

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Itchen College

September 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 120/95

ITCHEN COLLEGE

SOUTH EAST REGION

Inspected July 1994 - April 1995

Summary

Itchen College is a sixth form college serving the eastern part of the city of Southampton and adjacent areas. It offers a wide range of GCE A level and GCSE courses. Vocational programmes are an increasingly important part of its work. It has good links with schools and higher education institutions. It has developed substantial provision for adults, many of whom achieve good results. Teaching is well organised and well delivered by staff who have good academic qualifications and are enthusiastic about their work. The pastoral care of students is good. There is a substantial commitment to promoting equality of educational opportunity. Although there is learning support for college students, provision for those with learning difficulties is underdeveloped. The college is well equipped. After extensive redevelopment in recent years, its buildings are of a high standard although much of the accommodation is inaccessible to students in wheelchairs. The college is organised in a large number of small departments with substantial autonomy, and this leads to some weaknesses in central control. The quality assurance system does not yet cover all cross-college activities and has not eliminated poor examination results in some subjects. Management information about students is inadequate. The college should pursue the development of unit costing and examine the effects of the small class sizes in some subjects. In the absence of a unified catalogue, the control of the library bookstock is poor.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science/information technology	2	English	2
Mathematics	2	Modern languages	2
		Humanities	2
Business studies	2	Adult and continuing education	2
Art and design	2		

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INTRODUCTION

1 Itchen College was inspected in three stages. Induction and enrolment procedures were inspected in July and September 1994. Curriculum areas were inspected early in March 1995 and aspects of cross-college provision later in the same month. Twelve inspectors spent a total of 53 days in the college. They visited 117 classes and examined students' written and practical work. Meetings were held with governors, employers, head teachers of partner schools, representatives from local higher education institutions and from the Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), parents, college staff and students. Inspectors examined college policy statements, minutes of committees, working papers, and many other documents.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Itchen College is a sixth form college on the eastern side of Southampton. The city has one other sixth form college and a general further education college. Eastleigh, north of Southampton, also has a sixth form college and a general further education college. Itchen College draws its students mainly from the area of Southampton to the east of the River Itchen and from Eastleigh and Fareham. Most come from nine partner schools and from other maintained and independent schools within a radius of about six miles. In 1990, the college took over the management of adult education for much of the east side of the city. It provides courses for a growing number of adult students, some of which are run in conjunction with the nearby Eastpoint Community Centre.

3 The college occupies a site covering 3.3 hectares in a residential area close to the M27 and M3 motorways. It is also close to Southampton International Airport, good rail links to London and the west country, and ferries to the Continent. The city of Southampton is a commercial centre of 210,000 people. It has extensive shipping interests, heavy industries such as oil refining and vehicle manufacture, and a broad range of light industries and retail, leisure and media businesses. The city has a university, an institute of higher education, and a diversified church college. Cultural facilities include two art galleries, two theatres and a concert hall. Employment patterns have changed in line with the national trends towards service industries, higher levels of skill, and more women in work. Unemployment peaked at 14.7 per cent at the beginning of 1993, a high level for the region, but declined to 12.9 per cent by early 1994.

4 Student numbers have increased in recent years. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,076 students, of whom 841 were full time. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. The majority of full-time students are following General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) programmes, but there has been a steady increase in enrolments on General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs). In addition, a full-time access to higher education course is run for adult students. The college offers a large programme of extension

studies. From 1995 onwards, accreditation for these activities will be available through the Hampshire Open College Network.

5 The college is organised into 17 curriculum areas which are the responsibility of separate departments, these are: English and communications; computing and information technology; modern languages; mathematics; design technology; social sciences; business studies; recreation; physics; chemistry; biology including nursery nursing and health and social care; art; music; drama; geography and geology; classics; and adult education. Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figure 3. The college employs 70 full-time equivalent teaching staff, of whom 7.7 full-time equivalents are wholly engaged in adult education, and 25 full-time equivalent support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents is shown in figure 4.

6 The college's declared aim is to help young people to make the transition to adult life through developing personal attributes and skills. It seeks to be a supportive environment rich in opportunities for intellectual, sporting and cultural activities.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college has effective formal links with local schools. Many college staff attend schools careers conventions and parents' evenings. Local heads say they find the college receptive to their views on the curriculum. There are curriculum links with some schools, particularly in English, languages, science and geography. The TEC sponsors a scheme under which year-10 pupils study science at the college. There are informal connections between schools and the college through music and, to a lesser extent, through sport and drama.

8 Links with higher education are strong. There are compacts with Portsmouth University and Southampton Institute of Higher Education. Other connections with Portsmouth University were developed through the validation arrangements for access courses. The principal is a member of Southampton University's admissions and student liaison committee. The college is contributing towards arrangements for compacts which will secure progression for all successful Hampshire GNVQ science students. Less formal connections exist with La Sainte Union College, King Alfred's College, Winchester, and with Bournemouth University.

