

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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**Stockton and  
Billingham  
College of  
Further  
Education**

**September  
1994**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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## **THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

### **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

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

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

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 77/94

## STOCKTON AND BILLINGHAM COLLEGE OF FURTHER EDUCATION NORTHERN REGION

Inspected January - May 1994

### Summary

Stockton and Billingham College of Further Education is a major provider of post-16 education in Cleveland. It offers a wide range of full-time and part-time programmes to school leavers and adults. The college is increasingly responsive to local community needs through well-developed links with schools, Teesside Training and Enterprise Council, and other agencies and through partnership arrangements on a large number of externally-funded projects. A capable governing body and management team has made considerable changes to the management structure over the last two years. There has been a reduction in the financial deficit inherited by the corporation. Effective management is currently undermined by the lack of reliable information for planning and review purposes. Full-time teachers are well qualified and use a range of teaching methods. Examination results are modest and there are considerable differences in levels of performance between subjects. The arrangements for recruitment, guidance and support of students are at an early stage of development. There is a commitment to quality assurance, staff development and improvement of the equipment levels within the institution. However, monitoring and evaluating procedures are not yet in place. Although the accommodation has undergone considerable refurbishment there are some sections which require improving. There is under-utilisation of accommodation in some areas and the college lacks an overall accommodation strategy.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	3	Art and design	3
Computing/information technology	2	Humanities	4
Engineering	3	Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Business	3		
Care	2		

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 The inspection of Stockton and Billingham College of Further Education, in the county of Cleveland, took place during the spring of 1994. Specialist subject provision was inspected between 11 January 1994 and 12 May 1994 and aspects of cross-college provision during the week 23-27 May 1994. The inspection team of five full-time and seven part-time inspectors spent a total of 69 days in the college. Inspectors visited 113 classes, examined samples of students' written and practical work and held discussions with governors, staff, parents, students, local employers, and representatives of Teesside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

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

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

3 Stockton and Billingham College of Further Education is a general further education college serving the County of Cleveland and in particular the residential and town-centre areas to the north of the river in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees. It was built in the 1950s on the Stockton site and later incorporated the Billingham site which had originally been built as a hospital.

4 The county was until recently dominated by the steel, chemical and shipbuilding industries. British Steel, the Imperial Chemical Industry and Cleveland County Council are now the major employers. Light industry is increasingly being attracted to the area. Nevertheless, the county is characterised by levels of unemployment which are above the national average of 9.4 per cent. Unemployment in Cleveland is 15.2 per cent; in the borough of Stockton it is 13.4 per cent, reaching in some parts of the borough 29 per cent.

5 Within the immediate locality of the college there are fifteen 11-16 secondary schools, two 11-18 schools and two sixth form colleges. There is keen competition for post-16 enrolments among the 15 incorporated colleges within Cleveland.

6 At the time of the inspection, the college had 1,124 full-time and 8,881 part-time enrolments. A high proportion (69 per cent) of students are over 25 years of age. Percentage enrolments by age, and full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1 and 2. There are 264 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 176 are teachers and 88 support staff, (figure 3). The college has a non-departmental structure based around functional responsibilities for

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curriculum, finance and corporate planning. Academic staff belong to subject-based teaching teams and course teams.

7 The college has a stated commitment to meet the needs of the community, which includes the provision of adult education programmes sponsored by the local education authority (LEA). It holds the contract for providing the education service at Holme House Prison, Stockton, and it houses a unit for the deaf and hard of hearing, which serves post-16 students across the county. The strategic goals of the college include a resolution to contribute to the regeneration of Stockton and Billingham, and the provision of a range of non-vocational and leisure courses which meet the needs of the community.

### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

8 The college is extending its range of provision and becoming more responsive to local needs. Marketing and partnership arrangements are increasing access to learning opportunities for those in the community who are traditionally under-represented in further education. The development of new flexible training activities has resulted in a large number of projects funded by government and other agencies. The college company, called Power-Tec, is responsible for income-generating courses.

9 Staff in the college are aware of the national targets for education and training and the priorities of the Further Education Funding Council. The college's planning documents take account of these and outline a range of strategic goals to meet them. The college has successfully developed General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in a number of curriculum areas.

10 The college offers a wide range of learning opportunities at foundation, intermediate and advanced level for adults and school leavers. The percentage of enrolments by level of study are shown in figure 4. The college offers courses in business, community, creative and performing arts, technology, humanities, management and professional studies and science and mathematics. It is broadening its range of provision to match the changing needs of local industry and commerce. Cleveland LEA's strategic plan for 1991-94, which the college inherited at incorporation, allocated specific specialist provision to particular colleges in the county. Stockton and Billingham college has maintained its strength in the areas it was allocated, namely care, performing arts, training for medical secretaries and training for teachers.

11 Areas of provision in decline are science, fluid power, robotics and welding. College initiatives in open and distance learning have lost impetus, and college managers are re-assessing its market potential. The college has not met its growth target of 8 per cent. Its 5 per cent growth was mainly the result of an increase in full-time student numbers. Inaccuracies in the college's recruitment figures have made it hard for the college to develop an effective strategy for delivering its growth targets.

