

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College

September 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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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 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-95

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 113/96

BRIGHTON, HOVE AND SUSSEX SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected May 1995-June 1996

Summary

Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College is a sixth form college in Hove. It attracts students from a wide area, most of whom are 16 to 19 years of age. Student numbers have increased by 41 per cent in the past two years. An open style of management has united staff and governors in support of the college's mission. The college offers mainly GCE A level courses and some newer programmes leading to GNVQ at foundation, intermediate and advanced level. There are full-time and part-time courses designed to provide access to higher education. The college has met the specific needs of refugees who need to learn English. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and the standard of teaching is high. Students' examination results are outstanding. Guidance for students whose goal is entry to higher education is good. There is a high standard of pastoral care for students. Good progress is being made in the development of quality assurance procedures. A close relationship with Sussex Enterprise has been established. The college is gradually improving its accommodation and facilities, but some buildings, dating from the beginning of the century, are in need of refurbishment. The college library and information technology resources have not grown in line with student numbers and are inadequate. The college should make more systematic use of performance indicators.

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	2
Quality assurance	2
Resources: staffing	1
equipment/learning resources	3
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics	1	English, media, communication studies	1
Science	3	Modern languages	2
Business studies, economics	1	Geography, history, politics	2
Art and design	2	Law, psychology, sociology	1

INTRODUCTION

1 Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College was inspected between May 1995 and June 1996. The college's arrangements for the enrolment and induction of students were inspected in June and in early September 1995. Subject areas were inspected in May 1995 and in April and May 1996. Aspects of cross-college provision were inspected in June 1996. Thirteen inspectors visited the college for a total of 54 days. They inspected 112 classes and examined students' written and practical work. Meetings were held with governors, parents, college staff, students, employers, and representatives of local secondary schools, the local community and Sussex Enterprise, the local training and enterprise council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College (known locally as BHASVIC) was formed in 1975 as a result of reorganisation of post-16 education in Brighton. It was previously a boys' grammar school. The college is situated on the Brighton and Hove border in a predominantly residential area close to Brighton town centre and the railway station. Brighton and Hove form the largest urban area in East Sussex with a population of 229,000. The main economic activities are financial services, hotels and catering and leisure services. The unemployment rate locally is 10.2 per cent, 2.8 per cent above the south-east regional average of 7.4 per cent.

3 The college faces stiff competition for recruiting school leavers. There is another sixth form college and a general further education college in Brighton, a tertiary college eight miles away and a range of secondary schools, including independent schools, in the locality. The college recruits its students from more than 70 schools. Fifty-six per cent of students come from schools for pupils aged 11 to 16, and 36 per cent from schools which have their own sixth forms including 14 per cent of students from private schools.

4 At the time of the inspection, the college had 1,186 students, of whom 1,147 were full time, mainly between 16 and 19 years of age. In the last two years, the college has exceeded its enrolment targets, growing by 41 per cent. Although this increase has been primarily among full-time students aged 16 to 19, there is a growing number of mature students following access to higher education courses or English for speakers of other languages courses. Enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Since 1994, staffing has increased by 14 per cent. There are now 72 full-time equivalent teachers and 26 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

5 The college aims to provide a high-quality learning experience in a supportive and stimulating environment. It places emphasis on meeting

the individual needs of students and on promoting equality of opportunity by providing a broad and flexible curriculum for young people and adults.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

6 Governors and staff are aware of the government's policies for further education and the requirements of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college has achieved substantial growth since 1993 and plans to grow by a further 5 per cent in the coming year. The college has responded prudently to competition from the many providers of post-16 education in the area by planning its curriculum to be complementary to theirs. For example, an informal agreement with Varndean Sixth Form College concerning the provision of General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) English language courses ensures that one viable cohort of students can be enrolled each year. The curriculum reflects the college's mission statement and increasingly meets the needs of local and regional communities. The mission statement is supported by all members of the college and by parents and local people. The pursuit of academic excellence within a broad educational framework is widely perceived as an essential characteristic of the college.

7 The college offers students a wide choice of courses suited to their needs. There are 35 GCE A level courses, nine GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses, 12 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses and seven other one-year courses. An increasing range of General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses is being developed. These now account for 14 per cent of the college's work. A GNVQ foundation level course is offered in business, and there are intermediate and advanced levels in business, health and social care and leisure and tourism. To encourage adults to participate in further education, one-year GCE A level courses in Spanish, law and sociology, and two access to higher education programmes are provided specifically for them. The college responded briskly when an urgent need was identified for courses for English for speakers of other languages, particularly for Somali refugees. Adult education is contracted by the local education authority to Brighton College of Technology which leases the college's buildings on four evenings each week for a range of continuing education programmes.

8 The college has formal links with the University of Sussex and Brighton University. For example, students on two access to higher education courses are guaranteed interviews at Sussex University. Overseas students from Sussex University studying for the international Bachelor of Education degree are taught design and technology at the college. There are productive links with schools. College staff are actively involved in school open days and parents' evenings. The college's attractive promotional materials include a well-designed and informative prospectus. The publicity material for the open access language centre is particularly good and is well adapted to its business audience. The college

is collaborating with five other colleges to produce a professional video promoting sixth form college education. Marketing is well managed; there are clear policies based on market intelligence data.

9 There is an enrichment programme consisting of some 75 different courses and activities, including a wide variety of sports. All first-year students are required to follow one enrichment activity each term. The programme is optional for second-year students. Students say the programme is a strong factor in their selecting the college. There are many overseas study visits. They include a two-week post GCE A level expedition to Morocco, involvement in a county European link which entails a visit to Rouen and tours which support students' studies in history, geography and languages. Over 200 students have participated.