9 Relationships with the Hampshire TEC have developed well during the last two years. The TEC sees the college as a potential centre of excellence for GCE A level and GNVQ provision, and welcomes the college's initiative in catering for a wider range of students. Representatives of the TEC feel that the college is open to fresh ideas and that developments are undertaken with care. The TEC has made funding available to assist in the development of a new access to higher education course, and to support Training and Development Lead Body accreditation for staff. The college is bidding for funds to develop home-based information technology training

programmes. Staff are aware of the national targets for education and training and of those set by the TEC.

10 An extensive employer network supports the many GCE A level and GNVQ students who choose to do work experience or work shadowing. Employers are involved in careers guidance. There are many contacts with local companies: some direct, through organisations such as the rotary club, and others arising from the college's membership of the chamber of commerce. Pirelli, Vosper Thorneycroft, British Gas and other firms sponsor students in the college who are studying physics or chemistry with a view to following careers in science or engineering. Other companies are discussing sponsorship for students or events in the arts and humanities. A series of informal business lunches has been held recently to foster employer contacts and to obtain local market intelligence. Except in nursery nursing, employers do not influence the curriculum directly and are not involved in quality assurance procedures.

11 Contact with parents is good, and they speak highly of the college. There is an evening meeting for parents of newly-accepted students and later they are briefed on progression to higher education. Parents' meetings are held regularly to review student progress, and the governors present a report to parents at the beginning of each academic year. There are two parent governors on the corporation board.

12 The college offers 34 subjects at GCE A level and 32 at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level. The choice of GCE A levels was extended recently with the introduction of physical education and photography. GCSE travel and tourism and art began in the past two years. There is only a handful of GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses. Modular GCE A levels have been introduced progressively, particularly in science, mathematics and business studies. The introduction of vocational courses started in 1992 with a Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) first diploma in business studies, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at levels 1 and 2 in business administration, and a certificate in child development. Since then, further vocational programmes have been added including GNVQs in business, health and social care, leisure and tourism, and science, and a National Nursery Examinations Board diploma. In 1994, an essential competencies course consisting of English, numeracy and information technology was introduced for students with few previous educational attainments, including those with learning difficulties. The college intends to introduce a GNVQ in art and design and a foundation GNVQ programme in September 1995. It has been particularly active in the formation of the Hampshire Open College Network, through which accreditation for its redesigned extension studies programme has been sought. In 1994, a humanities access to higher education course started with 12 students. The college has been successful in a bid for European Community funds to support a science access course over the next two years.

13 In 1990, the work of the local adult education evening institute was absorbed into the college. In the past four years it has grown from very small beginnings to 2,000 enrolments. Provision consists of recreational, vocational and academic courses held during the day and in the evening. The college is part of the Southampton Adult Education Partnership which co-ordinates adult courses across the city and bids for funding from Hampshire County Council. A proportion of the work takes place at the Eastpoint Community Centre in the middle of a large housing estate about a mile and a half from the college. There are creches at Eastpoint Community Centre and, on Wednesday afternoons only, at the college itself. European Community funding will enable additional support to be given to lone parents who wish to follow college programmes.

14 The college offers 14 GCE A levels and nine GCSEs through open learning, supplemented by tutor support. In science, students attend some practicals at the college. Approximately 150 students are on this programme which has enabled the college to provide a service to those who are unable or unwilling to attend college, including a number of young members of the Exclusive Brethren.

15 Support for students with hearing or visual impairments, and with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, is well planned and effective. The essential competencies course, which is intended to support students with a broad range of learning difficulties, is still in its infancy. There are links with special schools and classes for people from local day centres. The college site has very poor access to upper floor areas for students with restricted mobility.

16 The college provides a small amount of training for local companies on a marginal-cost basis. The training consists of introductory information technology courses run at the college or on company premises. Language classes are being considered for the future. The college encourages the use of its buildings and facilities through low-cost lettings to sporting and cultural groups in the evening and at weekends. The local junior school is allowed to use the college's playing fields on two afternoons a week.

17 A marketing strategy was prepared in 1992 and it has been reviewed each year. New objectives are set after each annual review; they are not closely related to the college's strategic plan. There is a marketing director who is responsible for the style of college publicity. The prospectus is well presented, but is focused on provision for GCE A level students from schools at the expense of any mention of provision for adults, NVQ students or other students on vocational courses. As the prime public document the prospectus establishes the college's image, and it is unfortunate that it conveys such an incomplete impression of the range of provision. The head of adult and continuing education markets courses for adults using separate, less well-produced material, designed for house-to-house delivery.

18 The college has a commitment to fostering equal opportunities. It has an equal opportunities policy and strategy, and an active equal opportunities steering group, involving both students and staff. Staff development has taken place on equal opportunities issues, and more is planned. There are currently very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds in the college, reflecting the make-up of the surrounding area. The population of Southampton as a whole is more varied, and the college is aware that its ethnic composition may change.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

19 The corporation board has 20 members. There are 10 independent members, three co-opted members, two staff members, a student, two parents and a representative of the Hampshire TEC. The principal is a member of the board and the bursar is clerk to the corporation. Six committees have been established: finance and general purposes; education policy; adult education; building and maintenance; audit; and personnel. They have clear terms of reference and attendance at board and committee meetings is good. Governors bring their professional expertise to bear on corporation business, particularly in personnel issues, management, finance and education policy.

