

Tamworth and Lichfield College

**REPORT FROM
THE INSPECTORATE
1998-99**

**THE
FURTHER
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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.

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100
Website <http://www.fefc.ac.uk>*

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Grade Descriptors

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

Audit conclusions are expressed as good, adequate or weak.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision and curriculum areas, for colleges inspected during 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

Tamworth and Lichfield College

West Midlands Region

Inspected March 1999

Tamworth and Lichfield College was formed in 1996 from the merger of Tamworth College and Lichfield College. All staff were involved with the college's self-assessment process. Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report but considered that it did not include all significant weaknesses and strengths. Statistical data on students' achievements were accurate. Nevertheless, in several parts of the self-assessment report, the college paid insufficient attention to students' achievements. Findings from the college's programme of lesson observations were not used. Inspectors agreed with the grades awarded by the college except in one curriculum area and one cross-college area.

Since the last inspection, the college has extended its range of courses and student numbers have increased. The college has strong and beneficial relationships with its partner schools and works closely with the LEA, Staffordshire University and the local TEC. The college offers courses in nine of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Five areas were inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. Several curriculum areas offer courses with

various patterns of student attendance at levels up to and including higher education. Most of the teaching is good, but in some lessons teachers failed to take account of students' individual learning needs. Students' achievements are generally good but retention is low in several subject areas. Governors are involved in improving the quality of the college's performance and have productive links with curriculum and cross-college areas. College management is open and effective and communications are good. Financial management is strong. Staff are well deployed. Management information systems have improved significantly since the last inspection. The college charter is clear and accessible. Some accommodation is of a high standard. There is effective recruitment, good careers guidance, and helpful support for students with personal problems. The college should address: low levels of retention; ineffective course reviews; inadequate analysis of students' achievements; low take-up of learning support and counselling; the evaluation of staff development; the monitoring of strategic and operational objectives; weaknesses in the management of student services; and the inadequate range of standards set for college services.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Cross-college provision	Grade
Computing and information technology	2	Support for students	2
Business studies, business administration and management	2	General resources	2
Hospitality and catering and leisure and tourism	2	Quality assurance	3
Health and childcare	2	Governance	2
Art and design	3	Management	2

The College and its Mission

1 The merger of Tamworth College and Lichfield College in April 1996 established a new college which is now the main provider of vocational courses in the areas served by Tamworth Borough and Lichfield District Councils. Tamworth remains the largest of the two main campuses, while the Swan hotel and conference centre and Staffordshire University Lichfield Centre have been added to the Lichfield campus. About 30 other venues, mainly secondary and primary schools, are used to deliver courses in the community.

2 The historical town of Tamworth has quadrupled its population to 80,000 over the last 30 years. It had above average levels of unemployment until the extension of the M42, and the resulting economic growth brought the figure down to below the average for the county. Lichfield is prosperous and has a high proportion of professional and managerial occupations. The neighbouring and similarly sized town of Burntwood is a former mining area with regional development status. The college is collaborating with a local school in the town to make provision for 700 adults.

3 The college is below the median size for the sector but has achieved substantial growth since incorporation. There are five other, larger colleges within reasonable travelling distance and 11 high schools, all with sixth forms, within the council areas of Tamworth and Lichfield. Figures provided by the college indicate that 10,713 students were enrolled in July 1998 of whom 1,304 were full time. Students over the age of 19 make up 84% of all students and 40% of full-time students. The college employs 289 full-time equivalent staff, of whom 165 are teachers.

4 The college has attracted funding in addition to its Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) income through successful European bids, contracts with local education authorities (LEAs) and the Staffordshire Training

and Enterprise Council (TEC), and a wide range of full-cost work for employers. Approximately 11% of the college's work is delivered through outward collaborative provision. The college offers courses in nine of the 10 programme areas funded by the FEFC. The highest numbers of enrolments are in humanities, science including computing, and business. The amount of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and adult basic education has increased substantially in recent years. The college is a partner with other colleges in inclusive learning initiatives and in a pilot project to widen participation. The establishment of strategic partnerships has been a key feature of the college's development. There are effective working relationships with the LEA and local schools. All the local high schools, plus three from outside the county, are partners with the college in the Tamworth Opportunities Post-16 Consortium, which has been influential in improving post-16 participation rates in the area. There are strong links with special schools. The college provides courses in three prisons, runs adult education courses and is a major provider of TEC-funded courses at trainee and modern apprentice level. The college has a close working relationship with Staffordshire University that has resulted in joint ownership of the newly-opened Staffordshire University Lichfield Centre. This development is creating opportunities for students to progress from further to higher education through self-directed study supported by an information technology (IT) link between the two main college sites and the university.

5 The college's mission is to: 'enable members of the community to fulfil their potential through high-quality education and training'. The key objectives are to:

- strengthen employer links
- continue a policy of greater efficiency
- develop strategies to improve quality, raise standards and set targets

Context

- develop strategic partnerships with quantifiable benefits
- develop a strong, clear strategy on information learning technology.

The Inspection

6 The college was inspected during the week beginning 15 March 1999. A sample of collaborative provision was inspected in the previous week. The inspection team had previously evaluated the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other directorates of the FEFC. Inspectors used data on students' achievements drawn from the college's individualised student record (ISR) returns to the FEFC for 1996 and 1997. The college submitted its own data on students' achievements for 1998, which were

checked by inspectors against primary sources such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The inspection was carried out by 11 inspectors and an auditor working for a total of 44 days. Inspectors observed 64 lessons and examined students' work and a wide range of documentary evidence. They held meetings with governors, managers, college staff and students. Staff from the local TEC were also consulted about their links with the college.

7 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, 67% were rated good or outstanding. This is slightly above the average for all colleges inspected in 1997-98. There was only one lesson rated less than satisfactory which is better than the national average.

Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GNVQ	0	7	9	1	0	17
NVQ	4	3	4	0	0	11
Other vocational	10	17	5	0	0	32
Other	0	2	2	0	0	4
Total (No.)	14	29	20	1	0	64
Total (%)	22	45	31	2	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*

Context

8 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 (%)
Tamworth and Lichfield College	10.0	75
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

Computing and Information Technology

Grade 2

9 Inspectors observed 15 lessons in computing and IT. They broadly agreed with the college's assessment of the work in this area. However, they found several additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good teaching
- appropriate range of effective learning activities
- high achievement rates on some courses
- good access to appropriate computer resources

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on some courses
- students' lack of punctuality
- lack of full-time foundation level courses

10 As indicated in the self-assessment report, there is a good range of part-time IT courses at levels 1 and 2 designed specifically for adults. These are well attended. Full-time programmes at intermediate and advanced levels recruit well, but there is no full-time provision at foundation level. The proportion of women on the full-time courses is low but the college has done nothing to attempt to redress the balance. The outward collaborative provision at levels 1 and 2 for students living in Derby allows enrolment at different times through the year. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and communications are good. While courses are effectively managed, procedures for quality assurance are inadequate.

11 Most lessons are well planned. Lesson plans and schemes of work are produced, but the schemes of work frequently contain

insufficient detail. Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. A lesson on logic gates for BTEC national diploma students was particularly effective. It included whole-group work and individual work on problem-solving. The teacher gave clear explanations and provided a detailed, high-quality handout. The lesson was well attended and the students made useful contributions. They were highly motivated, assisted each other when appropriate, and made good progress in solving the problems.

12 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that most lessons include an appropriate range of effective learning activities. Appropriate assignments are set regularly, marked accurately and returned promptly to the students. Courses contain an appropriate balance of theoretical and practical work. However, many students arrive late for lessons and this disrupts both the teaching and the learning.

13 Most students produce good and well-presented assignments. Some gave clear presentations to the rest of the group about their research findings. Most courses have good retention and achievement rates. Pass rates on the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) intermediate IT course have been significantly above the national average for further education colleges for a number of years. Pass rates for level 1 part-time courses have also been above the national averages. These strengths were not mentioned in the self-assessment report. Some students on the certificate in IT course failed to satisfy all the assessment requirements and this led to low achievement levels for this course in 1998. In two of the last three years, the retention rate for the BTEC national diploma computer studies course has been below the national average. The current retention rate of 46% for outward collaborative provision is low.

14 Students have good access to appropriate computer and IT resources. However, the latest versions of the software are not always readily

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available. Classrooms containing computers are frequently used for the teaching of theory, which reduces the availability of the equipment. Teachers are appropriately qualified and most have relevant assessor and internal verifier awards. Classrooms are well decorated and furnished but some have poor ventilation.

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Introduction to computing, computer literacy and information technology C&G 7261	1	Expected completions	599	1,175	1,510
		Retention (%)	79	85	87
		Achievement (%)	76	81	79
Certificate and diploma in IT C&G 7261	2	Expected completions	116	145	322
		Retention (%)	77	81	86
		Achievement (%)	81	87	43
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	Expected completions	*	28	44
		Retention (%)	*	79	80
		Achievement (%)	*	82	69
BTEC national diploma in computer studies	3	Expected completions	28	29	40
		Retention (%)	68	90	70
		Achievement (%)	50	73	75

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Business Studies, Business Administration and Management

Grade 2

15 Inspectors observed 12 lessons. They agreed with some of the judgements made in the self-assessment report, but considered that insufficient prominence had been given to the evaluation of teaching and learning and to students' achievements.

Key strengths

- high pass rates on levels 1 and 2 business administration courses and supervisory management courses
- good retention rates on most courses
- valuable enrichment programmes
- broad range of courses
- flexible and accessible courses in business administration

Weaknesses

- failure to take account of individual students' needs in some lessons
- lack of work experience for full-time business and accounting students
- poor pass rates on general education business courses

16 Inspectors agreed with the statement in the self-assessment report that the range of courses at all levels in business, business administration, accounting and management is broad. Most courses are available on either a part-time or full-time basis. Many courses in business administration recruit students at various times throughout the year, using a modular curriculum framework. This has led to an increase in student numbers.

17 As the self-assessment report indicated, students are clear about the aims and objectives of individual lessons and overall learning

programmes. The best lessons are well planned, and effectively supported by relevant learning materials. In these lessons, students work purposefully at their own level and pace. In weaker lessons, the teaching does not take account of individual learning needs. Some activities are conducted at such a slow pace that students have difficulty in maintaining concentration. Teachers do not regularly reinforce individual students' learning or adapt the lesson plan when students have difficulty in understanding the work. There are few opportunities for students to undertake group work or to draw on the experiences of other students.

18 Good-quality course handbooks for full-time business courses enable students to plan effectively for assessment. Assessment schedules and activities are made clear to students at the start of their courses. Their work is well organised and appropriate for the level of the qualification being studied. They have a range of opportunities to enhance their primary qualifications through enrichment programmes that include career planning, modern languages and additional vocational and key skills units. During subject-based tutorials, students are helped to review their progress and set clear plans of action. The use of individual progress records on some courses ensures that students working towards multiple qualifications are clear about their progress towards each qualification.

19 Students on business administration courses undertake well-organised work placements or experience realistic working environments. Business administration teachers have strong and effective links with a range of employers. Local recruitment agencies send representatives to speak to students about local employment opportunities and skills needs. However, as the self-assessment recognised, the curriculum area as a whole has insufficient links with local employers. Work experience is not always available for full-time students of

Curriculum Areas

business studies or accounting. Students on national vocational qualification (NVQ) accounting courses do not have access to relevant occupational practice. While many full-time business students hold part-time jobs, assignments do not encourage them to relate their coursework to their experience in the workplace.

20 There are consistently high pass rates on business administration courses. Pass rates for NVQ level 2 business administration courses are well above the national average for further education colleges. There have been high retention and achievement rates on level 2 integrated business technology courses for the past three years. Retention rates are good on most courses. For example, retention for NVQ accounting levels 2 and 3 was 81% and 86%, respectively, and retention rates for GNVQ intermediate business consistently exceed the national averages. The National Examining Board for Supervision and Management certificate courses had retention rates of 91% and 88% in 1997 and 1998. Poor pass rates on general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) accounting and general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) business studies, identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report, have led to some courses being withdrawn. However, the self-assessment report did not identify the decline in achievement for GNVQ courses in 1998, and a retention rate for GNVQ advanced business that was well below the national average.