10 The college has built up its links with the local business community, primarily with the intention of offering work experience to students. There is a small central database of employers. This year, 232 students have placements in Britain or overseas, as part of their learning programmes. The college has harmonious relationships with the TEC, which has made a grant of £25,000 to assist the development of an open language centre. Further financial support has been provided by a company in Brighton. This specialist facility has helped broaden the college curriculum for full-time students, and members of the public are free to use it when they choose. This year, the college has received a grant of £10,000 from the Further Education Development Agency to support the introduction of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in three European languages at levels 1, 2 and 3.

11 The college has a well-established equal opportunities policy which it implements sensitively, treating seriously any problems that arise.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

12 The corporation board has 19 members, 10 of whom are independent. Of the remainder, one represents the TEC, two are parents elected through the parents' association, two are elected staff governors and one is an elected student governor. The principal is a governor and the board has co-opted two further members. Governors possess a broad range of experience in law, finance, property, personnel and general management. Governors with greater expertise in marketing would significantly strengthen the contribution the board could make to the college.

13 There are seven committees: audit, finance, personnel, premises, remuneration, search and strategy. Each committee has clear terms of reference. The strategy committee, comprising the chairs of the other committees, the principal and an elected staff representative, attempts to draw together the various threads of governors' activity in order to ensure that policy is coherent; there are clear indications that this is being done with increasing success. Attendance at full governors' meetings is 79 per

cent and is higher at committee meetings. The recent appointment of a senior member of staff as clerk to the corporation has improved procedures. The standard of agenda papers and minutes produced by the clerk is high. The clerk services both the governing body and all its committees except the remuneration committee. The principal attends the remuneration committee by invitation and is able to present information which might affect the remuneration of other senior postholders.

14 Most governors, though not all, have a good grasp of their roles and responsibilities. Governors accept their responsibility for determining the strategic direction of the college and, through the strategy committee, play a full part in updating the strategic plan. Governors review the performance of the college in detail and receive regular reports from the principal to assist them. These reports also provide a basis for reviewing the principal's performance, although his formal appraisal by the governors has not yet taken place. Governors are supportive of the principal but not in an uncritical way. The distinction between governance and management is understood and observed, and there are good working relationships. Governors work effectively but should consider reviewing their own performance more formally.

15 A joint governors and staff day has provided an opportunity for extensive discussion of strategic options. Staff are now familiar with the planning process and have ample opportunity to contribute to it individually and in groups. Staff reviews of operational plans are usually thorough and form a basis for action, but the relationship between the strategic and operational plans is not generally understood. Students' contribution to the planning process is mainly through course reviews.

16 The college has an appropriate range of well-written policies. A policy on environmental matters is being developed. Responsibilities for implementing policy are clearly assigned, although monitoring and review procedures require further development to ensure consistency. The equal opportunities policy, for example, is monitored largely on an informal basis. The health and safety committee has no senior management member. All policies and other essential information and guidance for staff are contained in a series of staff handbooks which are updated regularly. The college satisfies the requirements of sections 44 and 45 of *The Further and Higher Education Act 1992* by making provision for religious education and for a collective act of worship. The principal consults personally with students about these arrangements.

17 The college is a stable and united institution whose members share similar values and have a sense of common purpose. College managers are cautious and measured in dealing with change. The principal makes himself accessible to staff and places great reliance upon extensive consultation. Staff welcome this approach, although it means that they spend considerable time in meetings. The effectiveness of some meetings is limited by the lack of clear objectives. Consultation between senior

managers and the corporation has improved arrangements for finance and for clerking the governing body. The college now needs to review the personnel function which is shared between the principal, a vice-principal, the bursar and the principal's secretary.

18 Teachers are located in subject areas which are grouped into divisions. Divisional managers meet in a curriculum committee chaired by the vice-principal with responsibility for the curriculum. A parallel system operates for pastoral care. Teachers, as tutors, are responsible to senior tutors who work to a second vice-principal. The senior tutor team and the curriculum committee team report to the senior management team. Membership of these teams overlaps. Nevertheless, the structure is understood by staff and it works well. Divisions have played a major role in promoting communication and fostering curriculum development. Management at subject level is uneven but generally good.

19 In 1993, the college achieved only 93 per cent of its enrolment target. However, it has exceeded its target in each of the past two years and plans to grow by 5 per cent in 1996-97. The college's average level of funding in 1995-96 is £19.82 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.37 per unit. Budgets for staffing and fixed costs are managed centrally. Four per cent of the budget is delegated to curriculum areas using a bidding system. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are given in figures 5 and 6, respectively.

20 Management information is based on a commercial system supplemented by software produced by the college. It provides regular financial information for the finance committee of the governors, senior managers and budget holders. Information on student enrolments and destinations is available to a limited range of users. Examination statistics will be available on the system in the next academic year. The college has made good progress in developing its information system.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

21 The college has agreed a code of conduct with Varndean Sixth Form College and Brighton College of Technology. This ensures that applicants receive impartial advice and that there is some exchange of information on recruitment. The college is involved in a wide range of recruitment activities in local schools, and both parents and teachers speak highly of its efforts to meet the needs of each applicant. Activities include: an events day at which prospective students have an opportunity to meet current students; presentations to year 11 students and their parents; involvement by college staff in some personal and social education in schools; two open evenings each year which attract over 1,500 visitors; and introduction days in June. Teachers visiting schools to promote the college take former pupils with them. Schools appreciate the use made by the college of pupils' records of achievement at interview. The college is careful to inform schools of the examination results and destinations of their former students.