20 The corporation was not involved in devising the college's original strategic plan, but is taking part in its revision. The board has concentrated its attention on the college's financial management, its building programme, and options for its future direction. Members are strongly committed to the view that the college should continue to provide primarily for school leavers, and have been concerned about the effect on younger students of increasing adult and part-time provision. Although governors take an interest in curriculum matters they have not yet started to measure with any precision the college's academic performance or set targets for improvement. They monitor the extent to which objectives in the operating statements are met. They evaluate their own activities mainly in the course of an annual seminar meeting to review progress. Governors praise the work of the senior management team and especially the recent improvements in financial management and the successful completion of an ambitious building programme which has transformed the college's accommodation.

21 The college is led by a senior management team whose members teach. It comprises the principal, two deputy principals, and the bursar. One of the deputy principals is responsible for pastoral care and links with higher education; the other for the curriculum and quality assurance. There is also an executive team which consists of the senior management team and seven other members with cross-college roles. The other heads of department meet senior managers at least twice a term in a forum of about 20 people. There are other groups of senior tutors, liaison officers, and leaders of cross-college units. All these meetings are well minuted.

The principal holds short, weekly briefing meetings involving all staff, and there are regular staff bulletins. Staff appreciate being able to talk directly to the principal and there is good communication. The broad spread of responsibility and the frequency of meetings contribute to consensus in the college, upon which all its members place a high value. As the college seeks to increase its efficiency, it may need to consider ways in which this consensus can be maintained, while the amount of time devoted to meetings is reduced.

22 The executive team drew up the original strategic plan. Department heads are required to respond to the latest revision and to produce three-year departmental forecasts. Heads of department and those with cross-college responsibilities understand the strategic plan in general terms, but other teaching and support staff have little awareness of its implications or of the part they must play in achieving its aims.

23 The college has a complex management structure for a small organisation. The lines of accountability are not properly understood by some staff. Although the formal organisation chart shows all heads of department accountable to a deputy principal, some heads of department say that they report to the principal. Two of the heads of cross-college units are accountable directly to the principal, and the others to one or both of the deputy principals. Most cross-college staff are also members of a subject department and are accountable to a head of department. While such a matrix structure is not uncommon in those sixth form colleges which are organised into departments, there are disadvantages which multiply as the size and complexity of the institution increases. Departments vary in size from music with one permanent teacher to English with seven. Heads of department are responsible for curriculum development and management, academic quality assurance and the allocation of resources. Teaching and learning are well managed through this system.

24 The staff to student ratio is 1:14 and the college aims to increase this to 1:15 by the end of 1996. Enrolments this year have fallen short of targets by nearly 5 per cent, calling into question the college's ability to raise its efficiency through growth alone. However, managers believe that recent new building developments and an upturn in 16-19 year old student numbers may result in greater growth in the next few years. The college's average level of funding fell from £20.97 in 1993-94 to £19.85 in 1994-95 and is now very close to the median of £19.81 for all sixth form colleges. The college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

25 Budgets for consumable materials are allocated to heads of department and cross-college units through a bidding process guided largely by past trends. They are subsequently adjusted when actual enrolments become known. Monthly financial reports are issued to budget holders; they show total expenditure, the balance outstanding and committed expenditure. The college has not yet calculated any unit costs.

26 Data relating to full-time and adult students, staff and staff development, and finance are held on separate computerised and manual information systems, without the degree of integration that would enable trends and patterns of activity to be identified. Student retention, attendance and destination statistics are calculated and presented in several different ways. In the absence of reliable information from the central management information system, individual departments evaluate their work in their own way, and senior management cannot readily verify data or compare the performance of different departments. The college is exploring a number of computerised management information systems, but it should not wait for the purchase and commissioning of a new system before making a determined start on the systematic collection, checking and dissemination of the information necessary to measure and compare departmental effectiveness, and to evaluate its overall work against national indicators.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

27 The importance of pastoral care is emphasised in the college's strategic plan. Support and guidance are thorough and well organised by the deputy principals. Teachers carry responsibility for student services, external links, careers guidance, learning support, extension studies and flexible learning. There is a liaison team responsible for student admissions, induction and guidance, which are regulated by sound procedures. Tutors and senior tutors provide advice and guidance to students throughout their time at college. The college took part in a Further Education Unit project on enhancing guidance, and has made some improvements as a consequence.

28 A variety of activities is provided for pupils in partner schools beginning in years 9 and 10. The college makes presentations to the schools, in which former pupils take part. A college open day for school pupils is followed by structured interviews with prospective students. The liaison team meets regularly and keeps its procedures under review. Subject specialists attend to provide briefings on syllabus changes, new courses and progression opportunities. The college organises an introductory programme for prospective students at the end of the summer term, which helps them decide their choice of course. All applicants, including those who apply late, are invited to a final interview at enrolment in September. Procedures for the accreditation of prior learning are at an early stage of development.

