

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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# **Bede College**

**June 1995**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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## **THE FURTHER EDUCATION 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 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.*

### **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.*

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 68/95

## BEDE COLLEGE

### NORTHERN REGION

Inspected September 1994–February 1995

#### Summary

Bede College, Billingham, is a small college which sets out to cater primarily for 16-19 year old students aiming for academic qualifications. It provides a range of GCE A level subjects and six courses leading to GNVQs. The college is well managed and lines of communication are effective. The governing body, the staff and students work well together in a harmonious community. The target set for student recruitment last year was not achieved but this year there has been a considerable improvement and the college is likely to meet its target for units of activity. The staff are well qualified, committed and enthusiastic. Students receive good academic and pastoral support through a well-established personal-development programme. Standards of teaching and classroom management are high. Students are punctual, attend regularly and achieve good results in external examinations. Most students entering the college aim to enter higher education and many are successful in achieving this. There is no over-arching quality assurance system but the separate constituent parts which are in operation work well. Accommodation has a well cared for interior but there are problems with flat roofs and the exterior wall cladding. The college should: establish targets for adult recruitment; monitor the effectiveness of the strategic plan; improve and extend the use of the management information system; develop a more comprehensive quality assurance system; make greater use of market research; improve the development of students' core skills; attend to the poor condition of the external fabric of the building; and improve access for wheelchair users to some of the college.

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

<b>Aspects of cross-college provision</b>		<b>Grade</b>
Responsiveness and range of provision		2
Governance and management		2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		1
Quality assurance		3
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	2
	accommodation	3

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Mathematics and computing	2	English and communication studies	2
Biology, chemistry, design technology and physics	2	Foreign languages, geography, history, politics, psychology, sociology and theology	2
Business	3		

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# CONTENTS

	<b>Paragraph</b>
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	2
Responsiveness and range of provision	7
Governance and management	19
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	30
Teaching and the promotion of learning	40
Students' achievements	50
Quality assurance	60
Resources	68
Conclusions and issues	81
Figures	

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 Bede College was inspected between September 1994 and February 1995. Twelve inspectors spent a total of 44 inspector days in the college, 18 of which were spent on specialist subject inspections and 26 on aspects of cross-college provision. Inspectors observed 64 classes, examined samples of students' work and held discussions with governors, managers, teaching staff, support staff and students. They met with local employers, and representatives from local schools, universities, the community and the Teesside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 Bede College, established in 1972, is the second smallest sixth form college in England. It serves Billingham, a town bounded by the river Tees to the south, the A19 to the west, the A689 to the north and the North Sea to the east. The population is approximately 35,000. The development of the town accelerated in the 1960s after the arrival of ICI's Fertilizer Division. The recent decline in the chemical industry has had an adverse effect on local employment. Economic prospects are, however, improving. For example the local KP Foods factory is expanding, a high technology park has been established and Samsung has announced the opening of a new factory which will create up to 3,000 jobs.

3 The college is on an open-plan site with Billingham Campus School and Low Grange Junior and Infant Schools. The college building dates from the late 1950s when it was a secondary modern school. It has its own fields and has the use of the extensive facilities of the Billingham Campus School, which include a swimming pool. It has recently developed a small number of courses leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs). Students choose to come to the college because they value the particular characteristics offered by a small institution with a reputation for good academic results and a caring atmosphere.

4 In October 1994, the college had 356 full-time students and 15 part-time students. Enrolments by age and level are shown in figures 1 and 2, and by mode of attendance and curriculum area in figure 3. There were 29 full-time and seven part-time teaching members of staff, seven full-time and 10 part-time members of support staff, and two foreign language assistants. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents is shown in figure 4. The senior management team consists of the principal, the vice-principal, the senior teacher and the finance officer. The principal and vice-principal are also members of a team of section heads, each of whom is responsible for the progress and guidance of a group of students.

5 The college recruits primarily from three 11-16 schools in Billingham. It is also, increasingly, attracting students from the neighbouring districts of Norton and Stockton, two special schools and a special unit in a 11-16 school. There are two other sixth form colleges, two general further education colleges and two 11-18 schools to the north of the river Tees. Of

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the two general further education colleges in the area, Stockton and Billingham College, based a mile away in Billingham town centre, is the nearest competitor. This college caters mainly for adults and young people who wish to follow courses leading to vocational and general vocational qualifications.

6 Whenever possible the college collaborates with local schools, colleges, parents, employers and the wider community. The mission statement gives priority to the provision of a high-quality learning environment and emphasises support for the individual. It seeks to capitalize on the positive features offered by the college's small size.

### **RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION**

7 Bede College has deliberately set itself criteria for extending its range of courses which limit its ability to be fully responsive to the wider needs of the local population. The college sets out to make efficiency savings while meeting the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) and government targets for growth. It is anxious not to expand too quickly. It has clearly identified its main client group as school leavers in the Billingham area. It has no specific targets relating to increasing the responsiveness and range of provision.

8 The college has designed a range and level of programmes appropriate to its objectives. It aims to respond to the needs of its main client group by providing a range of General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects and six general vocational courses. It is beginning to play its part in identifying and meeting local demand for education and training. The college has achieved modest growth in its provision for adults and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number of adults and 16-19 year olds studying on a part-time basis remains low.

9 In 1993-94, the college fell short of its enrolment target by 23 per cent. Although this year's enrolments show a 14 per cent increase over those for last year, this is still below target. However, when converted to units of activity as defined by the FEFC, the college is likely to meet or slightly exceed its target.

10 The GCE A level programme of 26 subjects is well established and over 80 per cent of all students enrolled this year follow a GCE A level course. A number of changes have been made to syllabuses to reflect the changing views of school leavers, higher education institutions and college staff. The college also offers 10 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects taught over two years within existing GCE A level courses. The college is prepared, where possible, to meet individual needs: for example, one student is studying GCE AS geology using a mixture of individual tuition and supported self-study. Until September 1994, the college offered a range of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects. It now offers only GCSE mathematics and English following a review of its provision which included consultation with schools.

