

Tameside College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1998-99**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 1997-98, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	60	29	2	-
Cross-college provision	18	54	24	4	-

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*
Sample size: 108 college inspections

Student Achievements

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

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

Summary

Tameside College

North West Region

Inspected April 1999

Tameside College is a successful general further education college which provides a wide range of courses for the local community. In preparation for inspection, the college produced a comprehensive self-assessment report which drew on separate reports from curriculum and business support areas. Staff and students were involved in the self-assessment process and opportunities were provided for external organisations to comment on the report. The strengths in the self-assessment report were supported by comprehensive evidence. The weaknesses and the action plans in the report were less clearly stated. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the report and found that significant progress had been made to address weaknesses. Since the last inspection of the two colleges which merged to form Tameside College, the high quality of provision has been maintained and in some areas improved.

The college offers courses in all of the FEFC's programme areas except agriculture. Courses in five of these areas were inspected together with aspects of cross-college provision. The college has extensive and productive links with local

organisations which are used to adapt and extend college provision to meet local needs. Senior managers provide strong but accessible leadership. Authority is delegated to managers who are held accountable for the performance of their teams. The college is well governed. The board practises an open style of governance. It scrutinises closely both the financial and the academic performance of the college. Inspectors found no significant weaknesses in governance or management. The quality assurance framework is well established and is closely integrated with the planning process. The views of students and other clients are sought and acted upon. The various support services available to students are well managed. Students' needs for learning support are effectively diagnosed and met. The quality of engineering and art and design provision is outstanding. Inspectors saw some outstanding teaching in most subject areas. The quality of accommodation is generally good. Specialist equipment is widely available, in particular the extensive and up-to-date IT equipment. The college should address: low retention rates on some courses; poor attendance and punctuality on the part of some students; the failure to match teaching styles to students' needs in a few subjects.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Engineering	1	Support for students	1
Business and management	2	General resources	2
Business technology	2	Quality assurance	1
Health and social care	2	Governance	1
Art and design	1	Management	1
English and teacher education	2		
Social sciences	3		

The College and its Mission

1 Tameside College was formed in February 1998 from the merger of Tameside College of Technology and Hyde-Clarendon College. It operates on four sites in the metropolitan borough of Tameside, 8 miles to the east of Manchester. Three of the sites, at Ashton (Beaufort Road), and at Hyde (Stockport Road and Union Street) formed part of the former Tameside College of Technology. The college is the largest of the four providers of post-16 education in the borough. A sixth form college is half a mile away and two 11 to 18 schools, one voluntary aided and the other grant maintained, are within 3 miles of the college. There are seven further education colleges and several sixth form colleges within a 10 mile radius. The college has the contract for the borough's adult non-vocational provision. It is a managing agent for Careerships, the Manchester Training and Enterprise Council's (TEC's) training scheme for under 25 year olds. It also delivers modern apprenticeships and New Deal options.

2 Courses provided at the college range from foundation to higher national levels. They include those leading to the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE), the general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level), general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) courses at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels and national vocational qualification (NVQ) courses at levels 1 to 4. At the time of the inspection, the college had 3,135 full-time students and 8,695 part-time students. It employs 398 full-time equivalent staff. The college is led by the operational management team which comprises the chief executive, the senior management team, heads of school and managers of service functions. Teaching and learning are managed through 12 schools of study.

3 The borough of Tameside has a population of 221,527 which is estimated to increase over the next two years by 6,000. Approximately 4%

of the population, compared with 7% of students in the college, are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin. The profile of businesses in Tameside is dominated by small and medium enterprises, 82% of which employ less than 10 staff. There is a high level of dependence on the low technology manufacturing sector which employs 37% of the working population, well above the Greater Manchester and national average of 21%. Salary levels of local residents are lower than national averages. Much of the employment in Tameside is low paid and in nationally declining sectors such as metal manufacture, textiles and food manufacture. Only 59% of the working population are employed in service industries, 12% below the national average.

4 In June 1998, Tameside's unemployment rate stood at 3.6% compared with a national average of 4.5%. Two wards in the borough have unemployment rates above the national average with rates of 6.7% and 5.8%. In 1997-98, 38% of Tameside school-leavers achieved GCSE results of five grades C or above compared with the national average for England of 46%. Only 7.5% of borough residents currently hold formal qualifications compared with 11.4% for Greater Manchester. The 1996-97 participation rate in full-time education post-16 is 11% below the national average of 68%.

5 The college aims to achieve its mission 'to enable people to learn and achieve throughout life in a college which values excellence and enterprise through:

- understanding customers
- supportive approaches and a caring environment
- widening participation
- recognising achievement
- using emerging technologies and promoting innovation
- providing excellent facilities and services
- responding to challenge and change

Context

within a culture of critical self-evaluation and enterprise, with a willingness to work energetically with partners to contribute to the economic and social development’.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected during the week beginning 12 April 1999. Before the inspection, inspectors reviewed the self-assessment report and considered information from other directorates of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college provided data on students’ achievements for 1997-98 which it derived from the individualised student record (ISR) for the two separate colleges which existed before the merger. These were checked by inspectors against primary sources of evidence, such as registers and the pass lists issued by examining bodies, and were found mainly to be reliable. The data together with ISR data for 1996 and 1997 were used to compile the tables in the curriculum area reports. Where courses were available at both former colleges, the tables indicate to which the data refer. The college was notified of the sample of work to be inspected two months before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by 13 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 56 days. Inspectors observed 96 lessons and examined samples of students’ work and a variety of college documents. Team members met students, college governors, managers, staff, representatives of local schools, careers service staff, Manchester TEC and Tameside Borough Council.

7 This college was one of 30 in the current cycle of inspections which agreed to participate in the joint Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and FEFC assessment of careers education and guidance. The joint assessment was guided by the inspection framework, with careers education assessors contributing to judgements made by inspectors. The emphasis in this report on careers

education and guidance will help colleges and careers services to improve the quality of the careers education and guidance they offer and help the DfEE to disseminate good practice.

8 The following table shows the grades given to the lessons inspected and the national profile for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. Of the lessons inspected, 76% were judged to be good or outstanding and 4% were rated as less than satisfactory. This profile of grades compares favourably with the average figures of 65% and 6%, respectively, for all colleges inspected in 1997-98.

Context

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GCE A/AS level	3	7	5	0	0	15
GCSE	2	2	2	0	0	6
GNVQ	8	8	7	1	0	24
NVQ	8	4	2	0	0	14
Other vocational	4	10	1	3	0	18
Other	8	9	2	0	0	19
Total (No.)	33	40	19	4	0	96
Total (%)	34	42	20	4	0	100
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98 (%)	19	46	29	6	0	100

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

9 The following table shows the attendance rates in the lessons observed and the national average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98.

Attendance rates in lessons observed

	Average number of students	Average attendance (%)
Tameside College	11.0	76
National average, all inspected colleges 1997-98	10.4	77

Source for national average: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1997-98: Chief inspector's annual report*

Curriculum Areas

Engineering

Grade 1

10 The inspection covered all aspects of engineering. Inspectors observed 15 lessons. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but considered that some strengths relating to teaching and learning were understated.