29 Students are not screened for basic skills on entry, although staff are considering a number of ways in which they might be. A learning support unit established in 1993 provides additional tuition in mathematics, English, information technology, and study skills. Staff may recommend that a student receives learning support, but most of those currently receiving it have taken the initiative themselves. The take-up of support

teaching by students this year has been disappointing. The study skills sessions have been attended by an average of 10 students, but the other areas have seen less than five each week. Assistance for students with dyslexia, and tuition in English for speakers of other languages, are offered at the college by outside organisations.

30 There are guidelines for personal tutors and senior tutors and an extensive reference collection to help them locate more specialised advice. Tutorials are used flexibly to review students' progress and advise them on careers. Students judged them to be of uneven value, but they were consistently enthusiastic about the general advice and help they received from teachers. Professional counselling is provided on a part-time basis by a voluntary agency. The progress of all full-time students is recorded, using the national record of achievement which provides the basis for references for employment and applications to higher education.

31 The college has a weekly 'meeting time' for all students, which covers a wide range of social and cultural topics. It is currently reviewing the future of these sessions in the light of unfavourable views expressed by students.

32 The careers education programme is a full one, described in the student diary with a calendar of events. Work experience is provided in some courses, and participation in work shadowing increased from 30 students in 1992, to 75 the following year. Local employers confirm that students are well-prepared for work experience. The preparation for transition to higher education is thorough, including mock interviews and visits to higher education fairs and universities. References provided to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service are exceptionally detailed. The compact arrangements with the University of Portsmouth and with Southampton Institute have been effective in promoting the progression of disadvantaged students, who might not otherwise have been able to continue their studies. In 1994, all but one of 41 compact students went on to higher education.

33 There is a college council made up of staff and student representatives from each tutor group. In addition to organising social and charity events, it provides informal feedback on the quality of tutorial activities.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

34 The quality of the teaching inspected was high. The strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses in 77 per cent of the sessions inspected. There were no classes in which weaknesses outweighed the strengths. The following table summarises the grades given to the teaching sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		14	41	15	0	0	70
GCSE		2	14	8	0	0	24
Access		1	1	1	0	0	3
Basic education		1	1	1	0	0	3
GNVQ		1	4	1	0	0	6
NVQ		1	2	1	0	0	4
Other		3	4	0	0	0	7
Total		23	67	27	0	0	117

35 The average level of attendance for inspected classes, as recorded by the college was 88 per cent, which is 2 per cent below its target figure.

36 Examples of good practice were seen across the curriculum and at all levels of work. Courses are well planned, and appropriate to the requirements of examining bodies. Staff work in teams and share materials to provide full coverage of the curriculum. In humanities classes, the aims and objectives were clear and well understood by students. Class plans and tasks related well to course aims. In both English and communication studies, most classes began with a review of previous sessions. Course and lesson plans in mathematics and science were normally shared with students, either in a course handbook or in a more detailed synopsis of the scheme of work. Particularly extensive plans were seen in physics and biology, where they included information on teaching methods and resources.

37 In adult and continuing education, staff adapted their teaching to the needs of mature students. They moved easily between lecturing, facilitating, and general mentoring. They provided their students with interesting and varied learning programmes. Staff in business studies were skilled in managing a number of students working simultaneously on different tasks. The flexibility of their teaching methods resulted in efficient use of time and helped each student to develop at his or her own pace.

38 In some less successful classes in humanities, modern languages and business, teachers did not differentiate classwork or assignments to give students, in groups of mixed ability, work which was suited to them. In these sessions, the standard was pitched at the level of the average or below, leaving the more able with not enough to do. In a few science classes, the questions used to check students' understanding were too vague. The result was wild guesses, or monopolisation of the class by a few of the more confident students. Some sessions in art and design, and in English and communication studies, got through too little work; the pace was too leisurely. In a few business studies sessions, time was wasted transcribing text to the whiteboard which could have been handed round

in printed form. In some classes in English as a second language, a formal lecture technique was used throughout, with no relief from visual aids, printed materials or variation of pace.

39 Learning materials which enable students to study independently have been developed in response to requests from home-based mature students. The GCSE and GCE A level courses provide students with materials that guide them through the syllabus, as well as with workshop and tutorial support. The printed materials have been derived partly from those of the National Extension College, but they are supplemented by work developed at the college. Such materials are also helping to broaden the range of teaching in the classroom. For example, full-time GCE A level students in most subjects use them for revision, and their teachers use elements from them as class handouts.

40 In some classes teachers take pains to ensure that learning is enjoyable as well as thorough. In English, for example, role play, video and handouts are combined to give insight into complex texts. One class was exploring how Hamlet's state of mind appeared to the other characters in Shakespeare's play. Students took the part of the characters, and were interviewed as if for an investigative television programme, with the rest of the class asking questions as the 'studio audience'. The whole process was recorded on video and played back to the group, prompting further discussion. In art and design, the use of a cartoon strip as a lecture handout was funny and engaging. Students worked in an unusually effective manner on the difficult task of using language to communicate visual imagery. A student was given a reproduction of a painting to describe to the rest of the group. They listened, took notes and asked questions. They then had to draw what they understood of the image and the results were compared with the original.

