

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Handsworth College

May 1995

**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 FEFC's quality assessment committee.

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 39/95

HANDSWORTH COLLEGE

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected April – December 1994

Summary

Handsworth College comprises a group of centres in inner-city Birmingham, and the Handsworth Community College Network. Ninety-three per cent of the college's students are black or Asian. The college corporation provides strong support, drawing on a breadth of industrial, commercial and community expertise. The corporation and the management team are committed to widening access and encouraging participation in further education. Strong leadership from the principal provides a particular emphasis on equality of educational opportunity. The college serves a student community predominantly comprised of adults and has a history of community partnerships, particularly from minority ethnic groups. It offers a wide choice of provision for students who have not normally entered further education. The college places emphasis on staff development. Staff at the main college are generally well qualified and supportive of the college mission and ethos. There are strengths in the main college student services. There are established and developing links with employers. Examination results are poor and the college could develop performance indicators that better reflect its students' achievements. The college has a commitment to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The efficiency of management information systems should be improved particularly in terms of the translation of data into effective management information. The college should keep under review its strategy for dealing with retention rates and absenteeism. The grades awarded as a result of the inspection reflect a difficult reconciliation of the essentially satisfactory provision on campus with the innovative, but currently unsatisfactory, aspects of the management of, and quality assurance arrangements for the provision in the developing network. The network provision is reported in the annex.

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		3	
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		3	
Quality assurance		4	
Resources:	staffing	2	
	equipment/learning resources	3	
	accommodation	3	
Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Sciences including mathematics and computing	3	Art and design	2
Engineering	2	Basic education	2
Business	3		

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INTRODUCTION

1 Handsworth College was inspected in stages between April and December 1994. Specialist subject areas and the Handsworth Community College Network were inspected between 20-22 April 1994, 16-18 May 1994, and on 20 September 1994. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected at the beginning of the autumn term. Aspects of cross-college provision were inspected during the week commencing 3 October 1994. Seven inspectors spent a further 14 days between 20 October and 6 December 1994 at centres within the college community network. The majority of centres are in Birmingham and the West Midlands. Inspectors also visited centres in Accrington, Blackburn, Heston, Oldham, Walsall, Walthamstow, Coventry, Leicester, Manchester and Middlesex. During this period, a number of centres in Accrington, Blackburn, Bradford, Birmingham, Burnley, Manchester, London, Nelson, Smethwick, Walsall and Watford were not approved and were withdrawn by the college prior to inspection.

2 In all, 21 inspectors, two interpreters, and 84 inspector days were used for the inspection. Inspectors visited 163 classes, of which 51 were in the Handsworth Community College Network, and scrutinised samples of students' written and practical work. They held discussions with governors, staff, students, parents, local employers, local head teachers, and representatives of the community. Discussions were also held with Handsworth Community College Network managers, field workers, tutors and students. Views were received from the Birmingham Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the Birmingham Careers Service Partnership.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Handsworth College was established over a century ago to provide specialist commercial and technical education. Since incorporation, Handsworth has grown from a relatively small college to become a major provider of further education. It grew rapidly during the 1993-94 academic year through an extensive franchising enterprise known as Handsworth Community College Network.

4 The college offers a wide range of vocational courses on six major sites in Birmingham. In addition, the college has a large and increasing enrolment in outreach provision that extends across and beyond the boundaries of the West Midlands. The student population within these centres is mostly drawn from minority ethnic groups within Birmingham and the West Midlands conurbation. The college's students are mainly adults.

5 The college's activities in Birmingham serve the inner city areas of Handsworth, Aston, Lozells, Nechells, Winson Green, and Tyseley. Many residents are second-generation Asians and African-Caribbeans, and some Vietnamese. The unemployment rate for these inner city areas significantly exceeds that for the City of Birmingham as a whole, with levels as high as 33 per cent in Aston and 29 per cent in Handsworth itself.

6 The principal is supported by a directorate of five vice-principals, who have both corporate and curriculum responsibilities. The directorate has collective responsibility for finance and corporate services; marketing and customer services; business development; quality assurance; and curriculum development.

7 The college's largest site on Soho Road, Handsworth, specialises in courses attractive to the local community. The local catchment area is characterised by many small shops and trading companies in sectors such as catering, hairdressing, garment manufacture, and car repair. The curriculum programme reflects this local pattern of employment through courses that include hairdressing, catering, business studies, and science. Courses which prepare students for entry to higher education are also provided.

8 The college promotes particular vocational specialisms delivered in purpose-built centres. The Birmingham Automotive and Technology Campus, based in Tyseley, is a regional and national provider of automotive training. Aston Arts Centre, the college's centre in Aston, is the base for fashion and clothing manufacture, art, and design courses. Enrolments in these two specialist centres have rapidly increased since incorporation. The Soho Road site has significant provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

9 During 1993-94 the college enrolled 12,145 students. Of these, 3,567 were full time and 8,578 part time, including 5,608 (46 per cent) enrolments to the network. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. In the main college there were 164 full-time teaching staff and 103 full-time support staff. A total of 79.5 full-time equivalent part-time staff were employed comprising 61.8 teaching staff and 17.7 support staff. Half of the students were enrolled on foundation level courses. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

10 The college views itself not as a campus college but as a group of centres containing different disciplines and serving different markets. The exceptional expansion since incorporation is largely the result of the increase in outreach partnerships and the provision of courses which meet the needs of communities and are based in their own local community centres. The college's diversification into a community-oriented curriculum began in the 1970s. Since then, it has nurtured a widespread and varied outreach provision in cultural and community centres and now has over 300 partnership links.

11 The most significant recent development has been the formal linking outreach arrangements established through the Handsworth Community College Network which was officially launched in May 1994. This provides access to accredited foundation learning in community settings, particularly to large numbers of adults from minority ethnic groups through

courses franchised from the college. Birmingham has the headquarters of many ethnic group national networks. These include the Council of Gurdwaras, The Council of Mosques, and the Council of Black Churches. Through the college's contacts with these organisations the network of the franchise arrangements covers many areas of England.

12 There are several other colleges within the Birmingham area, including sixth form colleges, and two large colleges of further education, which are nearby, just outside the former local education authority boundary. There are also 11-18 schools with sixth forms. Handsworth College's active promotion of the ideals of access and of equity makes it popular with the local community where over 50 per cent of students are of African-Caribbean and Asian origin. This commitment helps to make it competitive in a conurbation where there are a great many colleges.

13 The college has defined its mission to reflect its engagement with local communities and furthers this objective through recruiting large numbers of students from groups who are not usually involved in further education. A key to the college's success in attracting a large and varied student population is its commitment to training and education for unemployed adults in areas where all socio-economic indicators point to levels of disadvantage significantly above the national average.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

14 Staff are aware of the national targets for education and training, and reference is made to them in the college's strategic plan. Responsiveness is of paramount importance in the aims of the institution. The strategic plan details the social and economic climate of inner-city Birmingham and illustrates how high levels of unemployment affect various groups of the community. It shows the areas where there are employment opportunities and the training and updating in skills which are necessary to meet the opportunities that are available. College partnerships are diverse and include, for example: the Prince's Trust, Christian and church organisations, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, a range of ethnic community groups, and organisations supported by the Birmingham TEC.

15 The college reports that in 1993-94 it exceeded its student number target by 70 per cent and achieved the highest national growth rate in student numbers of 79 per cent. There are full-time and part-time courses from foundation level to degree courses, franchised from Coventry University and De Montfort University, and a wide range of vocational courses. There is also some provision of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses. The college has developed a comprehensive range of General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and franchises part of this provision to five local schools.

16 Full-time university-validated access courses are franchised from three local institutions. Saturday courses are an innovative development that meet a local need. The college has well-established links with five regional universities and with several international and European colleges, which benefit both staff and students. The links which have been fostered with community colleges in the United States of America are of particular significance to the development of the college's philosophy and mission.

