

St Helens 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

St Helens College

North West Region

Inspected March 1998

St Helens College is a general further education college in Merseyside. Inspectors were able to validate many of the college's judgements on the strengths and weaknesses of its provision.

Although the college's quality assurance systems are well established, the self-assessment report was neither sufficiently comprehensive nor sufficiently evaluative. It did not present a complete profile. In collating information from many sources, the college omitted some key strengths and weaknesses from the report or failed to give them sufficient weighting.

Inspectors agreed with all the grades for aspects of cross-college provision and with most of the curricular grades that were awarded by the college as part of its self-assessment.

The college offers a wide range of provision spanning all 10 programme areas funded by the FEFC. Provision in five FEFC programme areas was inspected. Strategies to widen participation and respond to the needs of the local and regional community have been effective in achieving planned and rapid growth in student numbers. More than 80 per cent of students attend part time. Much of the teaching is of a high standard. Retention rates are improving, but remain low on some courses. Students' achievements in all programme areas range from good to poor with few discernible trends. Advice and guidance to prospective and existing

students is of high quality. Support for students on a wide range of personal issues is excellent. Many students work in attractive, modern surroundings; some accommodation provides outstanding learning environments. IT facilities are widely available. Students also make extensive use of the well-resourced libraries and learning resource centres. Almost all facilities are accessible to students with restricted mobility. Members of the corporation carry out their work effectively. The quality of governance is outstanding. The corporation strives for continuous improvement of its own work and the work of the college. Characteristics of the excellent management of the college include: strong leadership; appropriate delegation of responsibility to managers; good financial controls; rigorous monitoring and review of college performance; and effective communication systems. The college should: continue its efforts to improve retention rates; critically evaluate students' achievements and then devise strategies to rectify the weaknesses that are identified; strengthen its arrangements to identify and respond to individual learning needs; monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of tutorials; bring the various elements within the framework for quality assurance into a coherent system.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Engineering	2	Support for students	2
Business	2	General resources	1
Health and care	2	Quality assurance	2
Art, design and media	2	Governance	1
Humanities	2	Management	1

Context

The College and its Mission

1 St Helens College is a general further education college that provides courses in all 10 of the programme areas funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). It serves the borough of St Helens which lies in the south east of Merseyside and has a population of about 180,000. The college also attracts students from further afield, particularly those who wish to take further education courses in art, engineering, and construction or higher education courses. It is an associate college of Liverpool John Moores University.

2 The college is housed on three campuses: in buildings in St Helens town centre, which include property vacated and donated by a pharmaceutical company; at a newly-completed technology centre about two miles away; and at a centre in the neighbouring town of Newton-le-Willows. To encourage the local community to participate in further education, courses are also offered in 50 other centres within the borough. In partnership with three engineering companies and through its eight subsidiary companies, the college provides training at other centres in Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Cumbria.

3 The local economy depends mainly on glass making, engineering, distribution and service industries. The college is the fourth largest employer in the borough. Over 80 per cent of local companies employ between one and 24 people. Some areas of St Helens are comparatively affluent. However, in recognition of the high levels of social and economic deprivation in other areas, the borough, along with other parts of Merseyside, has been given European Objective 1 status. Projects supported by the European Social Fund have enabled the college: to invest in its buildings and equipment; to develop international links with Scandinavia, Greece and Germany; and to establish 15 learning centres in eight designated areas of the borough. In July 1997, the unemployment rate for the Wigan and St Helens travel-to-work area

was 8 per cent compared with a rate of 6.4 per cent in the north-west and a national rate of 5.9 per cent.

4 The college collaborates with other sector colleges in the locality to broaden its curriculum and to encourage a wider range of people to participate in further education. Use of information and learning technology and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are themes of current collaborative projects. Seven general further education or tertiary colleges are within a radius of 15 miles. Others providing education within the borough include a Roman Catholic sixth form college and 12 comprehensive schools, of which six have sixth forms. Statistics from the careers service for 1997 show that 62 per cent of 16 year olds continued in full-time education at the end of their compulsory period of schooling. Of those, 21 per cent enrolled on college courses. In 1997, 40 per cent of school-leavers in St Helens gained five or more subjects at grades C or above in the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) compared with an average for England of 45 per cent. The college is working in partnership with the chamber of commerce, the careers service and the borough council to try to raise the attainment levels of young people.

5 In March 1998, there were 21,426 students enrolled at the college. Approximately a quarter were aged 16 to 18 years. About 82 per cent were studying part time. Full-time enrolments at advanced level included 415 students on modern apprenticeships in seven programme areas. About 650 school pupils were attending link courses at the college to experience aspects of vocational education. The college employed 581 full-time equivalent staff on permanent or fixed-term contracts. An additional 74 full-time equivalent staff were provided by an agency. Eleven academic centres and two schools in the college are responsible for delivering the curriculum. Work in eight academic centres and both schools was inspected.

Context

6 The college's mission is 'to be a college centred on St Helens with a wider role in both further and higher education, and to provide an accessible and comprehensive range of high-quality education, training and services to individuals, industry and the community'. To achieve these aims, the college between 1997 and 2000 intends: to consolidate the growth in student numbers achieved in the last three years; to continue to improve its efficiency and effectiveness; to develop the way in which it delivers the curriculum so that it enhances students' opportunities to learn; and to ensure that its subsidiary companies operate effectively.

The Inspection

7 The college was inspected in March 1998. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and the information about the college which is held by other divisions of the FEFC. The college submitted data on students' achievements for the three years from 1995 to 1997. The data were checked against primary sources, for example learning agreements and pass lists issued by examining bodies.

8 The college was notified approximately two months before the inspection of the sample of

provision that was to be assessed. The inspection was carried out by 16 inspectors working for a total of 59 days, and an auditor for five working days. Inspectors observed 115 lessons, including learning activities delivered by four of the college's subsidiary companies at sites in Merseyside, Yorkshire and Greater Manchester. They also examined samples of students' work and a variety of college documents. Inspection team members consulted a representative of the local training and enterprise council (TEC) and held meetings with governors, managers, college staff and students.

