow them to complete the work. In some

# Curriculum Areas

lessons, teachers did not ensure that all students were fully engaged in learning activities.

25 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that retention rates on the GNVQ course at intermediate level, and the NVQ sport and recreation course are good and above the national average. Pass rates for GNVQ intermediate and advanced level were good and above the national average in 1999 after falling in the previous year. Assignments are checked and internally verified before being issued to students. Assignment briefs are clearly written to a common format. Tasks and assessment criteria are clear and concise. Internal verification of assignments is rigorous and prompt action is taken on issues raised by external examiners. Much of the students' work is well presented and is wordprocessed. Students on practical sports and recreation classes develop appropriate skills. Practical assessments are well structured. Although most

written work is of a good standard, some is poorly written and the content lacks depth. Written feedback is constructive and indicates how students can improve their performance.

26 Teachers are appropriately qualified and most have or are working towards a teaching and assessor qualification. With the growth in student numbers, the college has recruited part-time teachers with a wide range of recent experience in the leisure and tourism industry. Specialist resources are good although inspectors considered this strength was overstated in the self-assessment report. The increase in student numbers has resulted in increased pressure on the sports facilities and the travel shop. The college has good links with local leisure and activity centres and Portsmouth University. A local activity centre is used for specialist activities such as archery and initiative tests.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
NVQ sports and recreation (facility operations)	2	Number of starters	49	38	32
		Retention (%)	63	87	78
		Achievement (%)	65	70	68
GNVQ leisure and tourism	2	Number of starters	31	44	65
		Retention (%)	81	75	80
		Achievement (%)	68	52	90
GNVQ leisure and tourism	3	Number of starters	44	81	80
		Retention (%)	68	80	75
		Achievement (%)	80	58	82

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Music and Dance

### Grade 2

**27 Inspectors observed 12 music and dance lessons. They agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but identified additional weaknesses related to students' achievements. Some weaknesses had already been addressed by the time of the inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- some outstanding teaching
- students' high levels of achievement on some courses
- GCE A level students' success in progressing to higher education
- extensive opportunities for student performance
- industrial expertise of teachers
- strong links with arts organisations

#### Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some courses
- few creative links between classical and popular music courses
- over-stretched accommodation

28 The college offers courses leading to GCE A level in music performance and theory, and music technology and dance, BTEC first and national diplomas in performing arts (music) and music technology, and a BTEC national certificate in dance. Music students have access to a well-resourced programme of instrumental tuition. The college is planning to widen participation by offering courses leading to NVQs in popular music and a national certificate in music for students who have not attained the required instrumental performance standards necessary for GCE A level study. The potential for creative links between the classical and popular music elements of the provision is not

sufficiently exploited. The curriculum area is well managed. There are monthly team meetings that part-time teachers attend and regular course reviews in which students' views are taken into account. Planning is good and schemes of work are consistently detailed and thorough.

29 Eight of the 12 lessons observed were good or outstanding and none was poor. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that students benefit from teachers' industrial experience. Most teachers have recent professional experience and many part-time teachers continue to work in the music business. Lessons are well planned and effectively managed. Teachers on popular music courses are good at organising students into creative practical groups and all employ teaching styles appropriate for the ability of their students. In a lesson on a national diploma course, a teacher exploring music from different cultures played a recording of African music. The students were asked to identify the instruments involved. They then successfully built up a similar sound and rhythm using a mixture of guitars, drums and improvised ethnic instruments. In all lessons, teachers had established good relationships with their students. In theory lessons, teachers did not allow students enough opportunity to share and develop their learning together. In some theory lessons, teachers did not direct questions skilfully at individuals to make sure they understood the topic under consideration and they did not encourage students to explore their views through discussion.

30 Music students achieve high standards of performance in lessons and instrumental examinations. Students' achievements are above the national average for the sector on the national diploma course in performing arts (music) but the retention rate on this course is poor and declining. All students on the GCE A level course in dance have gained A to E grades for the past two years. The retention rate on this course is poor, and almost half



# Curriculum Areas

those who started in the last two years have failed it. All those completing the national certificate course in performing arts (dance) in 1999 achieved the qualification. The college's self-assessment report includes an action plan to improve retention rates by 20% and these are already improving. Students' pass rates on the GCE A level music and first diploma in performing arts (music) courses are below the national average and declining, weaknesses not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Most first diploma students progress to the national diploma course. Many students progress from GCE A level courses to higher education.

