

Rowley Regis College
Reinspection of Governance: April 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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**Rowley Regis College
West Midlands Region**

Reinspection of governance: April 2000

Background

Rowley Regis College in the borough of Sandwell was inspected in April 1999 and the findings published in the inspection report 91/99. Governance was awarded a grade 4. The audit service assessed governance as weak. The college attracts students from areas with very high deprivation and has a widening participation factor of 64%.

The key strengths of governance were: procedures for induction of governors; governor links with staff and students; a comprehensive handbook of governance practice; and full governor involvement in self-assessment. The major weaknesses were: insufficient attendance at corporation and some committee meetings; inappropriate appointment of governors; insufficient action on FEFC audit recommendations; inadequate monitoring by governors of college finances; lack of monitoring of students' achievements and retention; and poor monitoring of equal opportunities.

Reinspection took place in April 2000. Inspectors and auditors examined a range of documents and had meetings with governors and managers.

Assessment

The college is making progress in most areas shown as weaknesses at the inspection. New governors have joined the corporation. The gender balance of the governing body has improved but there is still under representation of minority community groups. The governance and search committee focuses on securing skills desirable for the corporation, such as further financial expertise. The committee considers all prospective governor nominations. Corporation minutes do not always record that appointment of governors was made on the advice of the committee. Governors set attendance targets and take action where attendance is unsatisfactory. Attendance targets are met. The audit committee monitors implementation of auditors' recommendations at each meeting. The finance and resources committee meets three times each term and considers detailed management accounts. All governors receive a copy of the monthly management accounts. The current financial position is considered at each corporation meeting. The curriculum, planning and general purposes committee and the corporation regularly monitor student retention and achievement together with analysis by subject area using national benchmarks. The corporation has received reports on equal opportunities and health and safety. The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is adequate. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC.

Revised grade: governance 3.