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12 Work with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well developed. The new college management structure has led to increased support and resourcing for work with such students and their number has increased from low numbers to over 600 in four years. The provision is highly regarded within the community, in particular the unit for the deaf and the hard of hearing which provides specialist support for 36 students from other Cleveland colleges. There are mutually beneficial links between staff teaching students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and staff in the deaf and hard of hearing unit. It is the only college in the area to make provision for 15 year old pupils from the behavioural support service of Cleveland Educational Network. The college is a member of the placement, assessment and counselling team for adults with emotional problems.

13 Liaison with a number of local external agencies has improved significantly over the past year. The college has partnerships in place with special schools, adult training centres and urban regeneration agencies such as city challenge, Stockton task force and the local councils. A number of advisory committees are being established or reconstituted to help increase employers' involvement in the development and evaluation of provision.

14 The college has recently established a marketing and publications unit, with a budget of 1 per cent of the overall budget. This has enabled the development of a marketing strategy with clear aims and objectives. There is a new approach to publicity. Attempts are made to attract specific client groups through a range of different materials which include a full-time prospectus, a college newspaper detailing all the courses available, part-time course leaflets grouped into curriculum areas, a college handbook for training officers and a full-cost course brochure. The college is undertaking market research, funded by the task force, into the training needs of the Stockton area.

15 The schools liaison officer organises a comprehensive programme of events which has increased the profile of the college within schools. A useful guide outlines the schools' liaison strategy. It identifies schools as core, semi-core and peripheral, depending on their distance from the college, and lays down detailed procedures, including targets for applications, offers and enrolments for each category of school. All pupils in the last year of compulsory schooling (year 11) in the core schools receive, by post, a personal copy of the full-time prospectus. This is a major undertaking involving the mailing of approximately 4,000 copies.

16 The college is increasingly responsive to local community needs. Access to provision is being extended and developed through a significant growth in outreach work. A double decker bus, refurbished to a high standard by college students, is used to enable staff to travel to outlying areas to provide advice and to deliver courses. The college offers a programme for the long-term unemployed. Staff are working to increase participation by groups traditionally under-represented in further

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education. However, the use of part-time staff without appropriate training and support has on occasions caused tensions with other community workers.

17 The college is working with a number of agencies on over 20 externally-funded projects. For example, it is a major partner in the Eurostan Network funded by the Department of Trade and Industry which involves five other partners from the north east. The college is also linked with colleges in the Netherlands and Greece as part of the Euroform Network in the development of learning materials for workers caring for the elderly. There are examples of other partnerships with the Further Education Unit, the European Community and the local TEC.

18 The college offers access courses specifically designed to help mature students enter higher education. It also runs the first year of undergraduate courses franchised from the University of Huddersfield and Teesside University. For a number of years, the college has provided courses to train further education teachers. These include courses validated by the City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI), and the certificate in education for the University of Huddersfield.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

19 The college has undergone significant physical, organisational and cultural change since the appointment of the principal in 1992. Substantial improvements have been achieved but many of the changes are recent and their potential benefits have yet to be fully realised.

20 The college is supported by a capable board of governors with backgrounds which reflect the college's activities. There are currently 13 members, including representatives from major employers in the areas as well as from the local community. Two staff representatives, one from support staff, one from teaching staff, and the president of the students' union are also board members. There are three subcommittees: audit, remuneration, and finance and employment. The main contribution of the board has been in the overall direction of the college. It is particularly committed to maintaining a broad curriculum in the college, to securing the college's financial position, and supporting the local community. The board's development as a cohesive team has been delayed by differing patterns of attendance and changing membership. Decision-making is sometimes hindered by a lack of necessary information.

21 Before 1992, the college was structured and managed on traditional lines in four strong departments. The principal introduced a complex matrix structure with an emphasis on cross-college functional roles. Staff now belong to teaching teams, which cover specific subject areas, as well as to course teams. Although the need for change was recognised by staff, it has taken time for the new roles and responsibilities to become established. As a result of the changes, the college is able to make better use of staff expertise, contact between staff has increased and the college is more able to respond to initiatives.



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22 Although staff have had little opportunity to influence the new structure they appreciate the increasing opportunities it offers for involvement through membership of task groups. Teams are working well, and are most effective where the course and teaching teams have the same membership. Under these circumstances staff have more autonomy and are able to participate effectively in relevant decisions. The introduction of the matrix structure has been a lengthy process and has brought about fundamental changes in methods of working. Coinciding, as it has, with the changes necessary to deal with incorporation, the college board and senior managers are now aware of the need for a period of stability.

23 The principalship sees its role as planning and setting goals for the institution. The governors and staff, other than senior managers, had little involvement in the development of the first strategic plan. There are no operational plans or overall monitoring processes; responsibility for detailed planning and delivery is delegated to other managers and groups. The second planning round has more staff involvement. It takes as its starting point teams' reviews of their current achievements. These are then used to set a broad range of targets for inclusion in the new strategic plans.

24 Communications have been improved under the new structure but some difficulties remain. Two meetings a week are timetabled for course and teaching teams, and operational managers meet weekly to deal with day-to-day matters. Decisions taken are communicated to the rest of the staff. Brief notes from senior management meetings are available for team leaders to discuss at team meetings; at present these do not include any information on the background against which decisions are made. There are no formal avenues for senior managers to communicate directly with the whole college staff. A number of attempts to establish a college newsletter have been short-lived.