21 Members of course teams have clearly-defined roles and meet regularly to plan and review their programmes. There are 'quality files' for all courses but course teams do not evaluate teaching and learning and students' achievements effectively, and do not hold consistent information on students' destinations.

22 The accommodation for business and business administration is good. Students have good access to IT in most specialist rooms and open access areas but the IT equipment in some

other classrooms is poor. There is a good supply of relevant text books. NVQ administration students are provided with appropriate reading lists. Business students have access to few specialist CD-ROMs and are not made aware of the learning resources now available through the internet for business and management courses. There is no access to the internet in the specialist business rooms.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
RSA book-keeping and wordprocessing	1	Expected completions	198	135	259
		Retention (%)	70	82	83
		Achievement (%)	73	81	67
RSA NVQ business administration, integrated business technology and wordprocessing	2	Expected completions	143	390	701
		Retention (%)	81	77	86
		Achievement (%)	62	87	70
GCSE accounting	2	Expected completions	25	30	15
		Retention (%)	88	40	60
		Achievement (%)	55	25	33
GNVQ intermediate business	2	Expected completions	26	24	23
		Retention (%)	88	71	74
		Achievement (%)	78	94	65
National Examining Board for Supervision and Management introductory certificate	2	Expected completions	46	34	57
		Retention (%)	93	79	79
		Achievement (%)	72	89	93
GCE A level business studies	3	Expected completions	52	18	37
		Retention (%)	75	89	70
		Achievement (%)	44	38	31
GNVQ advanced business	3	Expected completions	27	26	36
		Retention (%)	78	83	69
		Achievement (%)	76	91	52
National Examining Board for Supervision and Management certificate	3	Expected completions	21	23	25
		Retention (%)	67	91	88
		Achievement (%)	86	90	64

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Hospitality and Catering and Leisure and Tourism

Grade 2

23 Inspectors observed 12 lessons covering NVQ and GNVQ provision. They agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report and identified some additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- carefully-planned lessons
- effective teaching methods
- good pass rate for GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism in 1998
- good pass and retention rates for pastry and cake decoration courses
- effective development of students' technical and social skills

Weaknesses

- poor pass and retention rates for NVQ catering and hospitality in 1998
- poor pass rate for Association of British Travel Agents primary level certificate in 1997
- poor accommodation in some specialist areas

24 The school of customer service is responsible for the management and delivery of hospitality and catering, and leisure and tourism provision. The range of courses offered is appropriate. It includes GNVQ intermediate and advanced level courses in leisure and tourism, a higher national diploma in travel and tourism in collaboration with Staffordshire University, and NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in catering and hospitality. Under a partnership arrangement, the college provides tuition in GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism for pupils at a local school. Additional qualifications, such as food hygiene and cake decoration certificates, are also

offered. As the self-assessment report noted, the hospitality and catering, and leisure and tourism provision is well organised. There are regular, minuted meetings and staff are aware of their responsibilities. The school's operating plan has clear references to the strategic plan and contains an evaluation of the previous operating statement. However, it does not show who is responsible for achieving objectives and monitoring progress, or give target dates for completing actions.

25 Most of the teaching of leisure and tourism, and hospitality and catering is good or outstanding. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment that teachers use appropriate teaching methods, including individual support and guidance, small group work and role-play. In a lesson on travel services, an effective exercise to cost holidays made students familiar with travel brochures and improved their numeracy skills. Teachers produce good-quality schemes of work and thorough lesson plans. They regularly question students to check understanding but sometimes fail to summarise the key points of lessons. In some lessons, teachers make good use of their own experience to provide industrial relevance. Leisure and tourism students benefit from a well-developed programme of industrial visits and work experience, but hospitality and catering students have few such opportunities.

26 Inspectors agreed with the comment in the self-assessment report that pass rates for GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism in 1998 and for GNVQ intermediate in 1996 and 1997 were outstanding. Most other retention and pass rates for GNVQ leisure and tourism programmes were similar to the national average for further education colleges. GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism pass and retention rates declined between 1997 and 1998. Pass and retention rates for pastry and cake decoration programmes were very good. Results for part-time provision for food hygiene were also good. The NVQ catering and hospitality retention and

Curriculum Areas

pass rates in 1998 and Association of British Travel Agents certificate of competence pass rates in 1997 were unsatisfactory, weaknesses the self-assessment report did not identify. Most of those students whose destinations are known progress to other courses in further and higher education or to employment. Most students have good technical and social skills. They work well in teams in the college restaurant and its kitchen. The politeness of students serving in the college restaurant was particularly appreciated by customers. In 1998, a college student won a highly commended certificate in the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) awards for excellence in catering and hospitality.

27 Teachers have appropriate qualifications and relevant experience. Most hold vocational assessor qualifications, although some leisure and tourism teachers have been slow to achieve them, a weakness the self-assessment report recognised. Staff have undertaken little industrial updating. Parts of the specialist accommodation for hospitality and catering, and leisure and tourism are poor. One kitchen has inappropriate domestic stoves. There are no travel agency facilities. The range of periodicals available in the library for leisure and tourism is good. The college has an adequate range of hospitality and catering, and leisure and tourism books but a number of those for hospitality and catering are dated. A small range of videos is available for use by students. The library does not provide a press cuttings service of leisure and tourism, and hospitality and catering articles.

Curriculum Areas

A summary of achievement and retention rates in hospitality and catering and leisure and tourism, 1996 to 1998

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
Royal Society of Health certificate in essential food hygiene	1	Expected completions	96	169	174
		Retention (%)	100	94	100
		Achievement (%)	91	96	94
Pastry and cake decorating	1	Expected completions	22	7	54
		Retention (%)	95	100	93
		Achievement (%)	71	100	96
NVQ catering and hospitality	1	Expected completions	45	27	*
		Retention (%)	56	81	*
		Achievement (%)	47	86	*
NVQ hospitality and catering (general) two-year programmes	2	Expected completions	*	*	31
		Retention (%)	*	*	55
		Achievement (%)	*	*	47
Association of British Travel Agents certificate of competence primary level certificate	2	Expected completions	*	26	30
		Retention (%)	*	100	83
		Achievement (%)	*	46	72
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	Expected completions	38	28	39
		Retention (%)	66	75	59
		Achievement (%)	88	90	70
GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism	3	Expected completions	43	38	30
		Retention (%)	37	66	70
		Achievement (%)	75	76	90