17 A new college co-ordinator has been appointed to develop liaison with Birmingham TEC. There are courses for industry, funded through the Birmingham TEC which include 'training for work' schemes in engineering, business and administration, care, catering, and media. A scheme of youth training credits is available in engineering, on behalf of external agencies, and in business, textiles, and catering. The college's Birmingham Automotive and Technology Campus has a training association with the Post Office's Parcel Force company. The centre provides a three-year, block-release training programme on a national basis for their heavy-vehicle mechanics.

18 A business network called 'Team Train' has been developed with local employers. This venture is targeted at small to medium-sized companies on a franchise basis. It helps to train employees to achieve National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 and above in their workplace. Employers provide good work experience places for business and administration students, and there are sound links with the service industries. The amount of full-cost work undertaken by the college is small. Opportunities to increase this provision could be explored. Employers' representatives expressed satisfaction with the quality of training their employees were receiving, and complimented the college on its responsiveness to their needs. Some employers indicated the wish for more detailed information on their employees' progress.

19 The college places much emphasis on its education partnerships. The Titan initiative involves over 50 primary and secondary schools, employers and other community groups concerned with education in and around Handsworth. Its purpose is to promote working relationships to improve learning from primary school through to higher education and employment. It aims to create better opportunities for all the young people on the programme whatever their level of work. Representative head teachers involved in the enterprise were enthusiastic about the learning achieved and praised the college for its commitment to the success of the venture.

20 A vice-principal is in charge of marketing and student services. This includes promotion, advertising, and links with the community and its schools. There is a comprehensive marketing plan endorsed by the governors. The college produces a well-designed prospectus and a range of subject area booklets which provide much useful information. Newspapers and mailshot advertising are used. The bi-monthly college

newsletter called 'Clockwise' is delivered door to door in targeted areas of the community and is also mailed to local schools and colleges. The newsletter is multilingual and representatives of its diverse readership indicated their appreciation of this publication. The annual awards ceremony held in November is seen as a major promotional event which celebrates student success.

21 The college's commitment to equal opportunities is recognised by giving a senior manager responsibility for the implementation of its policies in this area. The college's equal opportunities policy document is comprehensive and easy to understand. The equal opportunities committee includes staff and student members. It is an advisory body which makes recommendations to the senior management team through a member of the directorate. Meetings are minuted and sent to all members of the committee. The implementation of agreed policies is monitored both formally and informally. Staff appointments are conducted according to strict equal opportunities guidelines. Staff training is provided in equal opportunities and a total of 35 events, focusing on this and related issues, were held in the last year. Student induction has a major equal opportunities content. This includes the distribution of three model workbooks on race, gender, and disability. Staff delivering the equal opportunities component of the induction process are provided with guidelines on the use of the workbooks. Immediate feedback is sought on the effectiveness of the coverage. The student population of the college strongly reflects the ethnic population of the area. Enrolments are monitored by gender, ethnicity, age and disability. Nursery provision is available at five of the college sites.

22 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified on an individual basis and programmes are devised for them within a basic core provision. Wherever possible, attempts are made to integrate all students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities into mainstream courses. The college has gained national accreditation for the qualifications on offer in this area of curriculum provision. There is extensive liaison with a wide range of institutions which support people with disabilities. These include community centres, hospitals, five Birmingham social services day centres, the Department of Employment's job centres and employment rehabilitation units. A group of colleges with a common interest in supported learning meet regularly at Handsworth to review continuously what the community needs to provide for these students.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

23 The college corporation has 20 members including the principal, a student governor, and two staff governors. At the time of the inspection, there were four vacancies. The core membership comprises 11 governors drawn from business and commerce; a Birmingham City councillor; a community council member; and two members co-opted from broader educational backgrounds with an interest in students with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities. The chairman is an honorary alderman and a local resident. The current membership comprises 11 men and five women. Four are from minority ethnic groups.

24 The corporation has benefited both from the continuing membership of key governors from the pre-incorporation group and from the inclusion of new members. The college is well served by its governors, and their individual expertise is appropriately deployed by an experienced chairman.

25 The principal provides committed and strong leadership. Academic goals based on the ideals of equity and equal opportunity are shared throughout the institution. There are good relationships between the principal and the members of the corporation. Governors are enthusiastic and provide individual and collective expertise. The college's mission, aims and ethos are shared, and supported by the actions of the corporation and its individual members.

26 Many of the governors have knowledge or experience of the locality either through business or employment interests. One member of the corporation is a director of the Birmingham Education Business Partnership. Individual members are involved in the wider aspects of the college's affairs and this helps develop an informed collective awareness of the institution as a whole. One of the governors represents the Birmingham Automotive Technology Campus board of management, which receives a reciprocal member of the corporation. The college's community council also includes a representative of the corporation.

27 Members of the corporation have individual chairmanship responsibilities appropriate to their expertise and interests. The main committees are: audit; finance and management; employment; remuneration; and health and safety. Governors fulfil their duties effectively. They make a positive contribution to the colleges' strategic planning, through committees which they chair. Promotion of the equal opportunities policy is effective at all levels. Governors have approved the submission of the college's health and safety policy and procedures to the health and safety executive, and have noted the need for more extensive consultation with staff at all levels. The management of health and safety is clearly designated.

28 The corporation has provided a strategic steer for the implementation of financial procedures and regulations to cope with the changes brought about through incorporation. Governors are well informed about aspects of the day-to-day running of the college. They supported the principal's wish to commission an external audit of the college's financial procedures. The corporation also had oversight of a temporary contract issued to a leading accountancy company to manage the college's finances during discontinuities in staffing at a senior level. The report from the external audit highlighted a number of weaknesses in the college's financial

procedures. The corporation acted promptly, following acceptance of the report, and a financial seminar was presented by the external auditors to governors, directors and managers. The corporation has been subsequently consulted on the advertising for a post of finance officer, at executive manager level, and will be involved in the appointment.

29 The corporation has been involved in developing the college's strategic plan which has been officially sponsored by 14 key Birmingham companies. The main objective of the plan is to improve quality and achievement. Other objectives are: to increase student numbers in line with national targets for further education; to maintain the college's share of the market; to extend its community network provision; and to develop centres of excellence in automotive technology, in the arts, and in the business school. The objectives are outlined for staff and students in a credit card sized, 'fact file' which also contains the college's mission and its vision statement.

30 Members understand their legal responsibilities and the corporation has approved a number of regulatory and monitoring procedures to ensure the effectiveness of the college's operational planning. The aims and objectives of the strategic plan are well reflected at programme area level. The deployment of the college resources and its staff are efficiently managed. The college aims to maintain its expenditure on staffing at 60 per cent of its budget.

31 It is normal practice for the governors to consult widely with all levels of the college. The corporation was consulted by the principal from the beginning on a proposal for a management review and gave support for a reorganisation of the management. An external consultant was commissioned to prepare a report on an appropriate management structure. Governors were fully involved with its recommendations and its approval, and were represented on all of the interviews for the new post holders.

32 The establishment of the new directorate resulted partially from a recognition that the growth of the college demanded a broader management base at second-tier level, and partially from the needs of strategic planning initiatives. The new management structure is clear and reflects the recommendations of the external consultant. Governors and senior managers have a clear understanding of their respective function and the early indications are of effective co-operation.

33 Three directorates, academic, corporate, and customer services have mainly operational responsibilities. The directorates of quality assurance and business development are primarily policy making. The vice-principals holding the directorate posts have line management responsibility for 16 executive managers. The fourth organisational tier comprises business and curriculum team managers. There is a schedule for regular meetings throughout the management structure, and appropriate arrangements for meetings and lines of communication

between the levels of the organisation. Members of the corporation, including the TEC-nominated member, attended a residential weekend with senior managers on strategic planning. This came immediately after the financial seminar to follow through the implementation of the new management structure, adopted from 1 August 1994. The principal and the corporation have subsequently initiated a standing conference on strategy and have established a finance and strategic planning committee of the corporation. This committee will be chaired by the principal and will include the chairman of the finance and management committee, the directorate, and three executive managers.

