

**Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College
Reinspection of Mathematics: 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.

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

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Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College West Midlands Region

Reinspection of mathematics: November 1999

Background

Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College was inspected in October 1998 and findings were published in inspection report 12/99. Mathematics provision was graded 4. The FEFC has identified the college as one of a group of colleges, which typically recruits a high percentage of students from disadvantaged areas.

Teachers gave individual support to mathematics students where necessary and checked their work to ensure that learning had taken place. There was good attendance in lessons. However, these strengths were outweighed by weaknesses. In some lessons, teachers used a narrow range of teaching methods and failed to take into account students' different abilities. There was no timetabled provision of support in mathematics for weaker students. Pass rates at GCSE and GCE A level were declining and well below national averages. Information technology was not included in the curriculum. Schemes of work were poor and there was a lack of professional development for staff.

The provision was reinspected over four days in November 1999. The inspector observed 14 lessons covering GCE A level, GCSE, and GNVQ support in numeracy. Inspectors met with teaching staff and managers. They scrutinised students' work and documentation relating to course management and student achievement.

Assessment

The college has made significant progress in addressing weaknesses. It has developed a range of successful strategies to improve achievements. Inspectors agreed that student achievement rates have improved significantly. In 1998-99, pass rates for GCE A level and GCSE in mathematics were above national averages for sixth form colleges. Value-added data for GCE A level improved and students consistently achieved better than their predicted grades. Students are making good progress in their studies this year. Good quality teaching includes some effective practical work. Arrangements for setting individual achievement targets and monitoring progress against these is particularly effective for GCE A level students. Well-attended and good quality support sessions have been arranged for weaker students. A suite of teaching rooms, with relevant mathematical displays, provides a stimulating learning environment. The provision of mathematics benefits from strong academic leadership, an increasingly cohesive staff team and valuable support from senior management. Some weaknesses remain in the teaching. The setting and marking of some assignments lack rigour. The vocational relevance of GNVQ mathematical support sessions is underdeveloped. There is little use of information technology and a shortage of self-study and support materials.

Revised grade: mathematics 2.

A summary of retention and achievement rates in mathematics, 1997 to 1999

Type of qualification	Level	Numbers and outcome	Completion year		
			1997	1998	1999
GCSE mathematics (grades A to C)	2	Number of starters	185	143	181
		Retention (%)	84	73	86
		Achievement (%)	36	43	53
GCE A level mathematics	3	Number of starters	26	46	42
		Retention (%)	59	72	74
		Achievement (%)	38	34	90

Source: ISR (1997 and 1998), college (1999)