31 In 1998-99, students took part in 12 dance events and 58 musical performances. Every year, national diploma students undertake a week long concert tour of the Isle of Wight as part of a work experience programme, and there have been recent visits to New York and Paris. GCE A level music students take part in master classes with leading composers and performers. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that students benefit from the many opportunities to participate in events outside the college and from associations with bodies such as the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and local arts organisations, including the Havant Arts Centre. The college's record label, 'Let's Get Phat', has given students the opportunity to work on a professional product and has helped to launch some into work in the music industry.

32 Music accommodation is well equipped and includes two music suites with music technology facilities and six practice rooms. Overall, the accommodation is not sufficient for the number of students enrolled. The separation of the two music suites in different parts of the college inhibits the extent to which students can work creatively with one another on common projects. There are two small dance studios, neither with changing facilities, and although students have access to the college theatre for performances, it has poor acoustics for music.

# Curriculum Areas

## A summary of achievements and retention rates in music and dance, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
BTEC first diploma in performing arts (music)	2	Number of starters	28	20	29
		Retention (%)	75	75	79
		Achievement (%)	81	87	66
BTEC national diploma performing arts (music)	3	Number of starters	33	42	38
		Retention (%)	67	64	58
		Achievement (%)	73	96	91
BTEC national certificate in performing arts (dance)	3	Number of starters	*	6	5
		Retention (%)	*	50	100
		Achievement (%)	*	0	100
GCE A level music	3	Number of starters	38	55	46
		Retention (%)	95	85	80
		Achievement (%)	79	72	70
GCE A level music technology	3	Number of starters	22	22	24
		Retention (%)	71	68	71
		Achievement (%)	73	60	71
GCE A level dance	3	Number of starters	9	15	15
		Retention (%)	100	53	53
		Achievement (%)	89	100	100

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

\*course not running

# Curriculum Areas

## English

### Grade 3

**33 Inspectors observed 12 GCSE and GCE A level English language and English literature lessons. They agreed with the key strengths and weaknesses stated in the self-assessment report but found an additional weakness in the poor quality of some teaching.**

#### Key strengths

- some skilful teaching
- good schemes of work
- students' good examination results in GCE A level English literature
- extensive range of specialist resources
- good working relations with schools

#### Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some courses
- students' poor attendance on some courses
- insufficient use of information technology (IT) in teaching and learning

34 Two course teams organise the teaching of GCE A level and GCSE courses in English language and English literature. These courses are well managed. Course team meetings are held regularly. These are well structured and the minutes provide a good record of actions taken to improve English teaching. The teams regularly review their performance and demanding targets are set. At the last annual review of one course on which the pass rate was 100%, teachers attempted to find out why some students had left the course early. Syllabuses and arrangements for the introduction of curriculum 2000 are well advanced.

35 In half the lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning was good or outstanding. For these lessons, teachers used good schemes

of work that were well planned and clearly linked to the examination syllabus. In class, students were attentive and purposeful and relations with the staff were good. They engaged in detailed and careful study of texts and through this, they developed the ability to read perceptively and critically. For example, in an outstanding GCE A level lesson, students were shown a brief documentary on the discovery of the dead body of Grauballe man in Irish bog land. Heaney's poem of that title was then read aloud, perfectly registering the power and beauty of the poem. The students then carefully excavated meanings, identified the values behind them, explored the technicalities of the verse, and compared the poem with other early poetry by Heaney.

36 Some teaching failed to probe the literary value and imaginative power of the texts being studied. Some lessons were not well planned. In several lessons, the teachers' management of time was poor. Students were given activities they were able to complete quickly and they were then left with little to do for the rest of the lesson. In other lessons, the teacher rushed through too many readings and little learning took place. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge that some teaching is poor. It recognised, however, that there is insufficient use of IT in teaching and learning.

37 Students' achievements on some English courses are good. Results in GCE A level English literature have improved in each of the last three years and all students passed in 1999. All full-time students on the modular GCE A level language and literature course passed in 1999. The pass rates on other courses are similar to the national averages for the sector. The proportions of students gaining high grades, however, are below the national averages. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the student retention rate is poor on some courses. For example, the retention rate on the GCE A level language and literature course has been below the national

# Curriculum Areas

average for the past three years. The retention rates on the GCSE English language course have been adversely affected by timetabling problems for students who are also following a vocational programme. The attendance record of some students on the GCSE English course is poor.

38 There is an extensive range of specialist teaching and learning resources. Teachers have produced a range of excellent study guides for all literature texts. Students on all courses are given a detailed handbook and GCSE students are given five handbooks, each dealing with a specific element of the course. The self-assessment report failed to identify these handbooks as a strength. The learning support centre is well resourced for drama, poetry,

critical appreciation and fiction and is well stocked with texts on the origins of English language. It has a good range of English periodicals and videotapes. All teachers are well qualified and some have served as examiners.