25 The corporation inherited a substantial financial deficit of approximately £510,000 which is still the subject of dispute with the LEA. This has proved particularly demanding for the college since its unit of funding is £1,981, well below the median for similar colleges of £2,444. The appointment of a finance director and additional finance staff has significantly improved financial management systems, and considerable progress has been made in reducing the deficit. Through tighter controls and prudent management the college intends to balance its budget by the summer of 1995. The college's estimated income and expenditure are shown in figures 5 and 6. The recent introduction of a computerised system for handling the budget is an improvement but there is some concern that the current system may not be able to deliver the range of information needed. Budgets are determined largely on an historical basis, the origin of which is not plain to staff. Some budgets, for example, the text book budget, are not delegated.

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26 The college's ability to plan and manage effectively is limited by its inability to produce trustworthy, high-quality information. There are a number of different systems, computerised and manual, and there is no effective cross checking between them. For example, registers and timetables are in both computerised and manual form; those maintained manually are more accurate than the computerised version. Performance indicators, such as retention rates and examination success rates, which are provided from the college information system, are unreliable. The senior management team is aware of the problem and plans to meet the information requirement of the college through a more comprehensive computer information system.

### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

27 The college has developed new structures to improve and promote the quality of its recruitment, guidance and support services for students. Many of these are in the initial stages of development and are operating in different ways across the college. There are varying levels of activity in accrediting prior learning, developing records of achievement and in implementing the programme of tutorial support. There is no monitoring or evaluation of these developments.

28 The information and guidance unit, established two years ago, acts as a focus for all enrolment and admission activities. It provides a range of guidance and counselling services on both sites. Students rate as satisfactory the help and guidance they obtain prior to enrolment. The impartiality of the advice given is shown by instances where students have been referred to more suitable courses at other institutions. Staff unfamiliarity with the range of college provision has led, in some cases, to students being directed to unsuitable courses.

29 Enrolment takes place on both sites throughout the summer and on pre-determined dates in September. A useful information pack ensures that staff are clear about the procedures to be used. The marketing team used a questionnaire to sample this year's students' satisfaction. In general, students found the process efficient.

30 The induction programme for full-time students was operated for the first time this academic year. There were inconsistencies between sites, confusions about rooms and the students found the programme over-long. A revised programme is planned for September 1994. Students enrolling late on a course receive no induction.

31 The strategic plan commits the college to offering a range of diagnostic services to assess general and vocational aptitude. This is not yet in place but procedures are being developed. There is no overall college policy to accredit students' previous learning and experience but accreditation is available in some curriculum areas where staff have taken the initiative. A new project is intended to enable staff across the college to identify strategies for sharing good practice and co-ordinating work on the accreditation of prior learning .

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32 A part-time member of staff provides a counselling service for 12 hours per week. Although the strategic plan indicates a commitment to counselling there is at present inadequate promotion of the service either to staff or students.

33 The opportunities for core skills development are restricted and lack consistency. In some cases, students' levels of understanding are clearly inadequate for the programmes of study they are following. For example, in some sessions, teachers spend time dealing with the low levels of students' mathematical ability rather than with the topic being studied. There are learning workshops in information technology and in mathematics. The information technology workshop gives priority to timetabled classes, and provides few opportunities for individual students as a drop-in facility. The mathematics workshop is inadequately supervised. Basic skills support for students is not available in an integrated or consistent manner. There are plans to develop a learner support centre funded in part by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit.

34 The tutorial programme varies in quality. Tutors are currently implementing a pilot programme for full-time students. General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) students feel that the tutorial programme lacks structure and they are unsure of their progress. On vocational courses, the tutorial system is more successful; often the sessions are used to consolidate and support course work, and students appreciate the work done with them. There is no structured programme available for part-time students. The pastoral role of tutors is not given a high priority and there has been no staff development to help tutors with this aspect of their work.

35 Full-time student attendance is monitored although there is no uniform college approach. A concern note system is in operation; either a student or a teacher can issue a note for action by the tutor. There is evidence that when these notes are issued the system works well. However, there are staff and students who are unaware of its existence.

36 A project funded by the TEC, which began in September 1993, is introducing records of achievement for all first year, full-time students. This project brings together the good practice which developed as a consequence of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative. Information technology facilities at both sites support the completion of records of achievement. Staff development on the use of such records has been provided but some staff and students still perceive the completion of these records as a chore.

37 The majority of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are successfully integrated into mainstream provision, with support and care from fellow students in their groups. A further 100 students are enrolled on provision specifically designed to meet their requirements. Needs are assessed at enrolment, often by the college co-ordinator and these, and reports from referring agencies, are taken into account when

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decisions are made on course content and selection. Four care assistants provide good support, where needed.

### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

38 Evidence of the quality of teaching was obtained from observations of a representative sample of the college's provision. Strengths outweighed weaknesses in 59 per cent of the classes inspected; weaknesses were predominant in only 8 per cent of the sessions. The following table summarises the inspection grades:

#### **Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE A/AS level		0	4	5	3	0	12
GCSE		1	1	5	2	0	9
GNVQ		0	3	3	0	0	6
NVQ		1	3	2	0	0	6
Other*		11	43	22	3	1	80
Total		13	54	37	8	1	113

\* Other courses include non-GNVQ Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) courses, CGLI courses and Royal Society of Arts (RSA) courses.