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11 Approximately 20 per cent of all students take a vocational qualification. Three new courses leading to advanced GNVQs in leisure and tourism, health and social care, and business have been introduced successfully this academic year. GNVQ courses are offered at intermediate and advanced level to replace the repeat GCSE courses and provide an alternative to GCE A level courses. Students with moderate learning difficulties benefit from part of a foundation GNVQ course which helps to develop core skills in information technology, communication and numeracy.

12 The Cleveland Local Education Authority (LEA) adult education service has offices in the college and uses parts of the building to provide courses. The college has recently taken over responsibility for some of this by providing a course for women returning to education and a course in information technology. It is seeking accreditation through the Teesside Regional Open College Network for these two courses. Both the LEA and the college are considering extending this franchise arrangement to introduce other subjects, such as parent craft. The college's intentions in relation to adult recruitment are unclear. A member of staff has been given responsibility for enrolling and supporting adults. The college also contributes to Adult Learners' Week. However, the college has not set clear targets for recruiting adults and it is not active in its promotion of opportunities for them.

13 Teesside TEC and the careers service consider that the provision to meet the needs of school leavers in the locality are adequate. Links with Teesside TEC are generally good; the college is seen as responsive and keen to become involved in initiatives. The development of GNVQ provision was assisted by TEC funding. The college is one of 16 organisations involved in a Partners in Learning group, which aims to identify education and learning needs within the locality. The initiative is funded by Task Force and City Challenge; other participants include the TEC, the Workers Education Association, Cleveland LEA, employers and other colleges. Links with employers are generally based around the provision of work experience for students. A current TEC-funded project to extend these links has been only partially successful. Employers have not been used systematically to provide advice to the college or to assist in the review of courses.

14 Less than 10 per cent of students at Bede College are on foundation or intermediate level courses, and there are no National Vocational Qualifications or provision specifically for industry. Opportunities for students to study part time are underdeveloped. Of the 18 adult students in the college, 10 attend existing advanced classes. The others attend from the Erimus adult training centre for students with learning difficulties. These students thought that the college was extremely friendly, supportive and responsive to their individual requirements. There are no students under 19 years of age studying part time.

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15 A variety of activities is provided for all students on Wednesday afternoons; attendance is compulsory for all full-time students. The enrichment activities include music, producing the college magazine and sports. Students work with local school children in a programme accredited by the Northern Partnership for Records of Achievement. They may also work with a group of students from the Erimus adult training centre. Students can decide to pursue their own interests under supervision by college staff at a range of locations.

16 An extensive network of contacts with local schools helps the college to review the provision and range of subjects it provides. There are innovative links such as a programme for high-ability pupils in year eight from the Billingham Campus School. Links are also developing with two schools who are piloting a GNVQ course. This will help students to transfer smoothly to college courses. A Cleveland LEA compact brings together the college and local schools. This has helped the college to recruit seven extra students from schools normally outside their area. The college works with the other sixth form colleges in the region. A wide range of informal and formal contacts exists with some higher education institutions. Teachers in areas such as mathematics, computing and languages maintain strong personal links with many university departments. The college offers teaching practice to students on teacher training courses at the University of Durham.

17 College managers, governors and teachers are committed to the principles of equal opportunity. A comprehensive policy, well understood by staff, covers race, gender, high achievers, disability and sexual harassment. Sections of the policy identify good classroom practice for teachers. The equal opportunity working group meets regularly to discuss equal opportunity issues and governors receive frequent reports. Data, particularly on gender, are systematically collected and analysed. Course and subject teams have recently been asked to identify how they intend to address the main elements of the policy in their teaching.

18 The college chaplaincy provides a weekly act of collective worship which students may attend. Each of the two chaplains teaches religion on a programme of general studies and is available, as counsellor, to staff and students at other times. This fulfils the requirements of sections 44 and 45 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

19 The college's small size allows the governing body, staff and students to work together in a close community. A positive feeling of belonging was evident in discussions with students and staff throughout the institution.

20 The board of the corporation has 16 members, including the principal. There are almost equal numbers of men and women on the board. Seven members are from business and the industrial community. The board has two representatives from higher education, one from Teesside TEC, two



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parent governors, two staff and a student representative. The college welcomes the professional expertise of members and uses it to good effect; for example, a member with a particular knowledge of health and safety matters chairs the relevant committee and has recently joined staff on tours of the college to check safety. Members are conscious of a lack of expertise in estate management; they are considering ways of overcoming this deficiency.

21 The board has established four committees: they are finance, audit, health and safety and remuneration. A manager of a bank chairs the finance committee. A retired chartered accountant, who is not a member of the board, is the chairman of the college's audit committee. Minutes from all committees are presented regularly to the full board. Groups of staff, students, or outside agencies make frequent written or verbal reports to the corporation; for example, the student council presented its new constitution to the governing body for approval and played a full part in the considerable discussion that followed.

22 There is a strong team spirit amongst the board of the corporation. All members have an opportunity to air views and make contributions to discussions. Careful consideration is given to the opinions of the student governor. For example, in discussion of the methods to be used to evaluate the college charter the governors supported the suggestion made by the student member that the cross-section of views to be obtained should include those of the few students who were not content. Governors see it as their role to take a general overview of the college, to identify its direction and set the main objectives in the strategic plan. One of their main priorities since incorporation has been to ensure a firm financial base while maintaining a caring environment and high-quality provision. The board shares with the senior managers a firmly held belief that the college's small size is one of its major strengths. Growth is only to be considered if members are certain that the high-quality provision can be maintained. However, the possible contradiction between the college remaining small and yet playing its part in meeting community needs, and the financial implications of this, requires further consideration.

23 All staff in the college were involved in deciding the priorities for the first strategic plan. The main issues and areas for development were established at a professional-development day. A working party, including senior managers and governors, then met regularly to write the first draft which was considered by the whole staff and the full governing body. The strategic plan identifies targets, dates and staff responsibilities. Procedures for monitoring the plan and evaluating its outcomes require further work. Plans at subject or departmental level are not consistently related to the college's strategic plan and often do not have the same objectives and target setting arrangements.

24 The management structure of the college works well. All the senior managers, except the finance officer, have a teaching responsibility

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and both the principal and vice-principal have a pastoral role. Their clearly-defined responsibilities are understood by all staff. Routine matters and external pressures take up too much of the senior managers' time. They recognise this problem and the impending retirement of the finance officer presents the opportunity to reorganise.