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

*course not running

Curriculum Areas

Health and Childcare

Grade 2

28 The inspection covered health and social care and childhood education. Twelve lessons were observed. Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the college's self-assessment report but identified additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- effective teaching
- well-organised work placements
- high pass rates on some courses
- a broad range of programmes with good progression
- an enriched curriculum which extends students' learning
- good accommodation

Weaknesses

- some low retention rates
- unsatisfactory design of some courses
- ineffective quality assurance arrangements
- inadequate library practice and resources

29 A wide range of child, health and social care courses, both full time and part time, provides suitable progression routes. There is an acknowledged need for further courses at level 1 in childcare. Students have the opportunity to acquire additional qualifications, such as health and safety certificates. They take part in educational visits that include exhibitions and overseas trips. In creative studies, they are encouraged to develop their artistic skills. All programmes include a work placement experience which is well organised and integrated with theory sessions. Strong links exist with employers, local higher education institutions and schools. A GNVQ intermediate

health and social care course is run jointly with local high schools. It includes work experience which has successfully led to employment.

30 A system of individual tutorials is in place. Through these, the school hopes to improve the poor retention which was acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The school is well organised; staff work well together and have a clear understanding of their roles. There are weaknesses in the structure of some programmes. For example, IT is not included in all courses. The school's quality assurance procedures do not place enough emphasis on analysing results and taking action in response to weaknesses.

31 Schemes of work and lesson plans are well structured and students' work is carefully planned. Most teaching is good and there were a few examples of outstanding lessons. As noted in the self-assessment report, appropriate learning activities are organised, including role-play, small and whole-group work, revision tests and the use of handouts. Teachers are skilful at integrating students' experiences and placement practices with other aspects of their learning. Most teachers frequently reinforce and summarise important points. Students participate well in classroom activities. In one lesson, students experienced emotional and social exclusion through role-play. Following discussion, the exercise was used to illustrate the understanding required when children experience exclusion. In a minority of lessons, opportunities were lost to stretch the more able students and to engage all students in question-and-answer sessions. This weakness was not identified in the self-assessment report. Student assessments are well planned and appropriate and assignments are clearly specified. Coursework is conscientiously and accurately assessed. Teachers give clear and detailed feedback on how students can improve their performance.

32 Teachers are well qualified and have relevant vocational experience. Two teachers

Curriculum Areas

recently worked in industry, updating their professional skills. Most accommodation is good. The college nursery and crèche has 73 full-time places. It provides good-quality work experience.

33 Students' work is extensively displayed. The school has its own learning centre where courses and 'drop-in' facilities are available in IT. Recently-purchased textbooks are also available in the centre. This contrasts with the library where the bookstock is dated and there are few journals or childcare text books. Students do not receive enough encouragement to develop the library skills necessary for higher education and lifelong learning. The bibliographies in many student assignments are poor.

34 There are high pass rates on some courses. For example, the pass rate on the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education course has improved from 60% in 1996 to 85% in 1998. The pass rate on the part-time diploma in post-qualifying studies in 1997 was 100% compared with the national average of 43%. At 80%, the pass rate on the GNVQ advanced health and social care course was well above the national average.

35 Retention rates vary, as the self-assessment report acknowledged. There are low retention rates on some full-time courses. For example, retention rates on the childcare and education course over the last three years have been below the national average and those on the diploma course have fallen. On the other hand, retention on the GNVQ intermediate health and social care course improved in 1998. Students' progression to employment in nursery nursing and residential care is good. In 1998, 63% of GNVQ advanced health and social care students were successful in obtaining places in higher education.

Curriculum Areas

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

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1996	1997	1998
GNVQ intermediate health and social care (full time)	2	Expected completions	60	59	33
		Retention (%)	67	59	76
		Achievement (%)	90	63	60
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education childcare and education (full time)	2	Expected completions	20	31	36
		Retention (%)	75	68	72
		Achievement (%)	60	71	85
Pre-school learning alliance learning through play (part time)	2	Expected completions	20	36	48
		Retention (%)	100	100	94
		Achievement (%)	95	100	96
GNVQ advanced health and social care (full time)	3	Expected completions	57	38	41
		Retention (%)	46	76	49
		Achievement (%)	72	62	80
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in nursery nursing (full time)	3	Expected completions	41	39	31
		Retention (%)	95	85	74
		Achievement (%)	85	90	70
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education diploma in post-qualifying studies (part time)	4	Expected completions	12	33	29
		Retention (%)	92	100	100
		Achievement (%)	100	100	97

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

Curriculum Areas

Art and Design

Grade 3

36 Inspectors observed 13 lessons. They largely agreed with the college's overall assessment of the provision in art and design. However, some weaknesses were understated and inspectors identified additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- good, well-organised teaching
- outstanding craft work at Lichfield
- good achievement and retention rates on the art and design access course
- wide range of courses and progression opportunities for part-time students at Lichfield
- detailed assessment of students' work and feedback from teachers

Weaknesses

- poor basic drawing and presentation by vocational art and design students
- low retention rates on full-time vocational courses
- failure to make students at Lichfield aware of student support services
- inadequate specialist equipment
- poor accommodation, especially at Lichfield

37 The school of art was formed following the merger of Tamworth and Lichfield colleges. This brought together Tamworth's GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses in art and design and national diplomas in media and performing arts with Lichfield's pre-degree art and design foundation course, access course and part-time Open College Network and C&G art and craft courses. There is a vocational focus to work at Tamworth while at Lichfield the tradition is of fine art and crafts. The school

has yet to exploit the combined strengths of these two traditions to their mutual benefit. The part-time courses at Lichfield are organised in a way that allows students to work alongside others at different levels of attainment. This practice encourages student interaction and progression from leisure studies, funded through the LEA, to more advanced courses. There are weaknesses that were not recognised in the self-assessment report. For example, students at Lichfield are not made aware of the full range of college services and personal support available to them. The full-time courses at Tamworth do not encourage collaboration between students on different courses. For example, the public performances staged by performing arts students could provide opportunities for media and art and design students to develop their skills in a live setting.