39 Teachers use a range of teaching methods and a variety of activities to promote learning. There are good examples of the use of visual aids, group work, interesting teacher-directed lessons, visits and student exchanges. In many classes, the work is well paced and provides stimulating challenges to students. A teacher training class which included four deaf students was signed by communicators. Both the teacher and the students found this helpful and the quality of the work, enlivened by good humour, was successful in maintaining students' interest and involvement.

40 There are instances of the successful use of assignment-based learning, where well-motivated students work at their own pace with good support from teachers providing assessment on demand. However, some sessions, which rely solely on assignments and pre-prepared packages do not challenge students sufficiently and allow them to work at too slow a pace. In some courses, such as information technology for medical secretaries, the work is not sufficiently related to the main vocational aims of the course. In classes where there is a wide range of abilities, some students are not sufficiently involved.

41 Relationships between staff and students are friendly and relaxed. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to their work. Most staff have a sound understanding of their subject which they convey to students in a supportive manner. However, in some instances staff knowledge is inadequate and students' time is wasted. In one class, for example,

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students spent an inordinate amount of time on inappropriate detail and the teacher supplied them with limited, and sometimes inaccurate, information

42 Staff generally have clear objectives for both lessons and courses. There are examples of well-written schemes of work. In the best practice these are amplified by good lesson plans and by assignment programmes. Staff are generally well prepared, and in some cases cover the syllabus under difficult circumstances where classes contain mixed groups of first and second year students as well as others who are repeating courses. Some classes, however, are poorly managed and the lessons lack direction and purpose. The design of full-time and part-time programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is weak. There has been little curriculum development for such students in recent years, and the choice of subjects studied is sometimes arbitrary and few connections are made between them. The course team has only recently been established and it is beginning to address these problems.

43 There is increasing use of learning workshops for information technology, wordprocessing, typing and core elements within GNVQ/NVQ programmes. This allows mixed ability groups to work together and supports small groups for which provision might not otherwise be made. However, records of progress are used inconsistently and some students are unaware of what they need to do to reach their learning targets. In the business studies field, there are examples of good use of records of achievement, carefully linked to the competence elements within NVQ or GNVQ units.

44 The written work from students is marked and returned within acceptable timescales. Frequently, teachers make helpful written comments and discuss the work individually with students.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

45 Students indicate that they enjoy their course; they describe their programme of study with clarity and enthusiasm. A mid-term questionnaire, returned by 927 students chosen at random from 58 different programmes of study, indicates that 97 per cent enjoy their time at the college. The regularity and quality of teachers' comment on their work is rated as good by 70 per cent, whilst only 2.5 per cent regard it as unsatisfactory.

46 Students on continuously assessed courses generally work hard and achieve good results. For example, out of 20 students enrolled on the BTEC national diploma in nursery nursing course, 17 completed satisfactorily.

47 Pass rates vary considerably. The results for full-time vocational courses across the college range from a pass rate of 41 per cent to 85 per cent. The variation in the results of part-time courses is even greater,

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ranging from 25 per cent to 100 per cent. The statistical return made to the Department for Education indicates 151 entries to national diplomas with a pass rate of 94 per cent. This compares favourably with the national average of 80.5 per cent. The GCE A level and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) provision is small. The college has difficulty in analysing these results since a large number were wrongly entered on the database.

48 Students generally achieve good standards in practical work. All practical sessions are carried out safely and competently. Craft classes have a strong sense of purpose and students produce high-quality practical and written work. Groups are encouraged and supported by staff during project work. However, although practical skills are well developed, there are some sessions where these are not clearly recorded.

49 Records of attendance are updated regularly by teachers. There is a policy of notifying students, parents or employers of any absenteeism of more than three consecutive sessions. There are examples where the monitoring of progress and attendance has resulted in further action being taken to improve the students' chances of successfully completing the course.

50 There is great variation in the retention rates on different courses and subjects across the college. Some retention rates are poor; for example 50 per cent of the students left within the first seven weeks of a GCSE mathematics course. In the BTEC first diploma in information technology applications, only two students completed the course successfully at the first attempt. Four of the nine students who originally enrolled left before the end of the course. Students on access courses are not warned of the intensity of the course, nor assessed sufficiently to ensure that they can follow it successfully. The drop-out rate from some access courses is high. For example, in science and humanities half of the original enrolments were lost. Staff are generally aware of the reasons for students leaving courses early but there is no college-wide attempt to monitor this or to make decisions about the implications of poor retention rates within certain courses.

51 On some courses, students' destinations from the college are tracked systematically. The proportion of access students going on to higher education is high. In other courses the proportion is variable. For example, only 25 per cent of the students on the BTEC national diploma in performing arts went on to a higher education course compared with 70 per cent of the students on the BTEC national diploma in engineering. The proportion of students who progressed from the GNVQ intermediate level to the higher level was low. The GNVQ intermediate level health and social care course started with 28 students and only 11 proceeded to a higher level course. The majority of students on nursery courses enter related employment.

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## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

52 The college has a clear commitment to assuring the quality of its provision. The Power-Tec unit is accredited for British Standard (BS) 5750. Course monitoring, evaluation and review procedures have recently been introduced for all full-time and a selection of part-time courses. The documentation has weaknesses but positive outcomes can already be identified. Generally, staff development matches college needs. A start has been made in developing procedures to manage these activities.