Key strengths

- learning activities well matched to students' needs
- a good mix of class-based tasks and individual study
- good development of students' technical skills
- good use of industrial projects to promote learning
- effective use of teachers' and students' industrial experience
- student achievement rates above the national average
- thorough internal verification and an effective system for tracking students
- modern and well-resourced technical facilities
- clear links between strategic, business and operational planning
- good use of learning support staff

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some courses

11 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that aspects of teaching and the promotion of learning were strengths but considered some of the strengths to be understated. Of the 15 lessons observed, 13 were judged to be good or outstanding. Teachers set demanding but appropriate targets for achievement. In one lesson for a large group of mature students, the teacher made sure that

the students clearly understood the specifications required to undertake complex industrial projects and skilfully used project management systems to enable them to appreciate the exercise fully. At every opportunity, the teacher encouraged the students to place the project in a realistic work setting. Teachers often make use of their own and the students' industrial experience to provide illustrations and set learning in context, a strength not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. During a motor vehicle technology class, students were required to use their own knowledge of different braking systems and apply it to the class activity. Lecturers devised suitable tasks for students of differing ability within the same group. In one computer-aided design lesson, draughts people, who were updating their skills, worked alongside other students who were studying basic computer-aided design techniques. Students were able to achieve their objectives through the differing tasks they had been set.

12 Task-based learning is becoming a focus of courses. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that the benefits of this strategy were already beginning to show. In one lesson, a group of motor vehicle students investigated the principles of engine fault diagnosis using an experimental system with computer-programmed fault creation. Varied teaching methods are used effectively to keep students interested. In an engineering mathematics class dealing with complex geometry, there was a short lecture, followed by a discussion and question and answer session, the use of 'gapped handouts' and a series of practical tasks on complex shapes and the calculation of liquid storage solutions.

13 As the self-assessment report stated, students' achievements are well above the national average. Students demonstrate a high level of technical skill, particularly in motor vehicle work, pneumatics and computer-aided design. Their portfolios are up to date, well

Curriculum Areas

ordered and informative. They take a pride in their work and are knowledgeable about it. All full-time and many part-time students acquire appropriate numeracy, literacy and information technology (IT) skills. The self-assessment report acknowledged that student retention rates are below the national average for some courses and there are action plans to deal with this weakness. Data for the current year indicate that retention rates are improving significantly. Partly in order to improve retention rates, the college has created a team of subject specific learning support staff. Many students are achieving vocational competence at

NVQ levels 1 and 2 with the aid of additional learning support.

14 Inspectors agreed that there are clear links between strategic planning, business planning and operational activities. Through regular and productive team meetings, staff are fully involved in the process of planning and reviewing the curriculum. A thorough internal verification and tracking system is in place to verify students' achievements. The system is managed by a lead internal verifier who ensures that a consistent and planned approach is maintained.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in engineering, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Foundation vocational (GNVQ, precursors, NVQ, C&G)	1	Expected completions	151	167	219
		Retention (%)	89	72	91
		Achievement (%)	23	85	79
Intermediate vocational (GNVQ, precursors, NVQ, C&G)	2	Expected completions	309	244	*
		Retention (%)	88	68	*
		Achievement (%)	32	59	*
Advanced vocational (GNVQ, precursors, NVQ, C&G)	3	Expected completions	184	184	151
		Retention (%)	93	64	66
		Achievement (%)	40	47	64

Source: ISR data

*incomplete data

Curriculum Areas

Business and Management

Grade 2

15 Inspectors observed 20 lessons covering business, management, accounting and public services. They agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. The evidence supporting strengths was comprehensive. Some weaknesses were understated and little evidence was presented to support the weaknesses.

Key strengths

- much good teaching
- effective development of key skills
- good pass and retention rates on many courses
- the high standard of students' assessed work
- effective curriculum and school management systems
- the broad range of provision

Weaknesses

- the failure of some teaching to take account of students' needs
- poor retention rates on a minority of courses
- the lack of recent industrial and business experience of some staff

16 As recognised in its self-assessment report, the school of business, management and finance offers a broad range of courses leading to NVQ, GNVQ, GCE A level, national and higher national awards, professional qualifications and courses devised to meet the needs of local firms. The school is currently piloting an NVQ level 3 in management using internet and electronic mail communications technology. The school is effectively managed by a head of school and five section heads who meet weekly to discuss operational matters. School and section team

meetings are held on a monthly basis in a regular time slot. All meetings are well supported by agendas and minutes and identify actions to be taken. The effectiveness of management was identified as a strength in the college's self-assessment report.

17 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that most of the teaching is good. Of the 20 lessons observed by inspectors, 15 were judged to be good or outstanding which matched the profile of the observations undertaken by the college. In contrast, 10% of lessons were judged by inspectors to be less than satisfactory although the college had identified none. Courses and lessons are generally well planned. They provide students with appropriate and varied opportunities for learning. In one GNVQ advanced business lesson, for example, students' knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of different methods of transportation were developed through small group work. The results were collated and a question and answer session was used effectively to develop points. Students then worked in pairs on case studies which required them to use the information provided to make recommendations on appropriate transportation methods. The groups fed back their suggestions and the alternative options were discussed by the class. Teaching is well prepared and most teachers are adept at using questions to maintain the interest and motivation of their students. In a few classes, the learning materials provided by teachers were not suitable, given the abilities of the students. Although teaching on the accounting technician course is purposeful, teachers do not make enough use of students' extensive work experience. Key skills are developed as an integral part of GNVQ and accounting programmes. Opportunities to develop key skills are indicated on GCE A level business schemes of work. Teachers have a good rapport with their students. In lessons, they make good use of praise and humour to foster self-confidence and increase motivation.

Curriculum Areas

18 The quality of students' assessed assignments and other written work is good. Students pay close attention to the presentation of their work. Their NVQ portfolios are comprehensive and contain evidence which is clearly cross-referenced. Teachers mark and return students' work promptly. They write detailed comments on feedback sheets and correct spelling and grammatical errors. Retention and examination pass rates on several courses, including the Association of Accounting Technicians accounting NVQs and the National Examining Board for Supervision and Management certificate, are above the national average. In December 1998, the Association of Accounting Technicians central assessment in planning and allocation of resources achieved a success rate of 86% compared with an overall national and international pass rate of 69%. In December 1998, a student on the National Examining Board for Supervision and Management NVQ management programme gained the national award for level 5. In 1996 and 1997, the higher national certificate business programme had achievement rates of 100% and 98%, respectively, which were well above the national average. On a minority of provision, however, retention is poor. In 1998, one GNVQ advanced business programme, had a retention rate of 46%, the other 61%.

