

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Farnham College

June 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education every four years. The inspectorate also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum and gives advice to the FEFC's quality assessment committee.

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

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

By June 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 81/96

FARNHAM COLLEGE SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected April 1995-March 1996

Summary

Farnham College is a sixth form college in Farnham, Surrey. It is the main provider of 16 to 18 education for the town of Farnham and its surrounding districts. The college is strongly committed to student care and this is evident in the energy it puts into its links with the schools from which it draws students and in its assiduous monitoring of students' progress during their time at college. Farnham College is a well-managed institution. It benefits from a well-conceived and accessible management information system, and there is broad involvement in the strategic planning process. Staff are well qualified and enthusiastic. Standards of teaching are high in many areas and particularly so in English and media studies. Students do well in most external examinations and especially in GCE A levels. They have at their disposal good facilities for information technology. All aspects of college work are characterised by a striving for continuous improvement. There is a need for the college to broaden the range of its courses to include those at foundation level. The college recognises that it must continue to seek ways of making the quality of its group tutorial sessions more consistent. The bookstock in the library should be improved and the library catalogue should include reference to material held throughout the college. The college should continue to improve the quality of its accommodation.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics and computing	2	Art and design	2
Science	2	English and media studies	1
Business studies	2	Social studies and languages	2

INTRODUCTION

1 Farnham College was inspected between April 1995 and March 1996. During the weeks beginning 24 April 1995 and 12 February 1996, seven inspectors spent a total of 19 inspector days assessing specialist subject areas. Inspectors visited 96 classes, involving 745 students, and examined a broad range of students' work and extensive documentation relating to the college and its courses. In the week beginning 11 March 1996 and during September 1995, when enrolment and induction procedures were inspected, six inspectors spent a total of 20 inspector days assessing aspects of cross-college provision. During the period of the inspection, there were meetings with members of the corporation, representatives of the Surrey Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and of local industry and commerce, headteachers of local schools, students, parents, college managers and staff.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Farnham College was established as a sixth form college in 1973 on a site formerly occupied by a boys' grammar school. The site is largely owned by the trustees of a local charitable foundation, which dates back to 1578. The corporation owns only the college tennis court and it has a renewable 50-year lease from the foundation for the use and sole occupation of the rest of the site.

3 The college is situated to the south of Farnham, a small town with a population of about 36,000. It is a major employer in an area where most companies employ 10 people or fewer. Many residents leave the town each day to work in London or elsewhere. At a time when the national figure for unemployment stands at 8 per cent, Surrey has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. It was 3.8 per cent in December 1995. In the Waverley district it was only 3.4 per cent. The college has sought to develop closer links with local business over the past five years and it is now developing a portfolio of commercial courses and training services.

4 The college is the main provider of education in Farnham for students aged 16 to 18, although there is also a local 11 to 18 Roman Catholic grant-maintained school. There are two 11 to 16 schools serving the town and these, together with two small special schools and a school at Ash four miles away, constitute the college's partner schools. The college also attracts students from many other schools. The Surrey Institute of Art and Design, a higher education establishment, is based in Farnham and its provision includes further education courses for 16 to 18 year olds. The Surrey Adult Education Service runs a large programme from its building in the centre of the town and it hires college premises for a few of its courses. Just two miles to the north-east lies Aldershot, and immediately beyond it Farnborough where there is a large general further education college and a sixth form college. There has been a significant decline in the number of 16 year olds in the partner schools in the area. It is predicted that numbers will return to their 1991 level only in 1998. The percentage

of students who continue in education after the age of 16 in Surrey has been high for some time, rising from 79.1 per cent in 1993 to 80.4 per cent in 1995. The college has expanded to reach enrolments of 511 full-time 16 to 19 year old students, and 324 adult part-time students. Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively.

5 There are three faculties in the college: communication and creative studies; management studies and humanities; and scientific and technological studies. Each is overseen by a faculty head. A fourth senior curriculum manager is responsible for adult education. Teachers are supported by a range of other staff including nine technicians and curriculum support staff, and eight staff who work in the college's creche. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6 The mission of the college is to be the leading provider of education and training for post-16 students in the Farnham and Ash area. The college recognises a need to maximise the potential of each individual; to provide opportunities for personal development in order to ensure fulfilment of that potential; and to meet the demand for a flexible and self-reliant workforce. In order to achieve these aims, continuous development of the curriculum and a commitment to professional development for staff are considered essential.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college offers 33 subjects at General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level), eight GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects and 20 subjects at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level, for full-time or part-time study. Six subjects can be studied through distance learning. Vocational subjects such as wordprocessing, desktop publishing and foreign languages at work are also offered. An access to higher education course is available, with options in sociology, psychology and economics. There are General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses at advanced level in art and design, business, health and social care, engineering, leisure and tourism, media and science. Courses are also offered at intermediate level in four of these subjects. Students on GNVQ programmes can also take additional vocational units or GCE A levels. Students with sight or hearing disabilities receive specialist support and those with learning disabilities such as dyslexia may attend additional sessions in the study support centre. There are no separate specialist courses for students with learning difficulties, nor are any GNVQs offered at foundation level.

8 There is a comprehensive choice of complementary studies. General interest programmes include the following: environmental awareness, public speaking, a young enterprise scheme where students work with industrialists to set up a profit-making company, singing in a choir, community service with elderly people, work as a classroom assistant in a

secondary school, and assistance with learning support for pupils in a local special school. Students also take part in a wide range of individual and team sports. The student council works closely with Farnham Hedgehogs, a fundraising charity, and students address the Farnham Rotary Club every year.