34 A unit costing exercise, based on an easily-understood, common formula, has been piloted throughout the curriculum areas. The framework and schedule for the exercise includes four points during the academic year at which variances in the targeted income and expenditure are checked. Curriculum team managers are set targets and understand the clawback implications should they fail to meet their targets. Budget allocations are made in an initial tranche related to enrolment targets. In common with all of the other regulatory systems, this process of targeted costing and expenditure applies to the programmes offered within the Handsworth Community College Network partnerships.

35 Governors and senior staff are aware of a major weakness in the college's computerised management information system which is not geared to meet the rapidly changing needs of the institution. Birmingham TEC expressed concern about the college's systems. The information systems department of the college has produced its own strategic planning document which recognised the need to improve its existing capability. A report concerned with the purchase of new management information systems and software was commissioned from an external consultant. This has been delivered and acted on: tenders were being sought during the period of the inspection. The present position is that while the management information system produces a variety of statistical information, it is seen to be inflexible and unreliable in its computerised form. There is little confidence in its accuracy at the curriculum team level and the majority of staff rely on manual records. The institution is poorly served by its current inability to record its students' achievements efficiently.

36 Governors have received data on examination results and retention rates. Action is taken by the college only where pass rates fall below 40 per cent or when drop-out rates exceed 20 per cent. The college should review this position. Also, because of pressure on the corporation agenda, governors did not receive details of the summer 1993 examination results until its meeting in May 1994. The college should ensure that the summer examination results are reviewed early enough to allow for action in the following academic year.

37 The college's unit of funding in 1993-94 was recorded in the FEFC report, *Funding Allocations 1993-94*, as £1,575 per weighted full-time equivalent student. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges was £2,444. During the period of inspection the college attained an exceptional rate of 79 per cent growth in its student enrolments, mainly as a consequence of the launch of the Handsworth Community College Network. The resulting recurrent funding allocation under the Council's new unit-based funding methodology for 1994-95 yields an average level of funding of £13.26 per unit based on 805,588 units. The median average unit of funding for the sector in 1994-95 is £19.01. The college's equivalent average unit allocation in 1993-94 was £7.44 and the median average unit of funding for the sector was £20.03. The college's average level of funding for 1993-94 was the lowest in the sector, and its average level of funding for 1994-95 is in the lowest 10 per cent of further education sector colleges. The college's income and expenditure are shown in figures 5 and 6.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

38 A staff guide sets out clear and comprehensive details of the enrolment process. Students receive a guide book which includes the college's students' charter. At enrolment, potential students have the benefit of assistance from current students who speak community languages. Advice is available to them on their choice of programme, and the students' charter commits the college to helping students choose a programme of studies that meets their needs. Students have the opportunity of diagnostic careers advice. A member of the academic staff is training as a probationary careers officer through the college's co-operation with the Birmingham Careers Service Partnership. The Soho Road, Aston and Lozells sites are all recognised as gateway to learning centres. A four-week, common entry module for GNVQ students in art and design, business studies and caring, has been implemented to ensure that students join the programme at the correct level.

39 There is no overall college system for the accreditation of students' prior learning, though procedures for accreditation have been developed by individual sections and good documentation exists in the science department. The caring section and the Birmingham Automotive and Technology Campus use accreditation of prior learning but claimed that students' professional achievements were often not backed up by documentary evidence. A significant number of students enrolling on courses have no formal qualifications. An Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit carried out screening assessments of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information technology for all main college students during induction in September 1994, and there was extended diagnostic testing where discrepancies were identified by tutors.

40 A survey of students' views, carried out in September 1994, indicated that the majority of students were satisfied with the process and received the advice they needed. Individual students commented that the staff were

very helpful and applications were handled well. The college accepts that dropout from some courses was partly attributable to inappropriate enrolment, and intends to re-examine procedures and criteria in these cases.

41 A clear framework governs the induction process and there is guidance for staff either in a protocol booklet or through staff-development sessions. Many examples of appropriate and effective student induction activities were seen, with good written induction material for students. The best practice was characterised by good student-staff relationships and by thorough preparation of appropriate activities. These included imaginative introductory exercises in confidence building, with full student and tutor involvement, and an effectively-used time management exercise. In contrast, other sessions were dull, with virtually no opportunity for student involvement. A well-documented and comprehensive induction programme, for both part-time and full-time students with specific learning difficulties, provided information and skills appropriate to their needs.

42 There are procedures which allow students to change courses, after discussion with their personal or course tutor about the appropriateness of the change. Changes are recorded on the college management information system. Examples of transfers seen by inspectors indicated maximum flexibility for students.

43 Every student in the college has a personal tutor who is responsible for providing help and guidance with subject studies and with personal development. There is no college-wide tutorial policy and few tutorial sessions provide curriculum enrichment. Those observed were being used for remedial work on assignments and for the lecturer to make, or record, progress checks on assignments and common skills attainment. Consideration is also given to the financial position of many students who are directed to seek help from the college advice centre. Little data is collected to demonstrate the effectiveness of tutorials and standard systems for recording management information have not been used. The college has identified the need to establish a college-wide personal tutorship system with regular opportunities for individual tutor sessions. Meetings have been held to define tutorial needs and to consider good practice.

44 The student advice centre at the Soho Road site offers a professional counselling service and information on course provision, financial and welfare issues. The college has a caring and sensitive ethos and it responds well to the demands of particular students, for example, those in the access group. There is a support fund for students with financial difficulties who are aged 19 or over and meet the required criteria. Overseas students can expect back-up and support. There is a qualified counsellor at the Soho Road site, whose services are also available to students at the other sites by prior appointment. The college has prepared an associate student information booklet and student guide. The student charter is produced in several community languages.

45 Open-access learning support is available in the flexible learning centre. Core skills support is provided throughout the day from specialist tutors, and there are some self-study materials. The college should ensure that students receive guidance to identify appropriate packages, and that attendance of students at the flexible-learning centre is recorded.

46 The college has good relations with the careers service. Careers advice and guidance is now part of the induction process, and tutors have received appropriate training. There is, however, no college-wide system for careers guidance through the tutorial system. A newly-appointed careers adviser is planning to extend the careers guidance through a more formalised advice and guidance pack. Students on two-year courses would benefit from being given advice on their applications to higher education at an earlier stage.

47 Completion of records of achievement has, until recently, been irregular. During the 1994-95 academic year the computer-based system used by the Titan partnership will be piloted in GNVQ intermediate caring and business studies courses, and another system will be used both as a tracking method and to generate records of achievement for GNVQ science courses. In other areas, it will be the responsibility of individual tutors to include completion of records of achievement within the tutorial programme.

48 Poor attendance patterns and lack of punctuality hinder students' progress on many courses. There is a high number of adult students who are single parents. The college is extremely sympathetic to such students who may need to arrive late or leave early in order to fulfil family commitments. In some cases, special arrangements are negotiated to accommodate them. The lack of pressure on the punctuality and attendance of 16-19 age group students should be reviewed. On occasions, time-constrained assignments were delayed until more students had arrived, and some students were late for external examinations. Monitoring of attendance was variable and ineffective.

49 Students and their parents are generally enthusiastic about the college and the support given by tutors. The college guide book sets out clearly the procedure to use if they have a problem or complaint. It includes the college's expectations of students as set out in the students' charter. Pride in the college and its community is apparent in those students who have represented it overseas. The college records intended destinations. A more systematic collection of data on the achievements and destinations of former students would enable the college to celebrate successes achieved through study at the college more effectively.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

50 A total of 112 teaching sessions were inspected, 56 per cent had strengths which outweighed weaknesses, 36 per cent had a balance of strengths and weaknesses, and 8 per cent had weaknesses which

outweighed the strengths. The following table summarises the grades given to teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Access		0	2	4	0	0	6
GCE AS/A level		0	0	0	1	0	1
Basic education		2	13	6	0	0	21
GCSE		0	3	5	0	0	8
GNVQ		0	14	10	4	0	28
NVQ		1	11	7	0	0	19
Other vocational		3	13	7	2	0	25
Other		0	1	1	1	1	4
Total		6	57	40	8	1	112

51 Relationships between teachers and students were good. In the majority of curriculum areas, the programmes of studies clearly met the needs of the students. Students were informed of their progress and given clear, identified targets for further progress.

