

Kensington and Chelsea College
Reinspection General Resources: 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.

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

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Kensington and Chelsea College Greater London Region

Reinspection of general resources: November 2000

Background

Kensington and Chelsea College was inspected in October 1999 and the findings published in inspection report 16/00. Provision for general resources was graded 4.

In the inspection, key strengths were: improvements in decoration and equipment in many teaching rooms; good use of community venues; and the good learning resource service. The major weaknesses were: poor access to accommodation above ground floor level to people with restricted mobility; under-resourced study centres; insufficient open access to IT facilities; and lack of social areas for students. There was some inadequate specialist accommodation for art, craft and design.

The provision was reinspected in November 2000. Inspectors visited the college's sites, met staff and students, and examined documentation.

Assessment

Progress has been made in many of the areas of weakness identified in the inspection. The accommodation strategy has been updated. One of the college's centres was sold during autumn term 2000. Plans are well under way for a major redevelopment of the Hortensia centre. Significant improvements are also planned for the Wornington and Marlborough centres.

Since the inspection, the college has carried out a number of improvements to its accommodation. It has spent approximately £295,000 on its buildings. More of the facilities for students studying art, craft and design have now been concentrated in one building at the Hortensia centre. Students now have more space and the accommodation has been substantially improved. A new room for students of fashion, millinery and soft furnishing provides a stimulating learning environment.

The college has continued to improve its general teaching areas to an agreed standard. Classrooms have been redecorated, carpets fitted and new furniture and equipment provided. The new kitchen facilities for catering students at the Wornington centre have now been completed. The reception area at the Hortensia centre has been remodelled and enlarged. Other improvements include works to the electricity and water supplies. There is still limited access to accommodation above ground floor level for people with restricted mobility. However, work has commenced to provide a lift at one centre, and plans are being developed for a lift at another. Students now have access to facilities for art and design on the ground floor at the Hortensia centre and to study facilities on the ground floor at the Wornington centre. Social areas for students are still limited, but the college has made arrangements for its students to have access to leisure services run by the local authority.

The college has developed a new learning skills centre at the Wornington centre. This includes a 'drop-in' IT facility, space for group study and a number of tutorial rooms. Previously, there were only 26 study spaces available within the college's two study centres. An additional 63 spaces, including room for quiet study, have been created, and there is now some evening provision. An additional £11,500 has been added to the centres' budget to

provide more books and CD-ROMs. Loan facilities are now available at both centres and a reservation system has been arranged with the local library service.

The college has invested considerable resources in improving its IT infrastructure and on improving the quality and quantity of computers available to students. It has made good use of the standards fund to support developments in these areas. A new suite containing 22 computers has been provided at the Marlborough centre, where previously there were none. The ratio of computers to full-time equivalent students has improved and is now approximately 1:9 compared with 1:10 a year ago. A number of the IT classrooms have been improved. Data projectors, air-conditioning units and solar reflective curtains have been provided. There are now more computers available for students' use outside of timetabled lessons. The college has recently produced an information and learning technology strategy and a co-ordinator for this work was appointed early this year. An intranet and additional work areas with computers are being developed to improve opportunities for students to study independently. IT training for staff is being provided. The number of computers available for staff use has also increased.

Revised grade: general resources 3.