53 There is a variety of quality assurance procedures in the college which are at different stages of development. Course quality control is at an early stage of development. Responsibility for course quality is laid clearly on the course teams. Their reports will go to the senior management team, the reconstituted academic board and the proposed advisory groups. The role of each of these in the quality system and the way in which they will inform course teams is unclear. Support service teams have not yet been included in the college quality systems, but some monitor aspects of their own work on a regular basis.

54 Power-Tec's accreditation to BS5750 has had a beneficial influence on the development of the quality assurance process for other courses. The system has an initial phase in which the course team defines the standards the course is expected to meet and the entitlement of the students on the course. This is followed by a continuous monitoring process and then by end-of-year review and evaluation. Part of the monitoring process uses questionnaires to gain students' and employers' perceptions of the course.

55 The quality assurance documentation has weaknesses. The standards and entitlement forms lack precision and their purpose is not clear; a list of monitoring indicators is suggested but there is little guidance on how course teams should collect and analyse them systematically. There has been insufficient staff training on working with the system. Course leaders are unsure of expectations; help from curriculum managers is available but they themselves have received little guidance.

56 A number of other quality systems operate within the college. Modified versions of the main scheme have been approved for the deaf and hard of hearing unit and for the courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some parts of these are an improvement on the main scheme. Many courses successfully operate well-established parallel quality systems to meet the requirements of the validating bodies. Moderator, assessor and verifier reports indicate that staff follow procedures and respond well to points raised.

57 Staff development is managed by a programme manager. This arrangement is temporary and the staff-development structure is under review. College-wide needs are identified by senior managers and considered by teams. Teaching staff, whose subject areas are in decline, have been retrained and redeployed successfully elsewhere within the

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college. There is a well-understood system for channelling requests from individuals through teaching team leaders to the programme manager. The route for requests originating with course teams is less well understood and needs further consideration. Appraisal arrangements are based on the professional development of the individual and approximately half of the staff have been through the process.

58 Approval for funding for staff-development activities is linked to a commitment to disseminate to others. It is the responsibility of the team leaders to ensure that this occurs. Teachers speak highly of the gains obtained from some of the dissemination sessions. In-house events are evaluated through end-of-course questionnaires. Those on external events complete a questionnaire on their return. The long-term effects of staff development are not evaluated.

59 The 1993-94 budget for staff development was decided on an historical basis; at £32,800 it is 0.36 per cent of the total college budget. Good records are kept of all activities supported from this budget but there is a considerable amount of internal activity which is not recorded. The current college priorities are appropriate; for example, the achievement of training and development lead body assessor awards and training related to GNVQs. Many staff are receiving training in the delivery of basic skills to adults. Training for middle managers to prepare them for their new roles following reorganisation was inadequate. A recent survey among staff indicates that most felt that the institutional requirements were being met but only half considered that curriculum needs were being satisfied. Two-thirds of the staff felt that their personal needs were not addressed.

60 In 1993, the college produced a short student charter containing some elements of the Charter for Further Education. This has been supplemented and extended by a further document which makes specific statements about the way in which the college promotes the delivery of a quality service. In May 1994, a task group began work on a draft charter. This is intended to be a summary document produced in two versions, one for students and one for employers. Documentation and examination of current practice shows that many of the requirements of the charter are already being met.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

61 A range of staff management issues is being addressed and there is good progress towards the philosophy of equity of treatment for all staff. There are issues relating to the management of part-time teachers that need attention.

62 The responsibility for human resource management lies with a deputy principal, supported by the programme manager for staff development and 1.5 full-time equivalent staff who form a small personnel unit. Teaching and management staff have job descriptions but those for support



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staff are out of date. A review of staff workloads is currently taking place; this compares the taught hours and average loading of staff with the information held on the central management information system. Considerable disparities have already been identified.

63 The college has made a public commitment to the Investors in People programme. After a slow start, progress is now being made. The original action plan was put aside and a new questionnaire has been distributed to staff, returns analysed and the results dispatched to the local TEC. A staff profiling exercise has also been carried out and the results are being analysed.

64 The technician and administrative support for teaching is generally good. The number of support staff has increased since incorporation to meet the new requirements of the college. Some technicians are full members of teaching teams whilst others with cross-college responsibilities are members of support staff teams. As a consequence, finding cover for absence involves approaching a number of team leaders to release their staff.

65 Full-time teaching staff are generally well qualified. Approximately two-thirds have recognised qualified teacher status and a further 20 per cent hold other teaching qualifications. The majority of staff have been in the college for many years, and there have been few recent full-time appointments. In some curriculum areas, staff have little recent experience of industry or commerce.

66 The college delivers 33 per cent of its teaching through the use of part-time staff. There are some weaknesses in the management of this large workforce. Appointments are often made through personal contacts. There are no mechanisms for encouraging attendance at team meetings.

#### **Equipment/learning resources**

67 Equipment in the college is satisfactory in quality and quantity. There has been much upgrading recently and this has contributed positively to the learning environment. Maintenance is well-handled; where there is expertise within the support staff team the work is done internally. There is no systematic replacement policy and this has left some areas without industrially-relevant equipment. Purchase of general fittings is well managed, but the use of performance standards would help to ensure value for money.

68 The library has an average quantity of books. Some specialist books are outdated and students have difficulty in getting access to up-to-date texts. A CD-ROM facility has recently been introduced into the library and additions are planned as demand increases.