22 Senior managers interview all prospective students either at school or at the college. Tours of the college are arranged for those interviewed at school. The college employed a marketing consultant in 1994 to evaluate its recruitment activities and it has also undertaken some market research of its own. Reports from both these sources have confirmed the quality of the college's recruitment activities. Guidance during enrolment is provided by teachers who act as enrolment advisers to groups of students. Most of these teachers will subsequently be personal tutors to the groups they advise. Enrolment takes place over several days and includes help in finalising GCE A level choices, as well as effective preparation for access to higher education, GNVQ and English language courses. Careful guidance is provided for those students who find they wish to change courses.

23 The college's induction for students comprises a three-day intensive programme of briefings. Students are welcomed and reassured as they make the transition to college. The college is careful to encourage students to get to know their teachers and their fellow students well. Subject induction is the responsibility of each subject area. Some areas, for example mathematics and languages, have produced materials of high quality to introduce students to the subjects. In GNVQ courses, induction is part of the course programme. Although practice differs, the quality of induction is generally good.

24 Students are allocated to a personal tutor with whom they register each day. Attendance is monitored carefully and the college takes prompt action if a student has prolonged or frequent absences. On four days each week, students receive 20-minute tutorials, each of which forms part of a programme constructed to meet their needs. The programme includes reviews of students' progress, reports to parents, careers guidance and preparation for higher education. Students' progress is monitored carefully. Mature students receive good support. In practice, tutorials vary in quality. Although the college has attempted to identify benchmarks for tutorial provision, it still has some way to go in securing their operation. A system for monitoring the effectiveness of tutorials is being developed but, at present, there is no means of obtaining students' views.

25 Students' guidance is well managed. There is a policy on support for students and there has been staff development aimed at improving its implementation. The college has reviewed its counselling provision. There are concerns that an internal counselling service could lead to problems with confidentiality and have an adverse effect on the tutor's role. There are wide-ranging connections with external agencies and students have access to counsellors through them. Careers guidance is offered in association with Sussex Careers Service and is of a high standard. However, there is no means to ensure that it is available consistently to all students. Good advice on university entry is available and students and parents speak highly of the efforts the college makes to pave the way to higher education. There is a well-organised careers fair at the college

each year and students' career intentions are regularly checked at tutorials. A similar programme for students seeking employment after leaving the college is being developed.

26 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified through two procedures. Firstly, confidential school reports are considered at the time of enrolment and secondly, teachers refer students at any stage of a course when students' difficulties are recognised. The latter procedure, for example, has led to the identification of students with dyslexia who have not been previously diagnosed. There is systematic additional learning support for students who require it. This programme draws on the wide experience of teachers. The quality of support in literacy, numeracy and English is highly regarded by staff, students and parents.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

27 The standard of teaching is high. Teachers are experienced and enthusiastic about their subjects. Work in mathematics, business studies, economics, GNVQ programmes, English, media studies, law, psychology and sociology is consistently good. One hundred and twelve teaching sessions were inspected. Of these, 76 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed the weaknesses. This figure is substantially higher than the average identified in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1994-95*. Only one session had weaknesses which outweighed strengths. The grades awarded to the sessions inspected are summarised in the following table.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		31	41	22	1	0	95
GCSE		1	3	2	0	0	6
GNVQ		5	3	1	0	0	9
Other		0	1	1	0	0	2
Total		37	48	26	1	0	112

28 Staff and students work well together and have high expectations of each other. Relationships are friendly but there is an acceptance by students that discipline is essential if there is to be effective teaching and learning. Students are punctual and generally well prepared for their classes. Attendance was good in the sessions inspected; average attendance was 86 per cent.

29 Courses were well planned. Schemes of work were written to a common detailed format, and took account of assessment requirements. The best examples included statements of aims and objectives, preferred teaching methods, assessment policy and lists of resources. In a few instances, schemes of work were no more than a list of topics or references to pages in text books. The information about courses provided for students

was generally good. For example, in business studies, students were provided with guidance notes and a timetable which set out the key stages on the way to the final examination. A comprehensive booklet for access to higher education students included the course structure, essential reading lists, advance notice of assignments and the deadlines for submission, and guidance on projects and other written work.

30 In the majority of lessons, aims were shared with students and new topics were set in the context of earlier learning. Lesson plans were generally good. However, a few were inappropriate for the class being taught. For example, in a few sessions the work was taken at too fast a pace for a significant proportion of students, who were left anxious while the more able students continued to debate the issues raised. Teachers used a variety of methods and activities. In several GCE A level mathematics sessions, whole class teaching was very effective. Teachers' questioning involved all students in discussions and most contributed willingly. Students were encouraged to help each other in developing an understanding of new concepts. In a GCE A level photography lesson, one student gave a good, well-researched presentation on the imagery found in one photographer's work in war zones. The teacher subsequently used this to help other members of the class develop their analytical and interpretation skills.

31 Much GCE A level teaching benefits from a scholarly and intellectually challenging approach. In sociology and psychology teachers' expectations were high but realistic. Discussion and debate, which are at the heart of these subjects, were well managed and particular care was taken to ensure that contentious issues received a balanced treatment. Students participated fully in discussion and took notes conscientiously without the prompting of the teacher. In lessons on the courses designed to provide access to higher education, the work was demanding but significant efforts were made to build up students' confidence so that they could cope with it. The approach to teaching mathematics was consistently challenging and fostered students' enjoyment of the subject. In contrast, several science sessions were marred by vague introductions which omitted to make any evident links with previous work. Lengthy exposition and dictated notes meant that students were not sufficiently challenged to think for themselves. Practical work usually consisted of verification rather than the investigation which is essential for the development of students' scientific skills.

