

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Barnsley College

October 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

The Further Education Funding Council 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 every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge and experience in the work they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member who does not work in education and a member of staff from the college being inspected.

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are set out in the Council Circular 93/28. During their inspection, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also use a five-point grading scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – provision which has many strengths and very few weaknesses*
- grade 2 – provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses*
- grade 3 – provision with a balance of strengths and weaknesses*
- grade 4 – provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths*
- grade 5 – provision which has many weaknesses and very few strengths.*

By June 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-96

| Activity | Inspection grades | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Programme area | 9% | 59% | 29% | 3% | <1% |
| Cross-college provision | 14% | 50% | 31% | 5% | <1% |
| Overall | 12% | 54% | 30% | 4% | <1% |

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 100/97

BARNSELY COLLEGE
YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE REGION
Inspected September 1996-April 1997

Summary

Barnsley College offers a wide range of general and vocational programmes which are responsive to students' needs. Effective partnerships have been established with local schools, employers and other providers of education and training. There is a sound marketing strategy and promotional activity is effectively co-ordinated. Governors are committed to the college and have a clear view of the college's strategic direction. There is a well-defined and consultative planning cycle. The college benefits from strong leadership. Responsibilities are appropriately delegated to staff and communications across the college are good. The college is successful in meeting its targets and is in a sound financial position. There are well-managed arrangements for students' support and guidance and high standards of teaching and learning. There is a clear framework for quality assurance. Staff are appropriately qualified and flexibly deployed. Learning resources and accommodation are generally of a good standard. To build on its strengths the college should: improve its management information systems, consolidate recent initiatives relating to the development and review of policies, and address inconsistencies in tutorial provision. It should also: improve the retention of students on some courses, integrate the staff appointed from outside agencies with course teams more effectively, and improve the quality of some accommodation.

The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are given below.

| Aspects of cross-college provision | Grade |
|---|--------------|
| Responsiveness and range of provision | 1 |
| Governance and management | 2 |
| Students' recruitment, guidance and support | 1 |
| Quality assurance | 2 |
| Resources: staffing | 1 |
| equipment/learning resources | 1 |
| accommodation | 2 |

| Curriculum area | Grade | Curriculum area | Grade |
|--|--------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Science, mathematics and computing | 2 | Health and social care | 2 |
| Construction and engineering | 2 | Hair and beauty | 1 |
| Office studies | 1 | Creative arts | 2 |
| Business and management | 2 | Performing arts | 2 |
| Business (outward collaborative provision) | 2 | Humanities | 2 |
| Catering and leisure | 2 | Basic education | 2 |

INTRODUCTION

1 Barnsley College was inspected between September 1996 and April 1997. The college's induction and enrolment procedures were inspected in September 1996. Twenty-five inspectors spent 77 days in the college in February inspecting specialist subject areas. In April, seven inspectors spent 35 days in the college examining cross-college issues. In all, inspectors visited 311 classes, examined samples of students' written work and college documentation. They met college governors, college managers, staff and students, parents, employers, representatives from the Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the local authority, head teachers and other members of the wider community.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Barnsley College, a large tertiary college, was formed in 1990 through the amalgamation of Barnsley College of Technology, Barnsley College of Art and Barnsley Sixth Form College. The college is the major provider of further education in the borough, where only one school retains a sixth form. There are fourteen 11 to 16 secondary schools in the Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council area. The college's main competition comes from the TEC-funded programmes run by local training providers who attract, at 25 per cent, a high proportion of school-leavers. The college has five main sites located in Barnsley town centre: Church Street, Old Mill Lane, Huddersfield Road, Eastgate House and Honeywell. There are several other smaller buildings. It also offers programmes to the outlying communities in a wide range of outreach centres, which are known as general access points. There is another further education college within seven miles, and other large general or tertiary further education colleges within easy travelling distance at Doncaster, Wakefield and Sheffield.

3 At the time of the inspection the college forecast that in July 1997 there would be 44,547 students enrolled at the college, of whom more than 89 per cent would be over 18 years of age. Over 95 per cent of the students are funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college has developed a substantial programme of outward collaborative provision with employers and training providers. The majority of these students are from outside the Barnsley area. Forecast student numbers by age, by level of study, and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3.

4 The population of Barnsley was 220,937 at the 1991 census. The local economy has faced decline and significant change over the past two decades. In an area that was heavily dependent on the coal mining industry, the sudden closure programme has had a particularly severe impact. Recorded unemployment is high; in 1996 10.6 per cent of the working population were registered as unemployed compared with a regional rate of 7.2 per cent and a national rate of 6.9 per cent. Only

29 per cent of the 16 year old school-leavers achieve five subjects at grades C or above in the general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). This compares with the national figure of 41 per cent for England. One per cent of the population are from minority ethnic groups.

5 The principal, as chief executive, and the three directors for corporate resources, finance, and studies form the college's executive group. The director for corporate resources is also clerk to the governors. Five heads of programme area, for sciences and technology, business and humanities, expressive arts, caring services, and enterprise and marketing, report to the director of studies. The heads of curriculum support and corporate strategy also report to the director of studies. The enterprise support unit co-ordinates programmes for employers, and the team that runs the general access points organises community-based provision. The work of the programme areas is supported by counselling and guidance services, client services, marketing and school links, and by the learning technology and curriculum development units. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6 The college's mission is to be a nationally-recognised leader in the provision of high-quality education and training and, through an accessible, responsive and flexible service, to help ensure the social and economic regeneration of Barnsley. The values which permeate the college's approach are set out in statements on the educational character of the college and on environmental, equal opportunities and disability issues.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college offers a wide range of programmes and makes a substantial contribution to the achievement of national targets for education and training. The targets are used in planning and are disseminated to staff. Courses cover all 10 of the FEFC's programme areas. The range is regularly reviewed and revised. Six programmes are offered at national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 1, 32 at level 2, 21 at level 3 and four at level 4. Courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) are available in 11 vocational areas; four are provided at foundation level, eight at intermediate level and 10 at advanced level. Forty-one general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects and 34 GCSE subjects are available. Forty-three students study a GCE A level alongside their GNVQ course, although a college timetable that could help other students to combine vocational and academic studies is not established. Students can participate in extra-curricular activities, for example they take part in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, run model companies under the Young Enterprise scheme and participate in a programme of competitive and recreational sports. Some course teams organise regular outreach activities. For example, performing arts students visit local schools and community centres to stage a variety of performances.

8 Participation in college programmes by 16 year olds is low at 50 per cent, but this proportion represents an increase of 10 per cent since 1991 in the college's share of the school-leaver cohort in Barnsley. Courses timetabled at the weekend attract over 1,000 students annually. The college is open for 50 weeks each year and some short courses recruit students during the summer. Courses for adults, many of whom would not be able to attend the main sites, are provided at the general access points. Some courses are targeted at particular groups of learners who are under represented in the college. For example, one programme is specially designed for women returning to education. However, few courses are targeted at some other under-represented groups such as local, long-term unemployed men. Facilities have been developed to enable students to study at times and at places that suit them individually. Enrolments for distance learning have increased from 189 last year to 527. The learning centres at the college's main sites provide students with access to computers, learning materials, study space and support. In addition, 30 learning bases, which provide learning support of a more subject-specific nature, have been created. The college has hosted conferences on the use of these delivery methods. The science learning base has won an external Beacon award.

9 The development of substantial off-site collaborative arrangements to fund business partnerships has enabled ambitious growth targets to be met during the last three years. College figures show that, in 1995-96, 13,503 students enrolled on 213 programmes franchised for delivery by employers and private training providers. This year the provision has expanded to an anticipated 70 per cent of the college's part-time enrolments. About 40 per cent of the provision is made within the Barnsley area and the remainder is more widespread. The main elements of the provision consist of work-based NVQs, assessor training, information technology and basic skills. Some courses are highly specific to particular occupations. A work-based training unit manages these activities.

10 The college maintains effective partnerships with local schools. Its team of link tutors, each attached to a specific school, co-ordinates a range of projects. For example the 'Chrysalis Project' provides a three-week course for disaffected students from nine Barnsley schools. The college provides courses for year 10 students, including some GNVQs which are taught jointly by school and college teachers. The college also provides training in assessment procedures for school teachers, and school teachers provide training for college staff on national curriculum issues. In 1995-96, the college's construction curriculum centre, sponsored by the Construction Industry Training Board, arranged visits and project work for pupils from 12 primary schools.