9 Links with partner schools are good. There is a nominated senior tutor for each school and faculty heads visit schools regularly to keep pupils informed about the opportunities that are open to them. The college is responsive to new curricular needs identified by the schools. It has developed an innovative GNVQ scheme with one of its partners through which school pupils can study GCSEs and half a GNVQ intermediate course in business. If students are successful, they may progress directly to a GNVQ advanced course or to a two or three subject GCE A level programme. Alternatively, they may complete their GNVQ intermediate course while studying for additional GCSE subjects. The college has a good working relationship with the Surrey Adult Education Service and a link with the University of Surrey. The college has some interesting contacts with leading literary academics and well-known authors and poets, who spend time each year at the college working with students and with pupils from partner schools. These workshops are recorded as 'Writers on Tape' packs which assist study of classical and modern texts.

10 There is a good relationship with the Surrey Careers Service. It has recently established a base at the college which also provides careers advice for the community. The college has good connections with local business and industry. Company staff work closely with the college and the local TEC to run a conference at the college on business in the community. Employers often speak to business studies students about current issues or contribute live projects to their programme. An internationally renowned ceramicist has held workshops with students. Design and technology students work with a local microsatellite manufacturer on design problems. Students learning desktop publishing have produced a brochure for the Farnham Youth Choir. Science students have designed a folding antenna for one of the Defence Research Agency's satellites. The college has yet to draw together its business contacts so that, for example, companies for which commercial services are provided are also invited to discuss careers with GCE A level students.

11 In September 1995, the college began to offer vocational courses for adults. This programme includes specially-designed short training courses as well as courses for GCE AS/A level and GCSE. The college is finalising a collaborative project with the Surrey police to provide multi-media computer-based training. Other services include video editing, perception surveys and marketing projects.

12 There is a marketing group which includes a press officer, an admissions officer, an events co-ordinator and a business liaison officer. The group is led by the vice-principal, who is responsible for marketing.

The college has a marketing plan and policies for corporate communications and advertising. Promotional materials are attractive. The prospectus is aimed mainly at 16 year old applicants. It does not mention some of the college's more innovative activities or the complementary studies programme, and some parents were disappointed not to have known of these possibilities in advance. The college's first brochure promoting its adult, community and business programmes was produced in 1995. It gives too little emphasis to the college's expanding services for business. Employers consulted during the inspection either had not seen it or were misled by its title.

13 There is an equal opportunities policy but no formal means of monitoring its effectiveness. Heads of departments and faculties take note of gender imbalances in classes. There are 39 classes in which 80 per cent or more of the students are of the same sex and eight classes where all the students are of the same sex.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

14 The corporation board has 17 members: seven are independent, four are foundation members, two are co-opted, one is the TEC nominee, one a parent, one a teacher and the principal is also a member. There is a vacancy for an independent governor. Members have particular expertise in estates, business, personnel and employment law. Attendance at meetings is good. In addition to the statutory finance, audit and remuneration committees, there are committees for personnel and employment, development and students, and premises and resources. Most committees meet termly, the finance committee meets monthly and the remuneration committee only as required. Committees are effectively clerked and papers for meetings are presented with clear delineation between those that are for decision and those for information. The board relies heavily on the detailed work of its committees, sometimes to the detriment of discussion by the full corporation.

15 Members recognise the distinction between governance and management. They consider that their responsibility is to support and guide the college in meeting the aims of the strategic plan. Committees review the strategic plan before agreement by the board at its June meeting. The board has adopted the code of conduct published in the Council's *Guide for Governors* and it maintains a register of members' external interests. At the time of incorporation, a board member took responsibility for governor training. This arrangement has now lapsed and little formal training takes place. The board does not yet review its own effectiveness.

16 The college is well led by a senior management team comprising the principal, vice-principal and college administrator. The vice-principal has responsibility for the development of the curriculum, organisation of teaching and management of professional development. The college administrator is responsible for support staff, management information

and the creche and refectory services. This group meets weekly. There are three heads of academic faculties and three senior tutors responsible for student advice, guidance and tutorial support. The senior management team, faculty heads, senior tutors and the senior curriculum manager for adult education meet twice a term as the strategy group to monitor the college's progress against its objectives and to formulate advice to the corporation. Senior managers delegate tasks and all teachers have some responsibility. All staff have job descriptions.

17 There is effective communication at all levels of the college. The principal holds a brief meeting with staff each week. There is a programme of meetings at subject level in addition to the published calendar of faculty, course and senior staff meetings. All staff meetings have agendas, and either minutes or action notes are kept. Teachers are able to contribute to the strategic planning process through subject group meetings. Their ideas are taken forward by faculty heads to the strategy group, whose recommendations are made to the development and students committee of the corporation.

18 The college has achieved its target growth each year since incorporation. In 1994-95 it exceeded its target by 11 per cent and it expects to meet its 1995-96 target. The college's average level of funding fell from £21.06 per unit in 1994-95 to £20.60 in 1995-96. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.37 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

19 There is a clearly-understood procedure for delegating budgets. Heads of department and subject leaders are advised of the total consumables budget for the college. Each makes a bid which is considered by a group including the administrator, the finance officer, and the head of information technology. It has been decided that for at least two years, 10 per cent of the budget will be allocated to the information centre which includes information technology and the library. Faculty heads monitor spending by subject leaders, but all budget holders receive a monthly report on their expenditure.

20 The computerised management information systems meet all current and foreseeable needs. The college has two separate systems; one for financial information and the other for student and staff records. The financial database provides detailed reports for managers, the finance committee and budget holders. The personnel and student database has been installed recently and it produces reports of increasing sophistication. A terminal is available for teachers in their common room.

21 The college has established policies for equal opportunities and health and safety. To supplement the college health and safety policy, each department has been required to write a policy specific to its area of work. The college administrator is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of health and safety practice.

