

**Isle of Wight College**  
**Reinspection of General Resources: 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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## **Isle of Wight College South East Region**

### **Reinspection of general resources: March 2000**

#### **Background**

Isle of Wight College was inspected in February 1999 and the findings published in inspection report 52/99. General resources was awarded a grade 4.

The key strengths were: a clear and widely understood IT policy; modern, business standard IT equipment for students; improved range of facilities in the resources centre; and building refurbishments, especially in central areas. The major weaknesses were: little structural work to address weaknesses of accommodation identified by the first inspection; slow progress in remedying faults in the condition of the accommodation; underused classroom space; inappropriate accommodation strategy; cramped working spaces for staff; lack of assets register or proper inventories; and no policy for equipment replacement.

#### **Assessment**

Progress has been made in many of the areas of weakness identified in February 1999. At the same time the identified strengths have been sustained. Governors have approved a new and realistic accommodation strategy. The college is now committed to remaining on its main site in Newport and to improving the accommodation there. Some new buildings are planned but these are dependent for finance on the college being able to achieve planning permission on surplus land and dispose of it. The plan clearly identifies those buildings which will survive any land sale and a costed planned maintenance programme, revised in February 2000, is aimed at improving these. During the current financial year the college will be spending about £260,000 on essential improvements, including the provision of replacement windows, repointing of brickwork and rewiring. At the time of the inspection, much of this work had been completed. A number of classrooms have been renovated and some staff offices improved. Nine of the mobile classrooms criticised during the last inspection have been demolished and only five are now used for teaching. Improvements have been made to the students' cafeteria. An accessibility capital bid, approved by the FEFC at the end of October 1999, has already resulted in improvements for disabled access. Automatic doors have been introduced in one building. In another, new toilets with access for people with disabilities have been provided. A new lift is planned in one of the blocks. Approximately £100,000 will ultimately be spent on these works.

Further improvements have taken place to the range of facilities on offer in the learning resources centre. The resource-based learning centre has been extended to include an additional 30 workstations and the overall number of workspaces available in the resources centre has increased from 188 to 244. The expansion, coupled with alterations to the layout of the centre, has provided some improvement for wheelchair access. Staffing levels have improved. Learning advisers are attached to each curriculum area and there is now greatly improved liaison with curriculum staff. The college has continued to make substantial investment in its IT provision. A successful standards fund bid has enabled £196,000 of investment in improving the college network. The fund has also provided £70,000 for improving staff access to computers and a further £40,000 to provide related staff training. Additional computers have been purchased for students' use, creating an improved ratio of one computer to every seven full-time equivalent students. The range of on-line learning

materials available on the college intranet has increased and there are now more computers available on open access.

In January the college appointed a health and safety officer. Risk assessments are being carried out and necessary action monitored. High risk areas have already been assessed, but assessments have not yet been carried out at all the outlying centres. The assessments are normally carried out by college staff but on occasion specialist contractors are employed.

Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment report that only limited progress has been made in some areas. For example, very little work has been carried out to the buildings at Holliers Farm and the college is reviewing its use of that site in the hope of improving the accommodation there. Most room allocations are still made by departments although systems are being developed to centralise this. Room utilisation is still low. The college's capital replacement policy is in draft and the college still does not have a comprehensive asset register.

**Revised grade:** general resources 3.