9 Of the lessons inspected, 69 per cent were rated good or outstanding and fewer than 2 per cent were less than satisfactory. According to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*, this profile compares with averages of 61 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, for all colleges inspected in 1996-97. The average level of student attendance was 75 per cent. This figure compares with 73 per cent recorded by inspectors for general further education colleges in 1996-97, according to the chief inspector's annual report. The following table shows the grades awarded to the lessons inspected.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level and GCSE	0	5	2	0	0	7
Access to further and higher education	3	7	3	1	0	14
Higher education	0	6	2	0	0	8
GNVQ	2	8	6	0	0	16
NVQ	7	12	3	1	0	23
Other vocational*	6	20	18	0	0	47
Total	21	58	34	2	0	115

*includes national diplomas and certificates

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 2

10 Thirty lessons were observed covering provision in motor vehicle engineering, electrical and mechanical engineering, electronic engineering, data communications and software engineering. Inspectors also visited one of the college's subsidiary companies. They agreed with some of the strengths that were included in the self-assessment report but found others were overstated, particularly judgements on the standard of teaching. Inspectors also identified additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- a wide range of courses
- clear progression routes
- effective collaboration with local industry
- effective practical activities
- learning materials of high quality
- students' well-developed vocational skills
- high retention rates on many courses
- thorough internal verification of students' work
- modern, well-resourced facilities for engineering and information technology (IT)

Weaknesses

- some ineffective teaching
- poor students' achievements on some courses
- incomplete records which omit some students' achievements
- variations in the quality of action plans

11 As the self-assessment report indicates, the college offers a wide range of courses at craft,

technician, higher technician and professional level. The range of provision has recently been increased in software engineering, computer networking and telecommunications. Many engineering courses are funded by sources other than the FEFC. For example, more than 100 engineering students are funded by TECs as part of the modern apprenticeship scheme. Strong links with industry enable the college to design and provide courses which meet the needs of different client groups. Examples include the delivery of programmes of study leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs), and the achievement of national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at manufacturing plants in the locality.

12 Most course teams work effectively. Some aspects of engineering provision are well managed. Procedures for internal verification are carefully implemented but the rigour with which courses are evaluated at the end of the year varies. Some course evaluations clearly identify strengths and weaknesses, and specify appropriate actions that need to be taken, together with timescales and the persons responsible. Other evaluations fail to address issues and lack sufficient detail. Course evaluation was overstated as a strength in the self-assessment report. Analysis of students' achievements is not sufficiently thorough. Inspectors found that some students' achievements were better than the college's centrally-held records indicated.

13 Schemes of work, lesson plans and the range and quality of learning resources are acknowledged as strengths in the self-assessment report. Practical activities are well planned and provide students with opportunities to work in small groups as well as individually. For example, in a computer networking class, students worked by themselves to transfer data from one computer to another and then worked in small groups to compare their findings and discuss differences. In most lessons, the teaching of theory complements students'

Curriculum Areas

practical experience in college workshops and industrial placements. However, in a few cases, theory and practice were not integrated. Less effective lessons were often characterised by a lack of appropriate variety in teaching styles and few questions were directed at students to test their understanding. The quality of teaching and learning was overstated as a strength in the college's self-assessment report.

14 Students demonstrated appropriate skills and knowledge. For example, in a motor vehicle engineering class, they showed high levels of analytical skills in diagnosing reasons for electrical faults in a particular car. Retention rates on many courses are high. For example, the last two classes of students taking two-year national certificate courses in electrical and electronic engineering had retention rates of 100 per cent. Examination results fluctuate. In 1997, the pass rate for the course that had recently been introduced leading to a higher national certificate in total quality management was 100 per cent. By referring to learning agreements and information from awarding bodies, inspectors discovered some high levels of students' achievements in motor vehicle

engineering courses that had not been recorded by the college. Students' low achievements are recorded on a number of courses but they are not acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

15 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that facilities for provision in engineering and technology are of high quality. Substantial investment to house the courses in modern, purpose-built accommodation has provided exceptionally good learning environments for students. Income from fee-paying courses has also helped to improve the quality of physical resources. There is sufficient, suitable specialist equipment; older items are being systematically replaced. Staff are well qualified to teach the courses offered. Many hold assessor and verifier awards.

Examples of students' achievements* in engineering, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Higher national certificate electrical engineering	Retention (%)	77	78	70
	Pass rate (%)	54	65	50
GNVQ advanced, national diplomas and certificates	Retention (%)	54	67	69
	Pass rate (%)	52	26	31
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	95	73	68
	Pass rate (%)	+	33	35
NVQ level 2 engineering manufacture	Retention (%)	100	100	99
	Pass rate (%)	64	67	37
Certificate in welding and fabrication practice	Retention (%)	81	55	58
	Pass rate (%)	62	83	55

Source: college data

+pilot year

*some data relating to students' achievements were not recorded by the college

Curriculum Areas

Business

Grade 2

16 The inspection focused on a wide sample of courses offered at college centres and at venues used by two subsidiary companies. Thirty-two lessons were observed. Inspectors found the self-assessment report more descriptive than evaluative. They broadly agreed with the college's judgements of the provision, but identified some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- a comprehensive range of provision
- the modular structure of courses
- well-planned and purposeful teaching
- high-quality learning resources and IT facilities
- on many courses, pass rates above national averages
- effectively managed courses
- appropriate use of some work placements
- strong links with local businesses and external clients

Weaknesses

- declining and below average achievements on GNVQ advanced courses
- the absence of formal work experience on full-time GNVQ courses

17 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment of its breadth of provision as a strength. An extensive portfolio of courses covering business, administration, office technology, management and professional studies successfully caters for a wide range of clients both locally and regionally. Progression routes are clearly defined. Modular structures and an appropriate variety of teaching and learning methods enable students to create

individual programmes of study and to attend the college at times which suit them. Courses are effectively managed and staff are deployed appropriately. On most courses, students are able to combine the study of theoretical aspects with the application of knowledge and skills in the workplace. However, formal work experience is not available to full-time GNVQ students. This weakness was not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Links with employers and external clients are effective. A significant proportion of provision is delivered through the college's subsidiary companies at venues some distance from the college.