52 In the best practice, the teaching was well planned and effective. Teachers displayed an up-to-date understanding of their subject. They employed a variety of teaching methods to reinforce learning, which included whole-class teaching, group work, individual work, resource-based learning, student presentations and projects. Schemes of work were regularly reviewed and updated. There was a variety of teaching activities which catered for a wide range of student abilities in the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) electronics first-certificate programme. Teaching was of a high standard in automotive engineering, particularly in automotive electronics.

53 In the less successful sessions, the slow pace of work, the lack of variety in methods of teaching and the limited challenge of the course work hindered students' involvement and progress. A number of students were reluctant to take any responsibility for their own learning and were too reliant on the teacher. Others were unable to apply their learning in new contexts. These classes were generally dull and mundane. In many programme areas, able students were affected by the lateness of other students and absenteeism hindered some students' progress.

54 In the main college, the quality of documentation in a number of subject areas was of a good standard and comprehensive. This helped the teaching of the courses, particularly the NVQ course in business and administration. There was regular testing of students' achievement. Assignments were marked and returned promptly to students with helpful annotations. Some students were encouraged to keep comprehensive

portfolios of their work. Part-time students from manufacturing backgrounds were able to demonstrate their industrial experience and knowledge by applying the use of their companies' own log-books in their training.

55 In general, students' assignments had clear, well-written briefs and were designed to take account of mixed groups with varying levels of attainment and ability. In some areas, insufficient work was set and marked. Staff provided continual support to individual students in art and design throughout their studio assignments. A well-staffed mathematics workshop was available every afternoon for those students with numeracy difficulties, and the assistance given was sensitive to students' needs. Students using the information technology resources were critical of the lack of open-access facilities. In some subject areas, such as mathematics and science, information technology was only used to a limited extent. Following the specialist inspection, the college had improved both the flexible learning and the information technology facilities.

56 An appropriate learning environment is provided for students with all types of disability including specially-tailored computer hardware for individuals with poor eyesight. The college has provided for over 20 teachers to be trained in the use of modern sign language and they were observed using their skills successfully to communicate to students with hearing impairment. A number of local authority signers are used in the college to assist students. A student with both speech and hearing impairment was observed receiving assistance for his engineering studies. The college has developed a number of well-managed procedures to identify dyslexia among students on the mainstream courses, and special programmes have been devised to assist them.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

57 Students were enthusiastic about their programmes of study and many spoke highly of the college and the staff. Demanding work in computing courses was evident in the well-conceived assignments and supporting materials. Good use was made of modern methods of software design. Students' attainment in expressive painting and drawing in art was of a high standard but students were not always sufficiently challenged and parts of the courses lacked structure. High standards were achieved by adult learners on part-time day courses in clothing manufacture. Good practice was observed in art, and the work of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was given equal status with that of other students in display.

58 There were good examples of group learning activity in both business studies and engineering where students were able to apply their work experiences. There was little group work in the science area. Awareness of safety was particularly good in science and in engineering practical work. Every opportunity was taken to stress safety aspects in the

engineering courses. Some individual students achieve notable national successes in engineering. The progress of students undertaking work placements was carefully monitored during regular visits by academic staff and a significant number of students enter jobs with their work placement employers. Students from the specialist hairdressing courses have also been successful in the industry. Twenty-two students from Royal Mail Parcel Force gained awards in the first NVQ level 3 in the country in heavy vehicle service and repair.

59 Students on many courses lacked the underpinning knowledge and core skills necessary for their success. GNVQ students who fail external tests especially in the business studies programme area require more support. Many students attending the college do not have English as their first language. Only a few GCE A level subjects are offered to students and many of these are undertaken in a single year. Students aged 16-18 entered for GCE A level and advanced supplementary (AS) examinations in 1993-94 scored, on average, 1.7 points per entry. This places the college among the bottom 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. Some notable 100 per cent pass rates were achieved in human biology and in Urdu, and 86 per cent in Punjabi. There was a significant drop-out rate in other GCE A level languages and this needs to be reviewed.

60 In common with some other colleges, Handsworth's policy is to reduce the number of students taking GCSE resit examinations and to extend its provision of vocational courses at all levels. Good results were obtained in GCSE sociology, Punjabi and psychology. English results were around the national average, but the percentage of passes at grades A-C in mathematics at 10 per cent, and human biology at 7 per cent, were unsatisfactory. The selection process for the GCSE mathematics course was weak and some students would have been better placed on a certificate of proficiency in numeracy course first. The progress of students on the access course was in complete contrast to this. Many of the access mathematics students, having started from a relatively low level, had made considerable progress and were coping with GCE A level topics successfully.

61 Pass rates varied considerably in the 1993 vocational examination results ranging from 12 per cent to 100 per cent. The 100 per cent pass rate successes included 39 students taking wordprocessing, 46 students taking information technology, and 73 students taking BTEC national diplomas and certificates in business and finance. There were unsatisfactory pass rates in some subjects including some typewriting examinations. Fifty-four per cent of students in the final year of study on vocational courses included in the Department for Education's 1994 performance tables were successful. This placed the college among the bottom 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

62 The majority of students progress within further education. The college has not investigated the added value which students may have achieved at college, by comparing final examination results with students' qualifications on entry. In the light of some of the examination successes this deficiency needs to be reviewed. It is particularly important given the non-standard educational background of the majority of the college's students. The college has failed to comply with the requirement to publish its examination results and distribute them to local schools.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

63 The college has distributed a summary of its charter as part of a student guide book. This outlines both the students' rights and responsibility and is based upon the charter for further education. The college student charter is clear and informative and has been published in a leaflet form in Urdu, Punjabi, and Vietnamese. The current charter contains no reference to employers.

64 A comprehensive quality assurance policy has been implemented. Quality is given high priority by the members of the corporation and senior managers. The college draws on its experience and knowledge of American community colleges as a model and has developed an approach based on total quality management philosophies. The processes associated with this model have been in operation at the senior staff level for several years. All staff are entitled to 20 hours quality training each year and almost half have also been trained in total quality management principles on a three-day course. This involved group activities in course teams and the techniques developed have enabled team building to take place whilst training was given. The principles of the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement* have been successfully used to strengthen the college's quality assurance systems.

65 A quality assurance team and a curriculum development team have been established to ensure a standard approach to quality. These teams meet regularly and have produced several good documents associated with course team meetings and annual reports. This is having a positive influence on the improvement of quality. Cross-college services have also been subject to analysis by quality management processes.

66 The use of annual course team reviews has been established and in operation for several years. This is augmented by documented course team meetings which are held regularly throughout the year. Information and recommendations from the reviews are channelled upward through departmental committees to management. External moderators' reports are analysed and acted upon. Many reports contain mainly factual information and there is little critical review of the course delivery. There is little recording of improvements in students' academic performance and student examination success to establish the value added by study at the college. It is anticipated that the recently-produced course standards,

based on a comprehensive list of course requirements, will bring about change. The common entry module for several GNVQ courses was implemented as a quality measure as a result of course reviews. Course teams have developed detailed strategic or action plans.

67 Over recent years, several surveys have been taken which record the students' perceptions of the college and its processes. The most recent one, that of the 1994 enrolment event, had already been processed at the time of the team inspection. Actions are taken as a result of these surveys. The flexible-learning centre and additional information technology facilities were provided partly as a result of students' concerns.