25 A group of five experienced staff, including the principal and vice-principal, act as section heads to co-ordinate and oversee tutorial arrangements. The group also act as a forum for the discussion of wider college issues. Senior management, section heads, course team and subject team meetings have minutes, though often these are no more than brief notes. They do not contain targets, dates for completion or identify responsibilities. Subject teams elect a spokesperson on a rota basis to represent their subject to senior managers. This reinforces the corporate feeling and offers staff-development opportunities. Communications between management and staff are good. Staff are appreciative of the college's strong commitment to consultation.

26 The small size of the college means that the majority of staff carry cross-college as well as subject-specific responsibilities. All staff feel involved in the day-to-day management of the college and this helps to overcome the potential isolation of staff who are the sole teacher in their subject areas. Senior managers and governors need to continue to review the effective use of staff time; a considerable amount of time is allocated to school liaison work and some teaching groups are small. Cross-college initiatives rely too heavily on the principal and the vice-principal for their co-ordination and development.

27 The college has a good range of useful policy documents, produced by college staff and agreed by the governing body. They are all contained within the college manual and many of them have helpful guidance notes. For example, the staffing policy has guidance notes on absence, applying for leave, code of conduct, communications and equal opportunity matters.

28 The size of the college means that its budget is modest and once the staffing and overhead costs are accounted for there is little room for manoeuvre. Despite prudent financial management, the college remains vulnerable to small variations in student numbers. The finance officer is not a qualified accountant, but is supported by a part-time qualified accounting technician, the chairman of the finance committee and the external auditors. Reports to the governing body are frequent and thorough. Allocations for subject areas are determined by a well-understood bidding process which is effective because most staff take a corporate view of financial viability. Individual subject teachers enter their own orders directly on to a computer-based accounting system. The college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6. Its average level of funding for 1994-95 is £20.97 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.81.

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29 The college uses the school information management system. This allows reports to be produced in a range of different formats. However, reports are used mainly to complete returns for external purposes and insufficient use is made of them to inform management decisions. The lack of sophistication in the system prevents a full analysis of data. The college should consider a systematic review of its management information needs.

### **STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

30 The college maintains close contact with the local schools from which it recruits the majority of its students. Teams of staff, selected because of existing personal contacts, are allocated to individual schools to maintain this relationship. Each academic member of staff has one period a week on their timetable designated for liaison duties. A schools liaison co-ordinator has been in post for a year. It is her responsibility to support the teams and ensure that a programme of activities takes place for each school. Typical activities include presentations, using a tape and slide show; attending school parents' evenings and open days; and arranging and hosting visits to the college. The co-ordinator also provides the teams with specific information relating to each school, such as the destinations and achievements of former pupils and local transport arrangements. Taster sessions and advice are available on specific subjects.

31 College publications are visually attractive and co-ordinated to present a corporate image. Students find the prospectus easy to use. The results of a survey of current students' views will be used to improve the 1996 version. The prospectus states that the college has no entry requirements although this is not borne out in practice. For example, students entering GCE A level courses are expected to reach given standards at GCSE. Information about the programmes available at the college is thorough and prospective students know what to expect. The schools particularly appreciate the open communications and support they receive. Copies of the principal's termly report to governors go routinely to each school. Now that the college offers general vocational courses it is important that the college makes more use of market research and local labour market information.

32 Each student who applies to the college is contacted within a fortnight and invited for an interview with one of the five section heads or the senior teacher. The same member of staff will conduct the student's second interview after the publication of examination results. The college requests that prospective students bring their records of achievement with them when attending for interview. A tradition of using records of achievement within the college has existed for some time, and both staff and students take them seriously.

33 After the GCSE examinations the college organises its preview programme at a time convenient for schools. These well-attended sessions

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allow prospective students to sample subjects and become acquainted with the college. One school whose pupils are unable to attend this year's preview day has had another time arranged for them. Last summer, 250 students attended the preview out of the 300 invited. Students enjoy the experience and use it to help them confirm their choice of college and the subjects they intend to take. In September, first-year students take part in an induction programme which provides documentation and a helpful introduction to college procedures. Staff are considerate, well informed, able to offer advice about subject choices and are concerned to meet the best interests of the students. Each student receives, during induction, an individual timetable for the year and signs a Bede College learner agreement. Students who wish to transfer between subjects and courses receive appropriate support. Some students, who are still uncertain about which GCE A level subjects to take, begin the year by studying four subjects. This option is available only to students whose GCSE results suggest that they can cope with the additional work. It ensures that their final selection is based on firm knowledge of the subjects to be studied.

34 The many strands of the personal-development programme are well co-ordinated. The programme of group tutorial sessions and individual tutorials provides students with personal support, monitors their academic performance and offers a broad range of enrichment activities which include a general studies course. The whole programme is managed by the personal development co-ordinator who supports tutors through meetings, resources and a programme of visiting speakers. Students and their tutor negotiate the programme for the group tutorials held every week. Tutors keep the co-ordinator informed of the topics covered. These include, for example, health issues, drugs, family planning and personal relationships. Development of a core of topics for tutorials is underway to ensure a consistent experience for all students. In the second of the allotted sessions each week, students meet their tutor individually and have the opportunity to review their progress, maintain records of achievement, seek careers advice and raise personal concerns. Each of the five section heads oversees a group of tutors; they also have an academic monitoring role for the students in these groups.

35 There are good relationships between staff and students. This helps to ensure that all students have a member of staff to turn to should they need advice and guidance. They find staff approachable and see no need for a more professional counselling and guidance service. Students in need of additional academic support obtain help from individual teachers who offer extra classes in most subjects. Students whose academic progress is causing concern are the subject of case reviews. Additional classes are available if students wish to take GCE A level special papers. The college is running a pilot programme to monitor the progress of those students who enter with a high point score at GCSE. It is the intention to encourage these students to reach their maximum potential by providing additional target-setting and personal support. Staff and students are

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kept informed about the purpose of the programme. However, some students, who are not on the programme, resent their exclusion. Until the two-year programme is completed, full evaluation is not possible. Early measurement against predicted achievement targets suggests that only half the students meet or exceed them.