22 The college provides a room for collective worship and an opportunity for spiritual reflection. A GCE A level course in religious studies has been offered at the college for several years. The college fulfils the requirements of sections 44 and 45 of *The Further and Higher Education Act 1992*.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

23 The college works closely with its partner schools. The principal meets the headteachers three times each term. The college offers unbiased careers counselling in the schools. It organises a series of taster days and opportunities to shadow college students. There are open evenings for prospective students and their parents. The college has appropriate policies and procedures on admissions, tutoring and progression. The interviewing team of senior tutors and the vice-principal has been expanded recently to include six more staff. The vice-principal keeps records of applications and interviews and uses them to set the enrolment targets in the strategic plan. Partner schools appreciate the care that is taken to ensure that interviews are conducted impartially and that the needs of applicants are paramount.

24 Enrolment and induction are well organised. Tutors are well briefed and have comprehensive guidance notes to help them work consistently. Students benefit from the calm, supportive atmosphere. At induction, students are welcomed to the college and are introduced to the complementary studies programme, the charter and facilities for study support. Although most tutors are successful in making students feel at ease, some students were unnecessarily passive in induction sessions. Subject and course inductions varied in quality.

25 Full-time students each have a personal tutor. Tutor groups include students who are at various stages from all programmes, but recently there has been a move towards allocating students to tutors who also teach them. All full-time, and an increasing number of part-time teachers, act as personal tutors. Tutors meet senior tutors regularly and are strongly committed to the college's ethos of support for students. Personal tutors have a time allocation of one-and-a-half hours for their duties, including two timetabled meetings with their tutor sets. One tutorial is largely taken up with information, dealing with matters raised by the student council and completing administrative procedures. Students are critical of the value of group tutorials, although they speak warmly of their tutors.

26 There is close contact with parents, including a 'meet the tutors' evening early in the autumn term. Students' progress is reviewed regularly and reports are discussed at parents' evenings. At the pre-entry interview where course options are finalised, an action plan is initiated which is built upon throughout the student's time at the college. Course assessment documents give scope to students to reflect on their achievements. The college has introduced an electronic system of registering students' attendance which provides immediate information. Unauthorised

absences are followed up quickly and parents feel that the college keeps them in touch.

27 A senior member of staff is responsible for developing courses for adult students. Applicants to the access to higher education course or to daytime classes are interviewed and offered careers counselling. The adult co-ordinator, assisted by a part-time personal tutor, is available every day and on two evenings each week. The college needs to improve its pastoral support for adult students as it expands this area of provision.

28 In September 1995, all students new to the college were screened for literacy. Students requiring additional help are referred to the study support centre, or they may refer themselves. Individual programmes are negotiated and personal tutors are kept informed of students' attendance. Forty-one students are receiving regular additional support, including one autistic student, and one who is profoundly deaf. However, there are no staff qualified to teach students with learning difficulties. The diagnostic tests revealed a number of students who are particularly able, but this information has not yet been used to enhance existing extension work.

29 Careers education and guidance are co-ordinated by one of the senior tutors. A careers library in the information centre is stocked with a wide range of reference material, including university video prospectuses and computer databases. A schedule of the guidance programme is published in the student handbook. There is good advice for the majority of students who apply to higher education, but work-related careers education is less highly developed.

30 There is a creche with facilities for up to 12 children, where college students take precedence. Students experiencing financial difficulty can apply to the principal for assistance. There is a counsellor who is based in the college on one day a week. Students also have access to a range of external agencies and local church ministers.

31 The college has a student council comprising representatives from each personal tutor group. It organises a number of social functions, including a rag week, and takes a particular interest in collegiate facilities such as the common room and refectory. The student body is represented on the corporation and the chair of the student council presents an annual report to the governors. Council members are committed and active, but a significant number of tutor groups fail either to elect representatives or to encourage participation in student affairs.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

32 Good teaching was observed in all curriculum areas and the standard in English and media studies was particularly high. Strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses in 69 per cent of the 96 sessions inspected, an outcome which is above the national average recorded in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report for 1994-95*. Seven per cent of lessons had weaknesses which outweighed strengths. The following table summarises the grades awarded to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		15	30	17	4	1	67
GCSE		1	11	2	2	0	16
GVNQ		0	5	3	0	0	8
Other		1	3	1	0	0	5
Total		17	49	23	6	1	96

33 The average attendance for all the sessions inspected was low at 73 per cent. This figure includes rates of attendance which range from an average of 83 per cent for classes in business studies, to only 65 per cent in social studies and languages. Attendance at GCE A level general studies classes was particularly poor; the average level of attendance in the three classes observed was 30 per cent. At the time of inspection, a significant number of students were absent because of illness. Inspection of a sample of attendance records showed that the average rate of attendance during the autumn term of 1995 was 89 per cent.

34 The college has a learning methods policy which is widely supported by teaching staff. There are coherent schemes of work in which aims and objectives for each area of the curriculum are clearly identified. In the best practice, these are shared with students who understand how each of their lessons fit into the overall pattern. In a minority of cases, schemes of work are not practical working documents. Most lessons are well planned and are designed appropriately to meet their stated objectives. There is evidence that syllabuses are reviewed regularly and that the college has selected those most appropriate to the needs of students. The college offers, for example, not only GCSE English but also the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) communication skills programme for students whose English is not strong. In modern languages it has responded positively to the poor grammatical knowledge of some students moving on from GCSE language courses by providing a basic linguistics course to all GCE A level students in their first term at college. Students taking repeat courses in GCSE mathematics are taught in different ways according to their previous levels of attainment. Those who need most help are taught in formal groups; others follow individual programmes of study, supported by a teacher.

