

**Derwentside College**  
**Reinspection of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities:**  
**December 1998**  
**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.*

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**Derwentside College  
Northern Region**

**Reinspection of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities: December 1998**

**Background**

Derwentside College was inspected between August 1996 and February 1997. The inspection findings were recorded in college inspection report 61/97. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was graded 4.

The college ran a range of programmes designed for students with learning difficulties, and was working with a range of agencies to extend this provision. Staff were caring and supportive. Some students with learning difficulties enjoyed their courses and gained in confidence. However, much of the teaching was of poor quality and few students with learning difficulties were receiving vocational training or gaining vocational qualifications. Some were underachieving and were bored. The quality of teaching was not effectively monitored. The cross-college co-ordination of provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was not effective, and no accurate information was available about the number of students with disabilities who needed support on their courses. Staff were not aware of the effect of students' learning difficulties and/or disabilities on their learning. Equipment and materials used in lessons were often unsuitable and some accommodation was not appropriate for the purpose for which it was being used.

The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was reinspected by a specialist inspector over three days in December 1998. Fourteen classes were observed. Discussions were held with managers, staff and students. Students' work, and college documentation were examined.

**Assessment**

The college has made significant progress in addressing the weaknesses identified during inspection. The provision has been restructured. More effective initial assessments are carried out during students' first term in college and more appropriate individual goals are set for their learning. The curriculum has been redesigned at each level, and appropriate prevocational opportunities are now available for students with learning difficulties. Vocational subjects, such as hairdressing, health and social care, and catering are effectively taught within the appropriate vocational schools. The college has extended the number of foundation level courses and many students with learning difficulties progress to them, or are recruited directly at this level, with the support they need. The quality of teaching has improved and most sessions observed were satisfactory or better. Students work enthusiastically and are proud of their work. Many lessons were practical, with teachers making effective use of real objects and situations. The new team leader for provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, adult basic education and key skills is improving the cross-college co-ordination of this provision. Accurate information is now available about the number of students with disabilities who need support on their courses. About 25 additional students needing support were discovered by the improved identification procedure. However, the new courses are still developing and have not yet reached their full potential. Teaching in some lessons was not sufficiently bold and imaginative. Some lessons for part-time adult students were not appropriate for the ages of the students or their levels of ability. The content of a few lessons was inappropriate for students who cannot read and write

**Revised grade:** provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities: 3