36 For the first time this academic year, students following the foundation and intermediate GNVQ programmes took the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit screening test on entry. Staff meet the needs identified during this assessment within their normal teaching programme. There are no plans to extend diagnostic screening to other students. Three members of staff with different areas of expertise form the basis of the learning support service established in September 1994. It helps students develop study skills and basic skills, and it supports them in their subjects. The staff are available for eight hours a week by appointment. They use an action plan to monitor the progress of students, who bring their own material to work on. Students mostly attend after recommendation from their subject teacher or tutor. The learning support co-ordinator works with schools to identify students with particular learning needs before they come to the college. Currently, 8 per cent of the student population has received, or is receiving, support. The learning support co-ordinator reports that the service is already operating close to capacity. The location of the service and its further development needs addressing.

37 Physical access for students with mobility problems to some parts of the buildings is poor and this limits their access to the full curriculum.

38 Student council members play an active role in looking after the facilities and social life of the college. Their meetings are productive, lively and well attended. Members of staff also attend when there are specific issues of interest to them. Council members are involved in most college issues, including production of the college's quality self-assessment report, and they receive regular reports from the student member of the governing body.

39 Support for students applying to higher education is particularly good. The tutorial programme includes advice in writing personal statements. All students have access to the Centigrade programme, which identifies courses of higher education that they may wish to undertake. Each individual student has a careers interview with the college careers teacher. A further interview is available with a member of the local careers service. Students who are seeking employment get special attention and an additional interview. The careers component includes a structured programme of visiting speakers from a variety of employment areas.

#### **TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING**

40 Of the sessions inspected, 64 per cent had strengths that clearly outweighed weaknesses. Six per cent of sessions had more weaknesses than strengths. The grades awarded to the classes inspected are shown in the following table.

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**Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study**

<b>Programmes</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Totals</b>
GCE AS/A level		11	23	14	1	0	49
GCSE		1	2	0	0	0	3
GNVQ		0	4	4	3	0	11
Other		0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>64</b>

41 The quality of the schemes of work varied considerably between subjects. Some staff have schemes which indicate the order in which syllabus content is to be taught. Students had copies of these schemes in their notes or access to them on noticeboards. There was evidence that they were well used by students to keep track of their progress through the syllabus. Frequently, the schemes dealt with content only and paid little attention to assessment strategies, methods of teaching or resource needs. Staff managed most of the teaching sessions well. However, they did not, as a matter of routine, have well-prepared or detailed lesson plans. Few had clear written aims, objectives and targets for each session. In the minority of lessons where the planning was poor the work had insufficient pace and direction. In a few cases, there was little indication of where the particular lesson belonged in the teaching scheme. In the better sessions, the work was set in context at the beginning of the class and a brief outline of the next lesson was given at the end.

42 Classroom management and control were good. Where there was a greater degree of variation in the learning activity students were more highly motivated. When students worked in small groups or in pairs, they were purposeful and well focused on their tasks. The use of question and answer techniques varied in their effectiveness. A good example, in mathematics, encouraged students to think about and explain new ideas. In a less successful example, in science, questions were too vague or required only single word answers.

43 The use of audio-visual aids in teaching sessions varied considerably. Some teachers used the overhead projector and video recordings to good effect. However, in other subjects, these techniques were hardly used at all. In English and communications, students were encouraged to wordprocess their major assignments and laptop computers were supplied for the purpose. In other areas, such as science and mathematics, students had some difficulty getting access to machines at peak periods. This was a particular problem when there were many pieces of work with the same completion time.

44 Most modern language teaching was conducted in the foreign language. Students were willing to practise the language but needed to be encouraged and helped. The best science classes interested students sufficiently to make them want to go and discuss the topic outside the

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session. This was the case, for example, with students in a physics class working in groups on an experiment to measure magnetic flux density. A biology class, where students had to derive a hypothesis and an experiment to prove it, was also particularly successful in promoting discussion. In mathematics the use of well-prepared overhead transparencies enabled effective discussion of problems recently tackled for homework. Students contributed well in a geography class that had a clear structure and a crisp presentation by the teacher. A lively session on politics had clear objectives and a good variety of activities, including effective use of a video recording which stimulated animated and purposeful discussion.

45 Some classes, for example, one in English, which lacked direction and interest for the students, were less successful. In a GCE A level psychology group, the experiments tried were not totally successful and a brainstorming session was over controlled by the teacher. In a GNVQ session where students were working away from the classroom, they were not monitored by the teacher, nor required to return to the classroom at the end of the session, so that the teacher gave an important concluding summary to only half the class.

46 Science and some humanities subjects had marking and assessment policies which indicated explicitly the criteria that would be used. There was a particularly good example in geography of an assessment grid which enabled students to understand the three areas of knowledge, skills and attitudes that would be assessed, and also gave them an understanding of the different assessment levels. In other areas, for example, mathematics and computing, marking policies were not sufficiently clear. In most curriculum areas, the setting of assignments and marking was of a high standard and students' work was returned promptly.

47 In mathematics, the course work showed that students could apply mathematical techniques to problem solving and the work in further mathematics was of a particularly high standard. However, the poor quality written work and presentation skills of some mathematics students occasionally hindered progress. Business studies students made full and articulate contributions in class. The assessment of their assignment work sometimes lacked rigour. In modern languages, geography and psychology, students' oral work was of high quality. Course work was of a good standard. Students had well-organised files, although their lack of note-taking skills was evident.

48 The recording of progress is a well-established part of the academic monitoring process. The suspension of classes for two days, four times a year, enables subject teachers to meet each student individually, to discuss progress, negotiate future targets and agree a report. Students then take their reports to further interviews with their tutors and section heads for monitoring and advice. Records of progress are available to inform discussion at parents' evenings and any parent or carer who is unable to attend receives a copy through the post. Students are aware of how well they are achieving and motivated to meet future targets.

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49 Some vocational courses include periods of well-organised work experience. Students and employers are well prepared and appropriate attention is given to health and safety procedures and insurance. However, the specific contributions made by work experience to the students' course and the recording of achievement are not made clear. GCE A level students can apply for work experience and last year the 15 per cent of them who applied were found suitable placements.