69 The equipment to support blind students is particularly impressive; it includes voice synthesizers and Braille machines. The college runs two mini-buses between sites, one especially converted for use by people with disabilities. The service is appreciated by students and staff.

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70 Specialist equipment in some areas has been updated recently. Information technology centres are well equipped with modern hardware and a range of business software but there is a need for more laser printers. The computer-aided design suite has industry-standard hardware and software. The motor vehicle workshop is comprehensive, and has machinery which meets the needs of local firms. Some specialist technology areas have equipment which is outdated, and there is little capability in computer-controlled engineering.

71 There are firm policies on health and safety, and an active committee ensures that they are implemented. A recent safety report detailed many areas of concern, some of which included machine safety. The safety committee is currently addressing these issues.

### **Accommodation**

72 The college accommodation is generally adequate. Viewed from the outside, the buildings are rather plain and the main entrances and reception areas are not easily identified. Improvements to the interiors are being completed and buildings are generally in a satisfactory state of repair. The systematic refurbishment of interiors has led to a dramatic improvement in some areas and provides a stimulating atmosphere which students enjoy. Areas that have not yet been refurbished are in an unsatisfactory condition. Some of the rooms at the Stockton site are poor; the basement area including the timber workshop is unsuitable for its purpose.

73 There is no long-term accommodation strategy. A consultant was commissioned to produce a comprehensive repairs survey and the college is working on an overall strategy that will address the changing patterns of demand.

74 The college has 14 students who use wheelchairs. Some specific problems of access remain for them. For example, there is no wheelchair access to the first-floor learning centre at the Billingham site and the new fire doors and carpets also pose difficulties.

75 A computerised timetabling system is in operation but inaccuracies make it of little use. Some areas are overcrowded while others are underused. There is particular under-utilisation of accommodation in engineering and technology, for example, the machine shop and the hydraulics laboratory. The heat engine laboratory is surplus to requirements.

76 Both sites are clean and tidy and there is a particularly pleasant atmosphere in the guidance areas, the information technology centres and the students' common room. Security has improved greatly by the extension and refurbishment of car parking facilities, and the provision of extra lighting and patrols by security staff.

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## CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

77 The college is making progress towards meeting the objectives stated in its strategic plan. Particular strengths of the provision are:

- the successful transition from a traditional departmental structure to a more flexible matrix structure
- an improved approach to financial management resulting in a reduction in the college's inherited deficit
- an extensive portfolio of courses
- the positive response to external initiatives
- an information and guidance unit that acts as a focus for recruitment, guidance and support
- a commitment to equitable treatment of teaching and non-teaching staff
- refurbishment that has improved the quality of the learning environment.

78 The college should address the following issues:

- the quality of the college's management information processes and the data they produce
- the absence of monitoring and effective evaluating processes in some key areas
- the shortcomings in some of the course monitoring and review documents
- the inconsistency of induction and tutorial programmes across the college
- the poor examination results in some areas
- the under-utilisation of accommodation and the lack of an overall strategy.

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## FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (April 1994)

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  - 2 Full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)

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

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  - 4 Percentage enrolments by level of study (April 1994)

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  - 5 Recurrent income (16 months to July 1994)

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  - 6 Estimated expenditure (16 months to July 1994)

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

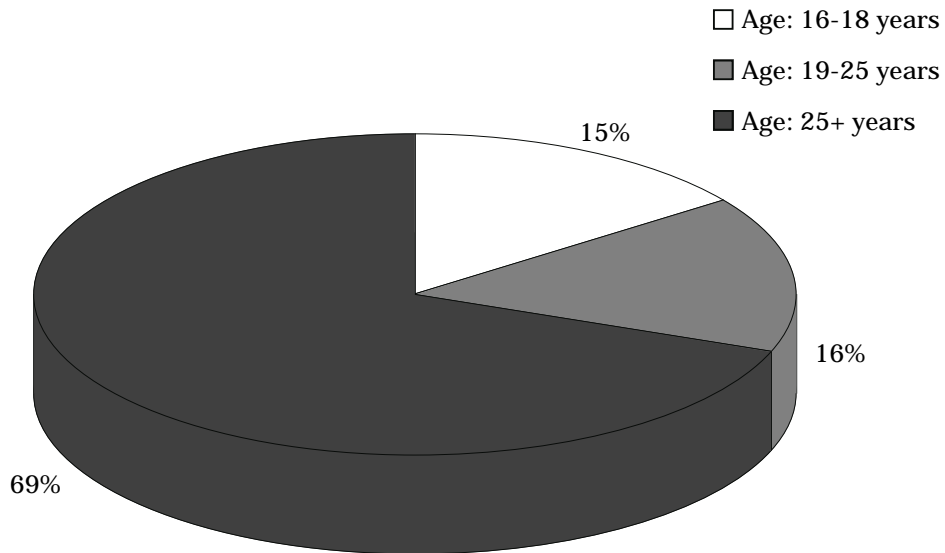
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**Figure 1**

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**Stockton and Billingham College of Further Education: percentage enrolments by age (April 1994)**