68 The quality assurance team has made a full college inspection of three teaching areas, Aston Arts Centre, The Business Centre and the Ammington Community Education Centre. The procedures adopted, based upon the Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*, included the observation of teaching and learning activities, the scrutiny of course documentation, and meetings with staff and students. A report with conclusions and recommendations was produced for each area. Good practice is exemplified by the targets set for second-tier managers who are required to sponsor quality improvements arising out of the recommendations of these reports. Further areas are to be inspected in the next academic year and the intention of the college is to inspect all areas of provision on a four-year cycle. This is a worthwhile activity which would be improved further if the college incorporated in the process detailed analyses of centrally-collected performance indicators.

69 Each subject area is now required to produce performance information based upon a common model produced by the quality assurance team. The main course completions and achievement performance indicators relate to entry qualifications, course progress and course completions and achievements. There are also targeted equal opportunities requirements. The exit performance indicators, such as high drop-out rates and poor examination results, require course teams to investigate the cause of such problems and for corrective action to be taken. The vice-principals have the responsibility of reviewing outcomes for the programmes in their directorate. Curriculum managers are required to undertake outcome analyses that make comparison with national averages and examination results from previous years. These were new requirements at the time of the inspection and there was still some variation in practice.

70 All new full-time staff have a one-day induction programme which is augmented by a comprehensive booklet. Staff are required to complete an evaluation form, part of which feeds into their own staff-development programme. The staff-induction programme is supported by a mentoring system. Visiting lecturers also have a staff-induction programme. Staff are kept aware of developments in the college by a weekly bulletin. This is recognised as a valuable way of communicating information throughout

the college. Other more urgent commitments have delayed the college's intention to achieve the Investors in People designation until 1996.

71 There is a staff-development policy which is linked to the college's quality assurance policy. A comprehensive staff-development programme is based upon college, course and individual requirements. Areas of college priority for 1994-95 include management information systems, financial systems, GNVQ core skills and equal opportunities. The college places high priority on staff development and has a budget of around £83,000 which is about 0.8 per cent of the college's expenditure. While this appears to be a low figure, there have been 13,500 staff training days at over 320 events. Staff are required to disseminate the knowledge gained from these activities within their course teams. Twenty-five academic staff, 21 administrative staff and three members of the corporation have visited community colleges in the USA as part of a programme of staff development.

72 A conscious decision to introduce a team-based appraisal system is seen as being consistent with the college's quality management approach. There is a hierarchy of appraisal from the principal downwards. The numbers of staff appraised in departments is variable and individual appraisal is incomplete.

73 The rapid growth of the Handsworth Community College Network has had a major impact upon the college and has taxed the college's ability to implement the monitoring and control systems in the network. The grade awarded for quality assurance reflects the reconciliation of the strengths of the provision on campus with the major weaknesses in the developing network.

RESOURCES

Staffing

74 The college's strategic plan has a section on human resource development covering management structure, resourcing strategy, management and staff development. This element of the plan allows the personnel staff to provide an enabling role. There is a comprehensive implementation plan and evidence that the strategy is being progressively implemented. The 1994-95 staff-development budget had not been finally agreed at the time of the inspection.

75 College teachers are appropriately qualified and competent. Some have significant industrial and commercial experience. Over 85 per cent of the full-time teaching staff have a teaching certificate, and training is proposed for the remainder. There is a good balance of support staff to teachers, and support staff are effectively deployed throughout the college. The college has a comprehensive recruitment policy, which is well implemented and incorporates equal opportunities procedures.

76 The ratio of men to women in the full-time teaching establishment is 10:6. Staff from minority ethnic groups comprise about 30 per cent of the overall staff establishment. The college has a policy of working towards a higher ratio of minority ethnic staff to reflect the student population. Staffing is reviewed termly and any necessary changes controlled through the senior staffing group. Curriculum leaders themselves are able to balance the ratio of permanent and visiting staff within budgets.

77 Many new personnel policies have been introduced including new contracts for lecturers, disciplinary and grievance procedures, absenteeism/sick absence, and payroll procedures. A staff-development report for 1993-94 shows that all staff were involved in at least one staff-development event. The college has identified the need for further staff training and support for line managers.

Equipment/learning resources

78 In most programme areas, the range, quantity, and quality of teaching and learning aids is satisfactory. There is sufficient specialist equipment to meet the college's needs. Facilities of particular quality include photography at Aston Arts Centre and the automotive workshops for both light and heavy vehicles at the Birmingham Automotive and Technology Centre. The link with the Post Office's Parcel Force provides the college with a supply of heavy-goods vehicles for practical training purposes. College transport includes a facility for wheelchair users.

79 A centralised system tied to the strategic and financial plan is proposed for purchasing, replacing and updating equipment. Maintenance and servicing of equipment, provided by specialist outside contractors and by the college's technicians, is effective. Safety equipment and clothing are provided where appropriate.

80 The main college library is situated on the first floor of the Soho Road site. Access has been made possible for wheelchair users although the nature of the building makes it difficult. The library journal and periodical stock is good but the bookstock is insufficient, particularly at Aston Arts Centre. Library facilities are available only at Soho Road and Aston. There are plans to provide a library at the Birmingham Automotive and Technology site. The college has allocated an additional £30,000 to the library budget for this academic year. An annual review of usage is reported.

81 The college has responded well to the information technology deficiencies noted at the times of the specialist inspections. There has been considerable investment in computers generally, including new industry-standard machines for art and design. Information technology provision now gives a good ratio of computers to students. The library has begun to acquire a stock of compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases.

Accommodation

82 The college's Soho Road site consists of buildings from the nineteenth century to the 1980s. The 1980s' block was formerly engineering workshops, of which only electrical installation remains; the rest of the building has been converted progressively for a variety of other uses. Aston Arts Centre (formerly the Aston Technical College) dates from the turn of the century, and the Birmingham Automotive and Technology Campus at Tyseley, is a purpose-built workshop building that was erected in 1989.

83 There have been annual programmes of alterations and refurbishments to meet newly-identified needs. Recent developments include the addition of an impressive learning centre; a greatly improved business centre which simulates a work environment; an open-access centre for computing; and refurbished hairdressing facilities with a retail shop and reception area. Catering and refectory facilities for students have been considerably improved at Soho Road, but the provision was criticised by students for being too small. Catering facilities for students are available at most of the other sites and are generally satisfactory.

84 The quality of accommodation on all of the college sites is generally good: in most instances it is clean, and in good decorative state and condition. There is a notable absence of litter and graffiti. There is wide variation between buildings, dependent on their ages, original design purpose, and the extent to which modifications have been carried out. Many of the rooms in older buildings are spacious. Lighting, heating and furniture were generally acceptable. A few cases were noted of rooms being drab or uninspiring. Many rooms are carpeted or have hardwood block flooring. The corridors at the Soho Road site are decorated with artwork and posters that celebrate multicultural achievements and reflect the ethnic diversity of the student population.

85 Considerable efforts have been made to make the Soho Road site and several of the outreach centres accessible for students with mobility problems. This has been difficult to achieve, particularly at Soho Road where now a lift, chair-lifts and ramps combine to make almost the whole of the site accessible. Exceptions are the Birmingham Automotive and Technology Campus and Lozells centres where first-floor facilities are denied to wheelchair users. The college could give more attention to improving the access at some of the outreach centres for students with mobility difficulties. Facilities for students with learning disabilities have been improved and are generally satisfactory.