32 All the practical work observed was carried out with a proper regard for health and safety. However, the allocation of single periods was inappropriate for subjects in which the majority of work was practical. For example, an art and design painting session of 45 minutes was reduced to 30 minutes of productive work because of the time required for setting up and clearing away.

33 Group work was carefully planned and used to good effect. For example, in art and design teachers provided clear and detailed

instructions which ensured that students worked diligently and effectively in their various groups, without prompting. In an English literature session on Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, students worked co-operatively to identify the key themes of the play. They shared their conclusions with the whole class and, guided by the teacher's apt questioning, contributed to a lively debate which strengthened their knowledge and understanding. The quality of students' contributions owed much to the English department's commitment to develop students' skills in written and oral work. Attention to basic skills in other curriculum areas was patchy.

34 The content of course materials was generally good. Some material was handwritten. Its presentation would have been improved if it had been wordprocessed. Nevertheless, the material was used to good effect in class and became an important learning resource for students as they approached examinations. During the inspection, there was little use of audio-visual aids, except in art. Students of modern languages have access to a language centre which provides opportunities for them to work on their own. Foreign language assistants help to develop students' confidence in speaking foreign languages. A joint project with a lycée in Corsica, funded by the European Union, contributes authentic materials to coursework in GCE A level French. Students on the GNVQ business studies programme benefit from the Young Enterprise organisation which enables them to experience setting up and running a small business. They are guided by experienced members of the local business community who give their time freely and generously. There are work experience placements in Brittany and Bavaria. In psychology there was a valuable programme of talks from visiting speakers, mostly research psychologists. The programme also gave students the opportunity to assist in projects which stimulate their own coursework.

35 Students' progress is monitored systematically. Assignments and tests are set regularly and marked carefully. Teachers give clearly written guidance on how students can improve and reinforce the messages by talking to each student when work is handed back. Regular progress reviews include students' self-assessments as well as teachers' comments. They result in action plans for learning which are agreed by students and teachers. In GCE A level sociology, students are encouraged to assess their own performance under a number of headings: level of knowledge and understanding, interpretation and application, evaluation, personal involvement and oral contribution. In history, students regularly compare their own assessed work with that of others in their class in order to build up an understanding of the standards required. In art, students assess each other's work in a constructive and sensitive way.

36 Extension classes designed to provide extra support are timetabled in all curriculum areas. Teachers work with individual students or with small groups to review difficult elements of courses or to improve students'

skills. These sessions are used to provide additional material for more able and less able students. Students praise the extra help they receive from their teachers outside normal contact hours. Library hours have been extended to times which are convenient for students on the access to higher education courses.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

37 Students at the college are keen to succeed. The number who do not complete their courses is small and the majority go on to higher education or additional further education. Students are confident in taking some responsibility for their own learning. In many humanities subjects, business studies and mathematics, students were able to express themselves clearly and spoke enthusiastically about their work. In science, students' communication skills were poor; some students were unable to explain basic concepts.

38 The performance of students in GCE A level examinations has been consistently high. Several students have been placed in the top five in examinations set by the Associated Examining Board: six students in mathematics between 1992 and 1995, including the top candidate in 1992; two students in design and technology in 1993 and 1994, including the overall top candidate in 1993; and one student in French in 1994. Students entered for at least one GCE AS/A level in 1995 scored, on average, 5.4 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2). This places the college in the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector in 1995 on this performance measure, according to data published by the Department for Education and Employment.

39 In 1995, there were 882 entries for GCE A level in 35 subjects. The average pass rate at grades A to E was 86 per cent, identical to that achieved in 1994. These rates were above the national averages of 83 per cent in 1994 and 84 per cent in 1995 for students aged 16 to 18 in sixth form colleges. In 1995, there were 100 per cent pass rates in six subjects: art and design, photography, government and politics, applied mathematics, music and theatre studies. Students in another 10 subjects gained pass rates of 90 per cent or more. In both 1995 and 1994, the proportions of students achieving pass rates at grades A to C were well above the 50 per cent average for sixth form colleges. In 1995, the proportion of students achieving grades A to C were above the national average in chemistry, design and technology, applied mathematics, mathematics with statistics, business studies, photography, music, theatre studies, English literature, English language and literature, French, government and politics, media studies, psychology, religious studies and sociology. Entries for GCE AS subjects have been few, but in 1995 there was a significant improvement in the number of passes.

40 The college subscribes to the advanced level information system which compares achievements at GCE A level with predictions based on

GCSE grades. In the past two years students have achieved higher grades than those predicted in media studies, English, French and mathematics. They have performed slightly less well than expected in computing, history, religious studies, Spanish, sports studies and social biology.

41 In the GCSE in 1995, there were 282 entries in 12 subjects. An average of 58 per cent achieved grades A* to C; 10 per cent above the national average for sixth form colleges. The number of students taking GCSE examinations and the number of subjects offered have fallen as more appropriate alternatives, such as GNVQ programmes, have become available.

42 In 1993, the college first introduced GNVQ intermediate programmes in business, health and social care, and leisure and tourism. The first 39 entries in 1994 produced a pass rate of 64 per cent, with three students gaining merits. In 1995, a pass rate of 81 per cent was achieved by 37 students, eight of whom were awarded merits and three distinctions. These pass rates are well above the national average for all colleges and schools according to data provided by the Department for Education and Employment. In the access to higher education programme which was first introduced in 1994, 14 out of 20 full-time students completed the course and 13 were successful in progressing to higher education. In 1995, 12 out of 18 students completed the full-time course and have gained places in higher education. On the part-time course, seven out of 16 students successfully completed the course and six have been offered higher education places.