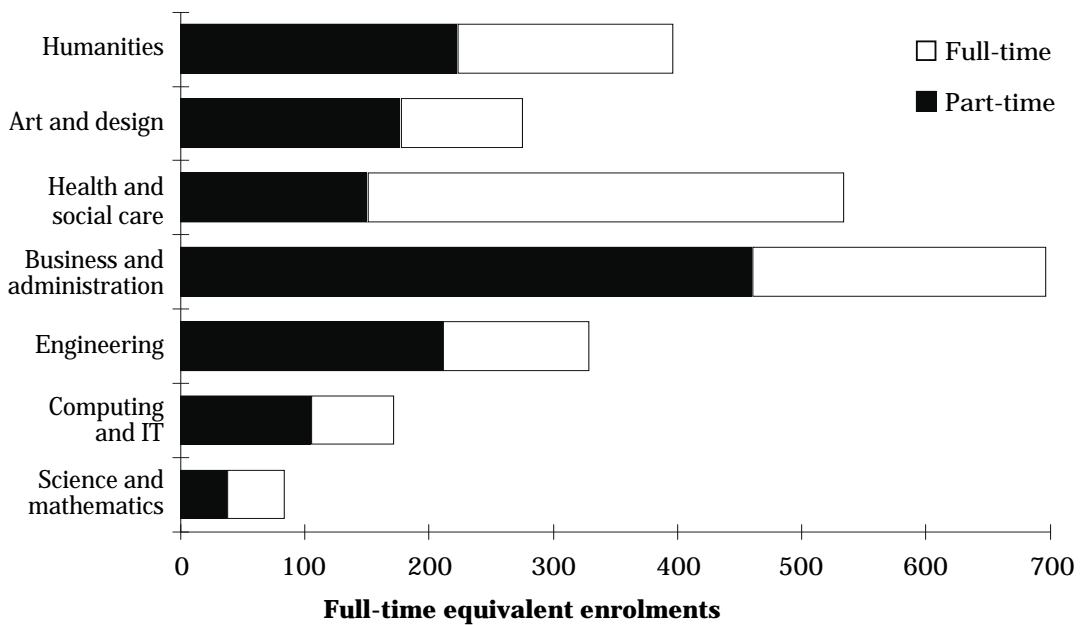
Enrolments: 10,005

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**Figure 2**

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**Stockton and Billingham College of Further Education: students expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)**

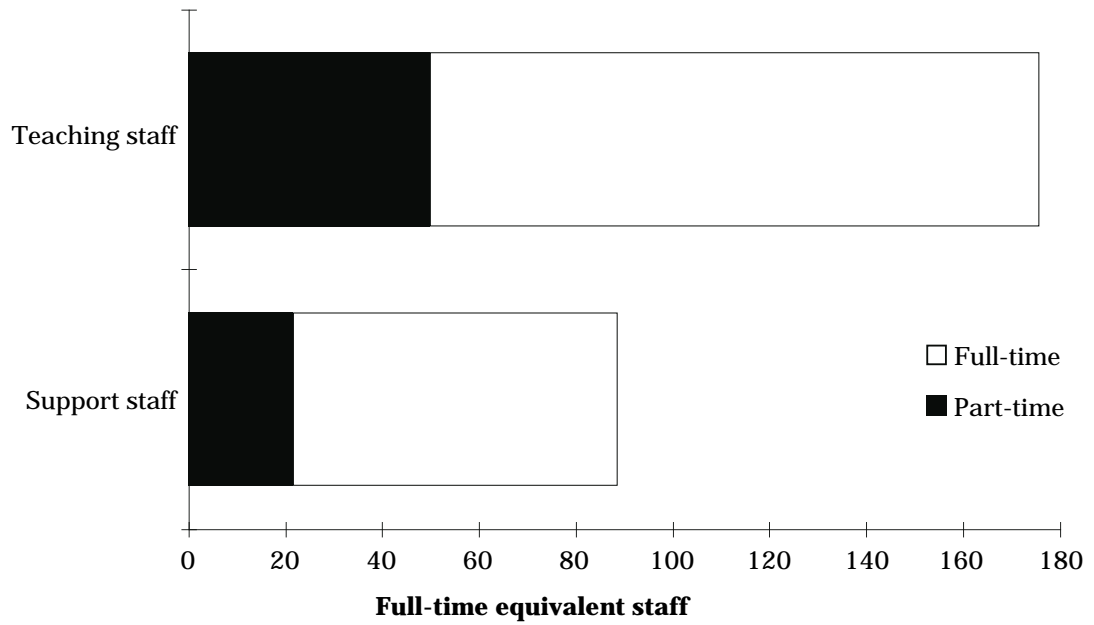


Full-time equivalent enrolments: 2,491

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**Figure 3**

**Stockton and Billingham College of Further Education: staff profile - expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)**