18 The quality of teaching and learning observed by inspectors was high, particularly in business administration and office technology. Lessons were carefully planned and related to detailed schemes of work. Some lessons provided effectively for a mix of students working at different levels. For example, in one class 11 students were aiming for qualifications in desktop publishing and wordprocessing at three different levels. Well-prepared, attractive booklets for assignments enabled students to work at a pace which suited them with sufficient help from the teacher. In most lessons, there was a suitable range of learning activities. This strength is highlighted in the self-assessment report. In professional courses, teachers drew directly on students' experiences in the workplace to illustrate points and to reinforce learning. For example, a group of managers considered issues affecting their own company in an activity designed to help them to manage change. Most teachers succeeded in developing responses from students during classroom discussions and role-play activities. Some lessons failed to stimulate students because they were too theoretical or relied too heavily on one type of learning activity. Most written work is marked and returned quickly, and contains detailed and constructive feedback.

19 Inspectors agreed with the view in the self-assessment report that students' work is of a good standard and meets course objectives.

Curriculum Areas

Students taking GNVQ courses show appropriate investigative and research skills and produce work of a business standard, often using IT. Portfolios belonging to NVQ students are comprehensive, well organised and contain work at and beyond the national standards. Students taking professional and management courses produce impressive project work and demonstrate appropriate oral skills. Students achieve high pass rates in a range of courses at different levels but there are also some weaknesses in students' achievements. The self-assessment report does not include enough analysis of these weaknesses. On some courses, for example wordprocessing and the GNVQ advanced and national certificate in business, pass rates are declining. Low rates of retention and achievement among some students registered with the college's subsidiary companies are also evident.

20 As the self-assessment report states, accommodation for business courses at the campus in the town centre is of a high quality and appropriately equipped. The learning environment is well suited to the needs of full-time and part-time students. Facilities used by the college's subsidiary companies are adequate and sometimes very good. Some trainees are able to use the resources at the town centre site.

Examples of students' achievements in business, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Higher national certificate business and finance	Retention (%)	84	86	90
	Pass rate (%)	65	77	98
GNVQ advanced and national certificates	Retention (%)	72	63	70
	Pass rate (%)	74	71	57
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	76	64	83
	Pass rate (%)	54	56	60
Accounting technician courses levels 2 and 3	Retention (%)	86	84	89
	Pass rate (%)	49	28	60
NVQs levels 1 and 2 business administration for people returning to work	Retention (%)	91	73	90
	Pass rate (%)	63	65	63
Wordprocessing: stages I, II and III	Retention (%)	100	78	97
	Pass rate (%)	70	62	59
Institute of Personnel and Development stage 1	Retention (%)	82	96	90
	Pass rate (%)	85	74	81

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Health and Care

Grade 2

21 The inspection covered a range of courses from foundation to higher education level. Sixteen lessons were observed. The average level of attendance was 85 per cent. Inspectors confirmed judgements included in the self-assessment report, but also identified some additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- a broad range of provision
- wide choice of attendance modes
- effective course planning
- strong links with a wide range of organisations
- an appropriate mix of assessment strategies
- students who demonstrate appropriate skills
- good pass rates and retention rates on advanced level courses in 1997

Weaknesses

- insufficient development of key skills
- a few inappropriate learning activities
- few NVQs gained by part-time students

22 As the self-assessment report states, the broad range of courses and the wide choice of attendance modes available to students are particular strengths of the work in the health and care programme. The college offers many opportunities: vocational experience courses for school pupils; part-time and full-time provision from foundation to higher education level in child, health and social care; and counselling courses. Courses and training are provided at the Newton-le-Willows campus, in local community centres and at other venues used by the college's subsidiary companies. Strong links with a wide range of organisations in both the public and the private sector enable the college

to play an important role regionally and nationally in training and assessment.

23 Courses are effectively planned and well managed. Work experience is fully integrated with other aspects of full-time provision. A wide range of assessment strategies is implemented fairly by staff. Records of students' progress are sufficiently detailed. An appropriate variety of enrichment activities including residential courses, visits abroad and first aid courses are features of the provision. Performance in such activities is included in students' records of achievement. Communication between staff working at different venues is effective. Staff are well informed about issues and contribute their ideas to operational and strategic planning. Some of these strengths are not fully reflected in the self-assessment report.

24 Teaching was usually of a good standard. Most lessons observed were well structured and made good use of high-quality learning resources. In the best lessons, students took part in an appropriate variety of learning activities which built upon their own experiences and enabled them to develop knowledge and skills in a relevant vocational context. Inspectors agreed with the college's view that students' experience of work makes an effective contribution to their learning. For example, in one class, using information gained during their work placements, students took the part of care workers and enacted a short role-play in pairs. From this activity, the students compiled and agreed a profile of essential skills for such workers. They compared their own skills with this profile to identify areas for further development. In some lessons, the learning activities failed to challenge students and sustain their interest. For example, in an advanced level lesson, students spent too long copying down notes from a flip chart. In all lessons, teachers did not make full use of opportunities to develop and assess key skills. This weakness was not included in the self-assessment report.

Curriculum Areas

25 Retention rates for full-time students on courses at all levels are improving and exceeded 80 per cent in 1997. In that year, all students who began the GNVQ intermediate course completed it. Retention rates for individual courses were not analysed sufficiently thoroughly in the self-assessment report. Pass rates on most courses are in line with or better than national averages. In 1997, the pass rate for students taking a national diploma course in nursery nursing was 100 per cent. All these students went on to higher level courses or found employment related to their training. At foundation level, some GNVQ students gained part of the award in 1997 and are continuing to study for the full award. Students' achievement and retention rates on some part-time courses leading to NVQs are low. The self-assessment report includes comments on students' examination results but gives insufficient information on other aspects of students' achievements. Students observed by inspectors in work placements demonstrated competent practical skills in dealing with children. In lessons, most students had oral and written skills appropriate to the level and stage of their course. For example, to support oral presentations made to the rest of the class, students prepared and used written and other illustrative material which was of a high standard.