11 The provision of higher education has been successfully developed. In 1993, very little was available in the Barnsley area. In 1997, the college has 1,340 full-time and part-time students enrolled on 30 courses which

are either franchised from or validated by local universities. These courses provide opportunities to many students, who would not otherwise be able to study at this level. Over 200 students study on three degree courses run in conjunction with Sheffield University. These include a degree in band studies which has a national reputation. The college runs access to higher education courses, with pathways in science, social sciences and humanities. Each year about 100 mature students who do not possess conventional qualifications enrol on these courses. There are effective links abroad with institutions of both higher and further education. For example Danish students from Neilsbrock Copenhagen Business College study units from the college's business and management degree and Barnsley students in the second year of their degree courses can spend a semester at California State University.

12 The college has successfully developed an entrepreneurial culture. Staff in the enterprise support unit liaise closely with curriculum leaders. A network of business contacts has been created and the secretary of the Barnsley Association of Training Managers is a member of the unit. A professional brochure has been produced to market courses to companies. The college has set up an educational trust and, through the trust, a holding group of three companies, which acts as a commercial arm for the college. Over the last 18 months turnover of around £1 million has been achieved from full-cost courses.

13 Each year 1,200 full-time students undertake work experience, approximately half organised by a liaison officer using the Trident charity scheme and half organised independently by curriculum areas. These activities mainly attract students studying vocational courses; less than 10 per cent of the students studying GCE A level subjects participate. In order to ensure that students benefit fully from the experience, a manual of guidance on good practice and a scheme to accredit the skills which students gain are planned to be introduced in the next session. The enterprise unit is currently creating a database of companies in order to improve the management and co-ordination of all the various contacts with employers. The engineering section has an effective employer board which enables employers to advise on the engineering provision in the college; however, few other curriculum areas involve employers in this way.

14 There are good working relationships with the local TEC and other bodies involved with local economic and social regeneration. The chief executive of the TEC is a member of the college corporation and there are regular meetings between senior managers of the college and the TEC. A joint strategic statement has been published. The college is involved in TEC-funded projects. A partnership of the college, the TEC and the local authority has resulted in 70 students enrolling on modern apprenticeships at the college. The college is a member of the local chamber of commerce and is represented on the Business Education Partnership. Money from

the competitiveness fund, City Challenge, TEC and other sources is supporting the 'Virtual College', a project to enable the college's learning materials to be made available to distant users through information technology and cable television.

15 The college has a sound marketing strategy. Marketing activity is managed by the marketing and enterprise manager and is organised within three units: marketing and enterprise, client services and corporate information. Publicity and promotional activities are effectively co-ordinated and are produced within a centrally-designed set of standards and procedures. Publicity material at college and programme levels is well designed. Some course leaflets are of poorer quality. Imaginative promotional activities include sponsorship of the local football club and collaboration with a high street bank. The college has collaborated with five other South Yorkshire colleges in the joint promotion of courses. The college works with the chamber of commerce and the TEC to collect and analyse training and employment needs. The needs analysis in the college's strategic plan is comprehensive and analytical. Important issues, for example low participation and long-term unemployment, are identified and clear objectives are set.

16 Equality of opportunity is a central feature of the aims and principles that underpin the educational character of the college. An equal opportunities policy statement is in place and has been reviewed. The equal opportunities committee receives reports on the monitoring of practice and determines appropriate action. There has been staff development on equal opportunities issues. A policy to counter personal harassment has been introduced and complaints are monitored. The college works with other agencies in responding to the needs of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are links with the three special schools in Barnsley. Programmes are provided for up to 150 learners with moderate to severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities; about 20 students with mental health problems attend the college each year. However, the scale of this provision is small in relation to the size of the college's catchment area.

17 There are good links with European and other countries. These are well developed in business, management, catering, health and also in the performing arts, where there have been joint public performances of plays with Harbor College California, preceded by rehearsals that were assisted by video conferencing. Between 150 and 200 college students, but including only a few studying modern languages, participate in exchanges each year. A modern foreign language is available as enrichment to students on GNVQ courses but take-up is modest. A college strategic objective is to promote European and international work and a European curriculum unit has been set up. The latest report from the unit indicates that many areas of the college have still to develop a commitment to this work. The college anticipates it will receive a total of £352,000 from the European Social Fund this year for a wide range of courses and projects.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

18 The 12 members of the corporation possess a wide range of appropriate expertise and experience. There are six independent governors, two co-opted members, one staff governor, one member nominated by community bodies, a representative of the TEC and the principal. There are currently no vacancies. Three governors are women. Governors have experience of, for example, senior management, personnel, education, and community activity. The chief executive and the chair of the corporation are members of the councils of the FEFC and the Association of Colleges, respectively. Governors undertake induction activities and a programme of training events. Recent events have covered curriculum issues, benchmarking, and inspection. Attendance is good at corporation meetings. Members are set personal objectives for attendance at meetings and for contributing to aspects of governance, for example strategic planning. Their performance is reviewed against these objectives. Governors have established a code of conduct and a register of interests. They are committed to the college and have a clear view of its strategic direction. They have set targets for college performance which include, for example, the amount of income to be retained, and the growth in the number of students at the college.

19 The corporation meets five times a year and is supported in its work by 11 committees which have clear terms of reference. Meetings are efficiently managed and well supported by financial and other reports. The college council, which has 60 members, is a committee of the corporation. It includes five governors, has members drawn from a wide range of organisations external to the college and acts as a consultative forum on strategic planning matters. It also plays a key part in the annual general meeting of the college where members of the public are invited to discuss the progress and future priorities of the college. A governor sits on the college's health and safety committee and the corporation, which receives relevant reports from the committee, expects to receive its first comprehensive report on health and safety matters in June 1997. There are no student members of the corporation. The corporation's joint consultative committee, which includes student members, is designed to meet annually and deal with student matters. Owing to difficulties in ensuring students' attendance it has never met.

20 The management structure of the college is well understood by staff. There are clear lines of responsibility and accountability. The large size of the college has led to a considerable degree of managerial responsibility and autonomy being devolved to the heads of programme areas, some of whom have additional cross-college roles. There are weekly meetings of the executive group and monthly meetings of the whole management team. Discussion in these meetings was observed to be open and wide ranging and included consideration of future options for the college. Strong leadership at senior level provides the college with a clear sense of purpose

and direction. There are also examples of conscientious leadership at middle management level, for example in engineering, business, art and design, and health and social care.

21 Academic affairs are overseen by the academic board which is chaired by the principal and meets six times a year. The majority of the 18 members are elected by the staff as their representatives; the heads of programme area are also board members. The minutes of meetings demonstrate good attendance, and show that a broad range of academic issues are discussed and that appropriate action is taken. For example, in response to concerns about some poor retention rates, a working party was set up and the recommendations influenced the construction of subsequent operational plans. However, not all cases are considered as quickly; a working group was only recently established to consider more effective teaching and learning methods in mathematics after three years of poor results.

22 Effective communication across the college is maintained through an extensive cycle of meetings. The chief executive's weekly briefings with senior managers are cascaded through heads of programme area to programme leaders in meetings that are held later in the same week. Programme leaders in turn are able to address their own course teams in a college 'meetings hour' on a Thursday morning and at other points during the week. Support staff meet formally with their line managers, usually on a weekly basis. A weekly college newsletter is distributed to all staff; it contains amongst other matters the times of surgeries to be held by the chief executive on different days of the week. The chief executive also holds end-of-term briefings at the different sites. He is regularly briefed on matters relating to outward collaborative provision. The minutes of meetings are well documented and action points are clearly identified. Programme leaders are represented on all the major cross-college groups and meet as a group every fortnight.

23 The strategic planning process is consultative. The annual cycle starts with the consideration of the college's broad aims by representatives of the corporation and senior staff. Managers make contributions at the next stage during a whole-college planning day, linking their own objectives to the broad strategic aims already formulated. Operating plans, with key targets and timescales, are finalised in the early summer and then combined into a whole-college plan. The 1996-97 plans include an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Each plan receives a mid-year review, starting with the programme area plans and ending with the overall college plan. The 1996-99 strategic plan is comprehensive and contains a summary of the progress made in meeting objectives. An executive summary of this plan, listing the major operating targets for 1996-97, is made available to the community and other groups.

24 A new register of college policies has been organised into three principal categories: students, management, and human resources.

College managers now have assigned responsibilities that cover all major policies. In most cases, there are written procedures to underpin the policies. A revised formal framework for the development and review of policies, including a policy control sheet, has recently been approved by the corporation. It is too early to assess its effectiveness.