43 The college records the destinations of its leavers. Of 327 full-time students aged 16 to 19 who completed advanced level courses in 1995, 67 per cent progressed to higher education, 11 per cent to additional further education, 7 per cent gained employment, 3 per cent progressed to other activities and the destinations of 12 per cent were unknown. Of the 117 students completing intermediate or foundation courses, 65 per cent went on to additional further education, 9 per cent gained employment, 12 per cent went on to other activities and the destinations of 14 per cent were unknown.

44 The college celebrates the achievements of its students at an annual reunion where awards are presented for academic excellence, general and personal progress and service to the college or to the local community. In team sports, both male and female students have achieved notable successes in county competitions in football, basketball, squash, tennis, climbing and swimming. Three students have represented their country. An all-female band has appeared on television and is negotiating a recording deal. Other music groups are regularly successful in the Brighton Music Festival. Other competitions where students have been successful include Young Enterprise, the English Speaking Union national public speaking competition and Stockpiler, a stock market investment exercise.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

45 The college has a long-standing commitment to improve its quality assurance. Over a number of years, an annual review conducted by each subject team focused on the analysis of examination results but there was no standard format for these reviews. Each subject manager was required to discuss the review with the vice-principal responsible for quality assurance and the curriculum, and to formulate an operational plan which included bids for funding to support new initiatives, for example, a change to a more appropriate syllabus. In time, the reviews came to address a broader range of issues and the best were comprehensive and rigorous. Operational plans were monitored through progress reports which became an integral part of the course review system. There is clear evidence of the effectiveness of this process in aspects of the college's work.

46 A new college quality assurance procedure was introduced in 1995, drawing together the best elements of earlier practice. It is based on course reviews which are collated at divisional level before submission to senior management. The information is incorporated into the college's annual self-assessment report which is formally submitted to the corporation. The new procedure did not adequately prescribe the scope of review and evaluation and the first of the new reviews varied widely in quality and rigour. A few were too descriptive and lacked evaluative comment so that they had to be done again. Firmer guidelines have now been issued to all staff. The system is now entering its second year and the action plans which resulted from the first round are about to be evaluated. The college needs to develop further its use of performance indicators to aid analysis, establish standards and set targets. Internal verification of GNVQ, access to higher education programmes and open college network programmes is well established and satisfies the requirements of the validating bodies.

47 An appraisal scheme for teaching staff is nearing the end of its first two-year cycle. Procedures are clearly established and 90 per cent of teachers have been appraised. While the appraisal scheme includes classroom observation, its main purpose is to clarify roles and responsibilities and to identify staff-development needs. An appraisal scheme for support staff has only just been introduced. The response of staff to appraisal has been favourable.

48 The monitoring of staff-development activities has led to improvements including, for example, the introduction of individualised staff records which ensure that any individual staff development is relevant to the college's strategic objectives. The development of GNVQ programmes has been assisted by courses for staff leading to the awards of the training and development lead body. Staff-development opportunities have been extended to support staff. This year the number of closure days for staff development was reduced from five to three in order to accommodate a new scheme of flexible in-service training. This has proved popular with staff who can now determine their own training

programmes in response to individual and subject area needs. Staff present training proposals to senior management for approval and funding. The annual budget for training outside the college is £12,000, representing 0.5 per cent of total staffing costs, but this is supplemented by the three in-service training days each year and other courses run without identifiable cost.

49 The college is a member of the Sussex sixth form colleges training consortium, which collaborates with Brighton University to provide middle management courses for teaching and support staff. Half the funding for this initiative is provided by the TEC. Through Sixth Form Colleges South, the college encourages staff-development events in conjunction with other colleges in Sussex, Hampshire and Surrey. The college is committed to the achievement of Investor In People status and a target date has been set for December 1997.

50 The college has an induction policy for new teaching staff. Detailed guidance is provided in a handbook. There is a mentor system for newly-qualified teachers and a system of 'tutor shadowing' for all first-year staff enables them to become familiar with the work of the personal tutor. Induction procedures for support staff are less formal and depend upon the goodwill of longer-serving colleagues.

51 The college charter, introduced in September 1994, has been reviewed in consultation with staff and students. A simpler version has been developed for insertion in the student handbook which includes the college mission statement and the complaints procedure. The complaints procedure is not entirely clear, but both students and their parents are happy with the handling and the outcomes of the small number of complaints that have been made. The charter is distributed to students and discussed at induction. Staff awareness of the college charter is high.

52 The college's self-assessment report follows the headings of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It is well written, critical and factually correct. The report provides a perceptive analysis of the college's strengths and weaknesses. It is an excellent example of its kind. A range of development issues is raised and there is an indication of the action plans and targets which have been prepared to remedy the main weaknesses. The report accords closely with the findings of the inspection.

RESOURCES

Staffing

53 The college employs 64 full-time and 15 part-time teachers, amounting to a total of 72 full-time equivalents. There is an equal number of men and women on the senior management team of six. In the last two years, student numbers have increased by 41 per cent and the number of teachers by 14 per cent, resulting in an increase in the staff to student ratio from 1:13.4 to 1:16.7. All full-time and part-time teachers are

graduates, 27 per cent have higher degrees and all hold a teaching qualification. Since the introduction of GNVQ programmes, 20 teachers have qualified through the training and development lead body as assessors, five as verifiers and one has achieved the award to accredit students' prior learning.

54 There is a good technical, administrative and clerical team. Technical support is provided by seven technicians. Three are graduates and one has recently obtained a postgraduate teaching certificate. Administrative and clerical support are provided by a team of seven, most of whom are employed during term time only. A high level of support is provided for senior managers and teachers. The college employs its own catering and cleaning staff.