35 Relations between staff and students are good. Teachers conduct their classes in a friendly and relaxed manner. Staff and students respect each other and discipline is good. Teachers are concerned to extend the learning of all their students. In a GCE A level lesson on Newton's laws of motion, skilful questioning coaxed an initially reluctant student to talk through the solution to a problem. By breaking the issue down into small steps and reinforcing the student's responses, the teacher was able to guide the student to a successful conclusion which boosted confidence.

36 Students are taught by staff who are knowledgeable in the subjects they teach and fully aware of the material they have chosen for particular classes. In the better lessons teachers obviously enjoyed their subjects and communicated their enthusiasm to students. A class reading Browning's *The Grammarian's Funeral*, quickly picked up their teacher's enthusiasm and worked with interest and commitment. Students of languages benefited from natural and sustained use of the foreign language by their teachers and expressed themselves confidently in it. Practical work is carried out with proper regard for health and safety.

37 Staff make considerable efforts to grasp and hold the interest of their students. They use a variety of learning techniques such as teacher exposition, group work, paired work, role-play, formal debate, student presentation and plenary discussion. Some approaches are particularly imaginative. For example, in a science lesson a farmhouse loaf of bread served to illustrate cell structure when students were asked to slice it for themselves and discuss what was revealed. Students dealing with the history of Russia were asked to recall facts relevant to an essay they were about to write. The teacher built up a spider diagram on the overhead projector using students' contributions both to consolidate knowledge, and to focus attention on the need for analysis rather than simple narrative in the essay. Staff make conscious efforts to relate the work they do to students' own interests. A media studies lesson taking place on 14 February discussed how messages might be interpreted by different audiences, using Valentine's Day cards as source material. Critically mature discussion was achieved in a class where students were debating whether, or to what extent, advertisements for feminine hygiene products might be exploitative.

38 Some tasks require students to develop several skills at once. A group of business studies students explored the issues which a company would have to consider when designing and building aircraft. This was done by building paper aeroplanes according to a detailed brief which included costing. Small groups of students worked in teams with a theoretical budget and a real timescale. Completed aeroplanes had to be tested: if they flew the specified distance they were regarded as a success; if they crashed, costs were added to the firm. By the end of the exercise, students had learned something of team work and delegation, quality control, testing and production.

39 Staff have a strong concern to help students. It is shown, for example, in the teaching and learning in the mathematics clinics that are advertised as a 'drop-in' facility for students wanting extra help and in the general willingness of staff to give their time outside classes. The college provides opportunities for students to broaden their experience by taking part in field trips and exchange visits to France, Germany and Spain, and art study visits to Amsterdam, Barcelona and Paris. Poets visit the college to give workshops, talks and readings.

40 A small number of adults attend the college during the day, mainly on information technology and wordprocessing courses. They are well integrated with other student groups and speak warmly of the help and understanding they receive from teachers and younger students. Staff are sensitive to the age differences in their groups and to the different experiences and circumstances of adult students.

41 Written work of an appropriate standard is set in all curriculum areas. It is marked thoroughly and assessment is consistent and fair. In the best practice, there is a departmental policy on assessment which emphasises deadlines for the return of marked work and gives guidance on the kind of teachers' comments which are useful in guiding students in how to improve. However, in some areas written feedback is limited to a simple mark or grade and no attention is drawn to recurring errors. The most able students do not always get the penetrating comment they need to encourage them to strive for excellence. In a minority of cases, students show poor written communication skills and serious errors of punctuation, grammar and spelling are left uncorrected by staff. The work of students on GNVQ programmes is sometimes marked over generously so that comparability with the standard of GCE A level work is lost.

42 Work experience is arranged for all students on vocational courses and is available to others on request. A student of government and politics, for example, spent a fortnight in the office of the shadow chancellor of the exchequer; a sociology student worked in the head office of *The Big Issue*, a magazine sold nationally by homeless people. However, few parents and by no means every student were aware of this opportunity for development and the college should do more to encourage participation in work experience by GCE A level students.

43 In a small number of lessons teachers dominated to such an extent that students had few opportunities to express themselves or to show initiative. Some lessons were too relaxed: the pace of work was slow, students' attention wandered and too little was achieved. In other lessons, there was too little guidance on study skills; for example, the erroneous assumption was made by some teachers that all students are capable of compiling useful notes during lessons. Small class sizes restricted the range of learning activities that teachers could use in some cases.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

44 Students spoke with enthusiasm about the teaching and support they received from staff. Most students' enthusiasm was evident. They absorbed themselves in their work and were responsive to the opportunities they encountered. One group of students taking an option in beginners French was giving presentations about a recent study visit to Paris. Despite their limited language ability after so short a period of study, their talks were lively and were well received by their colleagues. The language option was well integrated with other units of the GNVQ programme. Most students develop their core skills to a sufficiently high

level to enable them to succeed with their subject studies. Students develop appropriate levels of specialist knowledge and understanding.

45 In 1993, there were 618 GCE A level entries in 33 different subjects and the average pass rate was 88 per cent. In 1994, there were 619 GCE A level entries in 33 subjects, and the average pass rate fell marginally to 87 per cent. In 1995, there were 595 GCE A level entries in 34 subjects and the average pass rate increased to 90 per cent. The national average for sixth form colleges was 84 per cent. Of the 34 GCE A level subjects offered in 1995, every student who entered the examination in the following 10 subjects gained a pass at grades A to E: art and design, business and information studies, ceramics, Chinese, French, home economics, further mathematics, media studies, music and religious studies. A further 14 subjects had pass rates in excess of 90 per cent. Although numbers were small in some groups, this is a considerable achievement. There are few subjects in which pass rates give any cause for concern. There were 36 entries in 11 GCE AS subjects with an average pass rate of 89 per cent. Ten of the 11 subjects at this level had entries of four or fewer.

46 Students aged 16 to 18 who were entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1994-95 scored, on average, 5.3 points per entry. This places the college among the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data published by the Department for Education and Employment.