39 English teachers have established good working relations with colleagues in local schools. For several years they have held a poetry competition and recently a short story competition was preceded by workshops in the schools conducted by college teachers. These links have served to increase the popularity of the study of English and to enhance the academic status of teachers in the college.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE English language	2	Number of starters	282	260	235
		Retention (%)	79	79	73
		Achievement (%)	63	67	56
GCSE English literature	2	Number of starters	22	16	12
		Retention (%)	82	94	85
		Achievement (%)	44	80	55
GCE A level English language and literature	3	Number of starters	139	100	135
		Retention (%)	82	68	78
		Achievement (%)	75	99	78
GCE A level English literature	3	Number of starters	54	57	45
		Retention (%)	81	68	84
		Achievement (%)	84	92	100

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

# Curriculum Areas

## Basic Skills

### Grade 2

**40 Inspectors observed 11 lessons in literacy and numeracy at entry level and level 1.**

**They agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the college's self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- good teaching
- effective individual learning plans for students
- prompt provision of support following screening
- students' success in progressing to more advanced courses
- good management

#### Weaknesses

- inconsistencies in the planning and recording of students' learning
- lack of systematic identification of part-time students

41 The college offers a wide range of basic literacy and numeracy courses for full-time and part-time students. They include literacy and numeracy courses for a wide range of students, literacy for vocational students, community-based courses and a course for students returning to learn. Most students on these courses work towards a qualification. Individual teaching of reading and spelling, and support for students with literacy difficulties arising from their vocational coursework are also provided. Basic skills courses are well managed. Regular team meetings are held and actions resulting from these are promptly carried out. The self-assessment report failed to acknowledge the important part managers play in supporting teachers and making this area of work effective.

42 The college's analysis of the impact of basic skills teaching for full-time students shows that those who receive help with basic skills attend regularly and achieve their qualification. A significant number of students do not take up the offer of this support. The college has taken little action to find out why, or how more students might be persuaded to receive assistance. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that, despite the circulation of information, a significant number of vocational teachers are unaware that their students are receiving basic skills support.

43 Identification of the needs of full-time students for help with basic skills is effective. All full-time students are invited to identify their needs as part of the admissions procedure. They are also tested during induction. Students identified as needing help with basic skills are offered support within two weeks. When they enrol, part-time students are invited to identify their needs for help with basic skills. Their teacher may refer them for additional learning support. Compared with the arrangements for full-time students, however, those for identifying and meeting part-time students' needs for help with basic skills are not sufficiently systematic. The college is aware of this weakness and has taken steps to publicise ways in which students can receive help with basic skills. It has yet to analyse the effects of the publicity.

44 Much of the teaching is good. Seven of the 11 lessons observed were good or outstanding. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that teaching is a strength. The progress of students receiving basic skills support is regularly reviewed and their action plans are updated. The most effective teaching is that planned to address learning objectives derived from students' individual learning plans. The outcomes of this learning are recorded and used to plan further work. Students' motivation is maintained by the use of resources that relate directly to their interests and their vocational course. One mature student is developing

# Curriculum Areas

literacy skills by writing about his life and hobbies. Copies of his wordprocessed life story have been attractively bound and are in demand from friends and acquaintances. A number of younger students learn about different styles of writing. For example, they devise a memo to report faults and write letters of application for jobs for which they are likely to apply at the end of their course.

45 Relationships between students and staff are good. Students are well motivated. An atmosphere in which hard work is expected is rapidly established and sustained by the friendly yet purposeful approach of all staff. The weakest lessons were poorly planned and teachers did not keep an adequate record of what the students had learnt. These lessons lacked clear objectives and, in some instances, the activities and assessment methods were not well matched to students' needs. These weaknesses were not identified through self-assessment. The self-assessment report acknowledged the full-time students' poor retention and achievement rates on literacy courses. The college has now introduced its own certificate courses at intermediate level and the retention and achievement rates on these have been better. Many students, especially those on community-based and return-to-learn courses, progress to vocational courses. These students commented on the value of the course in giving them the confidence to progress to another college course. Thirty-six people on the recent family literacy programme have stated their intention to enrol on a further course.

46 Most basic skills teaching takes place in the 'flexible learning centre' and the basic skills room. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that the 'flexible learning centre' is a valuable resource for basic skills provision. This room is an attractive and welcoming learning environment with a good range of resources, including networked computers. Students of all ages and with a wide range of needs receive support together.