19 The self-assessment report recognised that not all full-time staff have had recent commercial or industrial experience. The college has identified it as an issue and a target has been set for staff to receive the appropriate professional updating. Rooms used for business courses are clean, well furnished and well equipped. Most full-time courses are allocated base rooms which have wall displays of business-related materials. Students have easy access to well-equipped IT suites, though students and teachers are sometimes hampered by the incompatible computer software in some classrooms.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in business and management, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Association of Accounting Technicians	various	Expected completions	176	193	223
		Retention (%)	89	80	83
		Achievement (%)	32	34	62
GNVQ intermediate business (at Tameside College of Technology)	2	Expected completions	20	24	14
		Retention (%)	85	20	78
		Achievement (%)	47	60	81
The National Examining Board for Supervision and Management management certificate	3	Expected completions	33	44	45
		Retention (%)	78	81	81
		Achievement (%)	88	80	97
GNVQ advanced business (two-year programme at Tameside College of Technology)	3	Expected completions	16	28	51
		Retention (%)	93	64	46
		Achievement (%)	93	88	74
GNVQ advanced business (two-year programme at Hyde-Clarendon College)	3	Expected completions	24	26	21
		Retention (%)	91	38	61
		Achievement (%)	54	77	84
GCE A level business (at Hyde-Clarendon College)	3	Expected completions	38	49	93
		Retention (%)	86	63	64
		Achievement (%)	96	83	83
GCE A level business (at Tameside College of Technology)	3	Expected completions	13	24	14
		Retention (%)	100	80	70
		Achievement (%)	58	81	100
Higher national certificate business and finance	4	Expected completions	59	79	75
		Retention (%)	91	63	70
		Achievement (%)	100	98	96

Source: ISR data

Curriculum Areas

Business Technology

Grade 2

20 Inspectors observed 11 lessons in NVQ administration and secretarial skills provision. They agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report, but identified an additional strength and some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good teaching in most lessons
- excellent support for adults
- well-planned learning, focusing on examination success
- good pass rates in single subject office technology examinations
- the innovative organisation of business technology workshops

Weaknesses

- some teaching and learning activities which are not meeting the needs of all students
- low achievement on NVQ and the legal secretary's certificate
- the narrow curriculum of some courses

21 The broad range of NVQ and business technology courses at levels 1 to 3 provides students with good opportunities for progression. A particular strength identified in the self-assessment report is the flexibility of the curriculum workshops at the Ashton and Stockport Road sites. Inspectors agreed with the college that the workshops enable students to plan their timetables to fit their domestic or employment needs. Workshops are well organised. High-quality learning packs are available to enable students to work on their own. Staff monitor students' progress carefully and maintain good records. Students can enrol on most courses at any time throughout the year. The atmosphere in workshops is

welcoming and relaxed, at the same time promoting a clear commitment to learning and success in achieving qualifications.

22 Course management is very effective. Internal verification procedures are rigorous and ensure that assessment is standardised. Timetable arrangements occasionally make it awkward for part-time staff to attend. The narrow curriculum on some full-time administration and business technology courses means that students have insufficient opportunities to study organisational procedures and office functions. This weakness was not identified by the college.

23 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that most teaching is effective and reinforces learning. In the better lessons, planning is meticulous and teachers share with students the aims and objectives of the session. In a minority of lessons, classroom management is poor, there is a slow pace of delivery and activities do not meet the needs of all students. These weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report.

24 Assignments are set at the appropriate level and are carefully marked to meet examination board and/or NVQ requirements. Students present their work well. NVQ students are encouraged to provide evidence from their workplace. Portfolios are well organised. Students in the workshops have the opportunity to enter six series of examinations and many achieve multiple qualifications in the course of the year. Some have already achieved four examination passes this year. In the key skills workshop at Stockport Road, students are encouraged to work in teams on practical business projects. Key skills qualifications including communications and personal skills are gained by many students on the successful return to work courses. Opportunities for students to integrate and develop number and problem-solving techniques are less well developed.

Curriculum Areas

25 Student retention rates are good although there has been some decline in all areas in 1998. There has been a general improvement in achievement rates. Pass rates on single subjects in office technology are good. Over the past three years, students' achievements have met or surpassed national benchmarks. In January 1999, 289 entries were made for single subject examinations covering 11 subjects and/or levels. Of these, 94% were successful; 71% with distinction. Achievement on NVQ administration levels 1 to 3 courses is low and is generally below national averages.

26 Inspectors agreed with the statement in the self-assessment report that staff are

appropriately qualified and have made good progress towards the acquisition of assessor and verifier awards. Part-time teachers who work in the business sector bring up-to-date business experience to the classroom. There is good technician support both during the day and evening. Inspectors agreed with the statement in the self-assessment report that the standard of accommodation and resources is high. Workshops are well equipped with industry standard software and up-to-date hardware. All rooms have whiteboards and most also have overhead projectors and screens. Furnishings are of a high standard. Rooms are bright and have attractive wall displays.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in business technology, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
NVQ administration	1 to 3	Expected completions	120	108	47
		Retention (%)	85	93	69
		Achievement (%)	48	32	55
Other vocational	1	Expected completions	208	562	268
		Retention (%)	75	83	69
		Achievement (%)	40	73	81
Other vocational	2	Expected completions	290	444	307
		Retention (%)	79	88	77
		Achievement (%)	53	69	72
Other vocational	3	Expected completions	19	167	68
		Retention (%)	68	91	86
		Achievement (%)	74	66	76

Source: ISR data

Curriculum Areas

Health and Social Care

Grade 2

27 Inspectors observed 10 lessons in health, social and childcare courses. They agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but identified a few additional strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and in students' achievements.

Key strengths

- much good teaching
- good curriculum management
- effective promotion of equal opportunities
- good achievements on advanced level childcare courses and GNVQ foundation courses
- high levels of student progression
- good-quality specialist resources
- the wide range of provision

Weaknesses

- low achievement rates on GNVQ advanced at Hyde Clarendon sixth form centre
- below national average retention rates on many courses
- some students' poor attendance and punctuality

28 Inspectors agreed with the college that the range of provision is a strength. Students have the opportunity to progress from foundation level courses to higher education. Courses are delivered in three of the main college centres. Inspectors agreed with the college that it uses its strong and innovative partnerships with local agencies to widen participation. For example, courses organised in the local community to cater for the needs of members of the Asian heritage community provide opportunities for

students to progress to higher level courses at the main college sites. Four of the current students taking the nursery nurse programme have progressed through this route. Courses are well planned and well managed. Good practice which is identified through effective course monitoring and review is then shared with other course teams. Students' work experience is well planned and well organised. It is an integral element of all full-time child, health and social care courses. These strengths were recognised in the self-assessment report.

29 Inspectors agreed with the college that the quality of teaching is a strength. Teachers make use of a variety of learning activities which enables students to develop and demonstrate knowledge, understanding and practical skills at levels appropriate for their courses. Inspectors observed outstanding practice in lessons where the tasks set challenged students to apply theory to current work practices. In one lesson, nursery nurse students discussed and selected the main criteria for identifying a good nursery. They were then required to use the criteria to choose an appropriate nursery for a particular child. Students are encouraged to challenge accepted theory, to think for themselves and to draw upon the experience they gain in their work placement. Equal opportunities topics are effectively and sensitively promoted in lessons. The language used in one lesson on homosexuality was adapted to the level of students' understanding and through a frank and open discussion of the topic, students were able to recognise examples of prejudice and to identify discriminatory behaviour. Well-structured assignments are used to make appropriate links between college-based and workplace learning. Tasks are clearly identified within assignments and teachers provide constructive written feedback to help students to improve their work. On some courses, students do not make full use of the IT facilities which are available to support their learning. This weakness was not recognised in the self-assessment report.

Curriculum Areas

30 Inspectors found that the college's self-assessment report understated both strengths and weaknesses in students' achievements. Most students who complete their course and achieve their qualifications progress to further or higher education, professional training or employment. Student achievement rates vary across the curriculum area and between college sites. At the Stockport Road site, pass rates on nursery nursing and GNVQ foundation and intermediate level courses were above the national average. In 1998, all those who completed the diploma in nursery nursing achieved the award. Students' achievements at the Hyde-Clarendon sixth form centre on GNVQ advanced level courses are well below national averages. Student retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate course at the Hyde-Clarendon sixth form centre are well above the national average. Retention rates on other GNVQ courses are declining and are below national averages. For example, in 1998, the retention rate on the GNVQ intermediate course at Stockport Road was only 56%. The college recognises that retention rates on some courses are weak. Students' attendance in lessons observed was 66%, well below the national average.