47 There were 342 GCSE entries in 1993, and 36 per cent achieved grades A to C. In 1994, there were 347 entries and 42 per cent achieved grades A to C. In 1995, there were 250 entries and 56 per cent achieved grades A to C. The national average for sixth form colleges was 48 per cent. The 28 per cent fall in entries for GCSE examinations between 1994 and 1995 is the result of action by the college to guide students towards a more suitable award, such as GNVQ.

48 Eighty-two per cent of the 28 students, aged 16 to 18, in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's 1995 performance tables were successful. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. The number of candidates at the college who pursued vocational qualifications was relatively small in 1994-95, but it is growing and now stands at 111. The GNVQ intermediate programme in business has improved its pass rate from 60 per cent in 1994 to 100 per cent in 1995. The pass rates for GNVQ intermediate health and social care for the years 1993, 1994 and 1995 were 54 per cent, 67 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively. For GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism in 1994 and 1995, the respective figures were 54 per cent and 38 per cent. The GNVQ advanced programme in business achieved pass rates of 75 per cent and 88 per cent in 1994 and 1995, respectively. The GNVQ advanced health and social care programme has had only one set of results so far: 63 per cent of students gained a pass in

1995. In leisure and tourism pass rates were 86 per cent in 1994 when students gained a BTEC national diploma and 80 per cent in 1995 after transfer to GNVQ advanced. Results at advanced level on vocational programmes are better than those achieved at intermediate level.

49 Students' achievements in the wider college curriculum are significant. They have reached the finals of the national Young Business Person of the Year competition in every year they have entered and have won the competition twice. College choirs regularly enter the Farnham Festival and have been successful in a choir of the year competition run by a major supermarket chain. Other students have gained Duke of Edinburgh awards. The college is a regular participant in the international Tall Ships' Race; it has been placed fourth on two occasions and has won the first prize for international co-operation.

50 The college analyses the destinations of its full-time students. Of those who left in 1994, 52 per cent entered higher education, 17 per cent went into employment, 20 per cent continued in further education and 11 per cent undertook other activities including voluntary work during a year out before entering higher education. Of the students who left in 1995, 49 per cent went into higher education, 16 per cent went into employment, 23 per cent continued in further education and 12 per cent undertook other activities.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

51 The college has a quality assurance policy that is supported conscientiously by all staff. The system has been in operation for two years. Subject teachers review and evaluate their areas, analysing examination results, retention rates, student destinations and feedback from students. They are supported in this work by management information reports.

52 A 'learning template' has been devised after research and debate about teaching and learning methods. The template has three sections: one sets out 'learning dimensions' which include scientific thinking, moral attitudes and creative development; the second deals with core skills; and the third describes learning activities which include exposition of topics, class discussion, paired work, researching topics, planning work and note making. Teachers use these headings to assess the extent to which each activity is addressed in their lessons. An annual student questionnaire is also related to the template and is used to evaluate the learning experiences of students.

53 Teachers use the national Advanced Level Information System to assess performance. The target for each teacher is to ensure that every student achieves or surpasses the GCE A level grade that was predicted on the basis of their GCSE performance. A review of Advanced Level Information System data is a standing item on course team and faculty meeting agendas. Results in each subject are compared with national

averages and reasons are sought for any that fail to achieve them. Each July, heads of department draw up their action plans which they discuss with heads of faculty so that staff development can be arranged where necessary. This process has resulted in improvements in teaching methods, in sharing good practice, in returning students' marked work more promptly and in changes to classroom management. Heads of faculty review the outcomes so that they can be discussed at the curriculum forum, a committee that oversees curriculum quality and development. Areas of concern are raised with the principal and vice-principal.

54 The principal also receives reports from individual teachers based on an analysis of a range of data. Where issues arise, the principal discusses them in detail with the teachers concerned, offers support and monitors subsequent progress made in dealing with the issues. These reports run parallel to the quality assurance system but any targets that may be set are not related to the system as a whole. Heads of faculty should be accountable for the endorsement of teachers' action plans and for monitoring progress.

55 Evaluation extends to support areas. Surveys of client satisfaction have been undertaken recently to help improve services. Areas that have been considered have included the tutorial system, the pre-entry processes, induction week, social facilities, information services, the refectory and learning support. The surveys have been constructive but they would be better co-ordinated if the quality assurance manager were told more formally of the issues arising so that they could be set against strategic objectives.

56 All staff are appraised on a two-year cycle. The principal is appraised by the chairman of the corporation. The process is thorough, well informed and widely supported by staff. It includes self-evaluation and classroom observation using a set of guidelines on good practice. Appraisal outcomes are closely linked to staff development, which is well managed to strike a balance between the college's needs and those of individuals. Induction of all new staff includes classroom observation and training in the quality assurance procedures. The programme of training in the last five years has covered teaching methods and the interpretation of data from the Advanced Level Information System. Support staff have a separate scheme of staff development which they say is adequate.

57 The college charter is printed in the students' handbook. Staff and students are aware of its contents. Students, staff and governors have been involved in its development. It is reviewed annually and includes measurable targets.

58 The college's self-assessment report was produced following the outline of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Evaluative comments were broadly in line with inspectors' findings. The report includes sufficient action points to make a useful contribution to quality assurance. However, some members of staff who should have been

involved did not contribute to the report, nor have they had sight of a copy. Self-assessment is not yet integrated with other aspects of planning, review and continuous improvement.

RESOURCES

Staffing

59 Teachers are well qualified. Ninety-two per cent of the full-time and part-time teaching staff are graduates. All full-time teachers and 87 per cent of part-time teachers hold teaching qualifications. Courses leading to Training and Development Lead Body qualifications have been arranged to cater for the college's expanding GNVQ provision. Twelve staff have gained assessor or verifier awards and a further five teachers are training for them. One teacher is training to assess prior learning. The total number of staff with recent experience of work outside education is not great, but staff involved with GNVQ programmes have relevant experience of accountancy, the health service and the travel industry.