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 2

**47 Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but found a weakness in target-setting the college had not identified.**

#### Key strengths

- comprehensive range of welfare and support services
- effective promotional materials and events
- good pre-course diagnostic testing of full-time students
- well-planned tutorial programme
- good financial support and childcare arrangements

#### Weaknesses

- underdeveloped arrangements to meet students' identified learning needs
- lack of targets in students' action plans

48 Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that course publications are well designed and informative. The college maintains close links with over 30 local schools. It also holds many promotional events to attract potential students, including road shows, open days and 'taster' days. Many year 11 pupils, who choose to shadow a college student for a day in their chosen area of study, subsequently enrol. Three-quarters of all full-time students who enrolled at the college last year applied to no other college.

49 The guidance and enrolment of full-time students are well managed. Application forms are checked to ascertain applicants' learning support needs. Applicants are then interviewed in accordance with well-written guidelines. Successful applicants are immediately offered a place. To ensure students have made the right decision, two reviews of their course choice take

place, the first at the start of term and the second three weeks later. If students are unhappy with their choice of course, they are encouraged to consider another option. The system is effective and is based on giving students supportive guidance. Part-time students enrol in a variety of ways, including by telephone. There are no systematic arrangements for providing applicants for part-time courses with initial guidance. Some applicants choose a course unsuitable for them. All students are given a well-designed induction programme. Through their responses to questionnaires on the quality of provision, students indicate a high level of satisfaction with the support received at the start of their course.

50 The tutorial curriculum for full-time students is based on personal, social and careers education and guidance programmes. It is well planned and carefully monitored. Full-time students have a one-hour tutorial each week. They also have at least one formal review with their tutor each year, based on subject teachers' reports. These result in an agreed action plan. Tutors do not use target-setting consistently when drawing up students' action plans. Some reviews of students' progress lack focus, a weakness not identified in the college's assessment. Since the last inspection, the college has improved its monitoring of students' attendance. Administrative staff check registers daily and the reason for students' absence is sought. Students' attendance records have now improved and fewer students drop out of courses. Part-time students studying on substantial programmes receive a modified tutorial programme but the college has yet to evaluate the effectiveness of this.

51 Learning support works well for those students who attend. Over 2,000 full-time students were screened at the beginning of their course in September. Almost half of the students identified as needing support choose not to take advantage of it. The college predicts

# Cross-college Provision

that half this group will not complete their course. There has been insufficient analysis of why the take-up of learning support is so low. Not all subject teachers are informed of the support needs of their students. The college understated this weakness in its self-assessment report. Part-time students who need learning support are encouraged to refer themselves for additional help. Take-up is poor, however, with only 25 part-time students currently receiving support. The range of resources in the learning centre and the quality of support students receive, are good. Dyslexia support is well developed and helpful hints on teaching styles are given to teachers. The funding the college allocated for learning support is lower than similar sector colleges, and the college has not calculated the cost of students not completing their course.

52 The college offers a wide range of student welfare and support services. These are well managed and held in high regard by students and teachers. The well-publicised counselling service offers support to students with personal and emotional problems. The service is highly regarded but lacks suitable accommodation. The careers guidance manager works closely with both the local careers service and the work experience unit. Together, they provide good careers guidance for students and are able to draw upon an extensive range of resources. The college was awarded Investor in Careers in May 1999.

53 The college has a new nursery that can accommodate 67 children at a time and over 140 parents regularly make use it. The majority of users are students, subsidised by the college. Surveys indicate that without the nursery, parents would not be able to attend the college. The nursery is also open during the summer holiday, enabling parents to attend one of the many summer programmes.

54 The college has a generous policy of supporting students with financial problems. Last year it contributed £130,000 of the

£240,000 distributed in awards, mainly to assist students for travel and childcare. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that all requests for support are dealt with quickly and professionally. The college's student liaison officer supports student union activities and the college contributes £5,000 a year to their running costs.

## General Resources

### *Grade 1*

**55 Inspectors agreed with most strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. Most weaknesses had been addressed by the time of inspection.**

#### **Key strengths**

- high standard of accommodation
- efficient room utilisation
- excellent access for those with restricted mobility
- well-maintained and well-equipped learning environment
- good access to IT facilities
- well-resourced learning centre

#### **Weaknesses**

- there are no significant weaknesses

56 The college is located on a single site set in attractive grounds midway between Havant and Waterlooville. In order to widen participation, the college is to lease buildings previously used as a library on a nearby housing estate where it will provide courses to meet the needs of those who live there. The college also runs courses at 57 schools and community centres in the local community.