### **STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**

50 Students enjoyed their work and spoke with knowledge and enthusiasm about their studies. They achieved standards that were appropriate and often better than those expected for the stage they had reached in their course. All of the practical work in science was safely and competently carried out. There was an insistence on the use by staff and students of laboratory coats and safety spectacles.

51 Most students were developing their ability to write English correctly as part of their development of core skills. Their achievements in information technology and numeracy were less sound. Many students had skills only in wordprocessing rather than wider ability with computers. Scientists had adequate mathematical skills but, where students were studying less numerical subjects, little attention was paid to numeracy. In general, planning and recording of core skills was unsystematic and inadequate.

52 Attendance was good. In the classes observed, attendances varied from 84 per cent to 97 per cent. In one register, only five absences were recorded out of a total of 142 entries. Punctuality was also good, with all classes starting on time and very few students arriving late. Those who did arrive late were asked for an explanation.

53 Last year's GCE A level results placed Bede College second amongst the Cleveland Colleges. Candidates attempting two or more GCE A levels achieved an average points score (where A=10, E=2) of 15.6. The national average was 15.3. The average point score per entry was 4.7 which placed the college in the top third of all the colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education.

54 Mathematics results in both GCSE and GCE A levels in 1994 were above the provisional national average. There was an improvement over the previous year of 16 per cent in the number of A-B grades achieved and of 11 per cent in the number of A-E grades. These results, based on value-added calculations carried out by the Cleveland Research and Intelligence Unit, are the best in the area. Science subjects all have GCE A level pass rates at grades A-E above the national average.

55 GCE A level English language results have also improved over the past few years. In GCSE English in 1994, over 50 per cent of the students obtained a grade C or better. The GCE A level results in communications



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are of a consistently high level. Pass rates in French and German are also well above the national average for these subjects. The examination results in politics, history and sociology were very good, with a range of 86 per cent to 100 per cent pass rates at grades A-E.

56 In 1994, at GCE A level pass rates in geography and business studies were disappointing in comparison with previous years. Geography was 13 per cent below, and business studies 9 per cent below, the national average pass rate at grades A-E. The pass rate at grades A-C in business studies of 19 per cent did not compare favourably with the provisional national average in 1994 for sixth form colleges of 42 per cent. In chemistry and physics, the college is not achieving the provisional national averages for passes at A-C grades. In English literature results are improving but remain below the provisional national average figures. The pass rate at grades A-E was 78 per cent in 1994, as compared with a provisional national average rate for sixth form colleges of 90 per cent.

57 All first-year GCE A level and advanced GNVQ students take a course in general studies to broaden their education. In the second year, attendance is optional, but in 1993-94 over 70 per cent of eligible students continued their studies and entered the GCE A level examination. Over 90 per cent of those who entered achieved grades A-E, well above the provisional national average of 77 per cent for sixth form colleges.

58 The overall retention rate of students at the college in 1993-94 was 87.5 per cent. There was, however, considerable variation across the different subjects. For example, economics retained all its students over the two years while physics retained only 37 per cent.

59 Eighty-four per cent of the students studying GCE A levels at the college last year went on to higher education courses. Many students go on to study one of their GCE A level subjects at a higher level. For example, 44 per cent of those studying geography went on to study it at university. Most of the students on the intermediate GNVQ course entered employment or further training. Five out of 14 continued to the advanced GNVQ course at the college.

#### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

60 There is no overall quality assurance system. The college sets out to deliver quality by providing a learning environment that supports the needs of individuals. Members of the senior management team share responsibility for quality; the lead is taken by the vice-principal. Some procedures address quality assurance issues for specific areas of the college's operation. Current practice depends heavily on the initiative of a few key individuals. Many issues of quality are, because of the small size of the college, resolved by informal communication. Performance indicators are being developed to monitor quality but are not in common use.

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61 There is an increasing awareness of the importance of gathering student views of courses. This is currently achieved through focused discussions with students and through questionnaires. The standard of these questionnaires varies and there is a need to ensure consistency in their construction. More effective use could be made of the data.

62 The control of quality within the curriculum is at an early stage of development. Teaching staff carry out annual curriculum policy reviews. This process requires course and subject teams to evaluate their work using a standard format. There are variations in the ways different staff approach this review and in the identification of significant issues for improvement. A senior member of staff monitors and evaluates these reviews. This monitoring process does not focus sufficiently on the production of clear action plans, specific targets and related performance indicators. Some reviews are descriptive and not sufficiently analytical.

63 Monitoring students' academic progress is a key element in the college's approach to quality. This monitoring is good for informing students of their progress but provides little specific data for course review. The management information system produces a range of information that is not routinely used to inform course planning. For example, retention rates are not regularly analysed by subject areas. Some statistics such as destination information are collected and stored separately from other data.

64 There is careful monitoring of examination results. The principal reviews the results in each subject area. The college uses the Cleveland Research and Intelligence Unit's analysis which measures value added by comparing the points score of students' qualifications at entry with final GCE A level results. Comparisons can then be made of groups of students studying the same subject across the Cleveland colleges. Discussions on the choice of examination syllabuses are informed by these results. The college is piloting other ways of predicting individual students' grades to help inform target setting.

65 The college charter was issued in early October. It formed part of a comprehensive package for students, which included the student guidebook and subject information. A working group including staff and a governor helped to produce the charter and the student guide. Consultations took place with representatives of the student council. Governors endorsed the final version after taking all these views into account. The charter builds upon existing good practice and contains commitments that take it beyond the Department for Education's requirements. It has an attractive format and the information is well presented. Tutorial periods were used to introduce the charter to students. They are aware of its contents and how to use the information. It is issued to year 11 students in partner schools to inform and guide the admissions process. A governor monitors the charter data file that has records of complaints and actions taken. Considerable thought is being given to reviewing the charter.

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66 Staff development is a key factor in the delivery of quality. The college has a mentoring system to provide support for new members of staff. Mentoring is extended for newly-qualified teachers to help them develop relevant teaching skills. Frequent meetings are held, initially twice a week, to discuss progress and set targets. A checklist gives information on classroom management and lesson preparation. This provides a framework for the mentoring process including the recording of progress. The vice-principal monitors the mentor programme by reviewing records and by meeting teachers regularly. Staff value highly the support the programme provides.