25 The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 was £15.84 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges over the same period was £18.13 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6. The finance and policy committee of the governors, which meets monthly, receives detailed management accounts at each meeting and the chief executive and chair of corporation discuss cashflow weekly. There is significant delegation of the budget down to programme leader level. Financial allocations to programme areas are negotiated with heads of areas according to their overall curriculum plans and unit targets; currently the plans are not fully costed. Funds are allocated, using a formula, at three points in the financial year. To support the efficient use of resources these funds are adjusted according to the enrolments achieved. A pilot programme of unit costing is being run in two programme areas this year. If successful, the model will be applied across the college for the year 1997-98.

26 The college recognises its heavy reliance on FEFC funds which comprise over 80 per cent of total income. A high proportion of these funds comes from outward collaborative provision. The college is considering the implications of reduced unit funding for this type of activity. With corporation approval, it is on target to build its general reserve to £4 million by 1999. Since incorporation the college has also been able to repay its deficit of over £2 million to the local education authority (LEA). An annual development fund has been established to promote initiatives in enterprise, research and the development of new courses. Value-for-money initiatives include the college assembling its own computers to an agreed specification, and the central purchase of items such as stationery and furniture.

27 The college undertook a major review of its management information systems in 1996. There is now a much stronger emphasis on liaising with the different user groups and improvements have been made, for example computer terminals have been sited in staff rooms. Significant weaknesses remain in the information that is made available to college managers. Many of the self-assessment reports written by college managers to support the inspection process identified such weaknesses. Much of the computerised data on students' achievements, presented to the inspectors, were found to be inconsistent with data held by course teams. Some of the reports that outline the achievements of students present an overall profile of achievement that is more favourable to the college than can be supported by the evidence. For example, the college compares the achievements of

students on its GNVQ courses with national averages which have been compiled from a different interpretation of pass rates. The number of guided learning hours received by students on outward collaborative provision is not routinely recorded and monitored; some students do not receive the number of hours planned. Figures on student numbers provided at different times to support the inspection varied significantly from one set to another.

28 Since incorporation the college has consistently met or exceeded its enrolment and unit targets. In 1995-96 for example, unit targets were exceeded by 10 per cent. Course teams monitor retention at course level. However, the aggregate figure for part-time continuation for 1994-95 has not yet been agreed with the FEFC and the figure of 97.9 per cent, as shown in the 1995-96 FEFC performance indicators, is currently subject to a credibility query. The college has a strategic objective to improve retention across the college by 9.2 per cent over the next three years. The college has recognised that there is a need to improve its procedures for the central recording of students who leave courses. Information on the destinations of students is collected at course level but currently there is little analysis of the data. The college, in its self-assessment report, recognises that the monitoring of retention and destinations and management information systems is in need of further development.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

29 The college has strong links with partner schools which enable effective guidance to be provided for students in their choice of studies. Members of a centrally co-ordinated team of 20 link tutors visit schools regularly to provide guidance on both an individual and group basis. An extensive programme of events enables students to build up a knowledge of the college and its courses before they enrol. Applicants from elsewhere receive information and guidance from the college's client services team, which includes a central admissions unit that administers the applications process. All applicants receive impartial information and guidance before they are interviewed by specialist staff from the vocational areas. The client services team is assisted by a team of duty tutors. These tutors are based in the learning centres, which are accessible to members of the public as well as to existing students. Pre-enrolment guidance is also available in the general access points. Students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the pre-enrolment guidance they received.

30 When students have enrolled, a well-structured induction process helps them to settle into the college. During the induction period, representatives from the college's counselling service and client services visit student groups to tell them about the support that is available. Tutors also conduct individual interviews with students. The extent to which they use the students' records of achievement and start to draw up action plans with students varies significantly. There are separate induction sessions for part-time evening students. These are usually held

immediately before their normal classes. All full-time and part-time students receive 'The Knowledge', a comprehensive loose-leaf ring binder of information about the college. In a survey, 90 per cent of students said they were aware of their rights and responsibilities. The college has a clear policy and procedures for the accreditation of prior learning and some students are given exemption from elements of their courses as a result of such activity. However, few students make use of this opportunity.

31 The client services team provides a focal point for student support. It is conveniently situated near a learning centre, the careers suite and the counselling service and provides students with: a high level of practical support including advice that has been agreed with the local job centre on benefits; appropriate financial support; and a list of local accommodation. The college's personal counselling service is provided by three full-time and two part-time counsellors, who see about 60 clients a week. The service is well advertised, accessible, and highly regarded by students. Counselling is also available out of hours by telephone. There has been a steady increase in the take-up of the service. The counselling team is integrated with other college services and provides training sessions for personal tutors. Some tutors have gained counselling qualifications. A sexual health and advice service, available for two hours each week, employs trained professionals and was used by almost 300 students last year.

32 The college aims to provide all new students with an assessment of their skills in literacy and numeracy and to offer relevant additional support. After an initial screening test, students undertake a more detailed assessment with their subject teacher, and appropriate support is arranged in conjunction with specialist basic skills tutors. This may be provided in a learning centre or by tutors working alongside teachers in the classroom. Effective links between teachers and tutors enable students to receive support which is relevant to the course that they are studying. A number of teachers have completed training in the teaching of basic skills. The college has achieved the Basic Skills Agency kitemark for its work in this area. However, some students are reluctant to use the service, and in 1996-97 less than half of the full-time students took the screening test. Some students had to wait too long before the support was made available to them. The support needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are carefully assessed before they start their courses. Specialist support is provided for students who have sensory impairments and for those who have dyslexia. Teachers receive useful guidelines and training to help them modify their teaching approaches appropriately.

33 Students are entitled to tutorial support. Full-time students receive two hours of support each week from a designated personal tutor. Students on substantial part-time courses are also allocated a personal tutor who conducts individual reviews of their progress. Those who attend for less than 180 hours a year have access to a duty tutor and a telephone helpline. The duty tutors report that their services are well used by part-time

students, for example those seeking careers and higher education advice. Tutorials for full-time students comprise both individual and group tutorials. The group tutorial entitlement, specified in the handbook for tutors, includes elements of personal and social development such as health awareness, careers guidance and money management. The college is aware that good practice in the delivery of group tutorials is not consistent across the college, and has taken steps to improve the situation. A co-ordinating group has been set up to support group tutors and encourage good practice. Training events have been held, targets for improvement established and appropriate teaching resources are being developed.

34 Students review their progress regularly with their teachers. They have a minimum entitlement, which is often considerably exceeded, of one individual review a term. Reviews are accompanied by appropriate recording and action planning. In many cases, the parents of 16 to 19 year olds are kept informed about progress by means of reports, letters and consultation evenings. The college's record of achievement is widely used. It is issued, in computer disk form, to full-time and part-time students. Students can use their record of achievement to record progress made in gaining qualifications in key skills. Sessions are held to introduce students to the key skills scheme and useful guidelines are issued to tutors and students. The record of achievement forms a central focus for individual reviews on many courses, although it is underused on others. Guidance is issued to teachers on the monitoring of students' attendance and the procedures for following up absences. Teachers in many programme areas implement these rigorously, but such good practice is not consistent across the college.

35 Careers and higher education guidance is provided jointly by college tutors and careers advisers from Lifetime Careers, with whom the college has a service level agreement. The partnership is effective, and is enhanced by the linking of each programme area with a named careers adviser. In the year ending April 1997, members of the careers service conducted 1,700 individual interviews and 380 sessions with small groups. In surveys, students express a high level of satisfaction with the service they receive. The college has established a staff-development programme to support this activity. Careers resources in learning centres and the client services area are of good quality. Applicants to higher education benefit from a centrally co-ordinated programme which includes a cross-college calendar of events and guidance and staff development for reference writing. There is also a helpful booklet that guides students through the process of making applications.

