

**Morley College**  
**Reinspection of Governance: March 2001**  
**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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**Morley College**  
**Greater London Region**

**Reinspection of governance: March 2001**

**Background**

Morley College in central London was inspected in May 2000 and the findings published in inspection report 104/00. Governance was awarded a grade 4.

The main strengths of the provision were: the wide experience of the governing body members; effective monitoring of the college's finances; and the productive involvement of governors in the life of the college. The main weaknesses were: the unsatisfactory clerking arrangements; insufficient attention to strategic planning; inadequate monitoring of students' retention and achievements; the slow progress in self-evaluation; and insufficient attention to FEFC requirements and guidance.

Reinspection took place over three days in March 2001. Inspectors had meetings with governors, the principal, the chair of the company and the clerk. They reviewed a range of relevant documentation including the post-inspection action plan, self-assessment reports, agendas, minutes and papers of governor meetings.

**Assessment**

The college produced a comprehensive action plan in response to the findings of the inspection. Inspectors and auditors judged that the college had made progress in addressing some of the weaknesses in governance identified in the report but that some significant areas of weakness remain.

Governors discuss and review the strategic and operational issues reported to them by management, and have been more active in specifying their information requirements. However, the college's current strategic plan, covering 1998 to 2001, lacks measurable objectives or outcomes. This hinders the ability of governors to effectively monitor achievement of them. The governing body recently approved a brief operating statement for the current year but this statement was agreed several months into the year of operation. It does not contain sufficient targets and milestones in key areas to enable effective monitoring of the college and its activities. The governing body has yet to discuss and agree strategic objectives and performance indicators for 2001 onwards. An accommodation strategy is not yet in place.

Although governors receive information on enrolments, they still do not receive adequate information to enable them to monitor students' performance in terms of retention and achievement. Governors have not yet agreed a set of performance indicators which would enable them to judge the overall effectiveness of the college against its mission and objectives.

The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is weak. The governing body now substantially conducts its business in accordance with its memorandum and articles of association. However, it does not yet adequately fulfil its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC. This relates primarily to the weaknesses in strategic planning and monitoring, which impair governors' ability to exercise effective oversight of the operational activities of the college.

The governing body continues to exercise effective oversight of the college's finances. However, it has not yet set measurable financial objectives within which the college is expected to operate. The governing body did not ensure that the latest three-year financial forecast was accompanied by a comprehensive commentary, which impaired governors' ability to challenge the forecast effectively.

The governing body recognised the importance of the procedural issues raised in the last inspection report. Governing body meetings are held at least termly and attendance is good. The governing body reviews attendance and targets have been introduced for governors' attendance at governing body and committee meetings.

Weaknesses in the college's clerking arrangements are being tackled. At the time of the reinspection the college was in the process of appointing an independent clerk and secretary to the governing body. The new clerk will report to the chair of the governing body, and will support the governing body and all committees. However, it is too early to assess the impact of this development. The standard of minutes and agenda papers remains adequate. Arrangements for the appraisal of senior postholders have been reviewed and a new system is being implemented.

The college has strengthened arrangements for maintaining its register of interests, which cover the interests of senior staff as well as governors. Standing orders covering the conduct of business have been introduced. The audit committee now substantially operates in accordance with the FEFC's *Audit Code of Practice*, including the production of an annual report of its activities to the governing body. The governing body has adopted a revised code of conduct embracing the Nolan committee's recommendations on standards in public life.

Governors have revised their arrangements for self-assessment, and a governors' skills audit has been undertaken. However, these have lacked sufficient rigour and arrangements do not yet link the outcomes of the self-assessment to identifying and addressing governors' training needs. The clerk does not currently maintain individual governor training records.

**Revised grade:** governance 4.