67 The college's self-assessment report and its supporting document, which gives evidence and additional comment, were produced by the college's senior management team. This was preceded and followed by discussion with staff and students. Both the report and the supporting document follow the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The report itemises under each heading a series of evaluative statements, mainly positive, with an indication of what the college sees as priorities. The college did not award grades. Inspectors found the supporting document helpful and informative. The judgements contained in the report, while not comprehensive in their coverage, broadly matched the views of the inspectors.

## **RESOURCES**

### **Staffing**

68 The college has a committed and caring staff. The small size of the college helps to engender a sense of common purpose. Staff show a high degree of flexibility in response to the needs of students and the college as a whole. They recognise the need to take on additional management tasks alongside their teaching roles.

69 Staff are well qualified: 91 per cent have degrees in their main subject and 76 per cent have teaching qualifications. However, of those teaching on vocational courses, 43 per cent do not have any recent industrial or commercial experience that is relevant to their area of work. A large number of teachers, 59 per cent, contribute to the teaching of two or more subjects. The college does not make sufficient use of performance indicators to evaluate the efficient use of staff.

70 Administrative and technical staff work effectively to support the curriculum. Team meetings involve support staff when there are agenda items of relevance to them. Support staff make a significant contribution to the life of the college. For example, a technician is involved in canoeing instruction on a Wednesday afternoon.

71 There is an appropriate balance of age and gender among the staff. Staff turnover has given the college the opportunity to bring in new ideas; 62 per cent of staff have joined the college in the last 10 years. The

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procedure for appointing teaching staff is thorough. It involves two interviews; one to establish teaching expertise and the other to cover issues relating to the pastoral side of the job.

72 The college had begun to set up an appraisal system based originally on the Cleveland LEA scheme. However, this was found not to be appropriate for the college and the process was halted. After staff consultation, a more relevant scheme has been designed in which the senior management team will act as appraisers for staff. Training in preparation for appraisal has already taken place. Staff-development documents include the policy and procedures for the appraisal of all teaching and support staff. The scheme is due to start in the second half of this academic year. It has not been decided how the governors will appraise the principal, vice-principal and senior teacher but a staff questionnaire has been used to gather evidence on their performance. The results from this questionnaire have been shared with the governors. At present, the college is not considering participation in the Investors in People programme.

#### **Equipment/learning resources**

73 The range of teaching and learning equipment in the college is appropriate to the needs of the curriculum and the current number of students. There are whiteboards, overhead projectors and screens in most classrooms. A range of audio-visual equipment is available on trolleys. A well-equipped video editing suite, situated on the first floor, is used for both promotional work and for students' projects.

74 Until recently there was insufficient information technology equipment of an appropriate standard. However, the refurbishment of the learning-resource centre has included the provision of a suite of nine workstations, accessible to both staff and students. Other computers have been purchased and are kept within subject areas. The college has made a considerable investment in the upgrading of its information technology equipment although there is no overall strategy for its selection, purchase and upgrading. There is now a very good computer-to-student ratio of one machine to every four full-time equivalent students. Other than the central disk for the School Information Management System software which is stored in a fire-proof cupboard, there is no system for maintaining backups of data or software applications off-site or in secure storage. The testing of portable electrical appliances is behind schedule.

75 The resource centre has an up-to-date collection of books. Other books are kept within the subject areas, an arrangement which suits both the learning-resource centre staff and the students. However, the college needs to review the extent to which books stored in a variety of places are used.

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## **Accommodation**

76 The approach to the site is poorly signposted and a housing estate screens the college from the main road. The exterior of the building is in poor condition but a recent structural survey shows that the steel framework is sound. The flat roofs cause maintenance problems. An accommodation strategy to set out the college's main objectives for long-term refurbishment of the building has not yet been produced.

77 Accommodation is allocated on a departmental basis and many rooms are dedicated to one subject. The Cleveland LEA adult education service use some rooms in the daytime and in the evening. However, many rooms remain unused outside the standard 09.00 to 16.00 day.

78 Careful maintenance and cleaning make the internal environment pleasant and cheerful. Rooms are well lit, adequately heated and carpeted. There are problems with soundproofing in some areas. One classroom and a laboratory are used as a thoroughfare and this causes disruption.

79 In some areas there are problems associated with the adaption of the building from its former use. Fume cupboards are awkwardly sited in the science laboratories and restrict room use. Some toilet areas are disproportionately large while adjoining teaching rooms are too small for the number of students who use them.

80 There is a centrally located learning-resource centre. It has limited space but it has been very effectively divided into three areas to provide an information technology section, a quiet study area and a library office. The student social area reflects a caring community; students take a particular pride in it, keeping it clean and orderly without staff intervention. In the circulation areas there are effective displays of students' work, attractive posters and material which promotes the college.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

81 The college takes its mission seriously and is working well to fulfil its aims. The strengths of the college include:

- effective classroom teaching
- examination results which, in most areas, are above the national averages for the sector
- an effective and committed governing body with a strong team spirit
- management that provides a strong sense of direction
- good communications and a strong feeling among staff that they are valued, and involved in the management of the college
- positive relationships with local schools
- the high level of student support and care provided in the personal development programme.

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82 To improve further the quality of the provision the college should address the following:

- the vulnerable financial position of the college, despite prudent financial management
- the strategic aims of the college which limit its ability to be fully responsive to the needs of the community
- more effective ways of sharing the load derived from the large number of issues to be addressed by a small number of managers
- the inadequate systems to support management functions and quality assurance
- the limited use made of market research and local labour market information
- the limited range of teaching strategies and learning activities
- the poor condition of the external fabric of the building.