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

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ advanced and diplomas in nursery nursing	Retention (%)	84	87	90
	Pass rate (%)	72	73	83
GNVQ intermediate and certificates in childcare and education	Retention (%)	68	82	86
	Pass rate (%)	50	71	65
GNVQ foundation	Retention (%)	69	76	87
	Pass rate (%)	33	55	45

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Art, Design and Media

Grade 2

26 Nineteen lessons were observed which covered a variety of full-time and part-time courses. Inspectors agreed with most judgements included in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- the broad range of provision
- a wide variety of appropriate teaching methods
- teaching and learning
- clear assignment briefs
- thorough assessment procedures
- good pass rates on full-time courses in art and design
- spacious and well-lit accommodation in the SmithKline Beecham building

Weaknesses

- some low pass rates
- some low levels of retention
- shortcomings in developing students' study skills

27 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the broad range of courses in art, design and media meets the needs of 16 to 19 year olds as well as adults who wish to return to work or change their careers. Full-time courses include: GNVQs at intermediate and advanced level in art and design; and national diplomas in interior design, photography, general art and design; foundation studies in art and design, and media. Photography, jewellery, calligraphy, ceramics, creative writing, video production and computer-aided design are among the specialist subjects offered to part-time students. The portfolio of higher education courses provides students with appropriate opportunities to continue their studies at the college.

28 Course teams work effectively. Most projects have aims and objectives which are clearly identified; they are assessed appropriately. As noted in the self-assessment report, most lessons are well planned and incorporate an appropriate variety of teaching methods. In most lessons, there was a suitable mix of theory and practice which helped to place students' practical work within a broader social and economic context. In most classes, drawing was well related to students' specialist disciplines. Students worked competently to produce work of an appropriate standard. Some weaknesses in teaching and learning are not identified in the self-assessment report. In a few lessons, aims and objectives were not made sufficiently clear to students, and their understanding of topics was not always checked. Some students wasted time while waiting for help from their teachers. Students are encouraged to develop research skills and critical awareness but support to help them to study by themselves varies in quality and quantity from course to course.

29 Low retention rates on some courses are acknowledged in the self-assessment report. For example, in 1996 and 1997, less than 50 per cent of students aged 19 or over completed the course leading to the national diploma in media. In 1997, only 50 per cent of students aged 16 to 18 and 43 per cent of students aged 19 or over completed the national diploma in photography course. Measures to improve retention are already in place and there are early indications that they are bringing about improvements. At the time of the inspection, 81 per cent of full-time students and 82 per cent of part-time students who enrolled in September were continuing with their courses.

30 Most students who complete their courses achieve the qualifications they are seeking. For the last three years, pass rates for students aged between 16 and 18 taking the GNVQ intermediate in art and design have been consistently above national averages. Among other notable achievements, more than 85 per

Curriculum Areas

cent of students on the course gained the national diploma in foundation studies in art and design in each of the last three years. For students aged 19 or over, the 1997 pass rate was 100 per cent. Many students went on to study higher level courses or found employment that was related to their qualification. Pass rates for other full-time courses, for example the national diploma in media studies, are lower. Pass rates for students on part-time courses are not as high as those for students on full-time courses.

31 As the self-assessment report notes, teachers offer a broad range of specialist skills. Many are practising artists and designers who exhibit their work or undertake freelance design projects. The college has a range of well-maintained, specialist equipment for the majority of courses. Most curriculum areas in the SmithKline Beecham building occupy accommodation in large, well-lit studios. Each

national diploma and GNVQ student has a workplace and some storage facilities. By contrast, the studio for ceramics, jewellery and three-dimensional design cannot adequately accommodate all the students who need to use it. Some lessons which are held in other parts of the college are not well accommodated.

Examples of students' achievements in art, design and media, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
National diploma in foundation studies in art and design (students aged 16 to 18 years)	Retention (%)	93	72	100
	Pass rate (%)	100	100	93
National diploma in foundation studies in art and design (students aged 19 or over)	Retention (%)	70	93	96
	Pass rate (%)	88	88	100
National diploma in general art and design (students aged 16 to 18 years)	Retention (%)	66	100	92
	Pass rate (%)	100	80	96
GNVQ intermediate art and design (students aged 16 to 18 years)	Retention (%)	80	83	60
	Pass rate (%)	94	88	83
National diploma in media studies (students aged 16 to 18 years)	Retention (%)	92	55	92
	Pass rate (%)	91	66	73

Source: college data

Curriculum Areas

Humanities

Grade 2

32 The inspection of humanities focused on GCSE courses in English, English literature, history, psychology and sociology and access courses to higher and further education. Inspectors observed 18 lessons. They confirmed most of the strengths in the self-assessment report and found that some weaknesses identified at the time the report was written had been remedied. A few additional weaknesses were highlighted by inspectors.

Key strengths

- courses designed to meet a range of individual needs
- a high standard of teaching
- highly motivated and purposeful students
- some pass rates above national averages
- effective management of courses

Weaknesses

- some low retention rates
- shortcomings in the delivery and assessment of key skills within GCSE courses

33 The college has strengthened its management of humanities provision since the last inspection. There are now effective systems in place to identify and remedy weaknesses. Pro-active leadership and effective management of courses are strong features. Managers are responsive to the needs of a diverse population of students and, in particular, to the requirements of adult learners. Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that the structure and timetabling of access courses allow students to study in ways and at times

which suit their abilities and personal circumstances. Enrolments have increased over the last three years.