31 Inspectors agreed with the college that classrooms are appropriate for the size of groups and types of learning activities. Attractive displays of students' work provide a stimulating learning environment and help celebrate students' achievements. Teachers provide students with high-quality learning materials to support learning. The library is well stocked. Teachers are well qualified and professionally experienced. Students speak highly of the support they receive from teachers.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in health and social care, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ generic (Tameside College of Technology – one year)	1	Expected completions	31	15	18
		Retention (%)	87	93	66
		Achievement (%)	70	78	75
GNVQ intermediate (Tameside College of Technology – one year)	2	Expected completions	55	99	75
		Retention (%)	81	74	56
		Achievement (%)	51	74	76
GNVQ intermediate (Hyde-Clarendon College – one year)	2	Expected completions	18	43	58
		Retention (%)	20	35	84
		Achievement (%)	33	95	69
Diploma in nursery nursing (two-year programme at Hyde-Clarendon College)	3	Expected completions	*	17	30
		Retention (%)	*	70	73
		Achievement (%)	*	100	81
Diploma in nursery nursing (two-year programme at Tameside College of Technology)	3	Expected completions	37	46	24
		Retention (%)	70	58	70
		Achievement (%)	88	92	100
GNVQ advanced (Tameside College of Technology – two year)	3	Expected completions	38	63	84
		Retention (%)	68	68	**
		Achievement (%)	88	72	70
GNVQ advanced (Hyde-Clarendon College – two year)	3	Expected completions	20	35	21
		Retention (%)	70	40	52
		Achievement (%)	35	63	45

Source: ISR data

*course not available

**incomplete data

Curriculum Areas

Art and Design

Grade 1

32 Inspectors observed 12 lessons in courses offered by the school of art, design and media. Inspectors broadly agreed with the self-assessment report although the weaknesses were insufficiently evidenced.

Key strengths

- much outstanding and good teaching
- a strong vocational emphasis in the curriculum
- good curriculum management
- action taken to address declining retention rates
- good levels of progression to further and higher education
- innovative strategies to promote learning

Weaknesses

- declining retention over the last three years

33 Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the standard of teaching is consistently good. Students appreciate the efforts teachers make to provide them with guidance and support. Relationships between staff and students are particularly productive and conducive to learning. Where appropriate, the vocational nature of courses is underpinned with challenging and stimulating assignments. There is a rigorous system of internal verification. Teachers use a variety of techniques to promote students' independent learning. When media practices are examined in lessons, students are required to explore the ethical issues which are raised. As part of their course, photography students observe local police photographers. Foundation students benefit from a structured programme of visits to appropriate galleries. As identified in the self-

assessment report, however, there are insufficient opportunities for work experience.

34 Teachers monitor carefully the progress of students and are responsive to their needs. There are imaginative initiatives for supporting students. For example, a full-time learning support officer has been appointed to work with students. On some occasions, staff are insufficiently vigilant in preventing students taking food and drink into classrooms.

35 In most classes, and in portfolios, students' work is of a high standard. The majority of students are highly motivated and appreciate the efforts teachers make for them to exhibit their work locally. Students' achievements are commendably high. In GNVQ art and design at intermediate and advanced level, and in foundation (post 18) and GCE A level fine art courses there have been pass rates of 90% or more over the last three years. Students' progression to advanced courses in both further and higher education is good, with progression rates of 96%, 85% and 79% for GNVQ foundation, intermediate and advanced, respectively. The self-assessment report acknowledged as a weakness some student retention rates and on all full-time courses there has been a decline in retention over the last three years. The college has taken action to address this issue, in particular through the introduction of effective diagnostic arrangements.

36 Inspectors agreed with the claim in the self-assessment report that the curriculum is well managed. Regular school management meetings provide opportunities for staff to express their views freely and to identify action to be taken. As a result of careful curriculum review, staff have structured the curriculum to ensure that students specialise in the area of work which most closely matches their interest and aptitude. GNVQ students spend the first term experiencing all optional units until their considered choice is made. There is some evidence that such strategies appear to have

Curriculum Areas

contributed to the improved student retention rates in the current academic year. Students on vocational courses are able to study complementary GCE A levels. At present, there is no curriculum offer below level 2.

37 Staff are well qualified. Many are practitioners in art, design and media. Full-time staff who do not have a teaching qualification are required to obtain one with the support of the college. Staff development is closely matched to the needs of the curriculum area. The accommodation is dispersed between buildings. The facility for photography is inaccessible to wheelchair users. Most equipment is of a good standard. Televisions, videos and overhead projectors are readily available to support teaching and learning when required. The learning resource centre and IT facilities are accessible to all students.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in art and design, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	Expected completions	28	40	28
		Retention (%)	82	82	64
		Achievement (%)	91	75	94
GNVQ advanced art and design	3	Expected completions	44	51	71
		Retention (%)	93	78	73
		Achievement (%)	100	90	98
Art foundation, post-18	3	Expected completions	30	52	40
		Retention (%)	83	80	*
		Achievement (%)	100	97	93
GCE A level fine art	3	Expected completions	50	25	121
		Retention (%)	80	68	62
		Achievement (%)	40	88	85
GNVQ advanced media	3	Expected completions	*	*	12
		Retention (%)	*	*	50
		Achievement (%)	*	*	100

Source: ISR data

*incomplete data

Curriculum Areas

English and Teacher Education

Grade 2

38 Inspectors observed 14 lessons. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report. The format of the report, however, was not helpful in enabling inspectors to identify the key judgements and the supporting evidence, particularly in evaluating weaknesses.

Key strengths

- generally good teaching and learning
- some high achievement rates
- particularly effective provision for teacher education
- good curriculum management
- strong pastoral and academic support for students
- good specialist resources

Weaknesses

- some courses with low retention and/or achievement rates
- students' lack of punctuality
- some teaching methods which did not match the needs of all students

39 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that teaching is generally of a high standard. Teachers plan their lessons meticulously and follow appropriate schemes of work. Good handouts and course guides provide an effective resource to which students can make subsequent reference. Teachers use carefully-selected and varied strategies to promote learning. Some of the best work took place where students worked in pairs and groups and then defended their findings in open debate. Students learn effectively to work on their own and to develop their thinking. In one lesson, the ideas generated from co-operative work in small

groups were tested one against the other, and with help and guidance from their teacher, students arrived at a well reasoned analysis of a Roger McGough poem. In a minority of lessons, particularly those which are dominated excessively by the teacher, some students are not stretched enough and work below their levels of capability. Teachers mark students' written work carefully, often making copious, constructive suggestions for improvement. Students are provided with the opportunity to enhance their studies through theatre visits.

40 The self-assessment report identified as a strength the high levels of achievement on a number of courses at GCSE and at GCE A level. For example, 90% of those who sat the GCSE English examination at the Ashton site passed at grades C or above. The report recognised, however, that retention and/or achievement rates on several courses have fallen below national averages. These courses have been identified by managers for improvement as part of an overall strategy to raise standards. Staff development initiatives have already been implemented. A consultant and individual managers have jointly observed classes. Managers have also made better use of target-setting in a concerted effort to improve students' attainment. In some classes, poor punctuality is left unchecked by teachers.