86 Managers responsible for room allocation seek to ensure that sensible and efficient use is made of accommodation on most sites, particularly in the peak period between 10:00 and 15:30, when there is considerable pressure on rooms. Evening usage appears to be low. Accommodation for the counselling service is satisfactory, and there is a large and welcoming student advice centre. Improved direction signs are needed in the Soho Road complex of buildings. Because of the inner city location,

on-site sports and leisure facilities are non-existent. The college uses facilities that are available in the city to compensate for this.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

87 The strengths of Handsworth College are:

- the commitment of the governing body and the management to widening access and encouraging participation in further education
- strong support from the governing body
- a clear mission statement and strategic plan
- mutual support for and from the local community
- links with outreach partnerships
- responsiveness to the needs of adult students
- commitment to equal opportunity
- good student-staff relationships
- the development of comprehensive quality assurance procedures
- the efficient and effective deployment of teaching and support staff
- the effective co-ordination of student support services for the main college
- the commitment made to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

88 If the college is to continue its planned growth and improve its standards of student achievement, it should address the following issues:

- the improvement of retention rates
- a strategy for dealing adequately with absenteeism and punctuality amongst students
- a co-ordinated tutorial system to ensure consistency of tutorial support and the inclusion of accreditation of prior learning
- a clear and efficient method of recording added value outcomes
- the translation of data into effective management information
- the use of reliable performance indicators at strategic planning level
- a college policy for the replacement of equipment
- strengthening of careers guidance
- the reliability of the data relating to the franchised work in the Handsworth Community College Network.

ANNEX

HANDSWORTH COMMUNITY COLLEGE NETWORK

Summary

Handsworth Community College Network is an extensive franchise of community centres in many parts of the country. It is a major college initiative which has encouraged participation by students who have not normally entered further education. Officially launched in May 1994, it has enrolled over 5,000 students during the 1993-94 academic year. These students were funded by a partial demand led element of £500 per full-time equivalent student. The rapid growth has taxed the college's ability to manage and control the effective delivery and quality of the work it has undertaken through this franchised provision. The implementation and maintenance of the framework governing the operations of franchises should be improved, particularly as it relates to quality assurance. Support for unqualified staff in some network centres is inadequate. Some accommodation and resources used within the network are inadequate.

Curriculum area	Grade
Community College Network	4

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

1 Handsworth Community College Network is an imaginative and innovative development from the college's community programme which is particularly effective in meeting the needs of groups who do not normally enter further education. The college reports that this outreach provision has operated in over 300 groups, often for seven days a week. At the time of the inspection, fewer groups were operating. Many are voluntary and community based in the local area, the region, or in other parts of the country. The college is committed to developing this community network system fully within three years. Its main objective is to provide educational and training services to a multicultural society in a home locality. College managers identify the network as a major means of attracting adult learners into further education and of meeting national targets for life-long learning. Community representatives praised the initiative taken by the college to create learning opportunities in a welcoming and supportive environment.

2 The network classes are held in a range of community-based locations including religious centres such as mosques and gurdwaras and in people's houses, including the tutor's house. The curriculum reflects the cultural and religious backgrounds of the various groups, and in many cases it has developed from initiatives in the voluntary sector, particularly the black voluntary sector. Few vocational courses are offered and the GCSE and GCE A level courses are in almost all cases culturally related rather than

part of a more comprehensive curricular choice for students in the community. The rapid expansion of the network has outpaced the management systems developed by the college to control the approval and quality of the franchise arrangements. This has had a detrimental affect on some network relationships.

3 The network programme enables many students to benefit from education for the first time. It offers a variety of learning opportunities that allow progression from the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills to higher education. The range of provision includes community languages, community and religious studies, English for speakers of other languages, literacy, wordpower, numberpower, dressmaking, audio engineering and some other vocational courses.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

4 The Handsworth Community College Network initiative has been positively supported by the corporation as a furtherance of the college mission. Handsworth College has several years experience in offering outreach provision. The corporation received a commentary on the strategic planning intention in March 1994 as a development of the community networking strategy outlined in the 1993 stage 1 strategic plan. The responsibilities of college managers for the Handsworth Community College Network are defined and the college has developed a regulatory framework and administrative infrastructure for Handsworth Community College Network which is common in all respects with those of the college. Clear documentation and information on the procedures to be followed are provided in minority ethnic languages. However, while the management structure and lines of accountability had been stated by the college, they were not yet working in practice.

5 The franchise relationships with community organisations in Handsworth Community College Network have caused management difficulties. In some cases, this has resulted in deteriorating relationships between the college and these organisations. By December 1994 the college had received 931 proposals from centres wishing to join the franchise. The network has a small team of advisers and 12 field workers who act as an arm of management to ensure that procedures and regulations are properly implemented. Many tutors and field workers were unclear and frustrated by a lack of communication and clarity about management arrangements for the network. The college has to date given little support to fieldworkers. Fieldworkers and tutors were unaware of college policies such as the health and safety policy. It was unclear who had responsibility for the implementation of policies and legal requirements such as health and safety in the franchised provision of the network. There were misunderstandings and lack of knowledge about the financial allocations amongst some fieldworkers and community organisations.

6 There were many weaknesses in the management of the Handsworth Community College Network provision. Particular concerns included the lack of accurate registers and uncertainties in the recording of accurate information about students. Where registers were observed to be kept and attendance monitored, there was an average attendance of 66 per cent. There is a need to ensure correct recording of students' ages and attendance. Quality assurance and monitoring systems, and curriculum support systems had not been implemented. This has had a detrimental effect on the quality of learning for students during the first nine months of operation of the network. There are serious weaknesses in the overall support for the curriculum and for monitoring delivery. The college should focus more on the work of the curriculum co-ordinators and fieldworkers, and on curriculum support for the network provision.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

7 The college's close contact with minority ethnic organisations has been used effectively to recruit students to Handsworth Community College Network programmes. Many students felt supported by being in the community-based centres, by being taught in their mother tongue, and by learning with people they knew from their local area. Tutors in the network provide good personal and social support for students. However, formal guidance and support systems for these students have yet to be developed. In the majority of cases, there was no tutorial system and some students have been recruited to inappropriate courses. There was no systematic guidance offered to students before entry, during or at the end of their course, and neither tutors nor students were aware of possible access to these services at the college. There was little evidence of induction for network students.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

8 A total of 51 teaching sessions were inspected in the network. Two network classes observed did not appear to meet the requirements of schedule 2 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The grades given to the teaching sessions are summarised below. Twenty-eight per cent of sessions had strengths which outweighed weaknesses; 39 per cent had a balance of strengths and weaknesses, and 33 per cent had weaknesses which outweighed the strengths. This profile is well below the national average.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		1	1	0	0	0	2
Basic education		0	3	6	6	0	15
NVQ 1		0	1	1	0	0	2
GCSE		1	2	8	4	1	16
Non-schedule 2		0	0	0	1	1	2
Other		2	3	5	4	0	14
Total		4	10	20	15	2	51

9 Tutors involved in Handsworth Community College Network were enthusiastic, supportive and sensitive to students' needs. They encouraged students' confidence and personal development. Some were not accomplished in their subject areas and many lacked teaching skills. Many were inexperienced in teaching in further education. The teaching was poorly planned and used a limited range of teaching methods. Many courses are first stage return-to-learn programmes but in some classes tutors did not develop students' basic critical or analytical skills or conceptual understanding. Some reinforced learning with the use of teaching aids but these were generally not available to most Handsworth Community College Network staff. Not all courses were suitable to enable students to achieve the qualification for which they aimed and in several classes teachers did not sufficiently challenge the students. The procedures for the assessment of students' progress on Handsworth Community College Network courses were underdeveloped. In many classes students had produced little written work. Arrangements for monitoring, recording and tracking students' progress were poor or non-existent in most classes.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

10 Many students taking Handsworth Community College Network courses were highly motivated to learn and had developed confidence through their studies. However, not all students were achieving their potential since some network programmes were at too low a level for their abilities. Many students were unclear about the accreditation their course provided. Few of the Handsworth Community College Network courses were enabling students to develop core language skills. The small number of examination achievements in courses included some notably good results in Punjabi and audio engineering.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

11 There was no evidence to indicate awareness of either the college charter or the charter for further education among fieldworkers and tutors in Handsworth Community College Network.