36 Students' views are systematically sought through questionnaires, and students comment that the college has introduced a number of changes as a result of concerns that they have expressed. Quality circles, facilitated by the college, enable students to suggest ways of improving their learning

environment. Costed proposals are presented to a panel of managers for approval. A sum of up to £500 is available to each quality circle and a number of improvements have been implemented. The students' association provides an extra source of support, mainly to higher education students. It organises a 'freshers' week' to supplement the college's induction programme, social activities such as the summer ball, and eight sports teams. In addition to the college's support services many students turn to the students' association for help and advocacy. The college employs a full-time liaison officer to assist the students' association.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

37 Strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses in 66 per cent of the teaching and learning sessions inspected. This is slightly higher than the national figure of 63 per cent for all lessons observed during the 1995-96 inspection programme according to the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. In 8 per cent of the lessons the weaknesses clearly outweighed the strengths, which is the same as the national figure. The average attendance in the classes inspected was 76 per cent. In languages and in basic education the attendance rates were low, at 60 per cent, but in classes in business and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities attendances were good at over 90 per cent. Attendance rates were poor on GNVQ foundation and GCSE courses at 59 and 57 per cent, respectively, and significantly higher at 80 per cent on GCE A level and both the GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses. The average class size was 10.2 students and ranged from six in basic education to 14 in business and management. The following table summarises the grades awarded to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

| Programmes | Grade 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Totals |
|-------------------|----------------|------------|-----------|-----------|----------|---------------|
| GCE A level | 9 | 26 | 12 | 2 | 0 | 49 |
| GCSE | 1 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 13 |
| GNVQ | 11 | 19 | 18 | 4 | 0 | 52 |
| NVQ | 11 | 20 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 37 |
| Basic education | 16 | 25 | 16 | 5 | 0 | 62 |
| Other vocational | 14 | 31 | 17 | 6 | 1 | 69 |
| Other | 3 | 12 | 8 | 6 | 0 | 29 |
| Total | 65 | 140 | 80 | 25 | 1 | 311 |

38 Teachers have established effective working relationships with students which promote learning. They generally displayed up-to-date subject knowledge. Course planning was generally thorough. Schemes of work usually specified the methods to be used. The better schemes indicated that the overall balance of a course had been carefully considered;

they incorporated, for example, work experience, European visits and an appropriate mix of theoretical, practical and assessed activity. Individual lessons were usually well planned and managed effectively. In the better lessons, the objectives of a session were clearly indicated at the beginning and linked to previous work. Whilst lesson plans were available, they sometimes failed to indicate teaching methods sufficiently clearly or the resources that were to be used. Assignment briefs were of an appropriate standard. In some cases, there were clear proforma which specified assessment criteria and provided space for the teacher's comments on the quality of the student's work. Whilst many course teams had established schedules of work for the students, in some cases the lack of such schedules resulted in an unbalanced workload for students.

39 Course files in science were well maintained and included detailed teaching plans. Students spoke highly of the support given to them by teachers both informally and in the learner base. The best teaching sessions used a variety of methods which consistently maintained students' interest. Practical activity reinforced specific learning that had been achieved in theory lessons. Much of the students' written work was marked constructively with omissions and corrections clearly described on their scripts. The less well organised lessons suffered from too much dictation of notes and poor use of teaching aids. For example, a video was allowed to run for an hour of a three-hour session without a break for comment or discussion.

40 Teaching of mathematics included lucid exposition of mathematical principles. There was a systematic approach to homework and to the review of students' progress. Students were able to gain additional help in the mathematics learner base or the mathematics workshop, where teachers provided valuable support. Students benefited from clear objectives, but there was insufficient use of teaching aids such as the use of the overhead projector, graphical calculators, and information technology. Practical work and assignments in computing classes were well designed and many related closely to practice in business and industry. On some courses good use was made of group work and student presentations to develop interpersonal skills. Teaching booklets produced by the college's learning technology unit helped mature students to work effectively, each studying at a pace that suited the individual. On the outward collaborative provision, students learning to use a range of office software received helpful and competent support from their teachers. However, students were not receiving the planned number of guided learning hours and review procedures to ensure that students were making appropriate progress were poorly developed.

41 Standards in the teaching of construction varied widely. Practical activities incorporated careful tracking of students' achievements and teachers were able to combine good working relationships with sound class management. The development of key skills was often integrated with lessons and assignments. Assignments were supported by

appropriate marking schemes and usually gave clear instructions about the levels of achievement that were expected of students. Many classroom sessions lacked a variety of teaching approaches; teachers did not instill enthusiasm in students and too few checks were made on their understanding of the topics being covered. Teaching strategies did not always meet the needs of student groups when individuals were working on different activities and progressing at different rates. A small number of teachers had prepared poorly for the classes they taught.

42 The teaching of engineering was thoroughly planned. Good use was made of the overhead projector, of well-presented handouts and other teaching aids. Teachers checked on students' learning through questioning or closely-supervised short tasks. In practical classes, teachers coped confidently with groups containing students from a wide ability range. Students' progress and achievements were closely monitored and students were made aware of any remedial action that was needed. All courses included timetabled periods in the engineering learner base, where students were required to study on their own under the supervision of a teacher. In one such session a student who had enrolled late was revising some missed theory, whilst others were tackling different practical assignments. Teachers often used computer-based learning to support their theory classes. In an appreciable minority of sessions, teachers did not exert sufficient control, were poorly prepared or lacked confidence in their subject. In some sessions the resources used restricted the students' experience. Outward collaborative teaching of engineering benefited from experienced and knowledgeable teachers, and from equipment and learning materials that were of good quality.

43 In business and management classes concepts were explained with clarity. In management classes teachers effectively drew upon the students' experience of work to illustrate points, and enhance the collective learning experience. Good use was made of teaching aids. Overhead projector transparencies, for example, were of a high standard and were used in conjunction with pre-printed notes issued to students. Group work was not always effectively managed. In some instances tasks were too difficult and assumed a level of background knowledge that the students did not possess. Teaching and learning in administration and secretarial courses were of high quality. Sessions were effectively planned and well documented. Staff sought to achieve high standards by using a variety of strategies to maintain the interest and motivation of students. Teaching was purposeful and supported by appropriate assessment activities. Feedback to students was regular and constructive and assisted students' learning.

44 Teachers on the short course collaborative programmes in business had appropriate industrial experience and possessed sound subject knowledge. They had established a good rapport with their students and were able to respond confidently to questions and issues raised in discussion. In some cases banks of learning materials were used to support

learning. During a session on equal opportunities, for example, information packs on legislation and related case studies were provided for each participant. In some cases students were provided with few opportunities or facilities to take notes. On programmes delivered in the workplace leading to NVQs and assessor qualifications, the failure of some providers to maintain appropriate records meant it was not always possible to determine whether the planned guided learning hours were being used appropriately. In one case only a single day's formal training had been provided over a period of eight months for company staff to gain assessor awards.

45 Vocational programmes in catering and hospitality were well planned and met the awarding body requirements and national standards for assessment. An enthusiastic team of teachers managed learning situations confidently. Full-time students were provided with work experience and opportunities for European work. The realistic work environments in college, for example in the college's restaurants, were well managed to provide appropriate practical and supervisory experience. Some learning materials were inappropriate for students on the lower level programmes. Programmes in sport and leisure included an appropriate balance of practical and theoretical activity. Work experience was a feature of all programmes and a new travel centre supported by a national travel company is under development to give students practical experience in the college. Students' workloads were poorly scheduled on some courses and some of the teachers' annotations on students' assignments, particularly at GCE A level, were perfunctory.

46 Students' experiences at work were used successfully in health and social care. In one class, for example, an exposition of the physical changes related to ageing drew on the knowledge of those students working in care homes for the elderly. Searching question and answer sessions ascertained and developed the students' knowledge and understanding, although, in some cases, not all students contributed effectively. A feature of childcare classes was an interactive approach to learning with good opportunities for students to participate in debate and discussion. The attention paid to students' written work was less consistent; comments were often insufficient to provide helpful pointers for improvement. High standards of practical work were attained in hair, beauty and fitness sessions. Teachers challenged the students to evaluate and improve their technical skills. Effective use was made of teaching aids, including videos, which were supported by good-quality, informative handouts. Work booklets were used to test the students' understanding of underpinning theory and practice.

47 Courses in art and design were well planned by knowledgeable and experienced teachers who worked well together. In some lessons, such as those on GNVQ programmes, there was close co-operation with the staff who were providing additional learning support in numeracy and literacy.

Teachers were proficient at relating the activities to be undertaken with those of previous lessons and setting tasks in context. Particularly well structured tasks were set for students on the GNVQ intermediate course. Many, but not all, teachers were effective in meeting the different needs of students in the same group. A few lessons were pitched at too high a level and students struggled to complete the work. There were several examples of excellent teaching in performing arts, media and music classes. However, some classes were poorly planned and delivered and, in some cases, insufficient thought was given to matching the planned activity to the accommodation available.