41 A high priority has been given to improving pastoral and academic support for students. Students are set targets for attainment based on their levels of ability and a variety of extra-curricular revision courses are offered to those who need them. Where common weaknesses are identified, for example in stylistics, they are dealt with thoroughly at extra lunchtime workshops. All students have their additional learning needs identified at the start of their course and staff ensure that extra support is provided where required.

42 A good range of books and equipment is available to support learning. IT facilities in the new building at the Hyde-Clarendon sixth form

Curriculum Areas

centre provide a valuable resource for students. There is effective exchange of materials between learning resource centres on different college sites so that students can gain ready access to the resources they need. In addition, staff in the curriculum area have produced a good range of high-quality learning materials to supplement those which are available commercially.

43 The provision for teacher education and training is particularly effective. The teaching team is enthusiastically led and offers a wide

variety of provision with the necessary flexibility to accommodate individual students' needs. The quality of teaching is good. Students speak highly of the quality of guidance and support they receive. Curriculum documentation is thorough and detailed. The unit is well resourced and has adequate administrative and teaching space. A good start has been made in establishing links with external institutions, using modern technology such as video-conferencing.

A summary of achievement and retention rates in English and teacher education, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE English language (Hyde-Clarendon College - full time, one year)	2	Expected completions	77	167	105
		Retention (%)	72	63	64
		Achievement (%)	96	91	97
GCSE English (Tameside College of Technology - full time, one year)	2	Expected completions	218	207	163
		Retention (%)	84	67	85
		Achievement (%)	62	87	85
C&G 7307 in further/adult education (Tameside College of Technology)	3	Expected completions	36	72	88
		Retention (%)	91	75	71
		Achievement (%)	81	94	85
GCE A level English literature (Hyde-Clarendon College - one year)	3	Expected completions	23	33	31
		Retention (%)	100	72	74
		Achievement (%)	86	95	95
GCE A level English language (Hyde-Clarendon College - two year)	3	Expected completions	48	76	146
		Retention (%)	95	71	73
		Achievement (%)	89	81	81

Source: ISR data

Curriculum Areas

Social Sciences

Grade 3

44 Inspectors observed 12 lessons on psychology, sociology and access to higher education courses. They agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that not enough evidence was provided of the weaknesses identified.

Key strengths

- some effective and well-organised teaching
- good psychology achievement at two sites
- regular monitoring of students' progress
- the broad range of additional support and guidance
- good curriculum management
- high-quality resources to support learning

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on most courses
- some poor achievement in sociology
- low rates of progression to higher education
- some patterns of poor attendance and punctuality
- IT and numeracy skills insufficiently integrated with other aspects of work

45 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that curriculum management is a strength. The management structure is effective and lines of communication and accountability are clear. A priority is given to raising achievement and promoting staff development. There is good liaison between subject staff across sites. They have made progress in identifying and disseminating the best practice and most effective procedures from the former colleges. Performance indicators are well documented and used effectively in course reviews.

46 As the self-assessment report claimed, staff adopt a variety of approaches to promote students' learning. Inspectors observed several examples of good practice in teaching and learning. The best lessons were well planned and had clear objectives. In one access sociology group, the teacher managed the conduct of a debate particularly effectively to make it both lively and appropriate to the topic. In a psychology lesson, the teacher helped students to exchange their ideas effectively with other members of the class. In weaker lessons, teachers failed to consolidate students' learning or to assess their progress. Opportunities were also missed to develop IT and numeracy skills. Inspectors agreed with the claim in the self-assessment report that students have access to extensive learning support. Students on GCE A level courses have additional sessions to supplement topics they may find difficult. On the access course, students can take the accredited key skills level 3 unit of work on 'improving one's own learning'.

47 As the self-assessment recognised, there are significant variations in students' achievements between college sites. In 1998, GCE A level psychology pass rates at Ashton were 85% compared with 68% at Hyde. Only 50% of students passed GCE A level sociology at Ashton compared with 92% at Hyde-Clarendon. Pass rates on the access social science programme at Hyde-Clarendon for 1997 and 1998, at 66% and 62% respectively, were well below national averages. At Ashton, the pass rate for access sociology (80%) was higher, though still below the national average. Only 55% of access students at Ashton achieved a pass in psychology. Pass rates in GCSE psychology in 1997 were 89% at Hyde and 92% at Ashton. The proportion of students who progress to higher education from access courses is low. In 1997 it was 60%. In 1998 it was 33%.

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48 Student retention rates were identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

Inspectors agreed. Retention rates are well below national rates on all courses. In 1998 only 41% of GCE A level sociology students and 52% of psychology students completed their course at the Hyde-Clarendon sixth form centre. Retention on the access course at Hyde-Clarendon was 60%. Evidence from current registers indicates that since November 1998, significant numbers of students have left their courses. For example, six of the original 16 GCSE psychology students, four of the 11 GCSE sociology students and 11 of the 27 students studying access psychology have left their courses. In contrast, 94% of students taking GCE A level year 2 psychology have been retained this year. In some classes, poor punctuality by students was not effectively addressed by tutors.

49 Inspectors agreed with the college that resources to support learning in this curriculum area are a strength. Staff are well qualified. Displays in teaching areas are designed to stimulate learning. The quality of course materials, such as handouts, is good. There are particularly good learning packs in psychology and access sociology, designed to enable students to work effectively on their own. The learning resource centre at Hyde-Clarendon contains good subject material. Students appreciate the well-equipped 'drop-in' IT facility.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in social sciences, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GCSE psychology one-year course (Tameside College of Technology)	2	Expected completions	109	66	46
		Retention (%)	94	59	72
		Achievement (%)	42	92	73
GCSE psychology one-year course (Hyde-Clarendon College)	2	Expected completions	11	19	*
		Retention (%)	64	47	*
		Achievement (%)	57	89	*
GCE A level and GCE AS psychology one- and two-year courses (Tameside College of Technology)	3	Expected completions	50	113	36
		Retention (%)	94	52	58
		Achievement (%)	47	51	86
GCE A level and GCE AS sociology one- and two-year courses (Tameside College of Technology)	3	Expected completions	26	40	17
		Retention (%)	81	33	76
		Achievement (%)	43	38	38
Access to higher education (Tameside College of Technology)	3	Expected completions	*	*	74
		Achievement (%)	*	*	81
		Retention (%)	*	*	63
GCE A level psychology two-year course (Hyde-Clarendon College)	3	Expected completions	20	47	67
		Retention (%)	95	64	61
		Achievement (%)	79	87	68
GCE A level and GCE AS sociology one- and two-year courses (Hyde-Clarendon College)	3	Expected completions	22	31	42
		Retention (%)	86	52	40
		Achievement (%)	47	92	80
Access to higher education one-year course (Hyde-Clarendon College)	3	Expected completions	*	15	12
		Retention (%)	*	40	67
		Achievement (%)	*	67	63

Source: ISR data

*course not running

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Support for Students

Grade 1

50 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of students' support, and noted that most of the weaknesses identified had been addressed since the self-assessment report was prepared.