57 The college's accommodation strategy is thorough and regularly revised to reflect the many changes and improvements that have been made. Over the last four years, £2 million



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has been spent on improvements and new buildings. These have included an extension to the main building, a new teaching block, a nursery and new car park. The college has identified other areas in need of improvement and has plans to address these.

58 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the standard of accommodation is high. The main buildings provide an attractive learning environment that is clean and attractive. Classrooms are well decorated, comfortably furnished and equipped with modern teaching aids. The corridors are enhanced by good displays of students' artwork. There is a welcoming and attractive reception area. An environmental policy has led to a gradual improvement of the college campus and accommodation. Inspectors agreed with the college assessment that space utilisation is good at 64%. This places it in the top 10% of colleges in respect of efficient space usage. There is a substantial caretaking and maintenance team. The planned maintenance programme is clear and well managed. The observance of health and safety regulations is a priority and the college has achieved the British Safety Council's safety award for the last seven years.

59 The college has a good learning resource centre. The centre's budget for 1999-2000 was £76,000, an average of £19.92 per student. This is much higher than in most colleges. The provision of books, periodicals, videos and music compact discs is good. The learning centre is managed by a qualified librarian and is well staffed. It is open for extensive periods in the week, including Saturdays and during the holidays. It has productive links with curriculum areas. Following the increase in student numbers the learning centre has become too small for the large number of students using it. The college has plans to increase the size of the centre before the start of the new academic year.

60 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the provision of IT equipment is

a strength. All the college's computers are networked and are of a high specification. The recent purchase of new computers brings the ratio of computers to students at peak occupancy to one machine for every 5.3 students. The availability of computers for use by staff is good. All staff and students have access to electronic mail and the Internet. The college has a well-designed intranet containing much useful information. This includes information about careers, over 90 CD-ROMs and useful Internet links for curriculum areas. Student feedback shows high levels of satisfaction.

61 The college has been outstanding in ensuring that its accommodation is accessible to people with restricted mobility. Only 2% of teaching rooms are not accessible to them and timetable changes are made to ensure that no student is excluded from class. Some accommodation used for the college's community work is also not accessible to students with mobility difficulties. The college has produced a chart showing which of its 57 centres in the local community are accessible to people with restricted mobility. Feedback from staff and the students' disability forum is used to identify and prioritise necessary improvements and students with mobility difficulties undertake regular surveys of the accessibility of the accommodation.

62 The college has four food outlets that provide a wide choice of food. In addition, there is a restaurant for staff. Students and staff express satisfaction with the quality, range and value of the food provided. There is a good student common room managed by the students union. Much of the accommodation for teachers is good. All teachers have work spaces and access to computers. Some teachers' workrooms have become crowded but improved accommodation is planned for the next academic year.

# Cross-college Provision

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 2

**63 Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but identified an additional weakness. Some weaknesses had already been addressed by the time of the inspection.**

#### Key strengths

- strong commitment of staff to continuous improvement
- comprehensive quality assurance arrangements
- effective annual cycle of quality assurance
- rigorous quality assurance arrangements for college support services
- rigorous system of lesson observation
- well-managed arrangements for staff development and staff appraisal

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient impact of quality assurance on student retention, some achievement rates and teaching
- lack of precision in some course and subject review action plans

64 The college has built on its good quality assurance practice identified at the last inspection. It has embraced rigorous self-assessment. Arrangements for lesson observation have been extended and developed, the quality assurance process for support services has been improved and the role of the quality assurance committees has been reviewed. The principal plays a key role by holding individual meetings with all senior, curriculum and service area managers to review their self-assessment action plans.

65 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the college's

quality assurance system is a strength. The annual evaluation and quality assurance cycle brings together quality assurance, staff development, appraisal and planning. There is a detailed calendar of activities. Staff are provided with clear guidance, including curriculum and support service quality manuals and course evaluation handbooks.

66 Curriculum teams review their work each year using the college course evaluation system. Reviews begin at course or subject level and include all full-time and part-time courses and the college's off-site community programme. Reviews begin with the design statement that provides the course specification. They include each course team's evaluation of its work, together with external verifiers' reports, comparisons with college and national data, and previous targets. They also include a summary of students' views obtained from questionnaires and course teams. The outcome of each review is a course statement and a programme of action. The action plans for some courses are not detailed enough. They lack timescales and the names of those responsible for the action to be carried out. This weakness was not identified in the college's assessment. Curriculum managers use these reviews to produce good self-assessment reports and action plans.