12 The college has introduced quality assurance procedures to the Handsworth Community College Network and there is a documented regulatory system for monitoring the network provision. Quality controls were initiated during the early phases of the network development and a number of the partner institutions have already been subject to quality investigation. The rapid growth of the network, however, has taxed the college's ability to implement the monitoring and control system. As a consequence, there were unresolved quality issues at the time of the inspection. By the end of December there were 604 groups to be checked and approved by the college. After the inspection of the Handsworth Community College Network began, many of the classes that were due to be seen by inspectors were closed by the college as a result of a quality inspection prior to the inspectors' visit. Fieldworkers and tutors were generally unaware of quality requirements.

13 There was poor support for tutors to help ensure the quality of teaching and learning. In many cases they had only cursory contact with the college. Many of the tutors and fieldworkers were not aware which courses met funding requirements. In some cases it was difficult to check on the reliability of the data the college received from franchised organisations. The continuing potential for growth demands considerably more resourcing than is currently available from the college if it is to implement and monitor quality assurance in the network effectively. The unresolved problems of implementing the quality assurance system in the network has had a detrimental effect on the educational experience for many network students. There has also been insufficient attention given to staff development for fieldworkers and tutors in the network. The college is providing training in assessment skills for staff in the network who wish to work toward the internal verifier award for NVQs and GNVQs.

RESOURCES

Staffing

14 The Handsworth Community College Network programme has systems for ensuring that teachers employed by franchised organisations are appropriately qualified and are observed in teaching. These systems were not in operation. Some staff were appropriately qualified for their work but many were not. Tutors in the network do not have access to administrative support. Some tutors teaching English for speakers of other languages or preparing students for GCSE spoke poor English and were unable to teach to GCSE standards and requirements for examination entry. There is inadequate support for unqualified staff in some network centres and there is limited access to technical, administrative and clerical support.

Equipment/learning resources

15 In general, there is a limited range of teaching and learning aids in the network. Programmes intended for adults drew on materials which

were unsuitable for adult learning. Specialist equipment is available for a few areas that have a specific vocational focus such as audio engineering. Library facilities and other learner support materials are not available for students and teachers in some centres. Very few network centres offered access to information technology.

Accommodation

16 The teaching accommodation and sites used by Handsworth Community College Network franchises are mainly based in local communities. Many are small or medium-sized terraced houses and some include the use of rooms which are part of a family home. Provision of this kind is important within some communities and encourages access and recruitment that might otherwise not take place. The provision is varied and inspectors saw many rooms which were cramped, some which were cold, bleak and poorly lit and venues that were inadequate because of distractions and interruptions to the classes. In one example, good use of an area in a primary school was observed but some of the accommodation seen was not adequate. Accommodation used by centres within the network is unstimulating and unsupportive when compared with standard college accommodation. There are health and safety concerns in some locations.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

17 Handsworth College has taken a major initiative in launching the Handsworth Community College Network to promote its mission. The particular strength of the network is the involvement of large numbers of students who do not normally enter further education.

18 The college should address the following issues:

- the implementation and maintenance of the regulatory framework governing the operations of franchises within the Handsworth Community College Network
- preparatory development for centres wishing to participate in the network
- the inadequacy of support for unqualified staff in some network centres
- the application of quality assurance controls and monitoring procedures in the network
- the inadequacy of some of the accommodation and resources used in the network franchises
- lack of guidance and learning support for Handsworth Community College Network students.

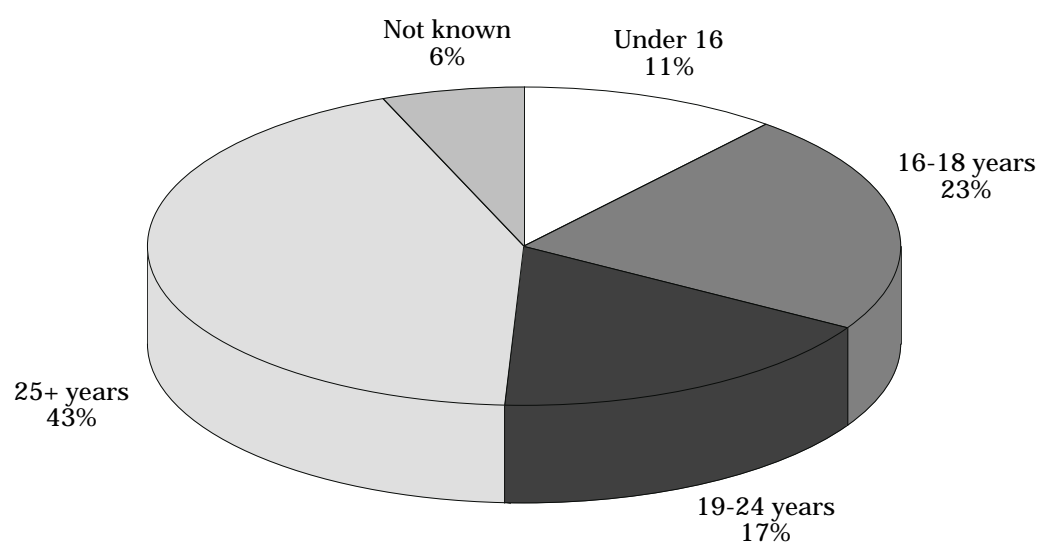
FIGURES

1	Percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)
2	Percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)
3	Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)
4	Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)
5	Income (for 12 months to July 1994)
6	Expenditure (for 12 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

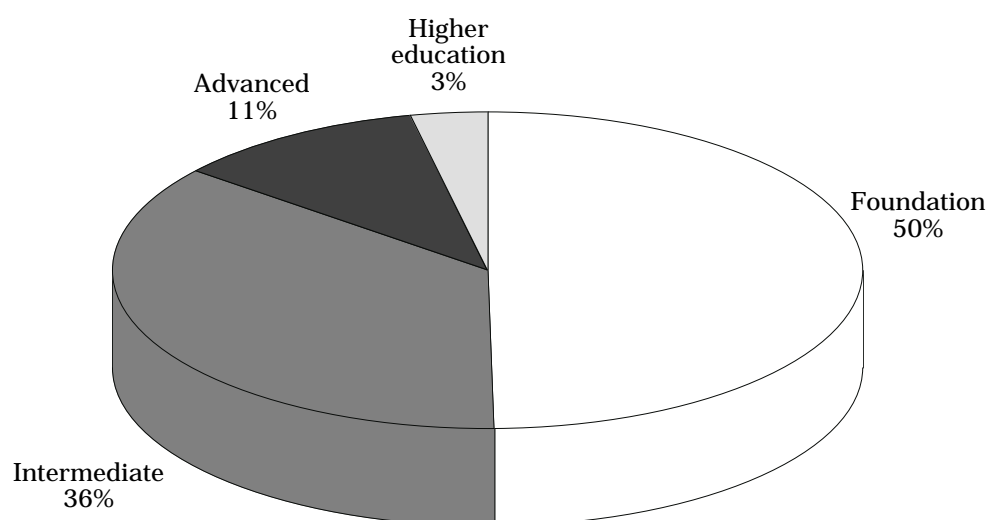
Handsworth College: percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)