Key strengths

- well-managed and well-documented student support services
- effective procedures for students' recruitment, admission and guidance
- comprehensive induction arrangements
- effective learning support to meet individual students' needs
- good support for students with disabilities
- a well-structured tutorial system
- comprehensive careers, welfare and personal counselling services
- good childcare support

Weaknesses

- there are no significant weaknesses

51 The college has clear policies and procedures for its student support services. Teaching staff attend regular training events to familiarise themselves with the wide range of support available. Students have easy access to student support on all four sites with high-quality, comprehensive information on courses and facilities readily available.

52 The college has well-managed arrangements for initial guidance, advice and enrolment. It enjoys good links with local secondary schools. In 1998-99, over 370 pupils took part in 'taster' days to sample a range of courses. The college annually hosts a careers convention for all of the schools in the borough. Inspectors agreed with the claim in the self-

assessment report that the college has effective means to identify and recruit students from those parts of the community which are under-represented in further education. For example, guidance sessions held in community centres reach members of the South Asian communities, and an advice shop in a local shopping centre attracts over 850 enquiries annually. The college works closely with schools which have students with learning difficulties, and disaffected school pupils regularly attend the college on a day-release basis. Enquiries and applications are followed up efficiently. Potential students receive a comprehensive information pack before their interview. There are clear guidelines for interviews, which can be conducted in a range of languages.

53 Induction programmes are comprehensive and inform students of their rights and responsibilities. They are reviewed regularly and adapted to meet the needs of different courses. Induction handbooks detail the support available. Group induction sessions are held throughout the year for students who enrol after the course has started; a video is available to show the range of support available and there is a useful induction pack. Students complete a checklist to confirm that they have covered all aspects of the induction programme.

54 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that it has particularly effective procedures in place to identify additional support needs, to provide students with appropriate help and to keep personal tutors informed of progress and attendance. On enrolment, all full-time and most part-time students are assessed for their competence in numeracy and literacy. Testing for dyslexia is also available. Additional learning support tutors work alongside teachers to provide extra support for students who need it, including those who wish to improve their GCE A level grades. At the time of the inspection, 70% of students who had been identified in need of additional support were receiving it. Students

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can attend open access workshops for mathematics, English and IT at the three main sites either on a 'drop-in' basis or by appointment. The well-resourced workshops also provide opportunities for students to have their key skills accredited. Students with visual and hearing impairment are well supported, and equipment such as magnifying computer screens and Braille printers is readily available.

55 As the self-assessment report recognised, tutorial support is well structured and effective. Seven out of eight tutorials observed were graded good or outstanding. A comprehensive tutors' handbook gives guidance on tutoring, and includes the key topics, such as study skills and health education, which must be included in almost all courses. However, there is little use of records of achievement, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. The progress of GCE A level students is carefully measured against predicted grades at the start of their first year of study. These grades are revised regularly in the light of individual assessments. The college has identified, and is addressing, reasons for poor retention on some of its courses. Monitoring of absence is thorough. During the inspection, however, the average attendance was lower than the national average in two curriculum areas.

56 There is a strong partnership between the careers service and the college. For example, the careers service participates in internal audits to verify the standards of careers guidance. Students applying to higher education receive extensive support, while all final-year students who are not applying to higher education are required to produce a career plan. In areas such as construction and hairdressing, former students and employers inform students of opportunities for progression. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the college provides comprehensive welfare and counselling services. These are available on all sites, are well used and highly rated by students and staff. However, not all schools make use of

advice and guidance interviews for students who are considering leaving their course early. There are good levels of practical support for students. For example, at the time of the inspection, the college was providing financial help to over 100 students to cover the costs of childcare. To ensure value for money, students are required to prove their attendance at individual lessons before the funds are allocated.

General Resources

Grade 2

57 Inspectors broadly agreed with the strengths identified in the college's self-assessment report but considered some of the weaknesses were overstated. One weakness identified by inspectors was not acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

Key strengths

- a clear strategy for rationalising and improving accommodation
- clean, well-maintained accommodation
- well-resourced libraries and learning centres
- good IT facilities and specialist equipment
- realistic planning for maintenance and replacement of equipment

Weaknesses

- poor access to some areas for students with restricted mobility
- limited sports and recreation facilities

58 The college has a clear strategy for rationalising and improving its accommodation, which is linked to its strategic plan. In its self-assessment report, it recognised the need to make more efficient use of its accommodation. One of its four main sites is planned to close in the summer of 1999. Since the merger in 1998, the college has invested heavily in its buildings

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and has improved significantly the quality of accommodation at the Hyde-Clarendon and Ashton sites. The Hyde-Clarendon site has been enhanced by the removal of temporary classrooms. Although the college has improved this site the exterior condition of the buildings is of a lower standard than other college sites.

59 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that most accommodation is of a good standard. Areas are being sensitively refurbished in order to extend the provision of learning centres. Already 15 such centres are in place together with areas devoted to the development of key skills. Accommodation is appropriately furnished and there are ample working areas provided for staff and students. Improvements have still to be made to some areas. The areas used by art and design, for example, are not adjacent to each other and further developments are planned. The college acknowledges that despite some improvements there are still areas of the college which cannot be accessed by students with restricted mobility.

60 The college's buildings offer an attractive learning environment free from graffiti and litter. Clearly-defined targets for the maintenance and cleaning of premises are achieved. Three of the cleaners are provided with two-way radios so that they can quickly move to the areas where they are required. The estates management team is effective, maintaining accommodation in a good state of repair. Environmentally friendly procedures are in place which, for example, require the use of biodegradable cleaning fluids only. The stairs at the Hyde-Clarendon site are clearly marked to enable students with visual impairment to use them safely.

61 Accommodation for sport, health and fitness is inadequate. The sports hall at Ashton is not currently in use. Equipment in the gymnasium at the Hyde-Clarendon site is old and limited in range. The dimensions of the gymnasium do not allow for students to practise trampolining or to play basketball. Storage

facilities are limited. Health and fitness rooms have been established at two sites, but the facility at the Hyde-Clarendon centre is small, has limited equipment and is at times inaccessible.

62 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that the provision of learning resources located in libraries, curriculum areas and in learning support centres is a significant strength. These have been developed as part of a strategy to implement a more flexible, student-centred approach to learning. Students have access to a wide range of up-to-date materials including books, CD-ROMs, videos, journals and an intranet. Staff are currently developing learning resources to enhance further the intranet database over the next academic year.

63 A significant strength of college provision, noted in the self-assessment report, is the excellent specialist and IT facilities. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that the maintenance and replacement of equipment are strengths. The ratio of computers to full-time students is now 1:4 and there are computers available in all staff rooms. Hardware is up to date and well supported by technicians. There is a good range of software, including an integrated system for key skills and additional learning support. Specialist equipment includes video-conferencing facilities and facilities to support students with physical difficulties, such as Braillemaster for the visually impaired and CD-ROM British Sign Language. The internet is available on approximately 60 machines across the college, but only 23 of these are accessible outside of the classroom. The college plans to upgrade hardware to extend this facility to 400 machines by the end of this academic year.

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Quality Assurance

Grade 1

64 Inspectors broadly agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report. They identified one additional weakness.