48 Work with small groups of students was used effectively in the teaching of English. The tasks set were appropriate and sometimes challenged the students considerably. Teaching was enthusiastic, stimulating a high level of interest in students, while focusing appropriately on examination requirements. Students used clear guidance notes on assessment methods and the grading of their work. A positive feature of modern languages teaching at all levels was the extensive use of the language being studied. Most sessions made effective use of learning aids; in one productive session in the language learning centre, a group of students from a variety of secretarial courses worked on their own at their chosen language, using tapes, videos, satellite television or textbooks, as appropriate. Overall, there were too few opportunities for group or paired work, and teachers did too much of the work themselves, thus limiting the contributions made by students. In other humanities subjects, teaching was well prepared and technically competent. Relationships between staff and students were invariably constructive. Learning activities, particularly in GCE A level lessons, were sometimes dominated too much by teachers and the extent to which students were required to make their own notes, independent of the teacher's guidance, varied considerably.

49 Effective support for students, including those with dyslexia and visual impairment, was a feature of basic skills provision. Students' records were comprehensive and there were sound learning schemes and course documentation. However, insufficient distinction was made between students with basic skills needs and those with learning difficulties. Students in the latter category did not always learn effectively in the open learning workshop. In a number of sessions, teachers failed to cater effectively for the wide ability range, from entry level to GCSE. In the community outreach programme, there was a good range of accreditation opportunities, programmes were well designed and sessions well managed. Careful attention was paid to building students' confidence and there were many opportunities for students to work at their own pace and level. An inspection by the college of the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities had revealed significant weaknesses. Restructuring has taken place but has not yet significantly affected the quality of teaching. Whilst some sessions were well prepared and included a variety of activities which sustained students' interest,

many sessions failed to challenge students sufficiently or extend their skills, knowledge and understanding.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

50 Students enjoyed their studies, were well motivated and attentive in class. They generally contributed well in discussion, although in some classes, for example in science and construction, a number of students were passive and only contributed when questioned directly. Students worked effectively in groups when required to do so and showed a willingness to help each other. In catering, for example, students worked well together in the exacting environment of the college's restaurant. In some cases, for example in business studies, some of the students did not possess the required level of knowledge to make good use of group work without assistance from the teacher.

51 Information technology was used to good effect on some courses. For example, students on the advanced GNVQ in construction and the built environment used digital photographs, spreadsheet analysis and wordprocessing, and their assignments were laser printed and well presented. However, on other courses such as mathematics, three-dimensional design and leisure and tourism, students made little use of information technology. High standards were maintained in much of the practical work undertaken by students. Secretarial students were particularly versatile in wordprocessing and desktop publishing; catering students prepared, cooked and served food to high standards; theatre design students produced models which were of good quality; and in hairdressing students demonstrated good technical competence. Students have recently gained national or regional success in several areas of activity, including construction crafts, hairdressing, and sporting activities. The college celebrates the individual successes of its students and staff by, for example, including details in college newsletters and issuing letters of congratulation to students and staff.

52 In 1996, 419 students aged 16 to 18 took GCE A level examinations. They scored, on average, 4.7 points per subject entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2) according to the 1996 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). This places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. In 1995, the college scored, on average, 4.1 points per entry, placing the college in the middle third of colleges. In most subjects, full-time students achieved pass rates which were at or above the national averages for students in general further education colleges. The overall pass rate, grades A to E for students aged 16 to 18 in 1996, was 83 per cent, an improvement on 78 per cent achieved in 1995. The 1996 pass rate is 9 per cent above the overall pass rate nationally for further education colleges. In 18 out of the 35 subjects taken by full-time students in 1996 the pass rates were above 90 per cent, with 13 subjects showing 100 per cent pass rates. For subjects with more than 10 students

taking the final examinations, pass rates above 95 per cent were recorded in seven subjects: sports studies, art and craft, media studies, English, French, psychology, and politics. Pass rates were below 70 per cent in three subjects: geography, mathematics and social biology.

53 Retention rates for individual GCE A level subjects vary. Overall, 77 per cent of the full-time students who started GCE A levels in 1994 sat at least one subject in 1996. For GCE A level subjects with more than 20 full-time students enrolled, the percentage of students who completed the subject compared with those originally enrolled varied from 42 per cent in social biology to 77 per cent in English.

54 In over half the GCSE subject examinations, including most of the sciences and languages, results were above the average for general further education colleges. Over 80 per cent of the students sitting the examinations obtained A to C grades in physics, single subject science, dance, French and German. However, results were poor in mathematics, where only 27 per cent of the students obtained a grade A to C, and in art, music and electronics.

55 The college did not complete the relevant documents supplied by the DfEE and therefore does not appear in the department's tables of vocational achievements. In their published information on students' achievements for 1995-96 the college records that all except one of the 222 students shown as enrolled on the final year of GNVQ courses in February of that year obtained the qualification and some of the college's promotional literature records a GNVQ achievement rate of 100 per cent. Another report produced by the college shows that, in 1996, 103 (63 per cent) of the 163 students who entered the second year of the two-year advanced level courses, and 104 (42 per cent) of the 246 students who sat at least one external test in the one-year courses at the intermediate or foundation levels obtained the full qualification. Good achievement rates, by these performance measures, were obtained in advanced level business (88 per cent) and art and design (83 per cent) and in intermediate level art and design (88 per cent) and intermediate level information technology (72 per cent). However, there were poor results on advanced level hospitality and catering, and intermediate level construction, engineering, business, and hospitality and catering where achievement rates were all below 25 per cent. Many students left these courses early. On the advanced level courses half the students who originally enrolled left before entering the second year. Thirty-two per cent of the students who enrolled on intermediate level courses and 13 per cent of those who enrolled on foundation level courses left before taking any external tests.

56 Results on advanced level national diploma courses were generally good. In sports science, animal care, and electronic engineering all students who completed the courses passed. In computing and engineering, however, the pass rates, at 19 and 38 per cent, respectively, were poor. Overall retention and pass rates on craft level courses in

construction were below the average reported in the national survey published by the FEFC inspectorate. In engineering, many of the part-time courses have good retention and pass rates. Pass rates on craft-based courses in catering and hair and beauty, and on courses leading to nursery nursing qualifications are generally good; for example pass rates of over 90 per cent were achieved in hairdressing and food preparation. In office studies pass rates are generally good; for example from over 1,400 entries in RSA Examinations Board (RSA) single subjects such as text processing, and shorthand in 1995-96, 64 per cent gained a distinction. Pass rates of 100 per cent were achieved on several courses in business studies, for example in BTEC national and higher national certificate courses and courses in management and personnel practice. There were poor pass rates, however, on the advanced accounting technician courses.

57 Achievements on courses delivered by outward collaborative provision were mixed. Students generally demonstrated enthusiasm and commitment and were able to draw effectively on their own work experiences. In business, many short course pass rates were very high. For example, of the 840 participants on basic health and safety courses in 1995-96, 826 gained an appropriate award. Achievements on the longer NVQ programmes in 1995-96 were satisfactory overall with a 79 per cent pass rate. For some programmes, for example NVQs in customer service, full completions are poor with only 35 per cent at level 3 and 15 per cent at level 2. In the case of one collaborative provider, out of the 56 registrations for NVQs up to December 1995, only three had been fully achieved at the time of the inspection. A similarly mixed picture of pass rates is evident on collaborative courses in other curriculum areas. For example short courses inspected in non-destructive testing showed high pass rates. However, on some programmes, such as one leading to information technology qualifications, students were making slow progress towards achieving the qualifications.

58 On adult basic education courses students were well motivated, absorbed by their work and usually eager to learn. Good progress was being made by many students, for example in the development of skills in information technology, and there are some individual examples of significant progression to higher level courses. About 30 per cent of students achieve satisfactory progression. Overall retention rates are good at 79 per cent. However, many students leave having achieved few or no qualifications.

59 The college records the destinations of students who achieve their intended qualifications, by level of qualification, as the following table shows.

