

**Rowley Regis College**  
**Reinspection of Quality Assurance: 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 quality assurance: 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. Quality assurance was awarded a grade 4. The college attracts students from areas with very high deprivation and has a widening participation factor of 64%.

The key strengths were: the quality management group's leadership; the wide application of quality assurance; the use of service standards; and the well-organised self-assessment report. The major weaknesses were: failure of quality assurance to raise the quality of teaching and achievements; uneven analysis of students' achievements and retention; inconsistent reporting of added value; insufficiently broad use of performance indicators to measure success; lack of rigorous monitoring of improvement plans; and incomplete appraisal.

Reinspection took place in April 2000. Inspectors examined a range of documents and held meetings with managers and staff.

**Assessment**

The college is addressing the weaknesses indicated at the inspection and continues to maintain strengths. Some further weaknesses were identified. Quality assurance arrangements are raising the standards of teaching and achievement. Training days are held on teaching and learning styles and how to improve performance. The overall pass rate is better, although some achievements are still below the national average. The quality management group continues to promote quality assurance, apart from a period in the autumn term when the work of the group was affected by organisational changes at the college. The group and senior managers monitor improvement plans. A new course review system has clear criteria and includes summaries of retention and achievement and an analysis of trends. Subject teams compare performance with national benchmarks. In some areas, analysis and assessment lack thoroughness. A new appraisal scheme has been introduced and the first two of its three stages have been completed to schedule. Appraisal includes monitoring against performance targets and takes account of lesson or task observation and weaknesses identified during the inspection. The standards fund was used to engage consultants as moderators for lesson observation. In the past these observations were overgraded but the grades awarded are now more realistic. Staff training requirements are established and relate to the strategic plan but lack clear priorities. Little progress has been made on the inconsistent reporting of added value. The complaints procedure and some service standards recently approved have been developed with insufficient rigour.

**Revised grade:** quality assurance 3.