41 A large part of the teaching of modern languages is carried out in the target language to help students gain confidence in its use. Native speakers are employed as language assistants in German, Spanish and French. The assistants work with small groups of students so that they are able to use their skills to the full. Educational visits are integrated into the teaching programmes through projects and written work. Students are provided with a good range of topical resource material, including newspapers and documentary videos in the target language.

42 Practical work in science and computing was particularly well planned, meticulously prepared by support staff, and carried out competently with due regard to safety.

43 The effectiveness of some classes was reduced by factors beyond the control of the class teacher. For example, the college's timetable does not provide for extended periods of study in the same subject. Longer periods are needed in some practical and aesthetic subjects, such as art and design, to enable students to undertake extended work. Seventeen per cent of GCE A level and GCSE classes run with 10 students or less. Some first and

second year GCE A level groups, and some GCE A level and GCE AS groups are taught together. While this improves the efficiency of staff utilisation, it usually reduces the effectiveness of the teaching.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

44 Students at Itchen College are confident and articulate, and they are well informed about the structure, content and assessment requirements of the courses they study. They understand their subjects and many are able to respond to complex questions about them. They have a high regard for the quality of teaching they receive from staff. Most students take part in groupwork, as well as individual and whole class activities. Examples of effective group activities were seen in business studies, languages, English, humanities and classes for adults.

45 Levels of achievement in the GCE A level examinations have been improving, and with 79 per cent achieving grades A-E in 1994 the college falls just below the average for sixth form colleges of 83 per cent. In 1994, a total of 275 candidates aged 16-18 sat GCE AS/A levels. There were 54 candidates who were 19 or over. The average GCE AS/A level point score notified in the Department for Education returns for 16-18 year old students taking two or more examinations was 12.8 (where A=10, E=2). The average score per entry was 4.2 which places the college in the middle third of all colleges in the further education sector.

46 Of the 34 GCE A level subjects on offer to full-time students in 1994, pass rates well above the national average for sixth form colleges were achieved in the following eight: English literature, communication studies, theatre studies, French, government and politics, geography, business studies, and chemistry. Pass rates were below the national sixth form college average in English language, classical civilisation, history, sociology, economics, law, computer studies, physics and biology. In mathematics the college has moved to a modular scheme in which students build up points to GCE AS or GCE A level. This has provided a flexible framework within which every student achieved a useful outcome.

47 In 1994 the college offered 32 GCSE subjects for 16-18 year old students. The proportion of candidates awarded grades A-C was low at 41 per cent, as compared with the corresponding national average for sixth form colleges of 49 per cent. In 17 subjects less than 10 candidates sat the examinations. If these are excluded, there are three subjects with results above the national average: history, sociology and physical education. Five subjects had results well below the average: biology, human biology, physics, law and business studies. All students who have not gained grades A-C in GCSE mathematics on entry to the college are required to resit. There is a substantial number who still do not achieve it at this second attempt. The college is now considering more appropriate mathematics qualifications.

48 In the adult education department the 1994 GCE A level results were good, with 94 per cent of the 35 candidates successful. Of the 87 candidates

taking GCSE, 78 per cent achieved A-C grades. Of the 125 adult students taking RSA typing, book-keeping and wordprocessing qualifications, over 80 per cent passed, many of them with distinction. The college has not publicised these results widely although they are markedly better than those achieved by 16-18 year old students.

49 Student retention rates for the whole college are not collated: each department keeps its own records. Retention in GCSE subjects in the three years up to 1994 varied; in some subjects the levels have been maintained or improved, but in most they have fallen. In business, geography, sociology, photography, ceramics, graphic illustration and Latin, retention rates have dropped to below 70 per cent. Some GCSE subjects had very low student numbers over this three-year period, including those modern languages taught as part of the extension studies programme. Spanish has fallen from an intake of 10 to five, Latin has had between four and 10, Russian has not exceeded seven and critical studies four. Some of these subjects have both low intake numbers and poor retention rates.

50 Retention at GCE A level has also been uneven. A number of subjects has high retention rates; for example, biology, English language and literature, chemistry and design technology. However, retention has declined by at least 20 per cent in classical civilisation, Latin, French, art and design, art history, world history, social history and graphical communication. A number of other subjects shows a smaller decline. Intakes to some GCE A level subjects are also very low: five in art history, three in Latin and six in German in 1994. All of these subjects also have falling retention rates. GCE AS electronics has not recruited more than four students in each of the last three years, and has never kept more than half of them to the end of the course.

51 Retention in the adult education department varied widely between lows of around 40 per cent in some GCSE subjects and 90 per cent in others. For part-time provision, the overall pattern is good, with retention rates of 65 per cent or better for 26 of the 37 courses.