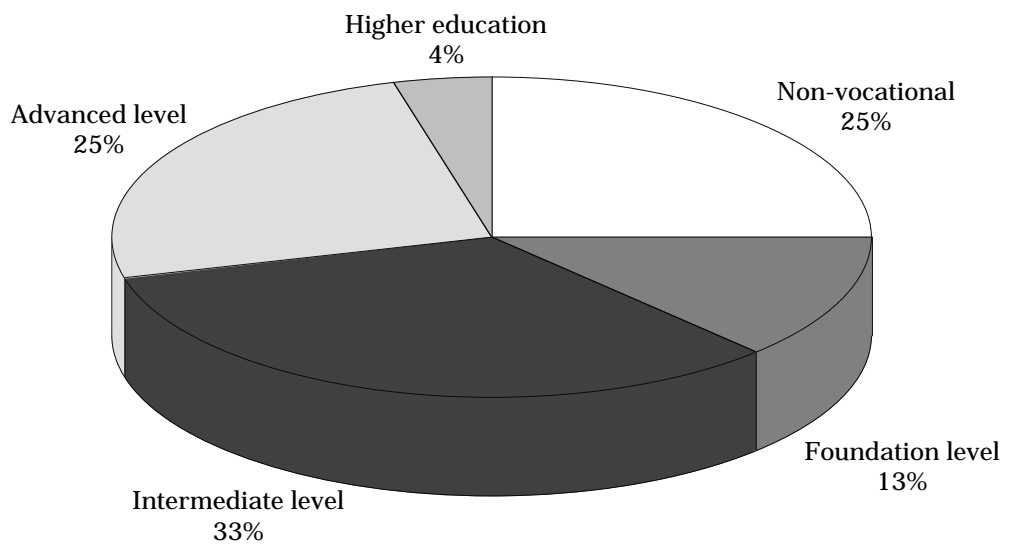


Full-time equivalent staff: 264

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**Figure 4**

**Stockton and Billingham College of Further Education: percentage enrolments by level of study (April 1994)**



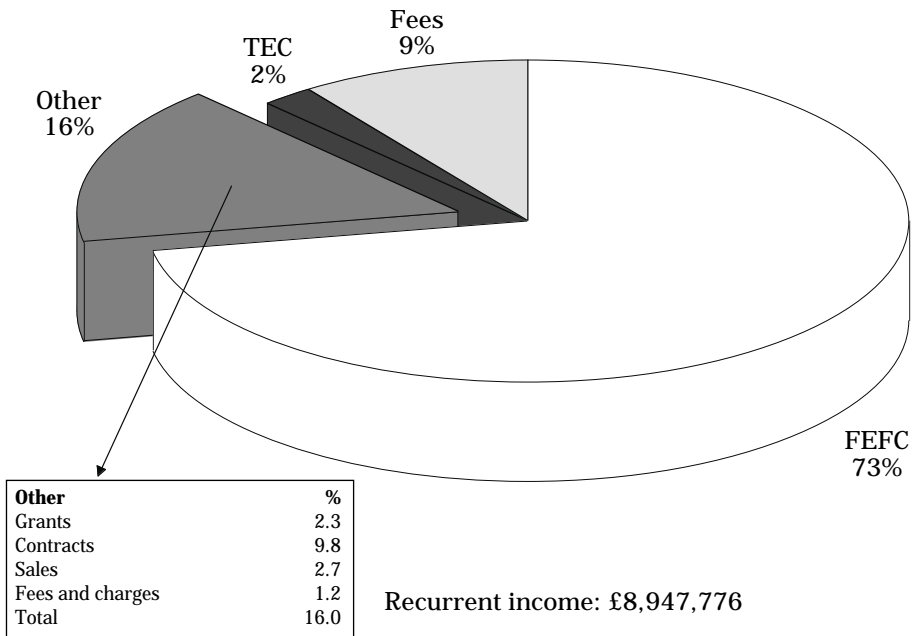
Enrolments: 10,005

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**Figure 5**

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**Stockton and Billingham College of Further Education: recurrent income  
(16 months to July 1994)**

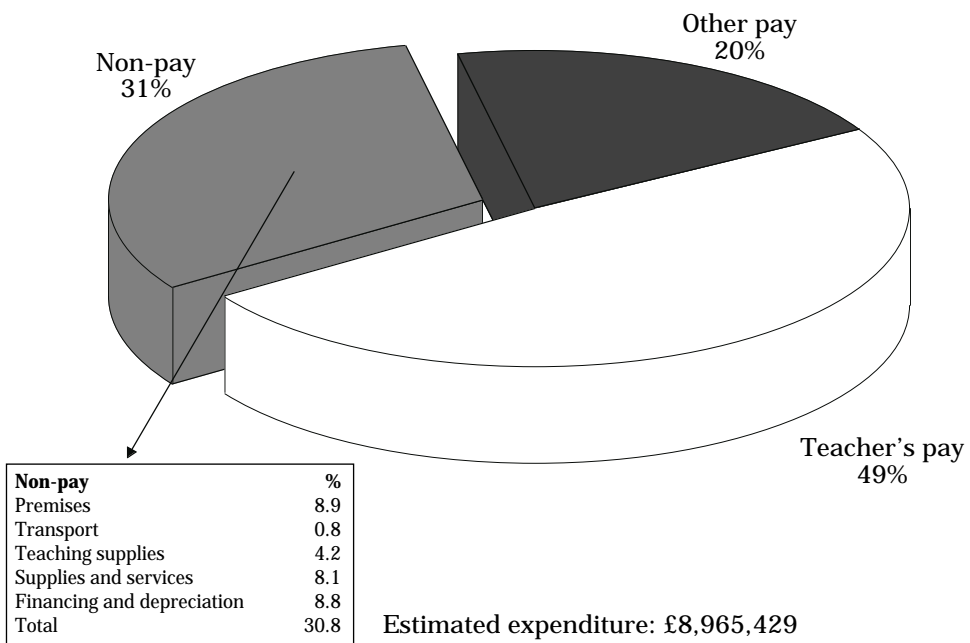


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**Figure 6**

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**Stockton and Billingham College of Further Education: estimated expenditure  
(16 months to July 1994)**



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