38 The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned, benefiting from the detailed schemes of work. The work on full-time GNVQ and national diploma courses is vocationally relevant and carefully sequenced to allow students to develop their skills. Performing arts students confidently demonstrate their skills in performance and characterisation. Much of the craft work, particularly in lace making, is outstanding. Good standards are achieved in media production work. Access students produce work of a high standard. The GNVQ art and design students at Tamworth lack basic drawing, presentation, and research skills. This makes it difficult for them to succeed in the design tasks they are given. These basic skills are strong at Lichfield on the access and pre-degree foundation courses. Teachers regularly assess work and the quality and clarity of oral and written feedback ensures that students are well informed about their progress.

39 There have been low numbers on courses and retention rates of 50% and below in GNVQ advanced art and design and national diplomas in media and performing arts. Retention and pass rates of 100% were achieved on the access

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course at Lichfield in 1997-98 and students have been successful in obtaining places on degree courses.

40 The quality of the accommodation and the range of specialist facilities on both sites is poor. At Tamworth the school rents space for performing arts and media at local art centres, which allows students to benefit from professional facilities. Sound and video facilities for media students are inadequate and performing arts students lack rehearsal space. Rooms at Lichfield are cramped and students work in small cluttered spaces. The photography facilities at Lichfield are inadequate; there is no lighting studio on either campus and the darkrooms are too small.

There is no sculpture and construction studio at Lichfield, so that sculpture students have to work in the pottery. Printmaking facilities are poor. At Tamworth there are only three computers with graphics software. At the time of inspection there was no scanner or printer available. Design students make insufficient use of computer graphics. Most of these weaknesses were not identified in the self-assessment report. The library at Tamworth has few contemporary reference books for art and design and photography. The bookstock at Lichfield is not catalogued and access to the books is restricted. Students make little use of the adjacent public library.

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
Open College Network arts and crafts	1	Expected completions	159	302	365
		Retention (%)	83	80	82
		Achievement (%)	80	60	61
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	Expected completions	5	28	17
		Retention (%)	80	64	65
		Achievement (%)	50	83	91
C&G photography	2	Expected completions	54	33	58
		Retention (%)	81	73	69
		Achievement (%)	64	75	35
GNVQ advanced art and design and precursors	3	Expected completions	11	31	35
		Retention (%)	100	87	60
		Achievement (%)	73	100	100

Source: ISR (1996 and 1997), college (1998)

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Support for Students

Grade 2

41 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements in the self-assessment report and found a few additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- effective arrangements for recruitment
- impartial guidance about courses
- good careers guidance
- appropriate help for students with personal or learning problems

Weaknesses

- inadequate records of meetings with individual students
- low use of support services by students in some curriculum areas

42 There are clear arrangements and procedures covering all aspects of support for students. These are well documented in a useful tutors' manual. Some of the forms used for recording meetings with individual students are poorly designed and some of the records of such meetings are insufficiently detailed. These weaknesses were not acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Monitoring of records of meetings is at an early stage of development and there is wide variation in practice across the college. This is the first year that full-time students have been based on the Lichfield campus and much of the support for students has only recently been established. Although the procedures are common to both sites, many aspects are not yet fully effective or co-ordinated.

43 The college has a variety of effective methods to inform prospective students about its courses. The prospectus is informative and clearly presented. The self-assessment report noted the good links with schools, the careers

service and other groups. Recruitment activities are recorded on an annual plan and effectively co-ordinated by a marketing group. Pre-entry interviews and enrolment procedures are well organised and students receive impartial advice. The central admissions system is effective, as noted in the self-assessment report. The admissions team reviews all application forms and, where necessary, offers prospective students a general guidance interview before they are directed to a specialist curriculum area. After the interviews, the admission team reviews interviewers' comments, records students' learning support needs and checks entry requirements. The comments from interviewers are often insufficiently detailed to inform the next stages of the process.

44 Full-time students receive an effective induction to the college. The self-assessment report recognised that this is not always the case for part-time students. Diagnostic assessment is used to identify the learning needs of all full-time students but the take-up of learning support by students identified as requiring it is low in some curriculum areas. Few students are referred for learning support once they have started their course. Part-time students are only assessed if referred by their tutor, and few take the assessment. Tamworth students receive individual help in the learning support centre and in the classroom. Comprehensive files of students' work are maintained and there are regular reviews of progress. The student's personal tutor receives copies of the resultant reports. These reports are not always sufficiently detailed to provide an effective learning plan for the student. Support for students with specific learning difficulties, including hearing and visual impairment and dyslexia, is good, as recorded in the self-assessment report. The college has good links with local specialist groups that provide support.

45 There are opportunities for full-time students to meet their tutor, both in a group and individually. In most areas there are sufficient group tutorials to meet general and specialist

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needs. This work is generally well planned and delivered. Students have individual, formal interviews with their tutor, but the frequency varies and in a few cases they are too infrequent. The quality of the records of these interviews varies. Some provide a detailed review of progress and a clear identification of needs and targets; others are superficial. This variation in quality was not noted in the self-assessment. Tutors provide considerable help and support in addition to the formal reviews. Students value this but the outcomes of such discussions are rarely recorded. Attendance is monitored and students with poor attendance records are usually required to agree an action plan involving improved attendance. For students considering changing courses, there is a clear procedure that includes impartial advice from a member of the admissions team and/or the careers co-ordinator before transfer. These interviews are rarely recorded.

46 Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that guidance for students on careers and higher education is effective. Students have ready access to careers advice from a full-time careers co-ordinator and this is effectively complemented by the local careers service. Joint evaluation of the careers advice by the college and the careers service has resulted in improvements. The co-ordinator and advisers now attend group tutorials for full-time students and the number of students taking up offers of interviews has increased significantly. There is a comfortable, well-stocked careers room at Tamworth and, as part of the agreement with the careers service, students have access to the careers service centre adjacent to the Lichfield campus.

47 There are three qualified counsellors on the Tamworth campus to help students with personal problems. The use of the service by students is low in some curriculum areas. A chaplain is available to give multi-faith support. Counselling provision has only recently been established on the Lichfield campus and is not yet fully developed. The college supports

students by removing barriers to study in a number of ways. There is nursery provision on both sites and at Tamworth it includes a creche. This provision enables many students who would otherwise be excluded from further education to attend courses. Over 100 students use the Tamworth nursery and most have their fees subsidised. Around 200 students receive help with transport or the cost of learning materials.