Destinations of students as a percentage of those completing their courses in 1996

| Students leaving with the following qualifications | Number of students | Higher education (%) | Further education (%) | Employment (%) | Other (%) | Unknown (%) |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Level 1 | 84 | 0 | 73 | 9 | 7 | 11 |
| Level 2 | 308 | 0 | 74 | 17 | 4 | 5 |
| Level 3 | 621 | 46 | 35 | 9 | 4 | 6 |

QUALITY ASSURANCE

60 There is a strong emphasis on quality across the college. The strategic plan makes a commitment to the promotion of continuous quality improvement, and the college's quality manual provides a clear overview of quality assurance policies and procedures. The quality review subcommittee of the corporation receives reports on quality matters, for example an annual review of the quality strategy, and makes recommendations to the college executive and the corporation board. A quality assurance manager, who is a member of the senior management team, works with three other staff to form the quality unit, which is responsible for supporting and monitoring quality assurance activity across the college. Quality issues are highlighted in a 'Quality Matters' leaflet distributed to all staff with the college newsletter, and good practice is disseminated through the 'Excellence' newsletter circulated by the chief executive. Some aspects of the quality framework are still being developed and not all staff are fully committed to the quality policies and procedures.

61 The college charter makes a number of clear and measurable commitments to the users of the college. Students receive an introduction to the charter during induction. Separate versions are provided for the community, employers, work-based learners, and distance learners, and the charter is available in Braille, large print, and on audio tape. Charter developments take place through a well-documented consultation process, that involves students, staff, employers and members of the corporation board. A charter monitoring group meets three times a year to review the format of the charter and to evaluate performance against targets. Most staff have a clear understanding of the standards contained in the charter.

62 There is a well-structured procedure for course reviews based on a regular cycle of review, evaluation and action planning. The cycle is explained in a handbook prepared by the quality assurance unit. Course team and programme area meetings are carefully planned and minuted, and course managers meet regularly with each other and with their respective programme managers. Each team is required to keep quality logsheets, and to submit annual reports on course provision to programme area heads, the board of studies and the quality assurance unit, giving

evidence of regular review, evaluation and action planning. Most course reports are rigorous and contain detailed analyses and action plans addressing the issues that have been raised. There are some weaknesses. Some course reports lack detailed commentary, while others contain little statistical analysis. There is inconsistency in the monitoring of action plans. The board of studies receives reports on the outcomes of course monitoring, review and evaluation. There are no formal procedures for the regular auditing of courses.

63 An extensive framework for setting standards and targets, monitoring progress towards their achievement and seeking to ensure continuous improvement has been established within the college. A number of performance indicators have been introduced to inform the process of strategic monitoring and evaluation of achievement against targets. A benchmarking exercise has recently been undertaken, comparing college performance with other colleges in the further education sector. The analysis of some performance indicators, for example students' achievements, is variable. The college's use of value-added analysis is at an early stage of development. Course teams use value-added data for students' guidance, but do not use the information to analyse or evaluate performance at course level. Service sections within the college set and monitor their own standards, and complete regular reviews of their achievements against these standards, setting action plans to address issues which arise. This process is audited by an external consultant on behalf of the quality assurance unit.

64 Quality assurance procedures meet the needs of external examining and validating bodies. The college's internal verification procedures are co-ordinated by the curriculum development support unit which has been responsible for developing a GNVQ quality framework for use by programme co-ordinators. This framework has recently been extended to cover key skills and other courses. An audit of internal verification procedures carried out by the college has shown inconsistencies, and initiatives that are intended to standardise assessment and verification procedures and to share good practice are at an early stage of development. At the time of the inspection, an internal verification plan had not been implemented for all health care courses. The college places a high priority on the evaluation of external verifiers' reports. The reports are received by the principal, and weaknesses identified in external reports are carefully considered.

65 The views of students are obtained on a regular basis through informal course team meetings, tutorials, the students' association, and regular student surveys of enrolment, and early and end-of-year perceptions. The perception questionnaires are distributed to all students by course teams, and responses are analysed by subject area and aggregated for the whole college. The results of these surveys, together with the results of parent surveys, are used by course teams in the course review process. There are weaknesses in the collection of employers'

perceptions of courses. A small number of interviews are conducted each year by the college marketing and enterprise unit, and some feedback is obtained directly by course teams, but collection and analysis are not systematic.

66 There is a clear framework of quality assurance procedures for the college's outward collaborative provision. A quality assurance manual has been produced and seven quality managers and eight auditors, who are employed by one of the college companies, monitor standards of provision. Their methods include direct observation of training and the application of a grading system. Files are kept for each contractor, and records maintained of all visits. However, the absence of training records that specify the use of guided learning hours makes it difficult to ensure that students are getting their full entitlement of training, guidance, support and assessment. There were no college records showing the comments made by internal verifiers about assessed portfolios of students' work and the progress students were making towards meeting their target completion dates.

67 The college was recognised as an Investor in People in June 1995. New staff receive an induction which introduces them to the college and to their sections. A performance appraisal system was introduced for teaching and support staff during the last academic year. Appraisal includes part-time staff employed on permanent or temporary contracts; they take part on an individual or team basis. Initial training and support is provided to all appraisees and to staff with responsibility for conducting appraisals. Procedures are well documented, and highly regarded by staff. The appraisal of managers contains an element of performance-managed pay. Direct observation of teaching and learning was carried out during the period before inspection, but is not a formal part of the appraisal process.

68 There is a wide range of staff-development activity. Approximately 1.5 per cent of the total staffing budget of the college is allocated to staff development. Staff training and development is linked closely to the college's strategic plan, and recent activity has focused on college priorities for management development and teacher training. A series of collegiate training days has recently been introduced to enhance staff awareness of the strategic planning process. There is no formal strategy for professional and industrial updating.

69 The college has produced a self-assessment report under each of the inspection framework headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Working groups were set up to facilitate the production of different sections of the report, and there was a thorough process of consultation. The report clearly identified strengths and weaknesses, evidence and action plans. Judgements on strengths and weaknesses generally matched the inspection findings, although some strengths were overstated.

RESOURCES

Staffing

70 Academic staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to teach the range of subjects offered. Sixty per cent are graduates and 21 per cent possess higher technician qualifications. Sixty per cent of teachers hold teaching certificates, and a further 10 per cent have other teaching qualifications. Eighty-eight per cent of the 120 full-time teachers hold a teaching certificate. Forty-six per cent of teachers hold assessor awards and 18 per cent have verifier awards. Both technicians and facilitators are encouraged to obtain these awards and currently 24 staff are working towards them or have completed them. Thirteen teachers have additional qualifications or training to support students with specific learning difficulties. Women constitute 57 per cent of the total workforce; 53 per cent of teachers are women and they hold 34 per cent of the posts in the management structure. Fifty-one per cent of managers have a qualification in management, and currently 13 per cent are working towards such a qualification. Some academic staff have recent industrial and commercial experience. Teachers employed through outside agencies are increasing in number. They need more careful induction and integration with college procedures and course structures.

71 The college is innovative in the use of staff to support its flexible learning provision. It employs 30 facilitators who work in the learning bases and assess students' competences. Learning centres are well staffed by qualified librarians, assisted by the facilitators. Students on higher education courses are employed to work in the learning bases or enter curricular materials on the 'Virtual College' network, and other students are employed to undertake library duties. Technical support is delivered by 53 technicians, who are organised in teams to cover the programme areas and are co-ordinated centrally. Twelve activity workers are employed on a part-time basis to provide childcare at the general access points. There is a strong emphasis on teamworking between support and academic staff. Maintenance, cleaning and security are the responsibility of in-house teams, which provide responsive services.

72 Only nine staff are not on new contracts. Recruitment and selection procedures are well developed, and there are comprehensive human resource policies and procedures, for example for equal opportunities, performance management, resource planning, and conditions of service. These policies are reviewed annually. The aim has been to achieve parity of conditions for all staff on core issues such as equal opportunities, sickness and leave of absence.

Equipment/learning resources

73 Since incorporation the college has invested heavily in information technology. There is a ratio of one computer to every eight full-time equivalent students and computers are well dispersed on the main sites.

A high proportion of these computers are modern. Laptop machines are transported to the general access points when needed. It is college policy to provide each full-time teacher with a personal computer. A dedicated network serves all sites, and two compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database systems have been installed. A wide range of software can be accessed by computers connected to the Internet and electronic mail is available college wide. A 'cyber cafe' has been established for students' use. The learning materials on the 'Virtual College' computer network are of variable quality, and not yet easily accessible. In general, however, students have good access to information technology facilities.

74 Each main site has a well-resourced and attractively furnished learning centre which includes library facilities. Two centres are open on Saturdays, and one on Sundays. There are 310 study spaces available in these centres, all of which have extensive provision for information technology. A budget of £70,000 is provided for books and journals. The bookstock is enhanced by the wide range of other learning materials. Books may be borrowed through a variety of loan arrangements. Most students surveyed expressed satisfaction with book provision. In the better learning bases, facilitators work alongside students and a wide range of learning materials specific to the curriculum area is available. However, at present not all learner bases are well developed or well used. Audio-visual equipment is available and photocopying facilities are readily accessible to teachers.