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## FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at October 1994)

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  - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at October 1994)

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  - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at October 1994)

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  - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at October 1994)

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  - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

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  - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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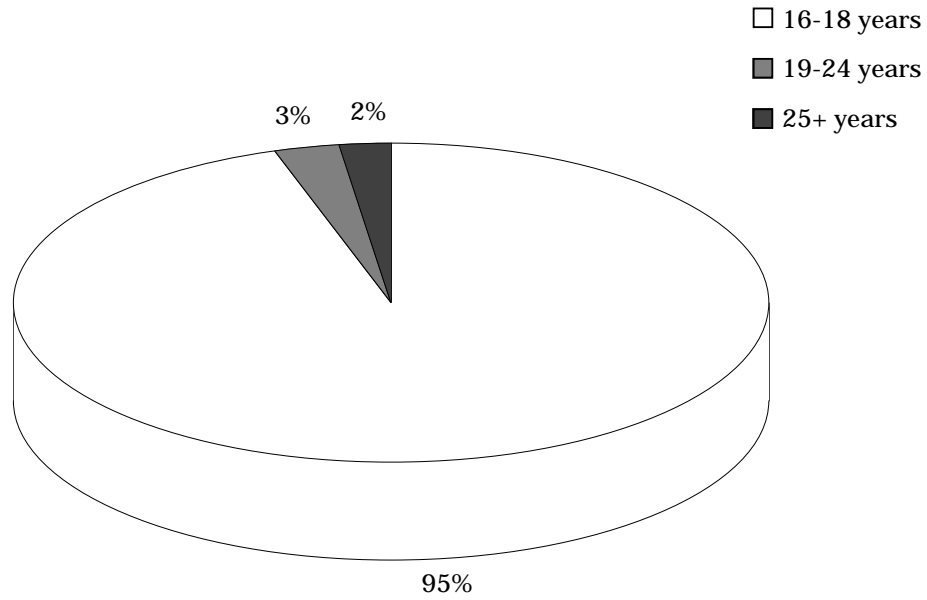
**Note:** the information contained in the figures was provided by the college to the inspection team.

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**Figure 1**

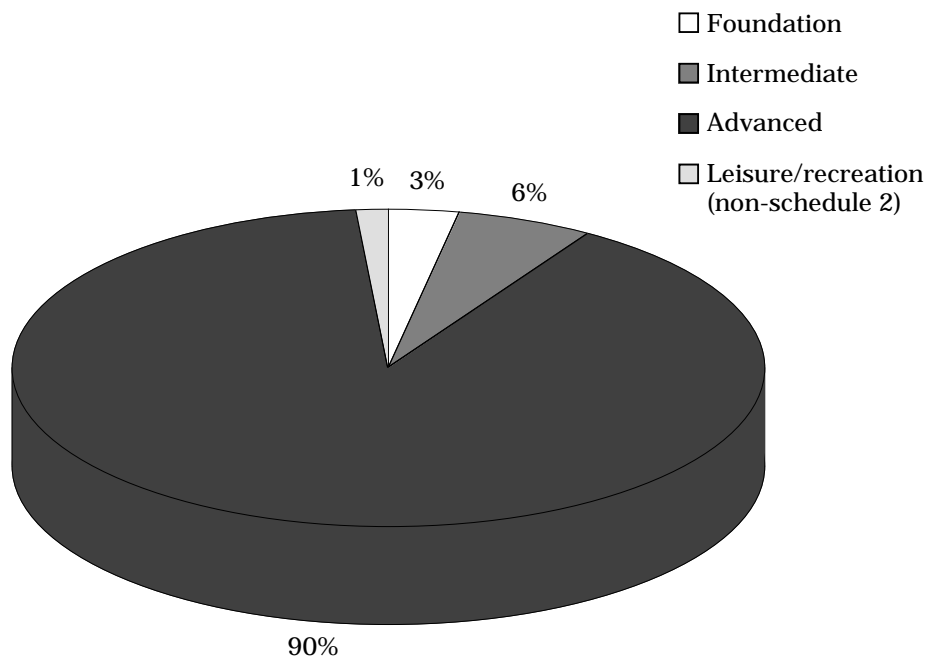
**Bede College: percentage enrolments by age (as at October 1994)**