General Resources

Grade 2

48 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements about general resources in the self-assessment report, but considered that some strengths and weaknesses were given inappropriate weighting.

Key strengths

- good access for students with restricted mobility
- an outstanding high technology centre
- distinctive nature of each curriculum area and good use of display
- good computer provision
- advanced electronic communications

Weaknesses

- some unsuitable accommodation
- poor access to the internet at Tamworth
- poor access to computer equipment at Tamworth
- some weaknesses in library provision

49 College accommodation includes a grade II listed hotel in Lichfield, a former girls' high school, several portable buildings, a range of buildings dating from the 1950s, purpose-built engineering workshops completed in 1992 and the high technology facility at Lichfield completed in 1998 and jointly owned with Staffordshire University. College statistics show

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that some room utilisation is high but that overall space utilisation is low, a weakness recognised in the self-assessment report. Strategies for rationalisation of the accommodation and costings for its refurbishment have been discussed and well documented. The delivery of courses in particular subject areas is concentrated in particular areas of the college. This has facilitated the display of stimulating course-related materials and students value and respect 'their' areas. Most of the college has been made accessible to people with restricted mobility by the provision of ramps and lifts. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. There is a comprehensive maintenance plan. The structural problems with a few buildings are identified in the self-assessment report. The problem relating to vehicle access at Tamworth, identified in the last inspection, has been solved by widening the main access road.

50 Most classrooms are well decorated and contain appropriate furniture. Many are equipped with modern teaching aids. A few classrooms at Tamworth suffer from noise penetration or overheating and some rooms in the older buildings at Lichfield have poor access, inconvenient layout and are of an inappropriate size. The main reception area at Lichfield is welcoming; that at Tamworth less so. Although room numbering throughout the college is generally clear, signs to curriculum and support areas are poor. Refectory facilities at Tamworth and Lichfield are adequate. Student common areas and social accommodation need refurbishment. Most staff rooms have up-to-date computers providing access to the college network. The extent of use of electronic mail by staff is varied. Storage facilities in the college are satisfactory. The central reprographic service is effective. There is a comprehensive equipment replacement policy linked to strategic objectives and curriculum developments.

51 There are good shared sports facilities including a swimming pool at the Tamworth site

and all-weather pitches that are used by college football, netball and hockey teams. The changing facilities are poor, as the self-assessment report recognised. The self-assessment report identified as a strength the learning resource centres. Although resources are good, inspection evidence indicated that the areas at Tamworth are not used as well as the college perceives. The library facilities at Tamworth are satisfactory, although the bookstock and budget are low. There are sufficient periodicals, videos and CD-ROMs available for loan. Opening times and staff support are appropriate to meet demand. The computerised book-issuing system is in need of replacement. There are sufficient study places within the library and study centres. There is no library at the Lichfield campus but an agreement is in place for students to use the adjacent public library. Discussions with students indicate that this arrangement does not meet their needs.

52 Both campuses and Staffordshire University are linked by advanced high-speed electronic communication facilities that will enable the development of fast networking and internet access. The computer equipment at Lichfield, shared with the university, is very good. Around 320 computers are available for student use at Tamworth. This equates to a good ratio of about eight full-time equivalent students to each workstation. However, many of the computers are located in classrooms that are locked when not in use and some rooms are inappropriately used for teaching or tutorials. A significant proportion of the equipment at Tamworth will not adequately support the latest versions of software. Access to the internet is good at Lichfield but poor at Tamworth. Little use is made of electronically-based course material, electronic mail between staff and students or CD-ROMs. There are insufficient technicians to maintain computers and the network at Tamworth. The college has recognised many of these weaknesses in its self-assessment report.

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Quality Assurance

Grade 3

53 Inspectors agreed with some of the strengths and weaknesses in the college's self-assessment report but found some additional weaknesses.

Key strengths

- strong staff support for the college's quality assurance arrangements
- well-developed monitoring of compliance with college procedures
- the clear and accessible college charter
- effective staff appraisal

Weaknesses

- inadequate course reviews
- insufficient analysis of students' achievements
- inadequate range of service standards
- insufficient evaluation of the effectiveness of staff development

54 The strategic aims of the college include a clear commitment to enhancing the quality of teaching and raising the level of students' attainments. The ISO 9001 quality management standard has been a key component of the college's quality assurance arrangements since 1995. The procedures required under the standard are documented in a regularly updated quality assurance handbook. There are carefully organised checks to ensure that the written procedures contained in the handbook are applied across the college. Well-maintained records of the actions taken to correct any deficiencies are kept. Further quality assurance arrangements include self-assessment and course reviews.

55 Inspectors agree that the quality assurance arrangements are well supported by staff. The information governors need to monitor quality

has been discussed and is improving. The arrangements for quality assurance in support areas of the college are inadequate. For example, the college makes insufficient use of service standards to indicate the level of performance to be expected from each area. There are service standards relating to initial student applications and guidance that could act as a model for other areas. Target-setting and performance indicators for non-teaching areas of the college are underdeveloped. The college acknowledged this in its self-assessment report.

56 The course review system is insufficiently thorough, a weakness not identified by the college. Curriculum teams complete course review reports three times a year and assess course strengths and weaknesses in the third review. These reports vary greatly in their thoroughness. Many do not show the evidence on which the judgements were based. The course review forms do not provide sufficient information on pass rates or comparisons with targets or national averages. The level of analysis in most reviews is inadequate and actions to rectify weaknesses are not always clearly defined. Meetings of course teams are intended to supplement reviews and to monitor agreed actions. However, references to the reviews in minutes of course team meetings are often cursory. Statistical indicators are made available to course teams to help them evaluate their performance but they are not used effectively.

57 Students' views about the college are gathered through annual cross-college surveys. In addition, the college has recently started to use focus groups in which senior managers talk to students about their experience of the college. A large amount of information is obtained from the student surveys but few meaningful reports are produced. The statistical data are sent to curriculum and other managers for their use. Inadequate analysis of the results of surveys leads to some issues not being identified and considered by managers and their teams.

