

Dewsbury College
Reinspection of Science: November 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. 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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Dewsbury College
Yorkshire and Humberside Region

Reinspection of science: November 1999

Background

Dewsbury College in West Yorkshire was inspected in January 1998 and the findings published in the inspection report 22/98. Provision in science was awarded a grade 4.

During the inspection in 1998 the key strengths of science were: outstanding link provision with special schools; good opportunities for students to improve their key skills; and the high standard of accommodation and learning resource materials. The major weaknesses were: schemes of work limited in range and comprehensiveness; use of a narrow range of teaching and learning methods; students' underachievement in some external examinations; students' poor experimental techniques; unsatisfactory attendance rates; poor learning experiences in combined groups; and few curriculum links with industry.

Following the inspection the college prepared an action plan to address the weaknesses. The action plan, together with a new self-assessment report, provided the main basis for the reinspection. The reinspection took place in November 1999, by an inspector working for three days. Documentation including students' achievements and retention data and targets set by the college were scrutinised. Meetings were held with managers, teachers and students.

Assessment

The college has made considerable progress in addressing weaknesses identified in the original inspection. Schemes of work and lesson planning have improved and are now satisfactory. A narrow range of teaching methods is still used but the profile of lessons graded as good or outstanding has improved and is now similar to that quoted for the programme area in *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1998-99: Chief inspector's annual report*. Students on different courses are still often taught together, but improved classroom management ensures that students receive good learning experiences. Attendance on all courses is good at 84% and better than the 79% quoted as the average for the programme area in the chief inspector's annual report for 1998-99. Some students still have poor practical skills but they are corrected during practical lessons. Overall, students' practical skills are at an appropriate level for the courses being studied. Pass rates on GCE A level courses are good but retention rates remain poor. Pass rates on GCSE courses are below the national average for the sector. There remain few curriculum links with industry or with schools. The college is considering ways of improving the range of links.

Revised grade: science 3.