52 There is a number of recent examples of notable student achievements in academic, cultural and sporting endeavours. Last year, a music student was offered scholarships to three national schools of music; she is now studying singing and aims for an operatic career. In 1993, a student achieved four grade A passes at GCE A level at 16 years of age; he is now studying science at Cambridge University. Sporting successes in 1994 included that of the college basketball team, which won the Hampshire Schools Basketball Cup. A number of theatrical, operatic and musical productions is presented each year and are open to the public. The college shows that it values the art and design work of its students in the displays of two and three-dimensional work around the buildings. In the main entrance hall there are stained glass windows designed by a past student who studied at the Royal College of Art. The college has well-established links in Africa and India, which provide students with the chance to visit these continents and to help with a number of aid projects.

53 In 1994, the college was able to track the destinations of 65 per cent of its students: 28 per cent to higher education, 14 per cent to further education and training, and 23 per cent to employment. Of students leaving two-year courses 44 per cent went on to higher education, a significant increase over the previous year. A more complete collection and analysis are required if such data are to be useful in interpreting trends and informing the quality assurance process.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

54 A policy for quality assurance was drawn up in 1992. Initially it was applied to the performance of departments, but some cross-college functions have been added since. The policy is based on the premise that quality measures and targets should not be imposed from above, but should rather stem from departmental priorities. This approach has led to diversity in interpretation of the terminology, to variations in the standards departments apply, and to wide differences in the rigour of analysis. There is no link to any generally applied college standards or to the objectives in the strategic plan.

55 The main focus for quality monitoring and evaluation is the annual departmental review document, which is compiled by the head of department, and which includes action points agreed by staff. Each such report provides the agenda for a formal review conducted by the principal and the deputy principal responsible for curriculum and quality assurance, in the course of which action plans are reviewed and revised. The process culminates in the production and adoption by senior managers of an overall quality assessment of the college and an action plan for the next year. In 1994, all departments were asked to involve students in their reviews. They have done so in a variety of ways.

56 Enrolment and induction arrangements are evaluated through questionnaires addressed to students, and in discussion with them. Cross-college issues are usually reviewed by the team of liaison tutors, the equal opportunities steering group, or the GNVQ team of course leaders and internal verifiers. The GNVQ team has established a programme to maintain consistent internal verification procedures, and has produced staff guidance on assessment and grading. Although quality issues are a regular item at the twice-termly heads of department meetings and at other college meetings, there is no college forum specifically concerned with the analysis of outcomes of the quality review process or the exchange of good practice.

57 Since 1991, the college has subscribed to the Advanced Level Information System, which provides data comparing actual GCE A level achievement with achievement that would have been predicted on the basis of GCSE results, as an indicator of the value added by education beyond the age of 16. It is also a member of the Hampshire and Surrey

college system for peer review, through which teachers from different colleges review each other's work. This process is well received by staff and adds to the information available for quality review.

58 A biennial review and development scheme was initiated in 1993, with an emphasis on personal development. Targets are set to reflect individual needs in teaching, career development, and curriculum matters. The guidelines for reviewers suggest that good teaching, effective management, and fulfilment of job description objectives should be taken into account during the reviews, and that 'indices of good teaching and effective management' should be agreed by the parties. All staff have been trained in the use of the scheme, and the review and development co-ordinator reports to the principal on its progress. The majority of staff reviews has been carried out by line managers, but peers and the review and development co-ordinator have also acted as reviewers. The scheme is half way through its first full cycle, and 40 per cent of staff will have been reviewed by the end of the 1994-95 academic year. It has been warmly welcomed by the staff who have been reviewed to date. Progress reviews will take place in the second year of the cycle. A parallel system for support staff is managed by the bursar and operates through line manager review, with performance targets set for individuals.

59 There is a clear policy for staff development, with the general objective of improving the quality of teaching and learning. A staff-development committee meets each term to review priorities and decide on action. Most staff development is related to curriculum development, but there are also bursaries for staff who apply to the principal for funding to support intellectual refreshment. The staff-development programme includes two days of induction for new staff. In 1994, £7,000 was provided by the TEC for Training and Development Lead Body assessor and verifier training. Some 33 per cent of full-time teachers are either qualified or training for qualification in these awards. The direct budget for staff development this year is £11,952 but, when supply teaching to provide cover for staff under training is taken into account, the true cost is about £72,000, 2.6 per cent of payroll. Five days are set aside for in-service training each year.

60 The college charter was developed from an earlier student contract. It was issued to all students in 1994 after wide consultation. A survey of the charter's impact carried out by staff from other colleges has been favourable. The style of the document is unattractive and there are some notable omissions, for example complaints procedures, and the names of corporation members.

61 The college's quality assessment report used the headings from Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*; strengths and 'areas for concern' were identified under each heading. The report is wide-ranging but takes a somewhat uncritical view of the quality of the college's provision.

RESOURCES

Staffing

62 The college's teaching staff are academically well qualified. Eighty-one per cent have first degrees, 21 per cent have higher degrees and 73 per cent have formal teaching qualifications. Few have recent experience of work outside teaching but within the last five years, 30 per cent of staff have been on industrial secondment or otherwise involved in professional activities. Seventy-two per cent are full time. The small proportion of part-time teachers limits the flexibility of staff management. A diary and handbook provide guidance for staff and set out their conditions of service in detail.