60 There are 42 full-time equivalent teaching staff of whom almost a third are on part-time contracts. Teachers are appropriately deployed and there are sufficient to cover the programmes on offer. Sixty-nine per cent of the full-time teachers are men and 84 per cent of part-time teachers are women. There are 33 support staff amounting to 23 full-time equivalents who make an effective contribution to the work of the college. Support staff feel valued as members of a cohesive college team. The college spends 71 per cent of its recurrent budget on staff salaries. This is a little above the average for the sector, but clear policy and an annual review of staffing in relation to curricular needs are resulting in improved efficiency.

Equipment/learning resources

61 Departments have sufficient specialist equipment and learning materials to allow proper coverage of their teaching programmes. All full-time students are provided with textbooks. Good reprographic facilities allow provision of a wide range of printed learning resources. There is ready access to television, video and audio facilities. Media studies students use good, modern television and sound equipment. The design technology workshop has a wide range of machinery. Science equipment permits the full range of practical teaching required by the syllabus. Science laboratories still have blackboards and there is a risk of damage to sensitive electronic equipment by air-borne chalk dust. There is a full inventory of equipment which lists original costs and an estimate for replacement. The college has service contracts for items such as workshop machinery, ceramic kilns and physical education equipment. There is no service contract for the language laboratory and difficulties are caused by breakdowns.

62 The college has three computer networks and some standalone machines. The network in the information centre is on open access and it links the computers in the library, the study support room and the adjacent business studies teaching room. It provides a wide range of compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database software and has been upgraded recently to provide access to 17 CD-ROM drives. The range of software available to departments is increasing and it includes spreadsheets, graphics, desktop publishing and wordprocessing facilities. An Internet connection is available. The other computer networks are classroom based and are used extensively for teaching purposes. Ninety-three machines are available for 511 full-time students. There is an information technology policy and development strategy, administered by a specialist committee.

63 The college information centre comprises the library, the open-access computer network, the careers office, the resources room and the study support room. Situated on the second floor of the main building, it is a stimulating place to work in. The library and information technology areas are staffed by three part-time librarians for a total of 40 hours a week and a technician for 36 hours a week. The bookstock exceeds 12,000 volumes and there is a good range of magazines. This year's funding for the information centre is £8,300, of which £4,560 is allocated to the library. In spite of recent improvements, books for several subjects are significantly out of date or inadequate, including those for psychology, mathematics, business and English. Departments have their own reference texts which have not been entered into the library's catalogue.

Accommodation

64 The college occupies a five hectare site in buildings which vary widely in age, design, construction, state of repair and fitness for purpose. The college uses the former boys' grammar school building from 1906 to accommodate the bulk of its administrative offices and a few general classrooms. The hall, gymnasium and science laboratories were built in 1963 and a music block, library and other minor extensions were added in the early 1970s. A purpose-built design and technology centre was completed in 1992. Twenty-five per cent of teaching takes place in a collection of temporary wooden huts which are in a poor state of repair. Construction of a replacement building has already started and is due for completion in the summer of 1996.

65 The college has an accommodation strategy and it evaluates its accommodation needs carefully. There is a programme of maintenance, repair and decoration. A number of curriculum areas are generously housed in attractive classrooms which give a strong sense of subject identity. The science area has large preparation rooms and ample storage space for equipment and materials. Design technology has spacious accommodation of a high standard in its new centre. College managers

have a sound policy of adaptation exemplified by the creation of the refectory, media studies studio and performance area from the old assembly hall. The college's space utilisation rate is low. The total amount of space existing or planned is generous, so that a considerable growth in student population is possible without the need to undertake further building.

66 For students with restricted mobility, access to almost all of the teaching areas is gained only by negotiating steps and stairways. Access to the upper floors, including the information centre and study support room, is impossible for wheelchair users. The cost of appropriate modifications is likely to be prohibitive. The college is well aware of the problem and will include provision for students with restricted mobility in all new building projects. The design technology centre has easy access and the new building will have a lift to upper floors, ramps and appropriate facilities.

67 There are cricket, hockey, rugby and soccer pitches on the site as well as all-weather netball and tennis courts. Sports changing facilities are adequate. The college also uses the town leisure centre a mile away. An additional 40 car parking spaces for students will be provided in the current building project and it is hoped this will alleviate the problems caused by parking in the narrow roads around the college.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

68 The strengths of the college are:

- its links with schools
- its effective managers
- the strong ethos of support for students, including the close monitoring of progress and achievement
- good teaching
- good examination results at GCE A level
- the information technology facilities for students.

69 If the college is to improve further the quality of its provision, it should address the following:

- the lack of foundation level courses
- the inconsistent quality of its group tutorial sessions
- the need to improve the bookstock in the library and to ensure that its catalogue is comprehensive.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at February 1996)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at February 1996)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at February 1996)