34 Most teaching was of a high standard. Lessons were well planned. Teachers ensured that students understood the requirements of courses in terms of content and assessment, a strength included in the self-assessment report. Teachers used suitable methods to enable students to achieve appropriate standards of work. In lessons, teachers quickly gained students' attention and harnessed their interests and experience to help them to learn effectively. For example, in a lesson on the access to further education course, an imaginative exposition by the teacher, followed by a constructive question-and-answer session, guided students through the complexities of a difficult topic. In a few lessons, the question-and-answer strategy failed fully to engage the attention of the class and allowed individual students to dominate or opt out of the activity. Learning technology is a core part of the access courses but it is not sufficiently developed to assist learning in GCSE lessons. The self-assessment report identifies integration of key skills as a strength of humanities provision. However, the teaching of key skills is not systematically developed or assessed in GCSE courses.

35 Students worked well and with enthusiasm in lessons. Teachers provide high levels of individual support which students value. They mark written work thoroughly and offer detailed feedback in a way that helps students to improve. However, students do not formally evaluate their own work and draw up action plans, nor do they record their progress against explicit targets. Variations in retention and achievement rates are recognised in the self-assessment report as weaknesses. For example, retention rates on the access to further education course were above 70 per cent in two of the last three years, whereas in GCSE sociology they were below this figure. In the last three years, the percentages of students

Curriculum Areas

gaining grades C or above in GCSE psychology and sociology have been well above the national averages for students of all ages in general further education colleges. By contrast, the percentage of students achieving grades C or above in GCSE history was substantially below the national average. Many students on access to higher education courses take single modules and achieve the full qualification over three years instead of two. Of the students who enrolled on the access to further education course in 1996, 88 per cent progressed to the higher level course in 1997.

36 Teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects. Learning and support materials are of good quality. Handouts are carefully prepared and well presented. Some learning materials are particularly stimulating. For example, GCSE English students from differing backgrounds made effective use of topical and provocative materials on screen violence in developing skills in argument and analysis. Teaching rooms are airy and large. They are equipped with audiovisual facilities but are not enlivened by displays of students' work.

Examples of students' achievements in humanities, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Access to higher education (full-time students)	Retention (%)	54	51	57
	Pass rate (%)	54	38	36*
Access to further education	Retention (%)	77	75	67
	Pass rate (%)	67	56	88
GCSE	Retention (%)	53	62	67
	Pass rate (%)	60	74	71

Source: college data

*includes only students who gain the full certificate. Some students take single modules

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Support for Students

Grade 2

37 Important aspects of support for students, for example tutorials, were not included in the relevant section of the self-assessment report. Inspectors considered that, in the judgements that were made by the college, some strengths were understated and a few others were not justified.

Key strengths

- the high priority given to support for students
- high-quality advice for prospective students
- effective procedures for admissions and enrolment
- the range and quality of learning support
- effective advice on opportunities for employment and higher education
- excellent personal support for students

Weaknesses

- weak links between the different support activities
- insufficient monitoring and evaluation of tutorials and additional learning support
- deficiencies in the identification of individual learning needs

38 The college aims: to make educational guidance and counselling readily accessible to students; to be responsive to their needs; and to help them to succeed in their aspirations. The key elements for achieving these aims are: a personal tutor system; the provision of learning support; and a broad range of personal support services. Most of the arrangements are well established and adequately resourced. Procedures are sound and well documented.

However, the overall effectiveness of support for students is reduced by the failure to integrate the key elements into a coherent, unified system.

39 Publicity material is of high quality. Prospective students receive clear and comprehensive information about college courses. A trained and experienced team of student services staff based in the guidance centre provides a service throughout the year for pre-enrolment advice and central admissions. In its self-assessment report, the college underestimates the strengths of its initial guidance and central admissions service. Students benefit from the integration into a 'one-stop guidance shop' of the admissions process and other functions, for example college reception and the administration of fees and examinations. Guidance is impartial and care is taken to match students to appropriate courses. Admissions staff are able to assess students' prior learning and achievements. Students report that enrolment, with the exception of arrangements for some part-time evening courses, is effective.

40 A college booklet describes aspects of support to which students are entitled. For example, it states that all students should have a personal tutor, a period of induction and weekly tutorials. Most students confirmed that during induction they were made aware of the college charter, including the complaints procedure, and a range of support services. Students undergoing training provided by the college's subsidiary companies receive regular reviews of their work. For other students, some aspects of the tutorial system are less effective. For example, some students do not receive their entitlement to tutorial time. Few students are encouraged to maintain their records of achievement or to engage in action-planning. Objectives for some tutorials are unclear and their quality is uneven. In many programme areas, there is little joint planning or sharing of practice with the guidance advisers in student services. There is insufficient evaluation of the

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effectiveness of tutorials. Most of these deficiencies were not identified by the college in the self-assessment report.

41 Inspectors were not able to agree with the college's judgement that the initial assessment of students is a strength. A screening test to assess individual learning needs is available from the learning support team but only 12 per cent of students took the test in 1996-97. Some students are screened by course teams, but information from these tests is not centrally recorded or analysed. Many course and personal tutors identify students in need of learning support, but few tutors have been trained for this aspect of their roles. These weaknesses were not included in the self-assessment report.

42 Different types of support are available to students who need extra help. In its self-assessment report, the college did not do justice to the strengths which inspectors identified in this area of work. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities includes: the adaptation of materials for those with visual impairment; communicators for students with hearing impairment; one-to-one support for students with dyslexia; and care assistants to help students with physical disabilities. An increasing number of students with learning difficulties enrol on academic and vocational courses; 371 students followed such courses in 1996-97. About the same number are enrolled on courses specially designed for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students who want to improve literacy, numeracy and IT skills receive effective support but take-up is low. The college does not monitor sufficiently the extent to which additional support affects retention rates and levels of achievement.

