East Yorkshire College of Further Education
Reinspection of Governance: January 2000
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.

Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 02476 863000
Fax 02476 862100
website: http://www.fefc.ac.uk

East Yorkshire College of Further Education
Yorkshire and Humberside Region

Reinspection of governance: January 2000

Background

East Yorkshire College of Further Education was inspected in October 1998 and the findings were published in inspection report 04/99. Governance was awarded a grade 4 and the audit opinion was that the governance of the college was weak.

The strengths of the provision were: governors' commitment to the college and an open style of governance. The major weaknesses identified during the inspection were: governors' failure to ensure the financial health of the college, the ineffective operation of the audit committee, insufficient involvement in strategic planning, inadequate attention to curriculum matters and unsystematic induction and training for governors.

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 which took place over three days in January 2000, by one inspector and an auditor. The auditor was also involved in the reinspection of financial management. They held meetings with governors, managers and the clerk and examined a wide range of college documentation.

Assessment

The corporation has partly addressed some of the key weaknesses identified in the last inspection. The strengths identified in the self-assessment report are overstated and some are considered as strengths when they are expectations for all institutions. Some key weaknesses have not been given sufficient weight in the self-assessment report.

Within the scope of its review the FEFC audit service concludes that the governance of the college is weak. The corporation does not conduct all its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also does not substantially fulfil its responsibilities under its financial memorandum with the FEFC.

Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that financial monitoring information is presented to governors regularly. The finance and employment committee meets regularly and receives a range of reports on the college's actual and forecast financial position. The three-year forecast for 1999-2000 to 2001-02, was approved by the governors but continued to show the college working in deficit. A financial recovery plan has been approved more recently. The FEFC requires the college to produce a more robust and detailed recovery plan before it can be used as a basis for funding the recovery. Governors are still failing to ensure the solvency of the college and safeguarding the college's assets.

The audit committee has been strengthened with the appointment of a new chair. As the self-assessment report identifies, governors now have a clear understanding of the role of this committee. However, this is recent and the committee has covered areas that are the responsibility of the finance committee, including the recommendation for approval of the financial statements. The corporation has recently approved a change to the principal's conditions of service. This change provides for 12 months notice instead of four, from the date of a decision to merge or close the college. This may not be in accordance with the financial memorandum in terms of affordability and value for money.

A standards committee has been established which has clear terms of reference and is well led. Its remit includes a review of the college's strategic plan and a consideration of the progress made by students whilst at the college. Inspectors agreed with the college claim that governors lack ownership of the plan and do not yet have an effective system for monitoring progress. Governors do not share a single vision of the direction and mission for the college. Their views varied between a college based on practical skill acquisition through an institution mainly for the unemployed and underprivileged to a college that concentrates on IT.

Governors and managers work well together. Curriculum areas and some cross-college functions have governors linked to that provision. Staff and governors benefit from these links. Governors visit the area, join meetings and receive valuable monthly reports. This has helped to address weaknesses in the last inspection report which identified that governors had insufficient contact with staff and that they gave insufficient attention to curricular matters. The last inspection report identified that the training for governors was unsystematic. Considerable effort has been made to overcome this weakness. There is now a clear training strategy for governors and the clerk to the corporation.

Revised grade: governance 4.