Enrolments: 12,145

Figure 2

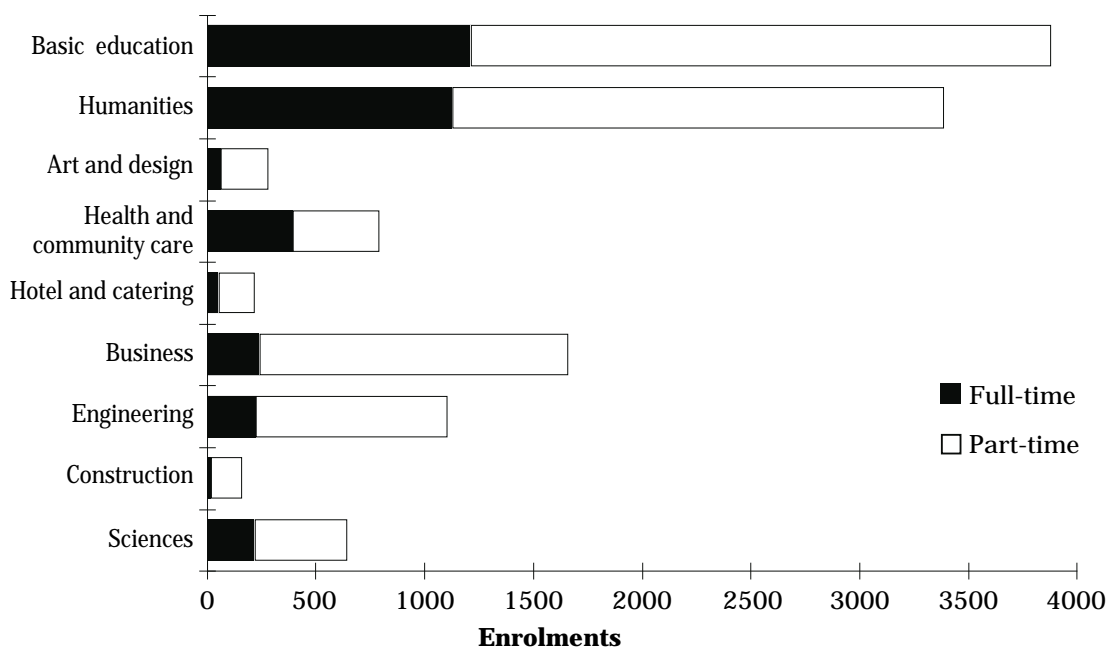
Handsworth College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)



Enrolments: 12,145

Figure 3

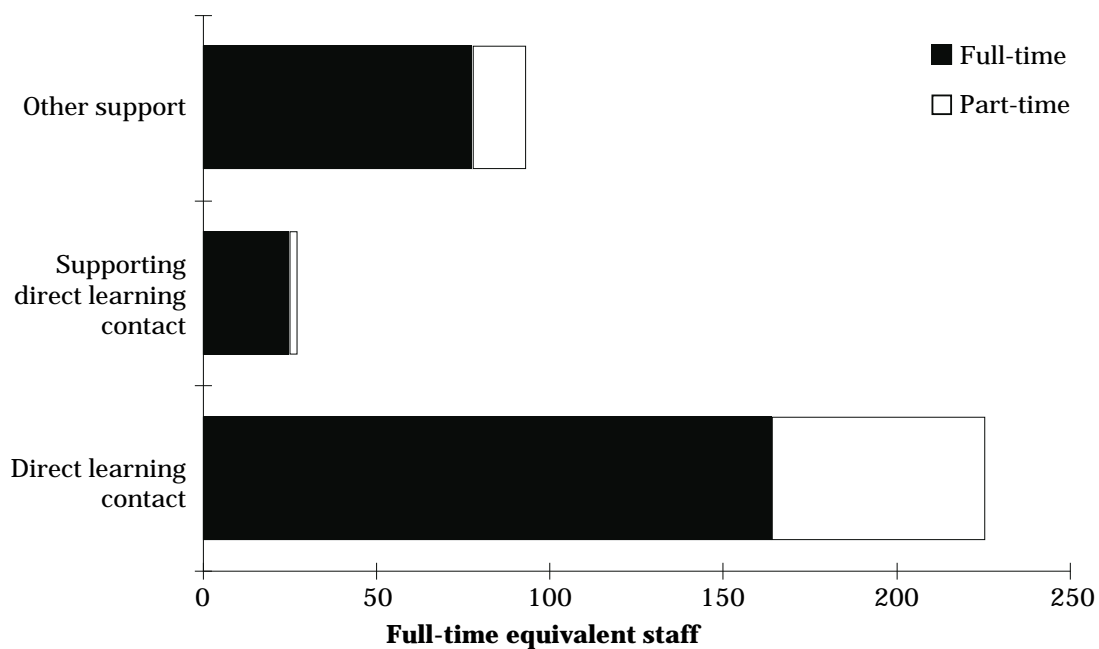
Handsworth College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)



Enrolments: 12,145

Figure 4

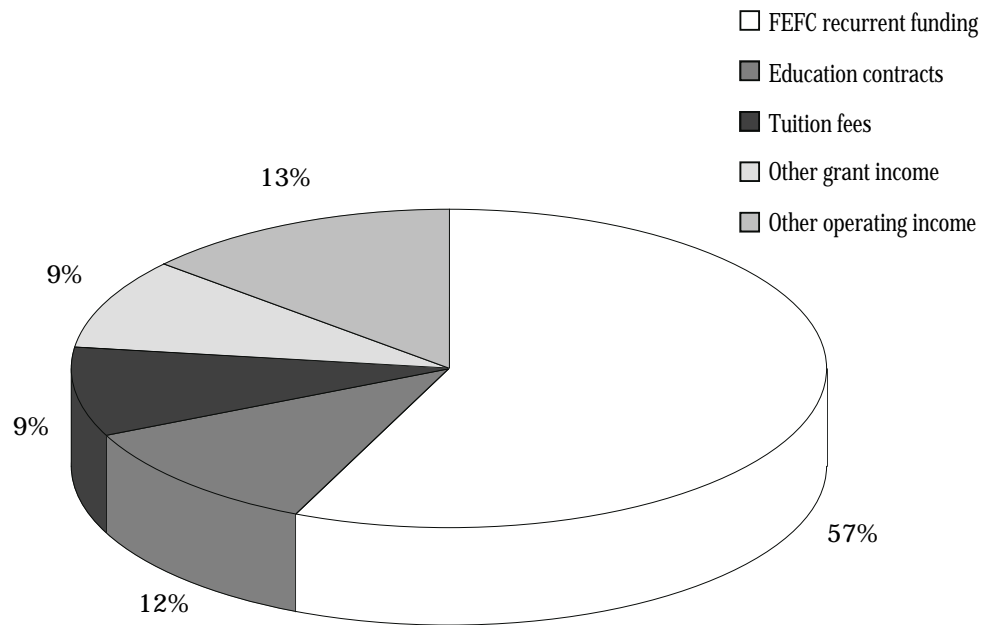
Handsworth College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 347

Figure 5

Handsworth College: income (for 12 months to July 1994)

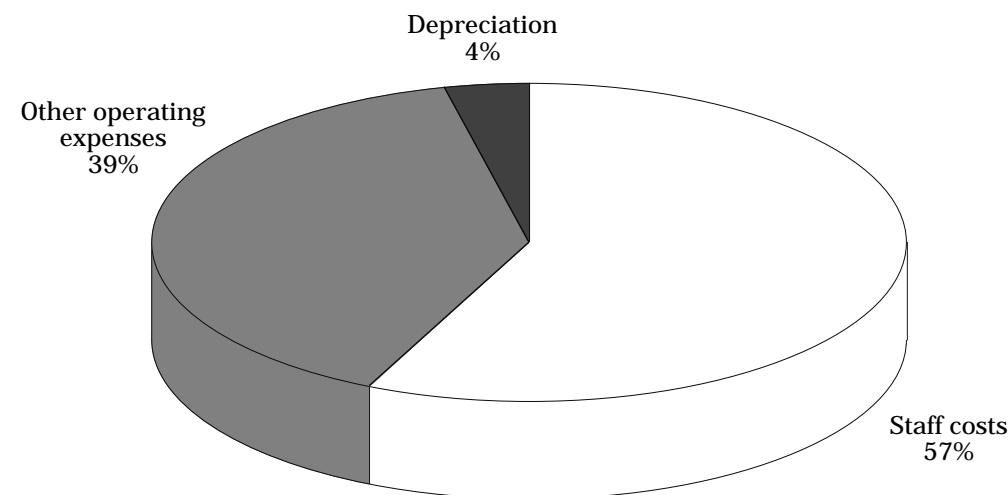


Income: £12,031,000

Note: this chart excludes £30,000 other income generating activities.

Figure 6

Handsworth College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £12,272,000