63 The teaching staff are supported by 25 experienced and qualified support staff, who are managed by the bursar. They are treated as full members of the college team. Departmental technicians are integrated into curriculum teams. In resource management and administration, steps have been taken to develop the competence of support staff and to give them increased responsibility.

64 Forty-nine per cent of teaching staff, 25 per cent of the senior management team, and 44 per cent of the heads of department are female. The proportion of staff of minority ethnic origin is 6 per cent, which is greater than that in the catchment area of the college. Seventy-one per cent of the college budget is devoted to staff costs. This is close to the national average for sixth form colleges, and above the regional average for all further education sector colleges of 65 per cent.

Equipment/learning resources

65 The college is well equipped. There is a good range of equipment in art and design, theatre studies, and design and technology. Science equipment is generally very good but the introduction of GNVQ courses makes the acquisition of additional instrumentation desirable. When modern languages move into their new accommodation later in 1995, the ageing language laboratory will be replaced with modern multimedia equipment. Satellite television is being added to the existing television and compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database facilities, enabling regular reception of foreign news and current affairs broadcasts. Students are supplied with a good range of textbooks in all subjects. There is a well-equipped resource centre. Colour televisions, videos, overhead projectors, slide projectors, flip charts and other teaching aids are widely available throughout the college.

66 Information technology provided for student use is impressive. There are approximately 150 computer workstations of various kinds, which are extensively networked. Specialist machines are provided for some subjects, for example, in art and computer-aided design. The 18 workstations in the information and resources centre, and a number of machines in

departments, are readily available on open access. Other computers in classrooms can be used when they are not timetabled. With one machine for every six full-time equivalent students, the college is well resourced, but there is still unsatisfied demand from daytime adult classes.

67 There are about 9,000 books in the information centre and many of them are very dated. A considerable number of more modern titles is held in departmental resource areas, but there is no unified catalogue. The information centre has a good range of CD-ROM disks, and video and audio tapes. There is, for example, a library of video cassettes covering every aspect of mathematics taught in the college, which may be used on site or borrowed.

68 A well-appointed careers advice area has been established in an ideal location adjoining the students' dining and recreational area. It holds a good range of computer software and printed materials. A recent acquisition has been the 'Adult Directions' program, which is of particular value to mature students.

Accommodation

69 The college has a core of good original buildings. Since 1992 there has been a very active building programme, and 40 per cent of the accommodation has been improved. All of the unsuitable hatted accommodation has been eliminated. A new student centre, refectory and careers area now form an attractive hub for student life. The recently-completed buildings for social sciences, languages and mathematics are excellent. They are well furnished and well resourced with computers and modern audio-visual aids. There are excellent science laboratories in the older part of the buildings. There is an assembly hall capable of seating 400. Most of the teaching accommodation is light, airy and well appointed. The college is clean and well cared for by both staff and students. There is a generous amount of accommodation.

70 There are some poorer areas of accommodation. The present provision for art and design consists of a number of separate rooms dispersed across the site. Storage areas in both art and design and science are insufficient. The gymnasium is very small and is not of a good standard. Many of the indoor sporting activities have to take place in a sports centre some distance from the college. An appeal has been launched to raise funds for a community sports and arts complex on the college site.

71 Although some departments are concerned that there is insufficient general teaching accommodation, most difficulties could be overcome by more flexible use of existing space. A proprietorial attitude to classrooms leads to inefficiencies and the average classroom use is as low as 55 per cent. Access for students using wheelchairs is at present restricted to the ground floor. The college is aware of the issue and is looking for solutions in its plans for future development.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

72 The strengths of the college are:

- the consensus among governors, managers and staff about the college's aims and direction
- strong links with partner schools and higher education
- growing adult and community education
- effective guidance and pastoral care
- good teaching
- academically well-qualified and enthusiastic staff
- good accommodation and equipment.

73 Issues which the college should address include:

- poor examination results and/or student retention in some subjects
- small class sizes in some subjects
- the inadequate management information system
- the lack of common quality standards across the college
- the unclear lines of accountability in the complex management structure
- inadequate access to the accommodation for people using wheelchairs
- the need for a unified catalogue of books.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