75 Equipment in vocational areas is generally of a high standard and well maintained. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, equipment in the salons and treatment rooms is modern and in other areas, such as music, art, design, and performing arts there is good-quality equipment, for example in the recording studio. Construction provision is equipped with a range of industrial standard equipment and engineering courses benefit from extensive computerised design and manufacture facilities. Teaching areas in the sciences and the humanities are also well equipped with a wide range of learning materials and apparatus. All programme areas are well supplied with consumables, which form part of the annual budgetary bidding process. On courses designed for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities there is insufficient specialist equipment, and a need for basic adaptations to furniture and to some equipment. In engineering, some of the equipment, such as workshop machinery and motor vehicles, is old but serviceable.

Accommodation

76 The college's accommodation strategy has vigorously addressed the complex and dilapidated state of the accommodation that was inherited at the establishment of the tertiary college. The college now has sites located around the town centre. The construction of a new music centre has enabled the college to vacate one site. The relocation of humanities provision to a new town centre site, Eastgate House, has enabled the

college to begin a phased withdrawal from the Huddersfield Road site, which is a Grade II listed building affected by severe mining subsidence. The college has a strategic aim of providing an educational zone straddling the town centre, with a road and path infrastructure linking key sites and providing car parking facilities. The corporation has sanctioned loan finance up to £2.2 million for a phased series of developments to achieve this aim. The college is still in dispute with the local authority over two of the town sites, and faces considerable problems before being able to divest itself of the Huddersfield Road site. The 47 general access points are of mixed quality; some are excellent, but others are drab and poorly heated, and noise levels sometimes impede concentration. Sports studies students use many of the sporting facilities at the Barnsley Metrodome Centre.

77 Classrooms on the main sites are fully equipped with good-quality furniture, whiteboards, screens, and overhead projectors. Most have blinds or curtains. Many rooms have attractive displays related to the curriculum area or students' work. There is a particularly high standard of decor at the main sites, with many carpeted classrooms and corridors, and good tiling and non-slip flooring where appropriate. Laboratories and workshops are spacious and well lit. An examinations hall and conference centre is currently being created. Toilet facilities are clean and of a high standard, with regular cleaning schedules. There is an absence of litter and graffiti, and there is clear signposting in all buildings. Each site has a pleasant cafeteria area, and reception areas are welcoming. Alarm systems and security measures are good. There is nursery provision for 35 places for pre-school children, provided at the Huddersfield Road site. The provision is small and located at some distance from the main college sites. Creche facilities are available at some outreach centres.

78 Some accommodation is cramped and unsuitable, and the top floor of the Huddersfield Road site is no longer used for teaching purposes because of roof problems resulting from subsidence. Classroom accommodation at Church Street is generally sound. The college has acquired residential provision for 50 students to support its programmes of higher education. The Eastgate site is well adapted for students with disabilities. The Old Mill Lane and Church Street sites have automatic doors and ramps, and toilets for the disabled on each floor. There is ramp and a chair-lift access to the cafeteria at Honeywell, and access to part of the ground floor at Huddersfield Road. Toilet facilities for disabled people are insufficient on some sites. Access for those with restricted mobility is limited at Fairfield House, and some classrooms are not easily accessible to them at Church Street.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

79 Barnsley College is making significant progress towards achieving its mission to provide high-quality education and training, and a responsive and flexible service. Its strengths include:

- the wide range of general and vocational programmes
- effective partnerships with local schools, employers, and other providers of education and training
- committed governors who have a clear view of the college's strategic direction
- the well-defined and consultative strategic planning cycle
- the strong leadership, effective communications and appropriate delegation of responsibilities to staff
- the well-managed and effective arrangements for the recruitment, guidance and support of students
- the generally high standards of teaching and learning, especially in office studies and hair and beauty
- the clear framework for quality assurance
- flexibly-deployed and appropriately-qualified staff
- good learning resources that include extensive computing facilities and equipment of high standard in many curriculum areas
- the accommodation which is generally of a good standard.

80 If the college is to build on these strengths, it should:

- improve management information, in particular at the programme area level
- continue to address inconsistencies in the tutorial provision
- improve retention rates on some courses
- achieve better integration of agency teaching staff with course teams
- improve the utilisation of some rooms, the access to some areas by students with restricted mobility and improve the quality of some accommodation.

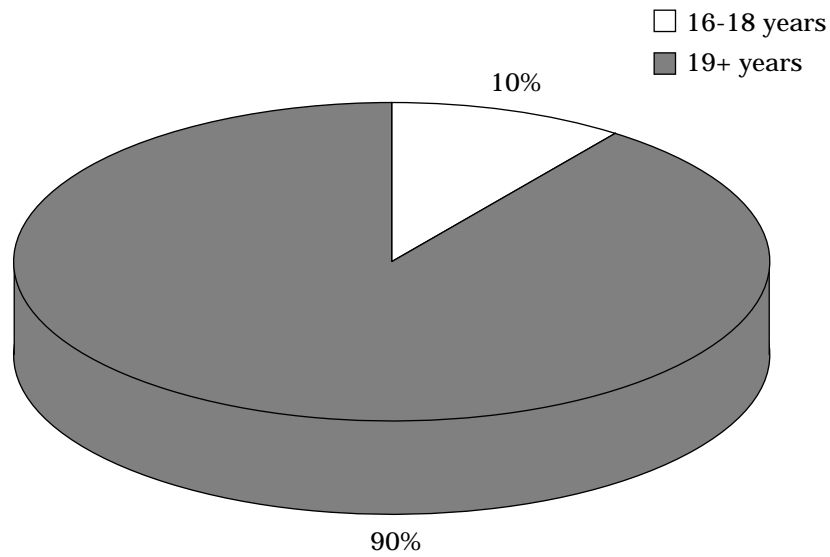
FIGURES

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|---|---|
| 1 | Percentage forecast student numbers by age (as at July 1997) |
| 2 | Percentage forecast student numbers by level of study (as at July 1997) |
| 3 | Forecast student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1997) |
| 4 | Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996) |
| 5 | Income (for 12 months to July 1996) |
| 6 | Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996) |
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Note: the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

Figure 1

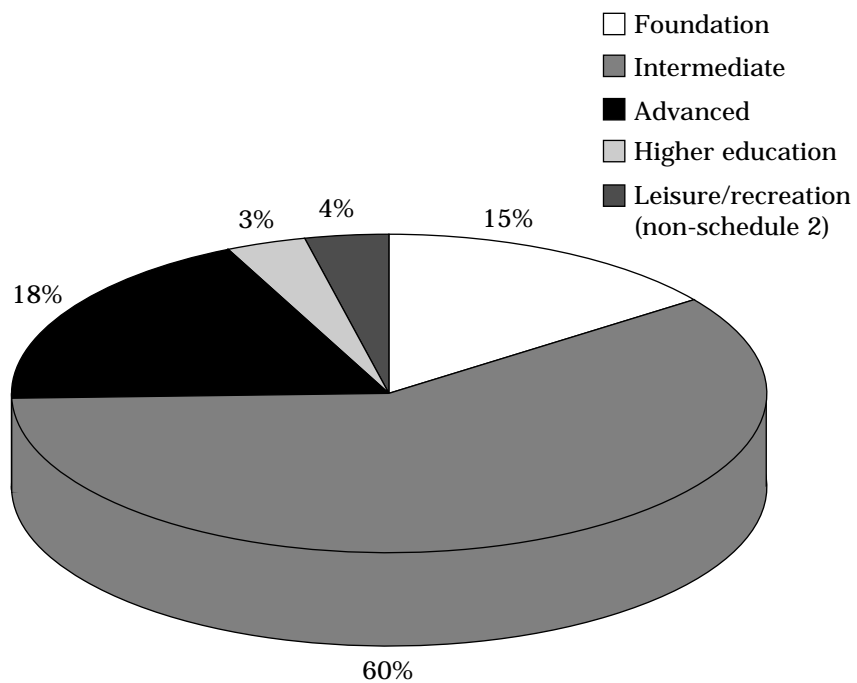
Barnsley College: percentage forecast student numbers by age (as at July 1997)



