

Hendon College
Reinspection of Science and Mathematics: March 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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Hendon College Greater London Region

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Background

Hendon College was inspected in January 1994 and the findings of the inspection were recorded in college inspection report 33/94. The science and mathematics provision was graded 4. The provision was reinspected in January 1995, November 1996 and March 1998 and was awarded a grade 4 on each occasion. At each of these reinspections, limited improvements had been made and an improved grade was not merited.

The main strengths of the 1998 reinspection were: excellent accommodation for science; improved accommodation and equipment for mathematics; and comprehensive schemes of work. Key weaknesses identified were: poor teaching and learning: poorly planned lessons; students' lack of understanding of the purpose of some science practical work: students' lack of basic scientific and mathematical skills; poor and declining students' achievements in external examinations; work set at inappropriate levels for the students' courses; some poor written work; insufficiently rigorous marking of written work.

The provision was reinspected in March 2000 by one inspector who observed 12 lessons. Meetings were held with managers, staff and students. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised and students' work was examined. Particular attention was paid to the support for students through the tutorial system and to the college's information on the destinations of students who fail to complete their courses.

Assessment

The college has successfully addressed a number of major weaknesses. Management and staff have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and students' achievements. Teaching is now mainly satisfactory or good. Lessons are well planned and the aims and objectives are shared with students. Students' interest is maintained in lessons by a variety of appropriate activities. Practical work is used effectively to reinforce theory. Students benefit from excellent levels of support during practical sessions in both mathematics and science. The level of tutorial support has been increased. Students meet with their learning development tutor on a regular basis to discuss progress and actions to be taken. Diagnostic testing has been introduced on all courses but is still at an early stage of development. Achievements in all GCE A level subjects improved significantly in 1999. The college has good information on why students' do not complete their courses. This information is being used to inform the tutorial system.

Some weaknesses remain. In the less successful teaching and learning sessions observed, teachers failed to meet the needs of the less able students. Some students had not understood the tasks they had been set, and some unclear oral explanations hampered students' learning. Students' work showed little evidence of good use of diagrams to communicate ideas. Retention is poor and declining on some GCE A level courses.

Revised grade: science and mathematics 3.