43 Students seeking employment or entry to higher education receive effective guidance. The arrangements for joint working between staff from the careers service and college staff in student services benefit students. Careers advisers work directly with programme areas

but the effectiveness of these links varies. This point is acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The support provided for students on a range of personal issues is excellent and valued by students. Trained staff offer advice about benefits, accommodation and welfare. Financial assistance with the cost of travel and equipment is available through the 'study plus' scheme. Personal counselling, a chaplaincy, advice about health issues and crèche facilities are also provided. In its self-assessment report, the college understated the strength of these personal support services.

General Resources

Grade 1

44 The inspection covered a substantial sample of the college's general resources. Inspectors' findings confirmed the judgements made by the college and expressed in its self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- the accommodation strategy
- substantial improvements in general resources since the previous inspection
- outstanding learning environments in the technology centre and the SmithKline Beecham building
- the high standard of provision in classrooms and other learning areas
- well-resourced and well-used libraries and learning resource centres
- availability of IT facilities for students and staff
- attractive refectories and recreational facilities
- the accessibility of most facilities to students with restricted mobility
- use of the facilities by the wider community

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Weaknesses

- room utilisation below the college target
- few remaining deficiencies in building stock and accommodation

45 The college has a clear estates strategy which has successfully underpinned the systematic development of its accommodation. Since the previous inspection in 1994 the number of main sites has been reduced from eight to three. Substantial refurbishment and some new buildings have been completed within timescales and budgets. As a result, many students work in attractive, modern surroundings. The former SmithKline Beecham factory, which has been refurbished to a high standard, includes a library and a centre for IT, media and telecommunications. The technology centre provides an outstanding learning environment for students taking courses in construction, engineering and technology. The third site, at Newton-le-Willows, which has also been substantially refurbished, is used by students taking courses in land-based studies in care, computing and general education.

46 Inspectors' findings confirmed the college's own assessment of accommodation. Most classrooms provide an appropriate learning environment. They are equipped with basic teaching equipment, for example whiteboards, overhead projectors and blinds. The college is clean and tidy; there is a rolling programme of redecoration. At all campuses, entrance foyers are used imaginatively. For example, at the town centre campus, an entrance to the college is in a shopping mall. Students of hairdressing and travel and tourism who work in training environments are directly visible to passers-by. A few deficiencies in the quality and use of accommodation remain. The college has plans for students working in construction and land-based studies to landscape the unattractive area around the SmithKline Beecham building. Some accommodation, used by courses which have been recently relocated, remains drab. College

room surveys show room occupancy could be improved. The college is increasingly successful in leasing surplus accommodation to organisations in the public and private sector.

47 Particular strengths included in the self-assessment report refer to the quality of libraries and learning resource centres. On all campuses, libraries are well resourced, adequately staffed and include multimedia facilities, audiovisual materials and an extensive range of periodicals. Named library staff support specific areas of the curriculum. The facility at Newton-le-Willows includes the public library, thus increasing the stock available to students. Expenditure on books at £21.75 per full-time equivalent student enables the college to keep its bookstock up to date. Analysis of client questionnaires shows a high level of usage and satisfaction with the service. Well-equipped learning resource centres enable students to study by themselves and receive additional help with mathematics and English. As the self-assessment report claims, IT facilities are readily accessible to students. Large IT suites at each campus and satisfactory levels of hardware and software enable students to use the facilities at times which suit them.

48 Substantial improvements in refectory and recreational facilities since the previous inspection are highlighted in the self-assessment report. On all campuses, there are attractive new refectories; some have common rooms attached. In the foyer of the SmithKline Beecham building, the common room is next to a fashionable 'cybercafe' where members of the public can pay to use the internet. At the campus in the town centre, there is a choice of four cafeterias, a training restaurant and a bar, all partly run by students as an element of their vocational courses. As the self-assessment report notes, students have access to sports facilities. A refurbished sports hall at the town centre site is used by the college's own sports teams as well as by various other groups and societies including the English national wheelchair basketball squad. A well-equipped

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fitness centre, used as a training environment for students, is open to the public. The sports facilities at Newton-le-Willows are inadequate and, as yet, non-existent at the technology centre.

49 The college provides effectively for students with restricted mobility, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. An appropriate combination of lifts, ramps and shortened access routes means that 95 per cent of the college is now easily accessible to wheelchair users. Zoned fire alarms allow phased evacuation of these students by lift.

Quality Assurance

Grade 2

50 Inspectors recognised that the college devotes a great deal of energy to assuring quality. They concluded, however, that some arrangements were unnecessarily complicated. Some activities that seek to assure quality lead to improvements in students' experience, but not always to better examination results.

Key strengths

- a well-established quality assurance system
- successful strategies to improve retention rates
- effective arrangements to improve the curriculum
- recent initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- effective appraisal and staff development systems

Weaknesses

- over-elaborate arrangements for quality assurance
- some unrealistic target-setting

- insufficient attention on some courses to analysing and improving students' achievements

51 As the self-assessment report indicates, a strength of the college is the extent to which staff are familiar with and understand the well-established elements of the quality assurance framework. College policies and procedures are brought together in a policy file and a quality manual which are updated regularly and distributed to staff. Academic centres, schools and service areas in the college evaluate the quality of their work annually; they draw upon evidence that emerges from course and other reviews. After various stages of moderation and interrogation, draft reports are collated to form the report for the whole college. This document is considered by the corporation and used to inform the development of strategic objectives. Implementation of the system has led to improvements, for example, the rationalisation of provision for the general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and GCSE and better management of particular courses.

52 Superimposed on these long-standing arrangements are more recent initiatives, for example, internal inspections, checks on the quality of teaching and learning, and the creation of a working party to tackle issues relating to student retention. The extent to which these various activities link with each other and with elements of the framework for quality assurance is unclear. In part, they duplicate each other's work and the work carried out within the annual review cycle. The college has generated a complex quality assurance system which lacks coherence; this weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report.