Student numbers: 44,547

Figure 2

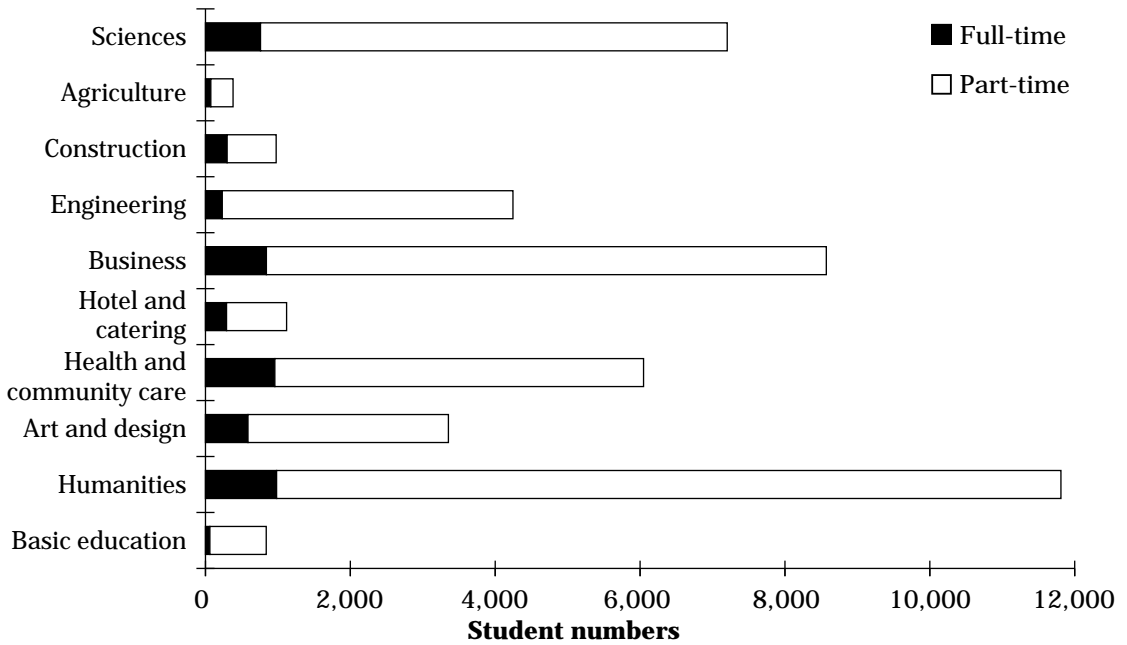
Barnsley College: percentage forecast student numbers by level of study (as at July 1997)



Student numbers: 44,547

Figure 3

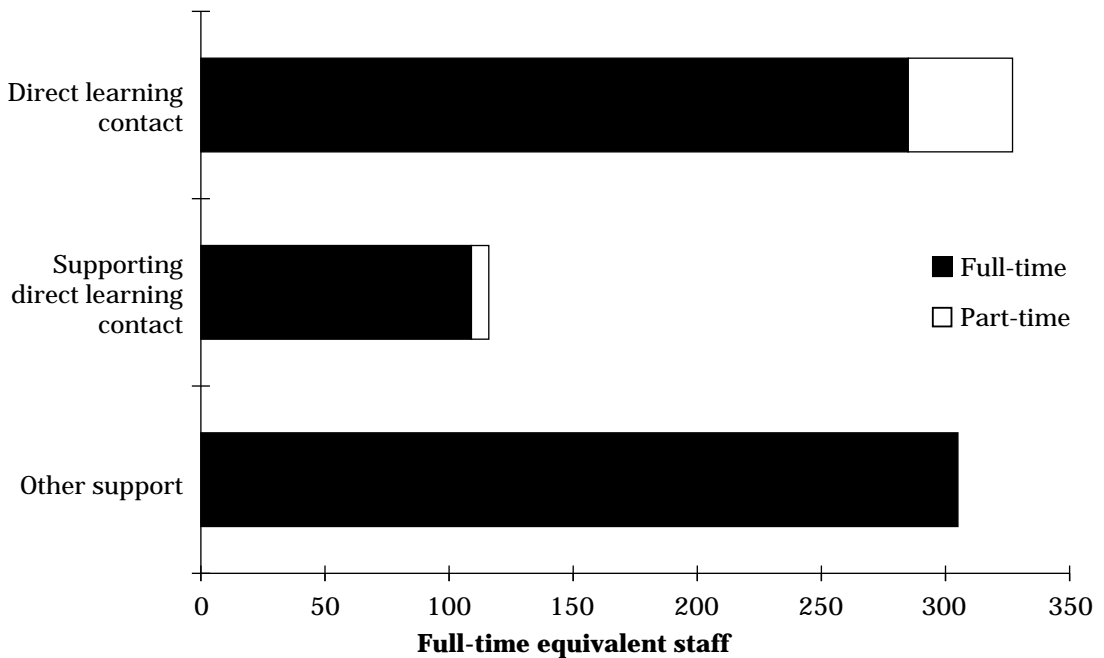
Barnsley College: forecast student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at July 1997)



Student numbers: 44,547

Figure 4

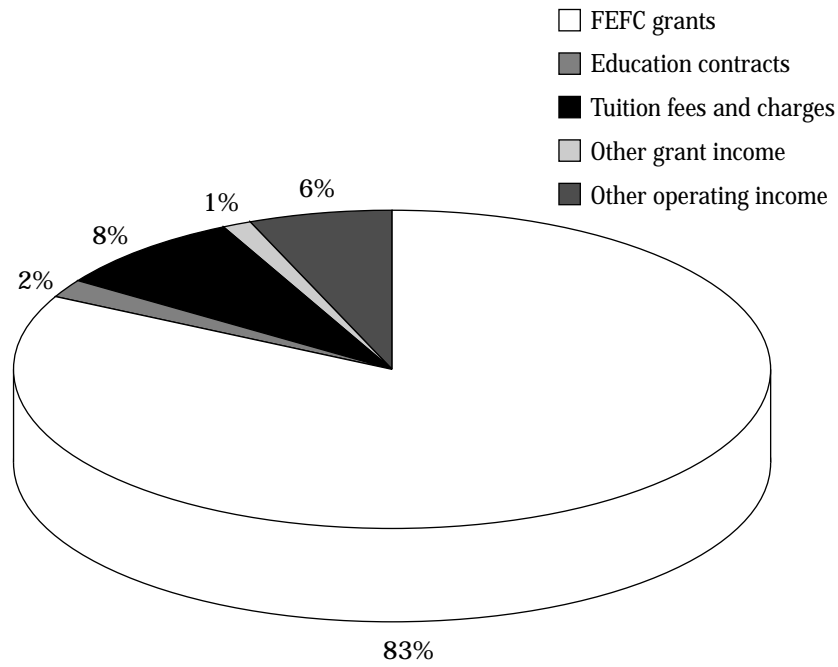
Barnsley College: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at November 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 748

Figure 5

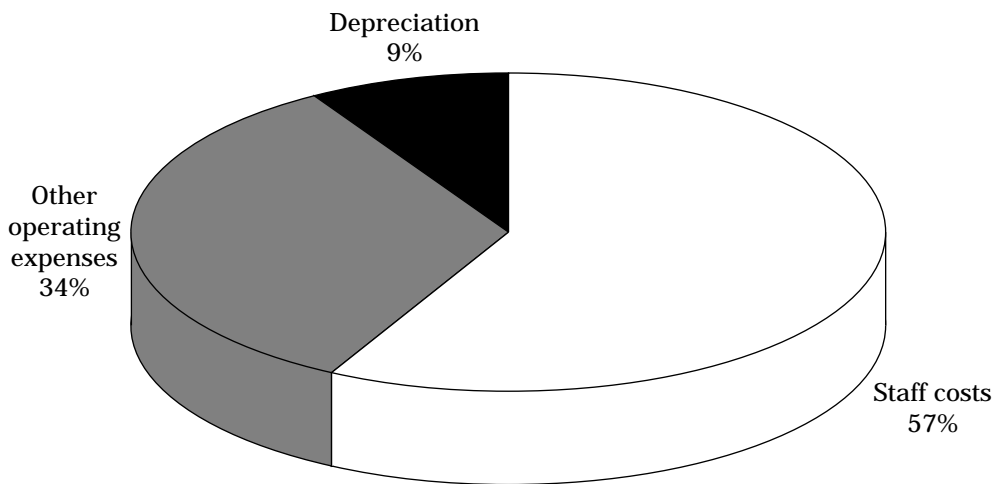
Barnsley College: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £22,848,000

Figure 6

Barnsley College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £22,971,000

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