

**Halton College**  
**Reinspection of Health and Care: November 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.*

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## **Halton College North West Region**

### **Reinspection of health and care: November 2000**

#### **Background**

Halton College was inspected in October 1999 and the findings were published in inspection report 15/00. Provision in health and care was graded 4.

The strengths of the provision were: well-managed and well-planned franchised provision; and clear linking of theory and practice in many lessons. The weaknesses were: retention and achievement rates below the national average; insufficient learning in a significant number of lessons; adverse effect of staff turnover on students' learning; failure to develop students' key skills; few opportunities for progression; inadequate curriculum management structure and organisation of college-based provision.

The provision was reinspected over four days in November 2000. Inspectors observed 10 lessons, held meetings with programme team leaders, teachers and students, scrutinised a wide range of college documents and assessed students' marked work.

#### **Assessment**

The college has made good progress in addressing the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. The proportion of lessons assessed as good by inspectors has improved to 60% from 53% in the previous inspection. This is slightly below the national average of 65% for this programme area. In the previous inspection, five of the 17 lessons observed were judged to be unsatisfactory, whereas this judgement applied to only one of the 10 lessons observed in the reinspection. The average attendance rate was 78%, just above the national average of 76%, though the average class size at 9.8 was below the national average of 10.3. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a variety of appropriate learning activities to maintain students' interest. There is a high level of student participation in most sessions. Students respond with confidence. Clear links are made between theory and practice. Key points are often illustrated with reference to students' personal life experiences or work placement experiences. In a few sessions, group work activity is poorly planned and there is insufficient clarification of intended outcomes. Good progress has been made in developing students' key skills. All full-time courses have timetabled key skills activities. Students are aware of the relevance of key skills to their vocational area.

In 1999-2000, pass rates on most courses were significantly above the national average. The pass rate was 100% on most intermediate and advanced level courses. Retention rates were above the national average on the counselling courses and the NVQ early years care and education level 2. However, retention rates on most other courses were well below the national average. Both retention and pass rates were low on the GNVQ health and social care foundation course. This year, strategies to improve retention include the work of a departmental tutorial support assistant who monitors attendance and quickly follows up absences. The quality of students' written work is generally good. It is well presented and often wordprocessed. Students read widely and make good use of IT including appropriate Internet sites. Students' work is carefully marked and students receive clear feedback from tutors. Written comments are supportive and provide guidance to students on how to improve further.

The college has taken a number of successful actions to improve curriculum management and reduce high staff turnover. It has restructured the management of the section and appointed new managers and teachers. Team meetings are held monthly and are well attended. Minutes are clear and identify actions. Course reviews are held once a term. They include the review of performance indicators against targets and national benchmarking data. Self-assessment is generally accurate and self-critical. All teachers within the section have been observed by trained managers. All teachers produce lesson plans and schemes of work according to a common format that requires identification of objectives, teacher/learner activities, strategies for addressing students' different learning needs, learning resources and assessment.

**Revised grade:** health and care 3.