

**The Blackpool Sixth Form College  
Reinspection of Governance: June 1999  
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. 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.*

*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.*

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

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## **The Blackpool Sixth Form College North West Region**

### **Reinspection of governance: June 1999**

#### **Background**

The Blackpool Sixth Form College was inspected in March 1998 and the findings were recorded in inspection report 84/98, published in August 1998. Provision in governance was graded 4.

The key strengths were: close monitoring of examination pass rates and good communication between staff and governors. The major weaknesses were: failure of the governing body to play a full role in strategic planning; ineffective clerking arrangements; weaknesses in the operation of governing body's committees; no arrangements for the formal appraisal of senior postholders; failure to monitor the implementation of key policies and inadequate arrangements for governors' training. The FEFC's audit service concluded that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college was weak.

Reinspection took place in June 1999. Inspectors and auditors examined a range of documents and had meetings with governors and managers.

#### **Assessment**

The FEFC's audit service concluded that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is now adequate. Inspectors judged that the college had made progress in addressing some of the major weaknesses identified in March 1998, though some weaknesses remained. Governors initiated a review of and amendments to the college's mission statement. Their involvement in strategic planning has been strengthened. The revised format of the strategic plan facilitates more systematic monitoring of progress. The new strategic planning subcommittee interrogates the strategic and operational objectives critically and indicators of progress are more specific and detailed. The audit committee, judged weak in the 1998 inspection, operates satisfactorily. The clerk, who was new at the time of the last inspection, has attended external training events. Agendas and minutes are clear and focused on key issues. Standing orders and a code of conduct have been introduced and the register of interests and statements of eligibility are signed by governors. At present, there is insufficient attention to openness. Recruitment to the governing body is not effected through an open process of application and interview. Appraisal of senior postholders and the clerk is still inadequate. There are no criteria for appraisal of performance and no targets. Arrangements for the training of governors remain weak. There is no training plan and no governors have attended training events outside college since the last inspection. Governors are not sufficiently self-critical in their own assessment. Key weaknesses are not identified in the self-assessment report and the action points have no timescales or responsibilities attached to them. However, the weaknesses arising from the inspection have been addressed seriously and methodically through the action plan of the inspection report committee of governors.

**Revised grade:** governance 3.