67 The quality assurance system for support services is also well established. Service standards have been set and their attainment is monitored using performance targets. Support staff seek the views of their customers when setting targets and as part of their review. Service managers produce an annual review report. The college is clear about its commitment to its students. As a means of checking on the college's overall performance, staff monitor carefully the extent to which the college honours the commitments it makes in the students' charter. The complaints procedure is clear and specifies a timescale within which a response to complaints must be made.

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Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the arrangements for monitoring the quality of services to students are a strength.

68 The work of the college's quality assurance committees is effective. Three quality review groups provide the forum for a detailed consideration of quality assurance. Two are concerned with the curriculum and the third with support services. These meet frequently to co-ordinate and monitor the review and evaluation process, including self-assessment. Associated committees support this work and provide a focus for improving teaching and learning, research and marketing, the college charter, inclusive learning and staff development.

69 Self-assessment is thorough and integral to the quality assurance process. All staff are involved in self-assessment and they comment positively about their opportunity to influence the process. The report also benefits from external validation. It contains clear action plans. Governors conducted their own self-assessment and approved the college's self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses the college identified.

70 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that it has a good and well-established lesson observation scheme. The college management has been self-critical of the quality of some lesson observation judgements and has arranged for the scheme to be externally moderated and verified. In 1999, of the 253 lessons observed, 77% were judged to be good or outstanding. Inspectors graded 63% of the observed lessons as grade 1 or 2. The proportion of good or outstanding lessons taken by part-time teachers was 20% lower.

71 The college has identified improvements resulting from its quality assurance process. These include modifications to course structures and induction, improved catering arrangements,

better signposting from bus stops and the work of the disability forum. Students' achievements have improved since the last inspection, significantly so for students aged 16 to 18 at levels 2 and 3, and for students aged 19 and over, at all levels. In 1999, students' achievements on all courses at levels 1 to 3 were at or above the national average for the sector. The college has made progress in improving student retention rates. At the time of the inspection, the retention rate for current students aged 16 to 18 was 76%.

72 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that arrangements for staff appraisal and staff development are a strength. There is one appraisal scheme for all staff. There is a two-year cycle of appraisal. All staff receive an annual appraisal at which their performance is reviewed against the individual objectives they have been set. The appraisal covers the findings from the observation of work and performance in the classroom. It leads to the identification of the training and staff development needs of individual members of staff. These needs are then fed into the college's overall staff development plan that reflects, in turn, the college's key strategic and operational priorities. The importance the college places on staff development is reflected in its allocation of 1.6% of staffing costs to the staff development budget. In addition, courses that staff attend at the college are paid for. The college achieved Investor in People accreditation in 1998.

# Cross-college Provision

## Governance

### Grade 2

**73 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the college's overall assessment of governance and judged that progress had been made in addressing some of the weaknesses.**

#### Key strengths

- governors' commitment to furthering the college's success and strategic direction
- governors' awareness and application of their trusteeship
- effective leadership of the board
- effective audit committee
- robust self-assessment

#### Weaknesses

- insufficient monitoring of the college's academic performance
- inadequate arrangements for governor training

74 Governors demonstrate a high level of commitment to the college. They are involved in determining and reviewing the college's mission and strategic direction. Corporately, governors have a good understanding of the social and economic characteristics of the area and of government policy to widen participation in education and training. A keen awareness of their role as trustees of a publicly funded organisation underpins their view that the college must constantly seek to identify and meet the needs of the varied communities in its catchment area. They encourage and support senior managers in this task. Governors are involved in the strategic planning process and approve annual targets. Their deliberations are informed by regular presentations by senior managers. A review of progress towards achieving annual targets is provided to governors through the principal's termly report

and a summary annual review. The principal's appraisal by the chair is based on this review.

75 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that governors possess a broad range of skills and expertise, covering areas such as law and finance. They are also familiar with local community issues. Some governors have educational expertise. They use their skills to contribute to the work of the college, for example, in providing legal and architectural guidance on the college's building programme. The corporation has 19 members. There is one vacancy. The membership comprises seven business, three co-opted, two staff, two students, two local authority, two local community members and the principal. The corporation planned the transition to the new statutory requirements for its composition in detail, with support from the search committee. The transition was complete by the time of the first corporation meeting after 1 August 1999. In order to achieve new composition of the board, some governors had to transfer from one category of membership to another. They did not do so, however, in accordance with the guidance published in Council Circular 99/30. The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

76 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the corporation operates in accord with a code of conduct and standing orders. There is also a register of interests which encompasses governors and members of the senior management team. Some aspects of these documents have not been updated. Corporation and committee meetings are held at least once a term on a cycle designed to ensure compliance with external requirements. The governors' attendance record is good. The

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production of agendas and supporting papers for corporation and committee meetings reflect the effective administration of corporation business. Corporation and committee minutes are also produced promptly. Corporation minutes are available for review in the library. The style of the minutes does not enable action points to be easily identified. Copies of supporting papers are available from the clerk to the corporation.