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58 The self-assessment process involved all staff and governors. The self-assessment report was set out in accordance with the framework in Council Circular 97/12, *Validating Self-assessment* but it omitted any reference to Council Circular 97/22, *Joint Working: Audit and inspection* in the governance and management sections. Some attention was given to teaching and learning in the curriculum reports, but information gained from lesson observations was not taken into account. In many sections of the report, the judgements on students' achievements were insufficiently clear. Action plans were provided for each programme and cross-college area but many of the targets did not indicate clearly the action needed to rectify a weakness.

59 College staff monitor the quality of collaborative provision regularly through visits to partners' premises. There are useful forms and checklists to complete during visits but no summary report is produced to give a clear overall appraisal of the quality of provision. Reports to governors lack sufficient detail on the quality of collaborative provision.

60 College charter entitlements are clearly stated. The charter is available in a variety of formats, including Braille and audiotape. A student with good signing skills has helped the college to produce a video that explains the content of the charter for those with a hearing impairment. Most of the entitlements included in the charter are monitored.

61 Staff development priorities evolve mainly from individual needs identified during appraisals. These are collated into themes that are linked to the strategic plan. There is insufficient evaluation of the effectiveness of staff development activities. There is a useful handbook to facilitate the induction of new staff. Staff appraisal is well developed and applies to all staff, including part-time lecturers who teach for more than six hours every week. Staff are positive about the value of appraisal. The college is recognised as an Investor in People.

Governance

Grade 2

62 Inspectors agreed with many of the judgements in the self-assessment report, but found some additional strengths and weaknesses.

Key strengths

- governors' attention to quality assurance
- open and transparent procedures
- good induction and training for governors
- governors' links with curriculum and cross-college areas

Weaknesses

- inadequate monitoring of progress towards strategic and operational objectives
- some key decisions not formally approved by the corporation
- inadequate terms of reference for some committees

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

64 The corporation comprises 19 governors. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that governors bring a range of interests and experience to the college. Educational skills are well represented, but there is less business and commercial expertise than is usual and no governor has professional expertise in personnel matters. The corporation's finance committee does not include a governor with professional financial expertise. A skills audit of governors

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has not been carried out. Public advertising has been used in an attempt to attract new governors but without success. The appointment process for governors is only partially documented and is not publicly available. Governors make an annual declaration of eligibility.

65 There is a good induction process for newly-appointed governors, and regular training events take place. A policy on governor training has been established but, as the self-assessment report noted, this has not been linked to the governors' self-assessment. Postal voting has been inappropriately used for the election of the chairman and vice-chairman of the corporation, and the reappointment of governors.

66 The governors are well informed about the college. As the self-assessment report indicated, governors have been instrumental in determining the strategic direction of the college. They have attended an event on the subject of strategic planning. Although the strategic plan includes quantifiable targets against which progress can be monitored, the operating plan has few targets. The corporation has not received regular reports on the progress made towards the objectives in the operating plan.

67 The self-assessment report overstated the extent to which governors were informed about the college's finances. All governors receive the college's monthly management accounts. The finance committee considers these accounts and advises the corporation, which does not adequately consider them. The college owns a hotel, and the corporation has often considered its management arrangements but not its management accounts. The corporation annually approves the college's franchising contracts for outward collaborative provision but governors have requested more information about the quality of this provision.

68 Governors pay appropriate attention to quality assurance. The corporation's quality and curriculum committee monitors students'

retention and achievements. It receives information on particularly good or poor performance. The committee has also reviewed self-assessment and the outcomes of lesson observation and has monitored initiatives relating to added value. Reports from the committee are submitted to the corporation, which also considers students' performance. Governors used a questionnaire to review their own performance, the results of which informed the self-assessment of governance.

69 Individual governors have useful links to curriculum and cross-college areas. This has operated informally for some time but is now done formally. The visits have enabled governors to become better known in the college and have been found helpful by staff. Governors have helped the college to secure industrial placements for some students and to obtain support from charitable funds.

70 The corporation has established an appropriate range of committees and subcommittees. The terms of reference of the finance committee and audit committee are not comprehensive or appropriate. The audit committee has, on occasion, acted outside its terms of reference.

71 The administration of most corporation and committee business is efficient but there is no detailed and documented cycle of decision-making and monitoring. The governors have not formally approved the college's three-year financial forecast or the appointment of the college's internal and external auditors. These omissions were not mentioned in the self-assessment report. The governors' register of interests is updated annually. Inspectors identified an instance where a governor had not withdrawn from a corporation meeting when an issue in which the governor had a direct interest was being decided. A declaration of interest had not been formally recorded in the corporation's minutes.

72 The corporation has adopted procedures to ensure openness and transparency. The clerk is

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independent of the college and services all the corporation's committees and subcommittees. The college holds a public annual general meeting. The corporation has adopted a code of conduct and a code of ethics. Standing orders and a 'whistleblowing' procedure have been established. Copies of the corporation's minutes are placed in the college library.

Management

Grade 2

73 Inspectors agreed with most of the judgements about management in the self-assessment report. However, the report did not comment on one important aspect of management, and omitted some weaknesses identified by inspectors.

Key strengths

- strong and effective partnerships with other organisations
- well-developed strategic planning and target-setting
- good use of accurate management information
- effective management at all levels
- good communications
- imaginative initiatives to expand provision in Lichfield and Burntwood

Weaknesses

- insufficient market research
- incomplete attention to equal opportunities
- weaknesses in some aspects of student services management

74 The college's management provides a clear sense of direction to the college. As noted in the self-assessment report, the college has exceeded its unit targets in each of the last three years. The college's well-developed strategic plan is

informed by labour market information. As the self-assessment report stated, all staff have been involved in strategic planning. Operating statements set out cross-college and curriculum plans and progress against these is beginning to be monitored. The strategic plan for 1998-99 contains clear strategic aims and targets. Responsibility for action, costs and achievement dates are not included. A formal mid-year monitoring of operating plans has recently been introduced.

