Greenwich Community College
Reinspection of Information Technology: 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.

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Greater London Region

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Background

Woolwich College was inspected in November 1998. The findings were published in inspection report 23/99. Provision in information technology was reinspected in March 2000. It was awarded a grade 4. The college was renamed Greenwich Community College in August 2000.

The main strengths of the provision in March 2000 included: effective lesson planning; good learning materials; much good teaching; good student retention and achievement on some short courses; and the high quality of computing facilities. These strengths were outweighed by poor levels of student retention and achievement on most courses and the lack of work experience opportunities for GNVQ students. The college's most recent self-assessment report contained a good evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses and identified steps taken to address issues identified in the reinspection.

The provision was reinspected for a second time in November 2000. The inspector spoke to managers, teachers and students; evaluated student achievement and retention data; looked at documentation and examined students' work.

Assessment

The college has made considerable progress in addressing weaknesses identified in the previous inspection and reinspection. The college has made good use of the Standards Fund to improve teaching and learning, and also the quality of its data on student retention and achievement. The planning of lessons continues to be effective. Many of the lessons observed were good. Improvements in student punctuality and attendance have been sustained. There are good working relationships between staff and students. Specialist equipment is good. Arrangements for the induction of students have been strengthened and are now effective. Course structures and content have been revised and more appropriate entry criteria have been introduced. Checks are undertaken to ensure that students are studying an appropriate course. These changes are having a positive impact on student performance. The majority of students are studying at level 1. Achievement on computer literacy and information technology has improved significantly and is now above the national average. Retention and achievement on other level 1 programmes are good. Retention on all level 2 programmes has improved and is above national averages. Achievement on the intermediate GNVQ course was good in 2000. Although there have been significant improvements in some areas, retention and achievement on full-time courses in GCE A level computer studies and GNVQ advanced in IT are low. Achievement on GCSE computer studies remained weak in 2000.

The college should improve retention and achievement on some courses.

Revised grade: information technology 3.