77 The corporation's committees cover finance and employment, audit, search and remuneration, premises, and standards and quality. Each committee operates within clearly defined terms of reference. Auditors agreed with the college's assessment that the audit committee operates effectively and in accordance with the provisions of Council Circular 98/15, *Audit Code of Practice*, including the submission of an annual report of its activities to the corporation.

78 The board benefits from effective leadership. There is a good working relationship between the chair and principal. Board meetings are well managed and members are encouraged to contribute to debate. In recent years, governors have been preoccupied with financial and accommodation priorities. They have not given sufficient time to their role in monitoring the academic performance of the college, a weakness they have identified through their own self-assessment. Governors acknowledge the need to improve their knowledge of the curriculum. The standards and quality committee has started to focus its attention on student retention and achievement rates.

79 The board undertook self-assessment for the first time in 1996. Each governor replied to a questionnaire and provided grading on a scale of 1 to 5 using a set of performance indicators. They discussed the outcomes in groups. The board then agreed strengths and key weaknesses and produced an action plan. In the most recent self-assessment, the number of

performance indicators has been increased and refined. Governors now carry out self-assessment more robustly and rigorously than before. They are better informed and their grading of the board's performance is realistic. Recently, governors have been assisted in their consideration of the college's self-assessment report by external consultants. Inspectors agreed with the finding in the self-assessment report that arrangements for the induction and training of governors have been inadequate. With the assistance of the clerk, governors have recently identified the training needs of new and experienced members. Plans to meet these needs are being drafted.

## Management

### *Grade 1*

**80 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the strengths identified in the self-assessment report. They considered, however, that some weaknesses had been overstated and found that progress had been made in addressing others.**

#### **Key strengths**

- strong leadership and effective management
- successful and robust financial management
- effective and efficient course planning
- effective planning to widen participation
- well-established use of operational and improvement targets
- reliable management information

#### **Weaknesses**

- insufficient support for part-time teachers

81 Inspectors agreed that the college is well managed and has strong leadership. There are high expectations of the commitment and

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performance of staff throughout the college. Staff are valued and supported and their work is conducted in a climate of good industrial relations. Roles and responsibilities at all levels are clear. The curriculum is effectively managed through four departments. The senior management team consists of the principal, the college secretary, who is deputy chief executive and also the clerk to the corporation, four heads of department, one of whom is assistant principal responsible for curriculum and quality, the head of finance, the head of student services, and the marketing manager. In fortnightly meetings, chaired by the principal, the team monitors policy and strategy. Weekly meetings address more routine matters, but without the principal. This arrangement works well. Targets are set for all managers and progress towards reaching these is regularly monitored.

82 Communication is good. There is a published calendar of management meetings. Staff briefings, the college intranet and principal's letters to staff contribute to good communication. The Investor in People report records that staff are kept well informed about developments. Staff have confidence in their managers and the flow of information. They are confident that they can speak openly and frankly to senior managers on matters that concern them.

83 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. Management accounts are produced promptly at the end of the month and are reviewed in detail by the principal, college secretary and head of finance. Each cost centre manager has an assigned contact person in the finance team to provide financial guidance and support. Each year since incorporation the college has achieved an operating surplus, despite an average level of funding that is below the sector average. The college has also consistently exceeded its funded unit targets. In the period since the last

inspection, the college has spent approximately £2 million on capital building projects while continuing its policy of not borrowing, retaining liquid funds of at least £2 million and awarding pay rises to all staff. This situation reflects the college's commitment to robust financial management.

84 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the college's assessment that there is effective financial management. The document 'course and resources' is produced annually and provides a clear guide to managers on which courses are to be run in the forthcoming year, minimum student numbers required and course costing data for full-cost recovery courses. This process underpins the college's efficient deployment of staff. Most of the better lessons inspectors observed were taught by full-time teachers. Some part-time teachers, and particularly those who take only a few classes each week, do not receive the same degree of support as full-time teachers and they are not enabled to meet and share ideas and good practice. This weakness was not acknowledged in the college's self-assessment report.

