

**Redcar and Cleveland College
Reinspection of Basic Skills: 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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Redcar and Cleveland College Northern Region

Reinspection of basic skills: March 2001

Background

Redcar and Cleveland College was inspected in March 2000. The inspection findings were recorded in college inspection report 74/00. Provision in basic skills was graded 4.

The strengths of the provision were: increased investment in basic skills provision; constructive working relationships between teachers and students; improved pass rates in Numberpower. However, much of the provision was poorly managed and arrangements for providing basic skills varied widely across the college. Too few learning materials were customised to make them relevant to specific vocations or to individual students. Retention and pass rates on a number of courses were low and a 'drop-in' workshop was underused.

The provision in basic skills was reinspected over three days in March 2001. Ten lessons were observed. Discussions were held with managers, staff and students. Students' work and college documentation were examined.

Assessment

The college has addressed many of the weaknesses identified during the inspection in March 2000. A senior manager has been allocated responsibility for the strategic overview of the provision across the college. Managers have developed a strategic plan for basic skills. Departmental operational plans show a clear commitment to the implementation of the strategic objectives. Responsibility for managing the provision has been moved to a different department and faculty and two additional members of staff have been appointed. Many staff from across the college have participated in a range of staff development sessions to raise their awareness of basic skills and to alert them to the college's procedures for supporting students. The standards fund was used effectively for this purpose. Teachers have developed learning materials which are closely related to the students' vocational programmes. Further work is currently underway to identify the basic skills requirements of vocational courses. Support for basic skills is now an integral part of students' main programmes and support tutors are working more closely with vocational teachers. Although some students have the opportunity to develop their basic skills through IT, much of their learning is undertaken individually through the use of print-based materials. Teachers make insufficient use of practical and group activities to develop students' basic skills. Attendance has improved although it is still low in some lessons. Procedures have been developed to assess the impact of basic skills and additional support on students' retention and achievement, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these measures. Each student who receives support now has an individual learning plan. However, the objectives within these are too general which leads to some ineffective monitoring and recording of progress.

Revised grade: basic skills 3.