53 Inspectors agreed with the college's judgement that attempts to improve retention rates have been successful in some curricular areas. The working party on retention has

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developed strategies that aim to raise retention levels. These strategies include: early identification of students who are likely to leave their courses; prompt follow-up of absent students; and better record-keeping. A series of questions helps course teams to examine retention rates critically and decide upon corrective action. There is not yet the same degree of rigour in the analysis of students' achievements, a weakness acknowledged by the college. Some course teams, that are trying to improve levels of achievement, are not setting sufficiently challenging targets. The college recently reduced its overall target for students' achievements by 5 per cent because it became clear that the original target was unrealistic.

54 As the self-assessment report claims, observation of lessons forms a key component of the college's arrangements to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Staff are observed at least once each year. The existing system is based upon a team of trained observers who use common criteria to grade lessons. Feedback to individuals is thorough and includes advice about appropriate teaching styles and classroom management. Members of the observation team also scrutinise schemes of work, lesson plans and assessment arrangements. Reports to managers include evidence of good practice and precise recommendations for improvement.

55 Standards of service are clearly stated in the college charter; some parts of the college also assess their performance against external criteria. For example, learning centres and college libraries use national benchmarks to measure the speed with which they respond to requests and the frequency of book usage. Inspectors agreed with the college that the complaints procedure is implemented effectively. Eighty-two complaints were dealt with in the last 12 months. Training events help staff employed by the college's subsidiary companies to become familiar with the standards of service and other key features of the college's system for quality assurance.

56 Staff development and appraisal are identified as strengths in the self-assessment report. Individuals strive to achieve realistic targets set by their line managers in pursuit of strategic objectives. Mid-year reviews enable managers and staff to monitor progress. Staff development needs are identified as part of the appraisal process and collated to establish priorities for the college. Evaluation of the effectiveness of staff development activities includes an annual report to the corporation.

57 In January 1997, the college presented its first self-assessment report to the corporation. The document replaced the quality assessment report stemming from annual reviews. To meet the inspection timetable, the college interrupted its quality assurance cycle to generate a self-assessment report specifically for inspectors. This lengthy report did not do the college justice. In the process of drawing together information from many sources, some judgements became lost in bland statements. In some sections, key strengths and weaknesses were omitted altogether or not given sufficient prominence. However, evidence was plentiful, cross-referenced to judgements and easy to trace.

Governance

Grade 1

58 The college is well governed. Inspection findings agreed substantially with judgements included in the college's self-assessment report. Since the report was written, the corporation has made progress in addressing the few weaknesses that were identified.

Key strengths

- effective recruitment strategies
- effective conduct of the corporation's business
- effective financial planning and monitoring

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- full involvement of corporation members in strategic planning
- a commitment to continuous improvement in the quality of governance

Weaknesses

- there are no significant weaknesses

59 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, 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.

60 Collectively, the 18 members of the corporation possess a wide range of skills and professional expertise that includes the areas of higher education, business, finance, personnel, engineering, construction and local politics. The corporation has a policy of appointing a new member every two years which helps to bring a fresh perspective to the workings of the corporation; this policy was identified as a strength by the college in its self-assessment report. At the time of the inspection, there were no vacancies; a reserve list has been drawn up. Procedures for identifying people for this list are straightforward and well understood. The corporation has recently commissioned a skills audit of its members to identify gaps in expertise. Members take a serious interest in matters that relate to students. Since January 1997, there has been a student member of the corporation who plays a full part in meetings and decision-making.

61 Members of the corporation are well informed about the college and the impact of external influences, for example, the government's expectations of further education. Effective induction and ongoing training programmes for members are planned carefully.

New governors are given initial training and briefing packs. Training opportunities and needs are considered at every corporation meeting. Presentations by college managers are regular features of corporation meetings and keep members informed of developments in the further education sector. A more recent development is the twinning of individual members with academic centres and schools to enrich their knowledge and understanding of curricular matters. Useful summaries of national developments which may affect the college are circulated to members by college managers.

62 Inspectors concluded that the corporation exercises appropriate controls to ensure adequacy and sufficiency of provision and the solvency of the college, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. Six established committees enable the corporation to discharge its responsibilities effectively. In most respects the work of these committees is in accordance with their terms of reference. The finance and general purposes committee meets monthly and considers, in detail, the college's management accounts and key financial indicators. The corporation also receives the management accounts and financial indicators at its meetings. Clerking arrangements contribute to the efficient and effective conduct of corporation and committee business. Agendas and supporting papers are sent out in good time, and minutes are prepared and distributed promptly.

63 The self-assessment report states that the corporation has a clear vision for the strategic direction of the college, a strength confirmed by inspectors. Annually, members hold a planning weekend to review formally progress towards the previous year's objectives and to confirm the strategic direction of the college. They debate and then establish priorities for the strategic objectives before formally approving them. The corporation sets and monitors targets for the college which are reviewed in the course of the formal appraisal of the chief executive. Progress

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towards the achievement of strategic objectives, which is a standing item at corporation meetings, is included in the chief executive's report to the corporation. However, the format of the report does not help members readily to identify and systematically to monitor the achievement of specific objectives.

64 Members of the corporation have the will and energy to strive for continuous improvement in the quality of governance. Inspectors confirmed the college's finding that the corporation has an established and effective self-assessment process with many strengths. Clear objectives and measurable targets enable the corporation to monitor and assess its own performance. A working party of members monitors national developments that may relate to governance and makes recommendations to the corporation. The work of this group has improved the quality of governance. For example, one of the corporation's objectives, to adopt a more open style of governance, was adopted on the working party's recommendation. To enable the corporation's processes to be observed and its decisions to be understood, meetings are open to the public and minutes are available in college libraries and on the college intranet. Inspectors, however, concluded that some agenda items were unnecessarily classified as confidential. In November 1997, the corporation held a public meeting to report on its work and the work of the college. The corporation has a register of members' interests and a code of practice.

Management

Grade 1

65 The college is very well managed. Inspectors confirmed most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. Some strengths were understated and only a few weaknesses were omitted. Most of the weaknesses that had been identified when the report was compiled had already been rectified.