85 All staff contribute to the strategic plan and consider that they have an important role in extending the college's core business. Their contribution is realised through department or unit development plans. The college has taken steps to improve co-ordination of its market research. The college's market research group monitors the relevance and quality of provision and engages all staff in identifying new opportunities to meet the needs of the local community. Strong links with schools and the local business community have been established. Operational targets for the college are agreed and published. All staff understand the importance of high retention rates and their implications for college income and students' achievements.

86 The college has fully embraced the aims of widening participation. In the last 18 months, increasing numbers of students have enrolled

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either in the college or at its centres in the local community to take advantage of opportunities for education and training. The college has close links with local government and other organisations, including Havant Borough Council, the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Education Business Partnership and the Chamber of Commerce. Their representatives speak highly of the college's commitment to students who, traditionally, have been under-represented in further education. Planning to widen participation is reinforced by the college's development of inclusive learning strategies.

87 Inspectors and auditors agreed that the college has robust management information. Data on students' retention and achievements are comprehensive and reliable. An easily accessible management information service is provided to all managers. Regular reports are available which facilitate monitoring of enrolments, course transfers, student retention and achievement rates. Statistical returns to the FEFC are prompt and reliable.

88 Personnel policies and procedures are updated annually. There is a comprehensive health and safety policy. The college ensures that staff and students are aware of equal opportunities issues. These are addressed at enrolment, induction and later in the year through the tutorial programme. Annual reports on equal opportunities are provided for senior management and the corporation. Complaints about harassment or discrimination are extremely rare.

## Conclusions

89 The college produced its first full self-assessment report for the inspection. It has produced individual curriculum and cross-college reports for the previous four years. The self-assessment report provided a sound basis for planning and carrying out the inspection. Inspectors agreed with most of the

strengths and weaknesses in the report. The grades they gave two curriculum areas and one cross-college area were one grade higher than those awarded by the college.

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

# College Statistics

## Student numbers by age (March 2000)

<i>Age</i>	<i>%</i>
Under 16	1
16-18 years	21
19-24 years	9
25+ years	68
Not known	1
Total	100

*Source: college data*

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

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 1 (foundation)	29
Level 2 (intermediate)	23
Level 3 (advanced)	25
Level 4/5 (higher)	2
Non-schedule 2	21
Total	100

*Source: college data*

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

<i>Programme area</i>	<i>Full time</i>	<i>Part time</i>	<i>Total provision %</i>
Science	504	1,239	19
Agriculture	43	17	1
Engineering	120	248	4
Business	384	1,140	16
Hotel and catering	348	249	6
Health and community care	529	746	14
Art and design	568	665	13
Humanities	548	1,171	19
Basic education	90	663	8
Total	3,134	6,138	100

*Source: college data*

## Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 21% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

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

	<i>Perm- anent</i>	<i>Fixed term</i>	<i>Casual</i>	<i>Total</i>
Direct learning contact	108	139	0	247
Supporting direct learning contact	36	14	0	50
Other support	104	7	1	112
Total	248	160	1	409

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



# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1997	1998	1999
Income	£10,708,000	£10,903,000	£11,562,000
Average level of funding (ALF)	£17.93	£16.73	£16.56
Payroll as a proportion of income	65%	65%	68%
Achievement of funding target	107%	100%	103%
Diversity of income	16%	18%	18%
Operating surplus	£766,000	£63,000	£38,850

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)

### 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	711	767	848	1,250	1,883	1,490
	Retention (%)	80	81	83	74	75	75
	Achievement (%)	62	61	59	50	64	64
2	Number of starters	1,612	1,941	1,678	1,724	1,450	1,621
	Retention (%)	81	80	79	79	72	76
	Achievement (%)	48	49	70	63	64	74
3	Number of starters	1,506	1,510	1,646	1,120	1,280	1,295
	Retention (%)	74	82	74	74	67	74
	Achievement (%)	80	75	76	63	63	63
4 or 5	Number of starters	15	9	8	322	210	106
	Retention (%)	100	89	88	83	74	84
	Achievement (%)	60	29	67	48	37	67
Short courses	Number of starters	220	369	470	2,316	2,173	1,117
	Retention (%)	96	98	79	98	99	69
	Achievement (%)	41	55	59	62	65	38
Unknown/unclassified	Number of starters	679	717	310	1,496	1,569	2,007
	Retention (%)	84	87	96	81	78	96
	Achievement (%)	44	37	78	47	41	65

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

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