55 All staff have job descriptions which are reviewed and updated regularly. The college has a full range of personnel policies and procedures, including those for the recruitment and appointment of staff, discipline, grievance, pay and redundancy.

Equipment/learning resources

56 The college has a wide range of teaching aids, including overhead projectors and whiteboards. Audio-visual equipment, including television and video-tape playback facilities, is permanently located in some of the rooms used for teaching English and media studies, and the same facilities are available in other areas by booking.

57 The library and resource centre is small. There are places for 30 students in the quiet area and a further 30 in the resource area. During term time, the centre is heavily used and there are often insufficient study spaces. The centre has 8,800 books, including multiple copies of the most popular books. Library funding of £8,963 for 1995-96 represents £7.56 per student. The range and quality of books for each subject area vary widely. In media studies, geography and business studies, holdings are good but in history, English and some sciences the bookstock is inadequate. In some cases, library holdings are supplemented by books held in departments. There has been a gradual transfer of these collections to the library but it is too small to hold them all. Additional study facilities are available in the careers suite and the college hall. There are six computers in the library, two of which are connected to the college network. Four machines have access to compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases.

58 There are 112 computers available for students' use, of which 94 are of modern specification. This gives a ratio of one modern machine to every 12.5 students. There are 17 computers available for teachers in their work rooms and another 17 for use by the administration. Two portable computers are available for general staff use. The college has embarked on a programme of updating all its existing computers before buying additional machines. There are three main rooms which are used

for teaching computing. When they are not timetabled for use, the facilities are available to students. Students also have access to computers elsewhere. The language centre has 23 workstations, some of which have interactive CD-ROM and video facilities. This year the college has received funding to develop the Internet as an educational resource. It has been able to lease a line that will give unlimited access from any of the college's networked computers.

59 Specialist equipment to support the curriculum is generally good, although some is ageing and in need of replacement. The college has started to plan an equipment replacement programme to supersede the current practice of annual bidding for new equipment. In art and design students have access to appropriate equipment. However, the darkroom is too small for the large numbers of students taking the photography course. There is a wide range of media studies equipment that includes seven camcorders and two editing suites. Science equipment is generally good. The chemistry department has a new calorimeter and students are able to try out more sophisticated equipment during visits to Sussex University. There is a comprehensive range of equipment to support craft design and technology courses, and equipment for physics is being updated gradually.

Accommodation

60 The college is located on a single site in a residential area, within a short walk of Brighton station. It was built between 1912 and 1914 as a boys' grammar school. The college is built of red brick, and has an impressive three-storey front and a bell tower. There is a second building on the site known as college house. The college owns an adjoining 1.5 hectare playing field with a gymnasium and a pavilion. This playing field is part of a larger one owned by the county council and used mainly by the college.

61 The college is not well signposted. The reception area is located in the main entrance, which opens on to an attractive corridor where there is a good display of students' work, prizes and records of achievement in recent GCE A level examinations. The layout of the buildings is complicated and there is a variety of floor levels. The load-bearing structure of the buildings makes it difficult to introduce desirable modification. Some classrooms are too small for the size of groups using them. The college has been refurbishing its accommodation over a number of years but there are still a number of rooms that need redecoration. In some rooms, if the windows are opened for ventilation, high levels of traffic noise make teaching difficult. Classroom and laboratory furniture varies in age and condition.

62 The college has a detailed accommodation strategy that includes options for new building and work on existing buildings. Lack of maintenance over many years has left the college with substantial

problems. The roofs of both its buildings are nearing the end of their lives and one is giving immediate cause for concern. A detailed condition survey was commissioned to identify the work to be carried out over the next 10 years. However, there is no planned maintenance schedule. The caretaking staff are employed in rectifying the many defects and generally improving the fabric of the buildings.

63 Students with restricted mobility are able to gain access to the first floor of both buildings and to the second floor of the main building. Other levels in the main building and college house are not accessible. The layout of the buildings means that a number of lifts would be required to improve matters. The college has installed a chair lift to enable a student to gain access to part of a building in order to take a particular course.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

64 The main strengths of the college are:

- its clear mission which is supported by governors, teachers and students
- effective enrolment and induction of students
- its system of support and pastoral care for students
- well-qualified and committed teachers
- high-quality teaching
- the outstanding level of students' achievements
- the guidance provided for students on progression to higher education
- close links with the TEC
- the new open access language centre.

65 If it is to further improve its services, the college should address the following:

- further develop its use of performance indicators
- extend its quality assurance procedures to all activities
- improve its information technology facilities
- improve its library provision.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1995)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1995)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)

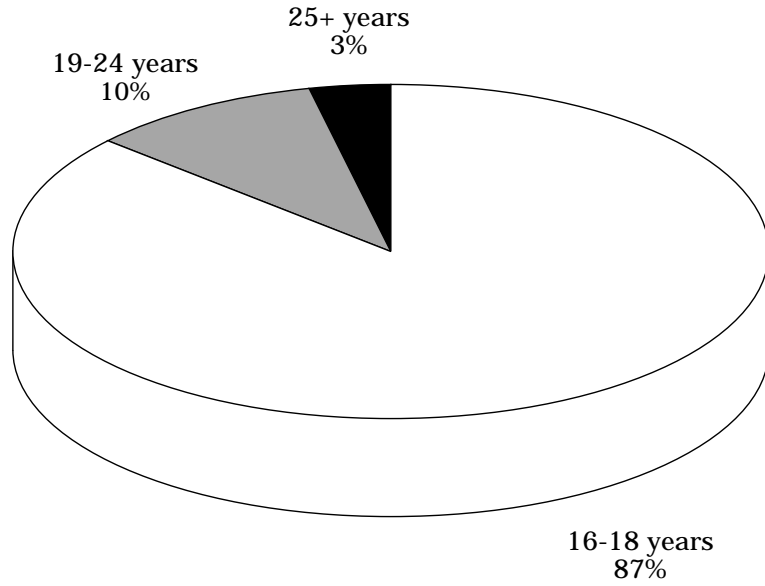
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