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

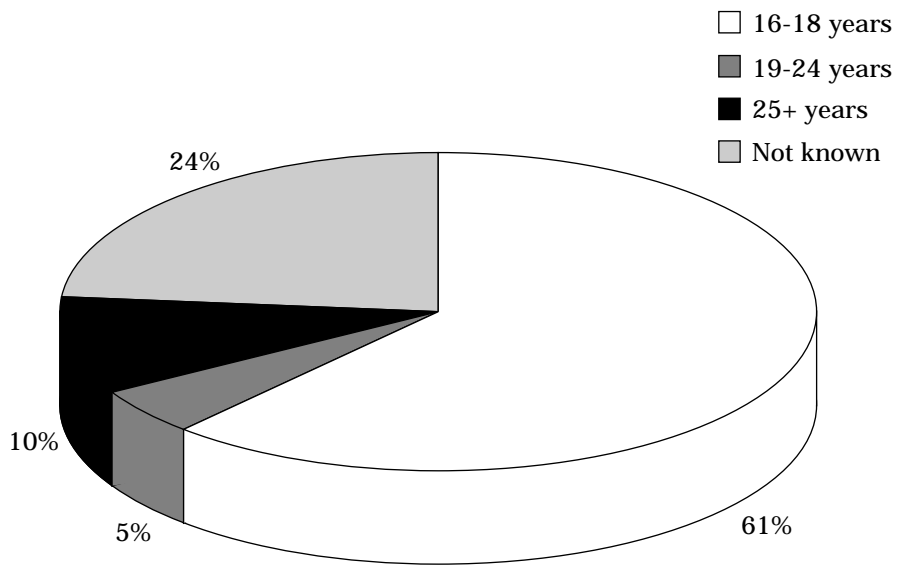
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1995)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

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

Figure 1

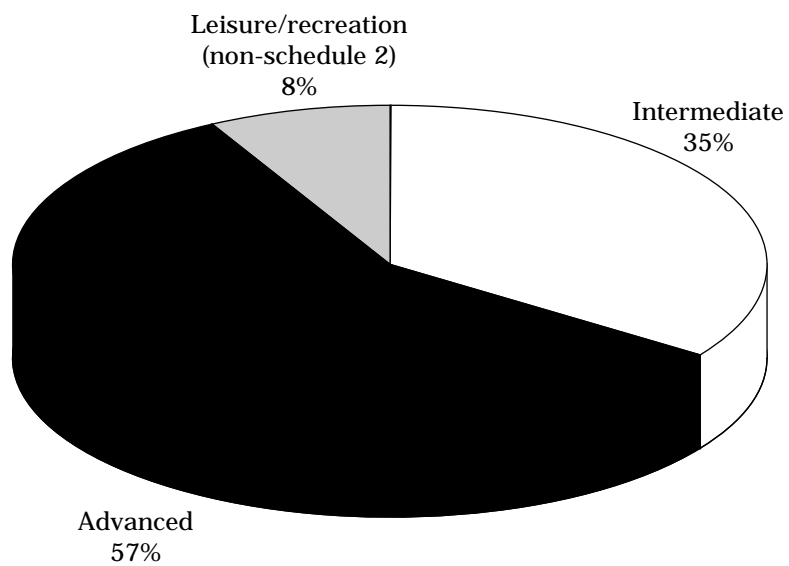
Farnham College: percentage student numbers by age (as at February 1996)



Student numbers: 835

Figure 2

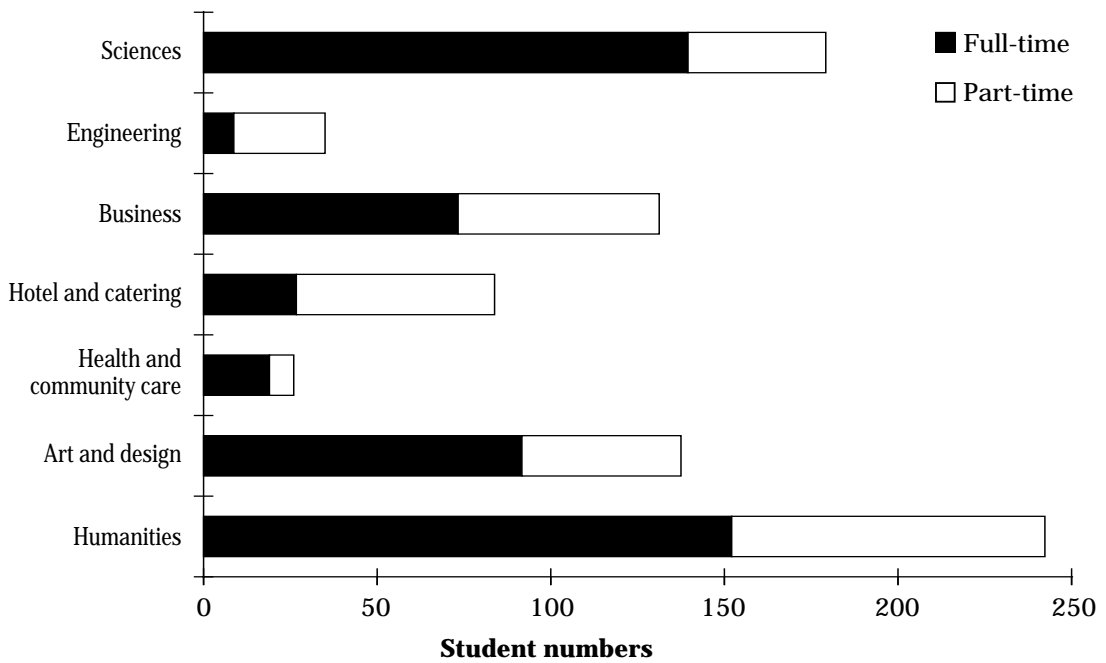
Farnham College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at February 1996)