Enrolments: 371

**Figure 2**

**Bede College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at October 1994)**



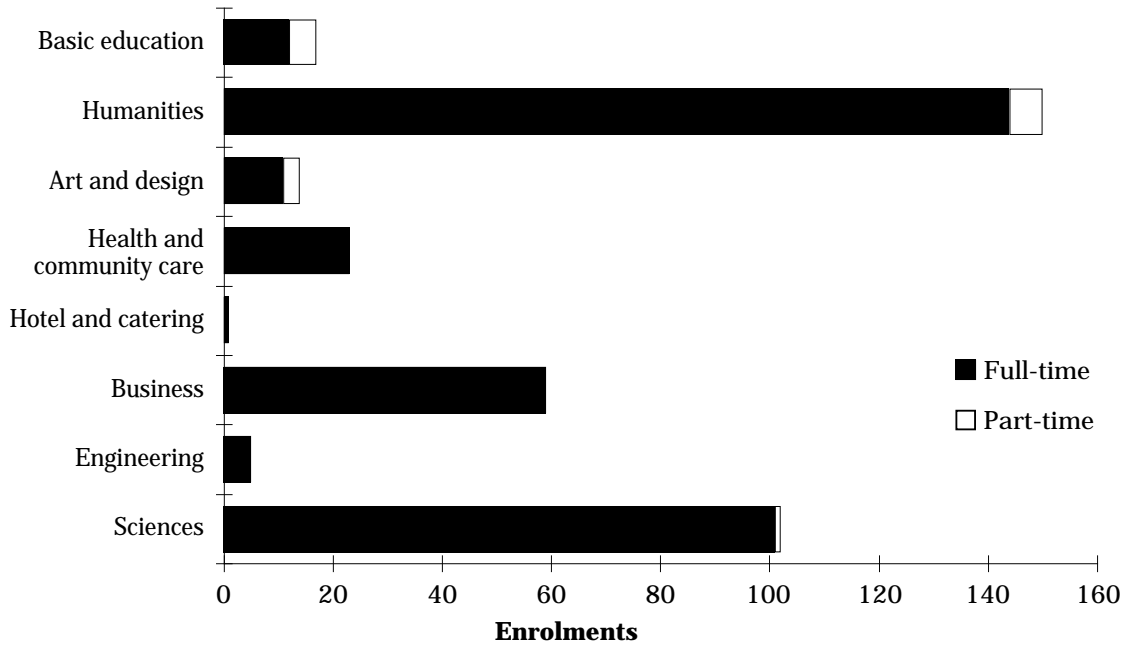
Enrolments: 371



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**Figure 3**

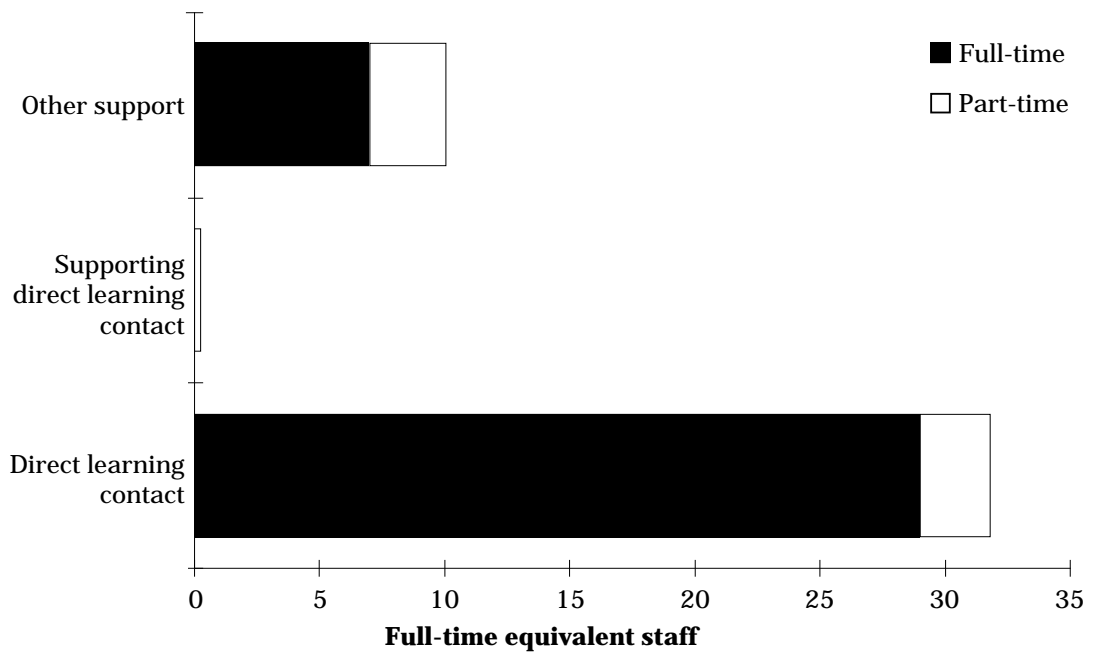
**Bede College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at October 1994)**



Enrolments: 371

**Figure 4**

**Bede College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at October 1994)**



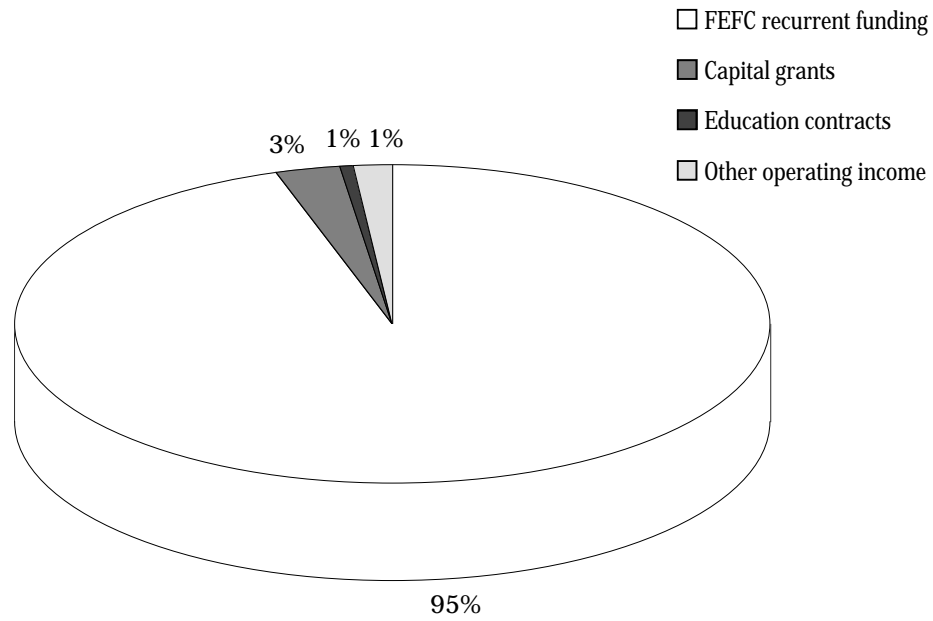
Full-time equivalent staff: 42

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**Figure 5**

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**Bede College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)**



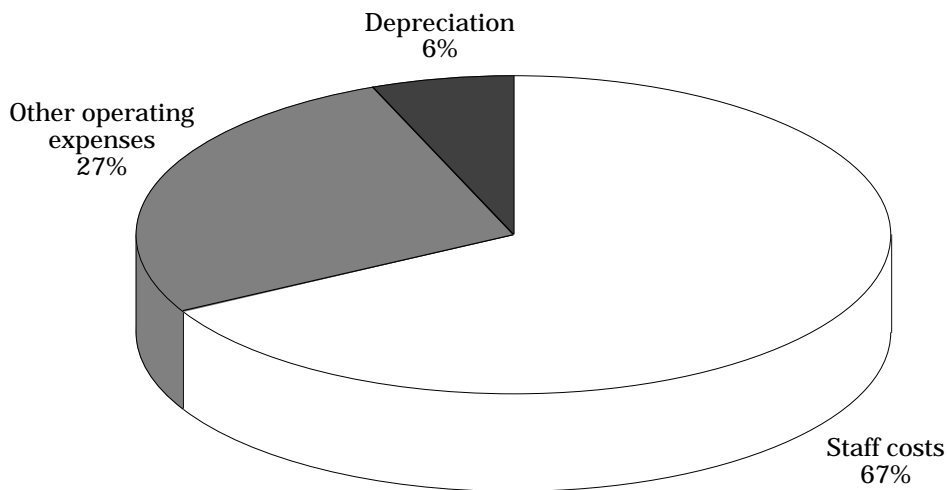
Income: £1,533,000

*Note: this chart excludes £2,000 other income generating activities and £1,000 other grant income.*

**Figure 6**

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**Bede College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)**



Expenditure: £1,654,000

*Note: this chart excludes £1,000 interest payable.*

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