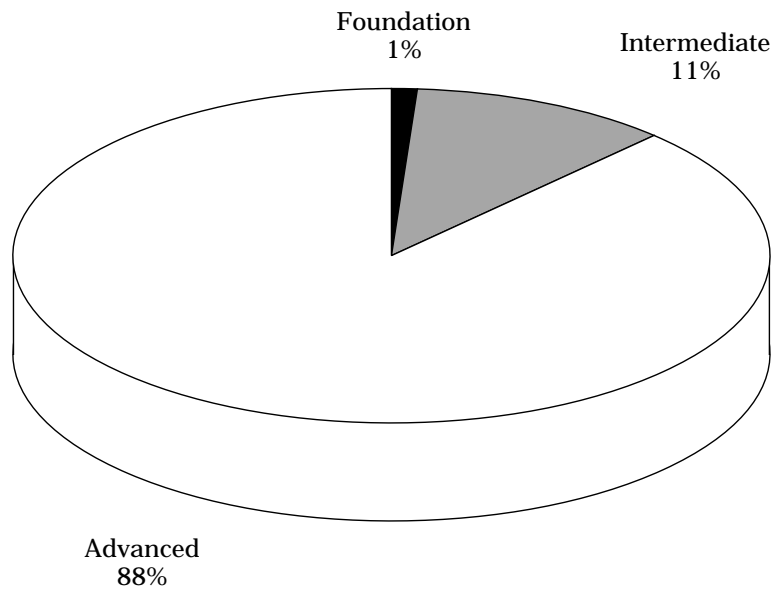
Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1995)



Enrolments: 1,186

Figure 2

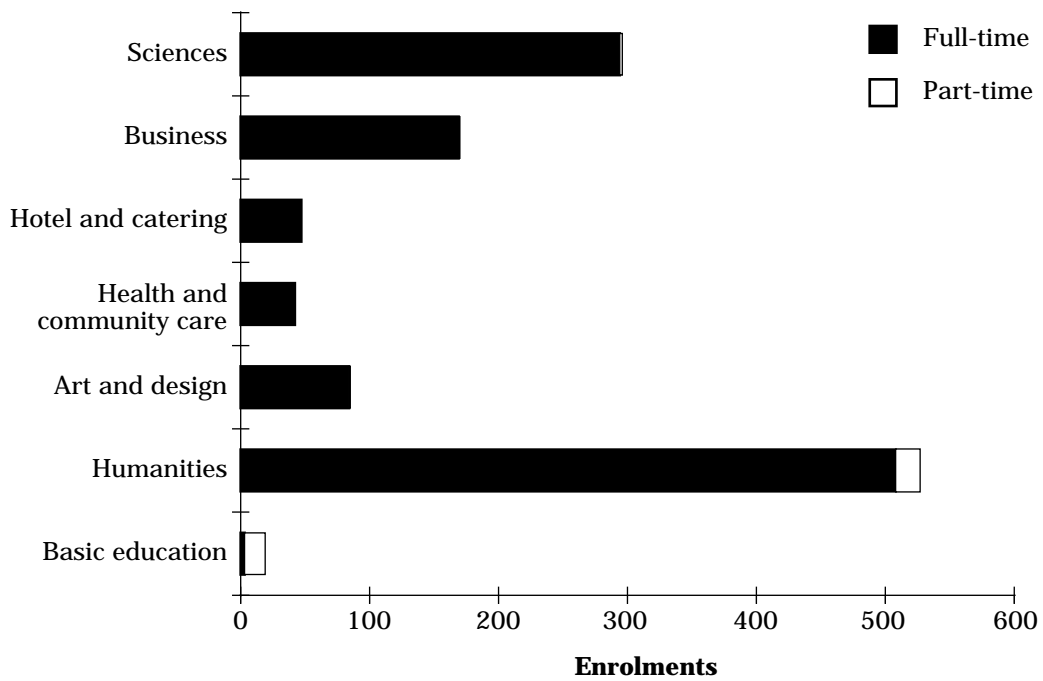
Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1995)