Student numbers: 835

Figure 3

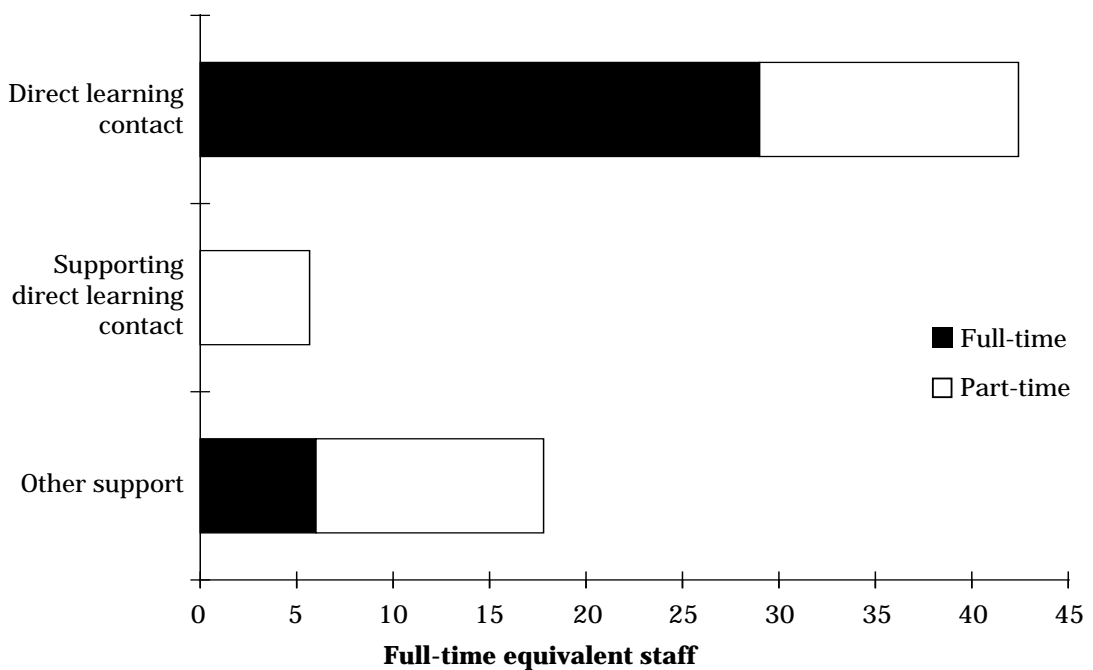
Farnham College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at February 1996)



Student numbers: 835

Figure 4

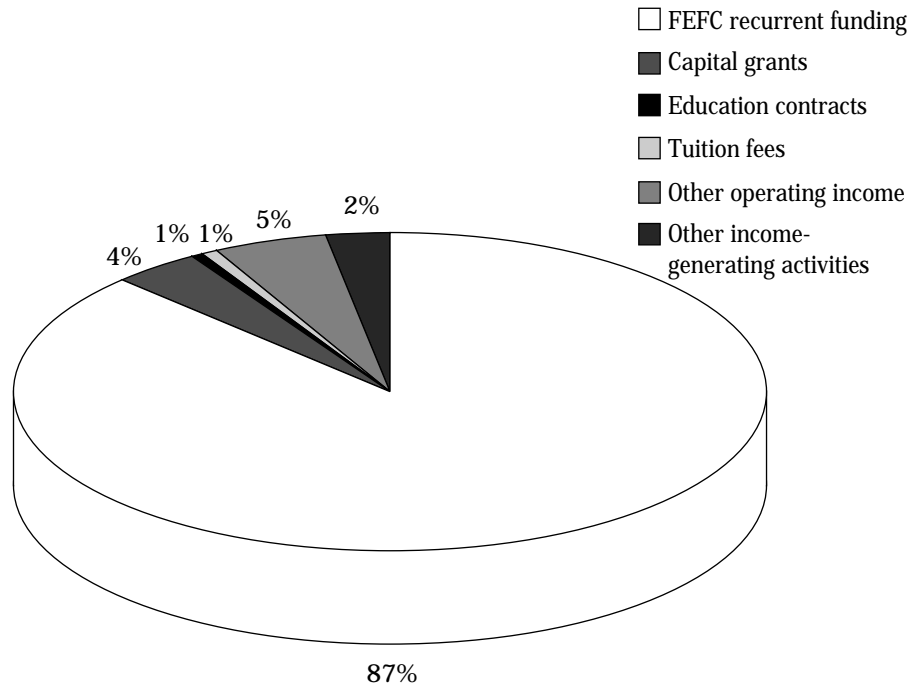
Farnham College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)



Full-time equivalent staff: 66

Figure 5

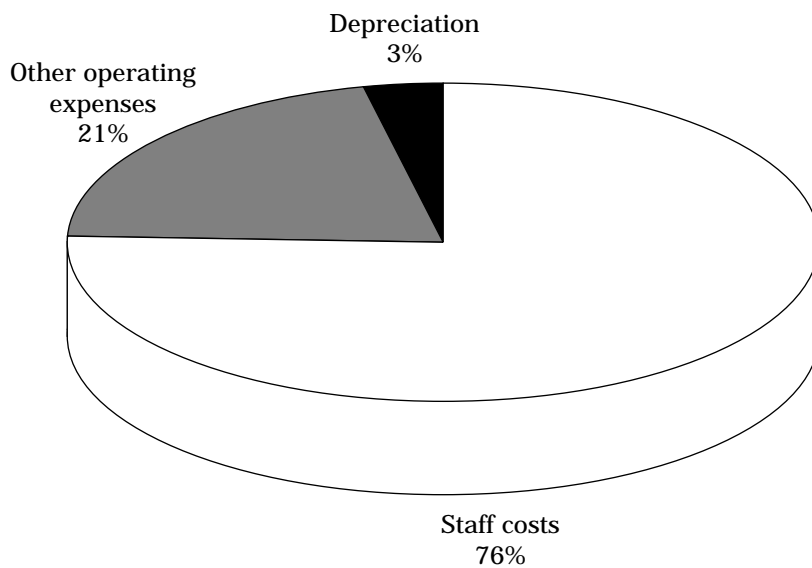
Farnham College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)



Income: £2,008,000

Figure 6

Farnham College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)



Expenditure: £1,792,000

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