Key strengths

- well-established and comprehensive quality assurance arrangements
- clear links between quality assurance and college planning
- effective use of targets and performance indicators to monitor performance
- rigorous internal quality auditing arrangements
- good use of students' and other clients' views
- effective staff development arrangements

Weaknesses

- shortcomings in the self-assessment report

65 Inspectors agreed with the findings of the self-assessment report that quality assurance and management systems are closely integrated. There is a strong commitment to quality assurance among managers and staff. Staff at all levels in the college demonstrate a high level of awareness of the importance of quality assurance procedures and of the links between them and college planning. Outcomes from the quality reviews are incorporated into the business plans produced by curriculum and business support areas. All college policies have review dates and there is standardised documentation for key programme management activities. Senior managers are closely involved in monitoring performance through the quality review panel, and quality assurance issues are reported to the governors, academic board, senior management team and operational management team.

66 The quality assurance system is comprehensive and effective. Guidelines are detailed and clear and are reviewed with staff every year. All courses and service area teams evaluate their work annually and report formally to the quality review panel. The reports adhere to a standard format which enables senior managers to monitor the college's performance as a whole. Service areas supplement their report with a review conducted against their own standards. Internal auditing procedures are rigorous and standardised. Forty-two staff have been trained to examine systems, practices and documentation. Action for improvement is planned as an integral part of all review activities. The college can identify tangible improvements in performance. Since 1995, students' achievements have generally improved. There is evidence in individual GCE A level subjects, through modular examination results already received, that poor performance in 1998 is being addressed.

67 A range of evidence is used in reviewing performance. Course teams routinely compare their performance with national averages. Targets for students' recruitment, retention and achievements are set by teams in discussion with senior managers and reviewed quarterly. Programmes which fail to meet their targets are subject to corrective action. The quality of teaching and learning is assessed through the observation of lessons. All teachers are observed at least annually by their line managers and are given feedback on their performance and grade. Low standards in lessons are taken seriously and action is taken if lessons are judged to need improvement. The proportion of lessons graded as good or outstanding by inspectors was 75% compared with the college's profile of 85%. The proportion graded less than satisfactory by the college was 4%, comparable with that of the inspectorate.

68 The college takes seriously the views of its client groups. The charters for students, employers and the community clearly set out the college's commitments. They include

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performance targets which relate to these commitments and which are, as asserted in the self-assessment report, monitored systematically by the charter management group. All schools have a students' forum and students are surveyed three times during their time at college. The college acts upon the feedback obtained. Employers were surveyed in 1998 and issues arising from the survey were taken up through the charter management group and the governors. Employers serve on school advisory groups although some schools do not capitalise on employers' expertise as much as others. Governors revise the charter annually. The college's complaints procedure is published in charters and a quarterly analysis, discussed by the operational management team and the academic board, is reviewed by governors. The analysis is also published in the 'College News' sheet.

69 All staff are appraised annually by their line managers. Staff development is well planned and effective. There is a significant amount of training undertaken within the college which addresses the training needs identified in the strategic plan, in staff appraisal interviews and through the quality assurance and self-assessment processes. Individual staff development activities are evaluated and the overall value of the staff development undertaken is formally reviewed annually. Part-time staff are encouraged to undertake staff development, but the level of participation varies across the college. Before the merger, the two separate colleges had achieved the Investor in People award. The newly-merged college achieved the award in July 1998.

70 The self-assessment process, which has built upon existing review procedures, is comprehensive and involves all staff and governors. Each team of staff, in the school and service areas, produced its own self-assessment report. Reports were then aggregated into programme area and cross-college area reports. The final self-assessment report was considered by the college management teams and academic

board before going to the corporation for approval. There were some deficiencies in the final report. The report did not do justice to the quality of the processes which produced it. No evidence base was identified to support the weaknesses and the lists of strengths were insufficiently discriminating. Some planned actions were unspecific and vague. In one curriculum self-assessment, action plans reflected weaknesses which were not explicitly identified in the self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed largely with judgements, however, and were able to confirm all but one of the self-assessment grades.

Governance

Grade 1

71 The college is well governed. The findings of inspectors confirmed the college's own assessment of the strengths of governance.

Key strengths

- comprehensive monitoring of academic performance
- an effective recruitment, induction and training strategy
- an open style of governance
- active involvement in strategic planning
- effective financial planning and monitoring

Weaknesses

- there are no significant weaknesses

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

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73 The skills and experience of members of the board are used effectively to conduct the college's business and to strengthen its links with the local community. The corporation has recently redetermined and reduced its membership to 15 members which consist of seven independent members, one TEC member and five co-opted members. The chief executive is also a member and there is currently one vacancy. Three members had previously served on one of the governing bodies of the two constituent colleges before the merger. A search committee carefully identifies the needs of the corporation before filling vacancies. The process of recruiting new governors is carried out openly. The corporation advertises in the local and regional press and with the local chamber of commerce. Members are provided with carefully-planned induction and training programmes. New governors are given initial training and briefing packs. All members are appointed for two terms of office in order to ensure a regular turnover. Effective succession planning was identified as a strength in the college's self-assessment report and is supported by inspectors.

74 The corporation meets three times a year. It has an appropriate committee structure which enables the corporation to discharge its duties. All committees have appropriate and comprehensive terms of reference and good reporting arrangements to the corporation. Clerking arrangements are effective. The clerk receives good administrative support. Agendas and supporting papers are sent out in good time and minutes are prepared and distributed promptly. The corporation has adopted a code of conduct and ethics and formal standing orders to guide the conduct of corporation and committee meetings. It has developed a 'whistleblowing' policy, following extensive consultation. The register of interests is revised annually and completed by governors, and more recently by managers who have significant financial responsibility. Governors are clear

about their responsibilities and differentiate them from management and operational issues, a strength identified in the self-assessment report. In accepting conditions for corporation membership, members undertake to endeavour to attend all meetings. The average level of attendance for the last five meetings, however, is only 72%. Reasons are sought for absences and there has been an improvement in the last two meetings. The corporation conducts its business openly. Minutes of corporation meetings are available in the college libraries at each site. The college recently held its first public annual general meeting which was well attended by corporation members and was chaired by the president of the college's student union. There are few opportunities through formal links for governors and staff of the college to meet. The college has made progress to address the weakness identified in the self-assessment report that heads of school needed a more formal link with the board.

75 Members of the corporation have been active in steering the college through a successful merger. A particular strength noted in the self-assessment report is the corporation's close involvement and monitoring of strategic planning. Members, together with college senior managers, hold a conference to set the strategic direction of the college. They debate, establish and prioritise strategic objectives which are then further developed by the college managers before governors give formal approval. To monitor the college's performance against its targets, members receive comprehensive reports which cover both financial and non-financial matters. Monthly financial reports are clear and concise, with an accompanying commentary.

76 Reports on other aspects of the college's performance are equally detailed. For example, reports on student retention and achievement rates are compared with both sector averages and the performance of students in the region. Presentations to the corporation and its

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committees are made regularly by college managers and cover initiatives by both the college and outside agencies. The planning cycle ensures that governors receive regular reports on the review of key policies such as equal opportunities. The corporation has decided not to use formal performance indicators in their own self-assessment. They review their performance by completing an annual questionnaire on specific aspects of their role. The search and audit committees consider the responses which are then translated into proposals for action.

Management

Grade 1

77 Inspectors and auditors agreed with the judgements in the college's self-assessment report. Action to remedy the weakness identified when the self-assessment report was compiled was clearly evident.