Enrolments: 1,186

Figure 3

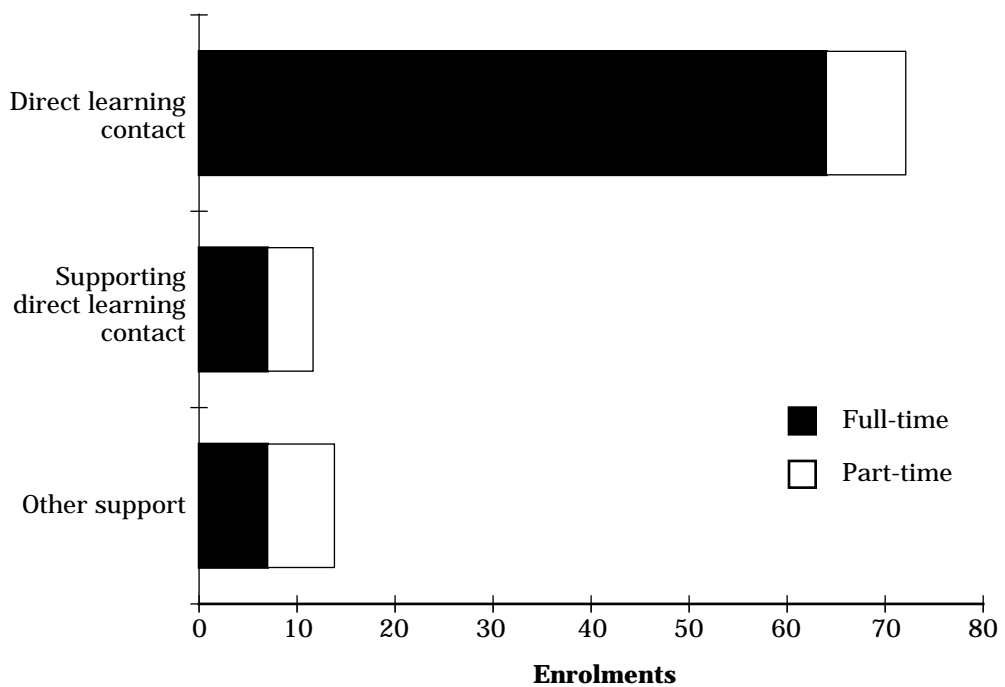
Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1995)



Enrolments: 1,186

Figure 4

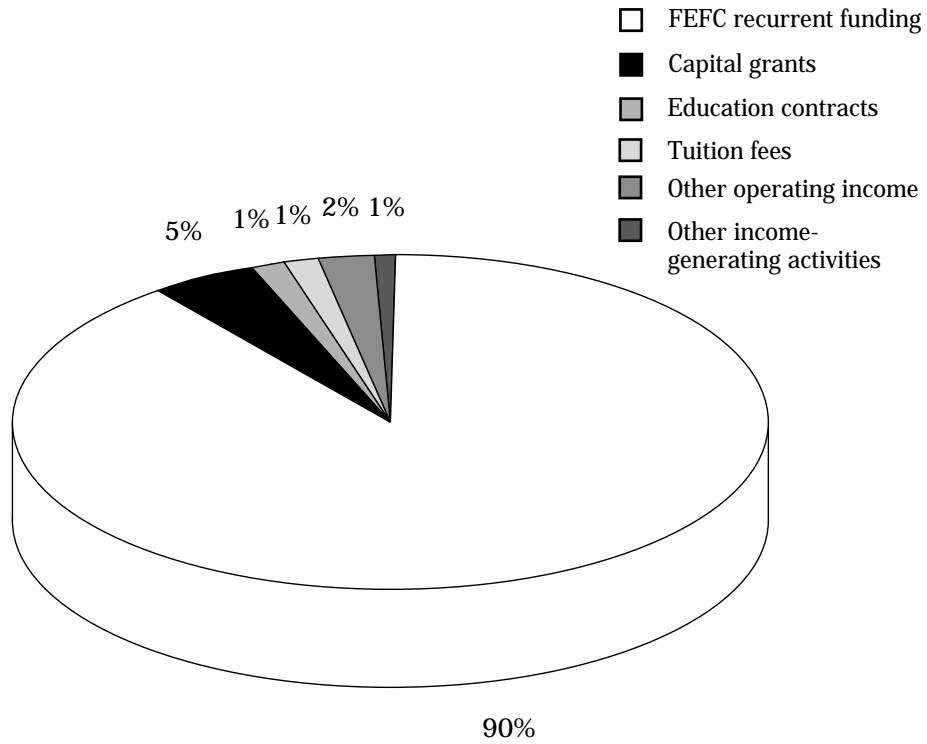
Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)



Full-time equivalent staff: 98

Figure 5

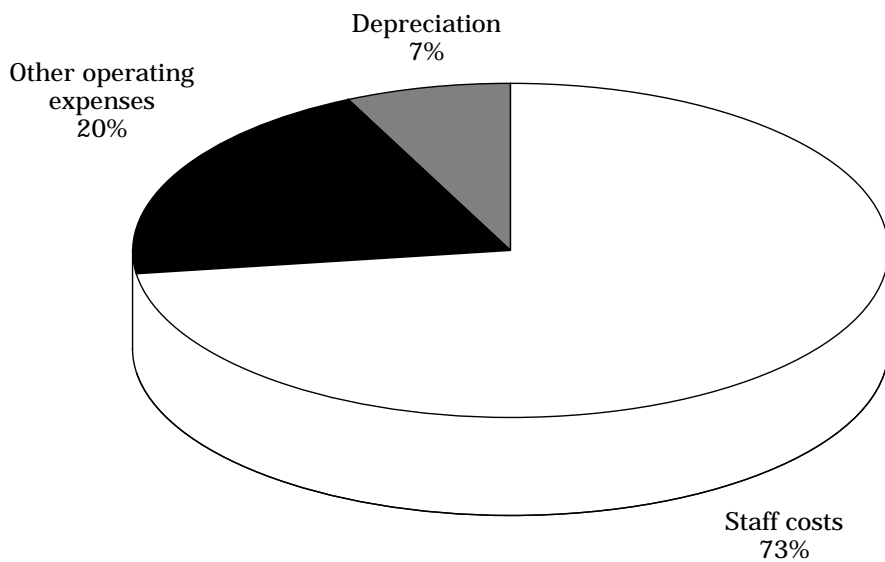
**Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College: estimated income
(for 12 months to July 1996)**



Estimated income: £3,101,000

Figure 6

**Brighton, Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College: estimated expenditure
(for 12 months to July 1996)**



Estimated expenditure: £3,276,000

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