

**City College, Manchester**  
**Reinspection of Care: 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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## **City College, Manchester North West Region**

### **Reinspection of care: February 2001**

#### **Background**

City College, Manchester was inspected in March 2000 and the findings were published in inspection report 82/00. Provision in care was graded 4.

The strengths of the provision were: good use of students' experiences in teaching and learning; closely monitored work experiences; and a wide range of provision. The weaknesses were: low achievement rates on many courses; poor retention rates on most courses; poor collection and collation of data; ineffective action-planning and target-setting to address weaknesses; and the poor quality of some schemes of work.

The provision was reinspected over four days in February 2001. Inspectors observed 12 lessons, held meetings with curriculum managers, teachers and students, visited a work experience placement and an outreach NVQ centre and scrutinised a wide range of college documents and students' marked work. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report. They considered that one strength was overstated and that a significant weakness was understated.

#### **Assessment**

The college has made considerable progress in addressing the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection while maintaining the strengths. Inspectors agreed that the quality of teaching and learning has improved. They judged eight of the 12 lessons they observed to be good or outstanding, a proportion slightly above the programme area national average for colleges inspected in 1999-2000. Attendance has improved significantly from 61% in the previous inspection to 78%, slightly above the appropriate national average. Most lessons are well planned. Teachers use a range of ways to link theory with workplace practice. In the better lessons, teachers ensure that students achieve the learning objectives of the lesson and help them to reflect on what they have learned. A range of tasks and activities engage the students' interest and enable them to contribute their knowledge and workplace experience. Teachers make good use of high quality, appropriate learning resources in almost every lesson. Equipment, books and journals to support tasks and practical activities are available in the classroom. However, inspectors saw some unsatisfactory teaching. In a few lessons, questioning and some tasks were insufficiently challenging. In others, the learning of a minority of students went unchecked. Students on full-time courses participate in well-managed work experience. They have a timetabled session each week in each of the key skills of communication, application of number and IT. A range of extra-curricular enrichment activities, including accredited short courses, has proved popular with students.

There have been significant improvements in the accuracy of course data. Managers have direct access to this information and use it to monitor and review course performance. Course teams set targets, some of which are displayed in classrooms. Achievement and retention rates are compared with national averages. Analysis of poor performance has led to action plans designed to improve quality. Non-notified absence is followed up on the same day. The department is implementing a range of strategies to improve attendance, retention and achievement rates.

In 2000, pass rates improved to at or above the national average on all courses in childcare and social work. Retention rates in 2000 were well below the national average on over half the courses. In two of these courses, retention had declined since the inspection. In 2000, retention improved to at or above the national average on the diploma in nursery nursing and the NVQs in childcare and playwork at level 3. It also improved on the certificate in childcare and education and the BTEC first certificate, though it remains below the national average on these two courses. There is some evidence to show that retention rates are better in the current year. Figures available on 2 February 2001 indicate significant improvements in retention rates for most courses when compared with figures for the same period last year. There have been productive developments in the organisation, delivery and assessment of NVQ provision. The standard of students' work, particularly the practical work produced by the childcare students, is generally good. Portfolios of work showed good use of IT. Students demonstrated an appreciation of the importance of the values of the care profession. Promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities is outstanding.

Inspectors agreed that curriculum planning is much improved. Detailed schemes of work are shared among teams, including part-time teachers. A standard format for lesson plans identifies the learning objectives of the lesson, the activities to be undertaken by teachers and students and assessment opportunities. Assessment schedules are produced at the start of the year. Students are satisfied with the spread of deadlines for assignment completion and the support they receive in preparing for assignments. Course teams meet regularly and cover aspects such as quality assurance and curriculum development. Teams are involved in annual course reviews. Self-assessment is generally self-critical and realistic.

**Revised grade:** care 3.