Key strengths

- strong and effective leadership
- open channels of communication
- good financial management
- involvement of staff in strategic and operational planning
- rigorous monitoring and review of college performance
- an exemplary management information system
- productive links with the local community
- active promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities

Weaknesses

- there are no significant weaknesses

78 The college is very well managed. The senior management team provides strong leadership and is perceived by staff as open, supportive and responsive. A policy of delegating authority and responsibility to managers to perform their roles effectively is matched by a clearly-understood framework of accountability. Communications are effective; staff are well informed about college-wide issues. For example, a fortnightly 'College News' includes minutes of meetings of the operational management team. The chief executive attends meetings of schools and service area teams twice each year to share information with staff and to hear firsthand their views and concerns. Outcomes from these meetings, and proposed solutions to problems, are circulated to all staff. Inspectors found widespread support for the college's values, aims and objectives, as stated in the self-assessment report.

79 Inspectors agreed with the college's assessment that governors, senior managers and staff are fully involved in strategic and business planning processes. To inform their planning, managers are provided with appropriate data from market research and are fully briefed on national and local developments. Managers work closely with their teams and the college's strategic development manager to formulate business plans which are relevant to the needs of the local community and industry. These plans are incorporated into the annual strategic plan. A particular strength noted in the self-assessment report is the system of quarterly reviews led by the chief executive and other members of the senior management team, the purpose of which is to enable the college to monitor progress and to measure success against the business and action plans for individual schools and service areas. The focus is on results rather than processes. Managers find the process of review rigorous and challenging but also rewarding. After each set of reviews, a summary of outcomes with supporting data is published in 'College News'.

Cross-college Provision

80 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good, a strength recognised in the self-assessment report. The college is financially sound and has large reserves. It has achieved an operating surplus in the last two years and similar surpluses are expected over the period of the current three-year financial forecast. The college has an appropriately qualified and experienced finance team and there are clearly-defined financial objectives. The comprehensive financial regulations were recently updated. Budget holders receive timely monthly reports on actual and committed expenditure. Detailed management accounts, with an appropriate commentary, are prepared monthly for review by the finance and policy committee and the senior management team. Financial returns are submitted to the FEFC in accordance with specified deadlines.

81 As the self-assessment identified, the college has developed a robust management information system which is networked throughout the college. All staff have on-line access to essential information about individuals and cohorts of students. This includes data relating to enrolments, retention, achievement and attendance. Staff understand that only data held on central databases are valid. They have been trained to use the on-line system. With few exceptions, inspectors found that data were accurate. A particular strength noted in the self-assessment report is the capability of the management information system to produce timely, analytical reports to inform decision-making and target-setting. Some software to create these reports has been written by college staff.

82 Responsiveness to the needs of the local community is a high priority for the college. The richness and variety of partnerships between the college, a wide range of public and private employers, and statutory and voluntary agencies were strengths identified in the self-

assessment report. For example, as part of the New Deal initiative, the college has already provided training in a range of vocational areas for about 90 trainees. At the request of employers, the college also provides training in the work place for about 30 companies. In line with the action plan to address weaknesses identified in the self-assessment process, the college is developing a central database of its links with employers.

83 A strategic aim of the college is to ensure equality of opportunity. Schools and service areas develop action plans focused specifically on achieving this aim. These plans are collated annually into a college-wide plan which is monitored by the equal opportunities management group. The group, chaired by the chief executive, includes representation from each school and meets six times a year. It is advised by an equal opportunities advisory group which includes representatives from the Equal Opportunities Commission and Tameside Racial Equality Council. In response to the findings of the Stephen Lawrence enquiry and the Macpherson report, the college has commissioned training for staff and students to enable them to develop greater confidence in addressing discrimination. The effective management of equal opportunities was a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report.

Conclusions

84 The self-assessment report produced by the college provided a useful basis for planning the inspection. The report built upon the outcomes of the college's well-established quality assurance processes. The evidence to support the strengths claimed in the report was comprehensive and detailed. Weaknesses and action plans were less clearly presented. Most of the findings of the inspection team were in line with those of the college. Inspectors agreed with all of the seven curriculum grades and all

Cross-college Provision

but one of the cross-college grades, where inspectors raised the grade awarded by the college.

85 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 (April 1999)

Age	%
Under 16	4
16-18 years	22
19-24 years	14
25+ years	60
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (April 1999)

Level of study	%
Foundation	30
Intermediate	35
Advanced	23
Higher education	4
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	8
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (April 1999)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	399	1,073	13
Construction	130	286	4
Engineering	267	1,059	11
Business	650	1,261	16
Hotel and catering	244	465	6
Health and community care	546	859	12
Art and design	362	374	6
Humanities	461	1,832	19
Basic education	76	1,486	13
Total	3,135	8,695	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 16% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (April 1999)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	162	49	2	213
Supporting direct learning contact	70	5	0	75
Other support	104	3	3	110
Total	336	57	5	398

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996*	1997*	1998
Income	£15,811,000	£15,872,000	£15,349,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£19.37	£17.76	£17.66
Payroll as a proportion of income	74%	70%	65%
Achievement of funding target	109%	120%	103%
Diversity of income	20%	20%	20%
Operating surplus	-£109,000	£57,000	£702,000

Sources: Income – college (1996, 1997 and 1998)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), Funding Allocations 1997-98 (1998)

Payroll – college (1996, 1997 and 1998)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1996-97 (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Diversity of income – college (1996, 1997 and 1998)

Operating surplus – college (1996, 1997 and 1998)

*combined data for colleges which merged

Note: operating deficit in 1996 relates to former Hyde-Clarendon College

Students' achievements data for Tameside College of Technology

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Expected completions	491	1,180	1,140	1,484	1,780	2,095
	Retention (%)	77	88	83	85	82	85
	Achievement (%)	39	51	60	48	63	75
2	Expected completions	832	1,338	1,231	1,893	2,107	2,762
	Retention (%)	74	77	81	87	81	86
	Achievement (%)	47	55	64	47	69	78
3	Expected completions	588	557	493	1,551	1,539	1,359
	Retention (%)	84	82	78	88	85	83
	Achievement (%)	50	63	75	52	56	81
4 or 5	Expected completions	0	0	0	704	648	467
	Retention (%)	0	0	0	89	89	89
	Achievement (%)	0	0	0	36	50	71
Short courses	Expected completions	151	442	939	313	244	183
	Retention (%)	82	93	94	89	88	88
	Achievement (%)	60	54	74	36	50	77
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	644	550	526	772	889	717
	Retention (%)	69	86	87	87	89	81
	Achievement (%)	42	46	73	37	72	74

Source: ISR

College Statistics

Students' achievements data for Hyde-Clarendon College

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
1	Expected completions	216	656	273	787	855	567
	Retention (%)	88	75	72	73	78	66
	Achievement (%)	42	48	60	75	86	83
2	Expected completions	405	371	269	1,011	1,077	331
	Retention (%)	81	66	68	83	79	84
	Achievement (%)	83	70	84	68	80	75
3	Expected completions	764	500	1,060	46	79	52
	Retention (%)	84	63	64	63	53	62
	Achievement (%)	75	79	77	60	62	76
4 or 5	Expected completions	0	0	0	39	22	0
	Retention (%)	0	0	0	100	51	0
	Achievement (%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Short courses	Expected completions	429	439	358	1,690	2,830	1,268
	Retention (%)	95	95	84	88	93	80
	Achievement (%)	67	93	62	76	92	76
Unknown/ unclassified	Expected completions	17	348	139	30	77	45
	Retention (%)	100	45	84	77	36	62
	Achievement (%)	94	89	83	100	81	89

Source: ISR

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