

**Basildon College**  
**Reinspection of Business and Professional Studies: February 2001**  
**Report from the Inspectorate**  
**The Further Education Funding Council**

## **THE FURTHER EDUCATION 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 assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.*

### **REINSPECTION**

*The FEFC has agreed that colleges with provision judged by the inspectorate to be less than satisfactory or poor (grade 4 or 5) should be reinspected. In these circumstances, a college may have its funding agreement with the FEFC qualified to prevent it increasing the number of new students in an unsatisfactory curriculum area until the FEFC is satisfied that weaknesses have been addressed.*

*Satisfactory provision may also be reinspected if actions have been taken to improve quality and the college's existing inspection grade is the only factor which prevents it from meeting the criteria for FEFC accreditation.*

*Reinspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Reinspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports and confirm that actions taken as a result of previous inspection have improved the quality of provision. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work they inspect. The opinion of the FEFC's audit service contributes to inspectorate judgements about governance and management.*

### **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

*Assessments use grades on 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 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.*

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**Basildon College  
Eastern Region**

**Reinspection of business and professional studies: February 2001**

**Background**

Basildon College was inspected during October 1999 and the findings were published in inspection report 14/00. Provision in business and professional studies was graded 4.

The strengths of provision were: effective academic support for individual students; well-planned schemes of work; and good retention rates on NVQ accounting courses. The main weaknesses identified at inspection were: inappropriate teaching methods in many lessons; poor and declining retention and pass rates on GNVQ advanced business courses; failure to address low retention and achievement rates; insufficient opportunities for progression for full-time students; insufficient opportunities for teachers to update their professional expertise.

The provision was reinspected in February 2001. Inspectors observed 10 lessons, one tutorial, held meetings with the head of school, teachers and students. Students' work was examined, together with a wide range of documentation prepared for the reinspection.

**Assessment**

Inspectors found that there has been some progress in addressing the weaknesses in teaching identified in the last inspection report. On full-time courses greater attention is given to identifying students' prior achievements and adapting teaching methods to their needs. Individual students' progress is carefully monitored and all full-time students are now taking key skills as an integral part of their courses. This is leading to a stronger focus on tackling student weaknesses in literacy and numeracy. In a few lessons there is insufficient emphasis on relating teaching materials and assignments to a business context. On full-time secretarial courses students do not gain sufficient experience in using basic business equipment. The college is taking action to address this issue. At the time of the inspection, a training office was being developed so that students could gain regular experience of undertaking routine administrative tasks. On NVQ accounting courses, students were developing relevant IT skills through using standard accounting software. Students do not have access to IT resources in their classrooms. This limits the use of IT as a routine element of teaching and learning.

There are insufficient opportunities for progression for full-time students. Since the last inspection, the GNVQ and GCE A/AS level courses in business, which had poor levels of retention and achievement have been discontinued. However, provision at entry and foundation level has been improved through the introduction of an NOCN course with a business pathway. There are also a range of return to study courses for adult students in IT and administration. Retention and achievement were above the national average on the NVQ administration course in 1999 and 2000. NVQ accounting courses at foundation level have high levels of retention and achievement. However, at levels 3 and 4 students' achievements are below national averages. Poor attendance was a feature in some of the part-time classes observed and this is reflected in poor student retention rates for some of the courses. Curriculum managers are aware of these issues. Student attendance, retention and achievement are now closely monitored, although there is a need to base targets on the published FEFC benchmarks for individual courses.

There has been a significant effort to retrain staff in using teaching methods suitable for students at foundation level. However, few staff have benefited from training, such as short industrial placements, to update their business experience. Work experience is not a compulsory element of full-time courses. This restricts opportunities for full-time teaching staff to make useful contacts with local businesses through the supervision of full-time students on work placement.

The college needs to continue to address: raising the standard of teaching and learning; tackling poor levels of retention on some courses and improving access to modern business equipment on the NVQ administration courses.

**Revised grade:** business and professional studies 3.