Key strengths

- strong leadership from senior managers
- well-managed growth in student numbers and gains in efficiency
- the effective communication of management decisions to staff
- effective delegation of responsibility to managers
- rigorous monitoring and review of college performance
- good financial controls and healthy finances
- a wide range of provision which is responsive to the community's needs
- close and productive liaison with external organisations

Weaknesses

- insufficient links between planning, review and the self-assessment process
- shortcomings in some data held centrally

66 The college is an innovative and responsive institution which is strongly led. Senior managers, in the promotion of an open and inclusive style of management, encourage staff to take initiatives and develop new programmes of study in pursuit of strategic objectives. There have been significant achievements since the last inspection: rapid and planned growth in the size of the college; the successful implementation of the accommodation strategy; and the effective streamlining of the management structure. The management of change has been thorough and systematic and gained the widespread support of staff. Some of these strengths in the leadership and management of the college were not explicitly mentioned in the self-assessment report.

67 The management structure is straightforward. The principal, the deputy

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principal, and seven senior managers form the corporate planning team which meets monthly. They are joined by the heads of centre and heads of school to form the management team which meets weekly. Individuals have the freedom to adopt a management style which best suits the areas of work for which they are responsible whilst conforming to the college's policies and operational requirements. In most respects, the management structure works well. However, some aspects of cross-college provision, for example tutorial and learning support arrangements, are not monitored systematically to check that acceptable levels of consistency exist among and within centres and schools.

68 Staff understand the management structure and their own roles within it. Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that briefing papers and the cycle of meetings keep staff effectively informed of management decisions. The chief executive has his own cycle of meetings with staff so that he can hear firsthand their views and concerns. A weakness that was referred to in the self-assessment report identified the unsystematic way in which information flowed from staff to managers. Inspectors found that the agendas of management teams now include a standing item which considers responses from staff to decisions taken at earlier meetings.

69 The regular monitoring of performance against targets is a key strength that is identified in the management section of the self-assessment report. As part of the planning cycle, service areas, academic centres and schools prepare business plans which indicate how they intend to contribute to the achievement of college targets. A system of quarterly reviews of performance linked to 39 performance indicators enables senior managers to monitor and measure progress. The process of review is rigorous and challenging to managers who have to account for any shortcomings. Inspectors found that managers

of some academic centres and schools do not take the opportunity to translate overall college targets for students' achievements and for retention into specific targets for their own courses. The timing of this year's college self-assessment report did not allow the subsequent action plan to be linked as closely as in previous years to the planning of the college's business for the year ahead.

70 An internal review of registers and of enrolment forms has improved the accuracy of some data stored in the computer-based management information system. Inspectors found that other data, for example data relating to students' achievements, were incomplete and some were inaccurate. The college's action plan attached to the self-assessment report recognises the need to improve systems that track the progress and achievements of learners.

71 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. Members of the finance team are appropriately qualified and experienced. Budget holders are involved in the financial forecasting process which is facilitated by the use of a sophisticated computer programme. There is an appropriate scheme of financial delegation. The system of quarterly performance reviews includes financial monitoring. Currently, the college is in a good financial position. Its average level of funding in 1997-98 is £17.16 per unit. The corporate planning group monitors the college's financial position by formally reviewing the college's monthly management accounts. The content of the accounts is good but the format in which they are presented is not very user-friendly. The college has good financial controls in place. This judgement is confirmed by the positive conclusions contained in the 1996-97 annual internal audit report. The college's external auditors did not raise any significant internal control issues in their 1996-97 management letter.

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72 The college has a strong commitment to its local community which is noted in the self-assessment report. Projects and initiatives to widen participation and to extend the range of programmes accessible to local people are notable features. A weekend programme, which is an addition to existing community provision, has recruited more than 700 students since it was launched in September 1997. In collaboration with other Merseyside colleges, the college is working with small to medium-size enterprises to develop their use of the internet. Information from the college's marketing unit and from research projects has a direct impact on the development of college programmes. For example, many courses have adopted a modular structure to enable students to join programmes at different times of the year. The TEC's confidence in the college is expressed in the number of training programmes which it funds.

Conclusions

73 Inspectors concluded that the college's judgements about its own performance, particularly aspects of cross-college provision, were usually accurate. Although evidence to justify their inclusion was readily available, some key strengths and weaknesses were omitted altogether or not captured in the appropriate sections of the self-assessment report. In one programme area, the inspection team found the college to have been overgenerous; it had paid insufficient attention to the analysis of students' achievements. In another programme area, inspectors considered that the college had understated the strengths in the quality of teaching and learning and in the content, organisation and management of the curriculum.

74 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 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	3
16-18 years	24
19-24 years	16
25+ years	57
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (March 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	44
Intermediate	28
Advanced	18
Higher education	10
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (March 1998)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	466	2,942	16
Agriculture	247	559	4
Construction	337	1,360	8
Engineering	478	1,469	9
Business	361	2,666	14
Hotel and catering	301	384	3
Health and community care	630	2,069	13
Art and design	524	1,599	10
Humanities	413	2,937	15
Basic education	87	1,597	8
Total	3,844	17,582	100

Source: college data

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (March 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	220	15	74	309
Supporting direct learning contact	128	18	0	146
Other support	175	25	0	200
Total	523	58	74	655

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£21,033,000	£22,363,000	£24,357,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£20.84	£15.16	£19.22
Payroll as a proportion of income	59%	65%	58%
Achievement of funding target	101%	158%	149%
Diversity of income	37%	29%	32%
Operating surplus	£2,208,000	-£537,000	-£310,000

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), Funding Allocations 1997-98 (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	38	56	74
	Average point score per entry	2.1	2.2	1.9
	Position in tables	bottom 10%	bottom 10%	bottom 10%
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	181	144	312
	Percentage achieving qualification	85%	90%	75%
	Position in tables	top third	top 10%	middle third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	111	210
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	76%	64%
	Position in tables	*	top third	middle 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

*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

FEFC Inspection Report 73/98

**Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
July 1998**