75 The college has established strong and effective partnerships with other organisations. These include an agreement with schools in Tamworth, under which the college provides vocational courses for 16 to 19 year olds and the schools provide GCE A level programmes. There are good links with special schools. The college has imaginatively expanded its provision. It provides adult education in Lichfield and this is being extended to Tamworth. Joint funding with Staffordshire University has led to the establishment of the Staffordshire University Lichfield Centre. This has enabled the expansion of part-time provision in art and design, business studies and IT. Full-time courses have also been introduced. The college is involved in a project to widen participation in the Burntwood area. There are good links with the Staffordshire TEC, which has reported favourably on the college's links with local employers and the community. The principal is a member of the TEC board.

76 Targets for students' retention and achievements have been set for all courses and for the college as a whole. Retention rates have been consistently below the national average for further education colleges while achievement rates have been above average. The college is developing strategies to improve retention and early indications suggest that these are proving effective.

77 Most curriculum and cross-college management is effective. There is a regular cycle of senior and middle management

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meetings to discuss relevant issues. Clear minutes are kept. A weekly briefing meeting of senior and middle managers ensures the rapid dissemination of key information throughout the college. Weekly bulletins containing a diary of events circulate widely. Staff commented upon the open and responsive style of senior management. The organisation of student services has weaknesses. Learning support is managed separately from other areas of student support, including tutorials. Liaison between the two areas is inadequate. The time allocated to the role of the senior tutor is insufficient.

78 The original federal relationship between the Tamworth and Lichfield campuses is moving towards full integration but there are no links on site management between the two campuses. Two of the college's schools now cover both campuses. The college is working to adopt common procedures, for example on admissions and examinations but the quality of student support is not yet consistent across the college.

79 Management information systems have improved greatly. As the self-assessment report noted, these now provide a wide range of financial and non-financial information to assist managers. Heads of school and sections receive management reports that enable them to measure progress towards targets. The management information system is widely accessible to managers and other staff. Electronic mail is being used increasingly, although some staff need more training.

80 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. The college has high levels of accumulated reserves and good levels of solvency. The finance team has, until recently, been insufficiently resourced. The college's finance officer is a qualified accountant. She is not a member of the college's executive team, but attends finance committee meetings as well as corporation meetings where financial items are discussed. Detailed monthly management accounts are produced promptly.

The management accounts do not include a commentary and managers do not monitor finances against the approved budget. Budget holders receive monthly reports on expenditure together with good support from the finance section. The college produces detailed management information on curriculum areas which is valued by managers and is used in decision-making.

81 Staff are effectively deployed and the staff utilisation rate is high. No complete skills audit has been carried out. However, as the self-assessment recognised, the average class size and the student to staff ratio are both low. The college is giving priority to increasing its average class size.

82 As the self-assessment report acknowledged, there has been little market research at curriculum level. Enquiries are not systematically analysed to yield information about possible future provision and there has been no thorough analysis of the courses offered by other providers.

83 The college has a revised equal opportunities policy, an equal opportunities forum and a recently-appointed equal opportunities co-ordinator. The fairly even gender balance throughout the college is monitored. There is good support for students with physical disabilities. Inspectors agreed with comments in the self-assessment report, which indicated that the college has some way to go in ensuring equal opportunities in the curriculum and in raising staff awareness. College publicity materials, including student case studies in the prospectus, tend to reinforce gender stereotypes.

Conclusions

84 The inspection team found the college's self-assessment to be a useful basis for planning and undertaking the inspection. This was the third self-assessment report produced by the college. Inspectors agreed with many of the

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strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report but found some significant strengths and weaknesses that the college had not identified. Several sections of the report did not contain a detailed evaluation of students' achievements. There was an adequate evaluation of teaching and learning, although details of the college's lesson observations were not used as evidence. Inspectors agreed with all but one curriculum area grade and one cross-college grade. In these two areas inspectors considered the college to have been overgenerous.

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 (July 1998)

Age	%
Under 16	2
16-18 years	13
19-24 years	11
25+ years	73
Not known	1
Total	100

Source: college data

Student numbers by level of study (July 1998)

Level of study	%
Foundation	32
Intermediate	26
Advanced	11
Higher education	1
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	30
Total	100

Source: college data

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

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	216	1,771	19
Construction	18	96	1
Engineering	132	678	8
Business	273	1,261	14
Hotel and catering	100	188	3
Health and community care	220	688	8
Art and design	127	433	5
Humanities	136	3,845	37
Basic education	82	449	5
Total	1,304	9,409	100

Source: college data

Widening participation

Based on a postcode analysis of 1995-96 ISR data, the college recruited 10% of students from disadvantaged areas defined in relation to the Department of the Environment Index of Local Conditions.

Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (July 1998)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	97	68	0	165
Supporting direct learning contact	25	15	1	41
Other support	66	14	3	83
Total	188	97	4	289

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

College Statistics

Three-year Trends

Financial data

	1996	1997	1998
Income	£6,908,000	£7,389,000	£7,732,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1997; funded 1998	£16.18	£15.91	£15.54
Payroll as a proportion of income	63%	68%	63%
Achievement of funding target	101%	105%	101%
Diversity of income	41%	39%	40%
Operating surplus	-£217,000	-£297,000	-£388,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

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

Payroll – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

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

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 97/35 (1996), 98/43 (1997), college (1998)

Students' achievements data

Level	Retention and pass	Students aged 16 to 18			Students aged 19 or over		
		1995	1996	1997	1995	1996	1997
1	Expected completions	150	390	613	540	786	1,013
	Retention (%)	58	74	82	60	74	85
	Achievement (%)	59	66	80	51	71	85
2	Expected completions	411	762	705	703	845	1,183
	Retention (%)	65	67	66	65	75	76
	Achievement (%)	65	50	52	71	64	67
3	Expected completions	–	436	427	–	628	618
	Retention (%)	–	67	73	–	69	78
	Achievement (%)	64	60	60	60	64	63
4 or 5	Expected completions	–	25	19	–	248	377
	Retention (%)	–	80	68	–	82	87
	Achievement (%)	82	82	82	53	55	67
Short courses	Expected completions	29	408	201	1,520	5,176	8,123
	Retention (%)	100	96	92	96	94	94
	Achievement (%)	79	95	90	89	94	96
Unknown/unclassified	Expected completions	131	385	901	365	1,210	1,482
	Retention (%)	95	89	78	79	79	77
	Achievement (%)	100	95	60	94	96	81

Source: ISR

–ISR data not collected

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