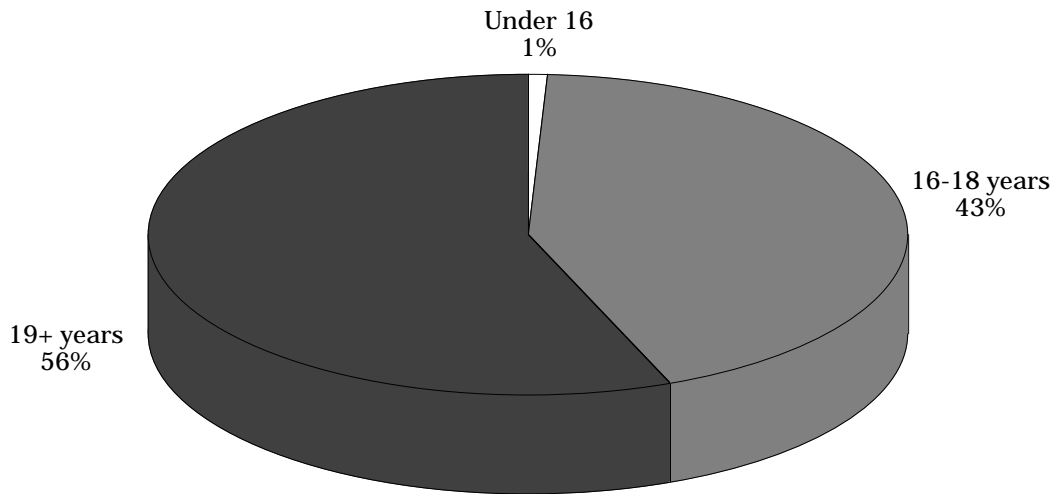
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

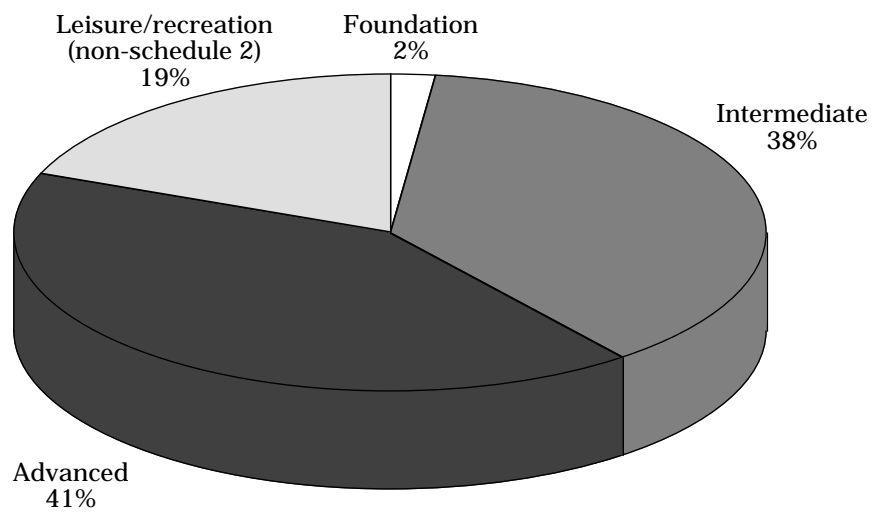
Itchen College: percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)



Enrolments: 2,076

Figure 2

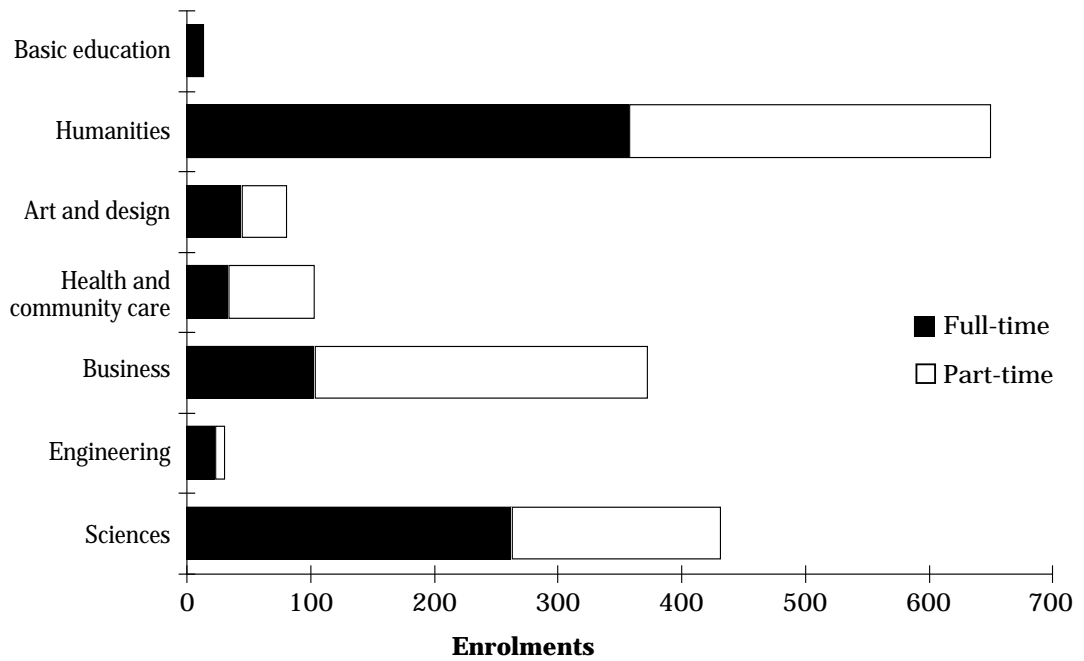
Itchen College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 2,076

Figure 3

Itchen College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1994-95)

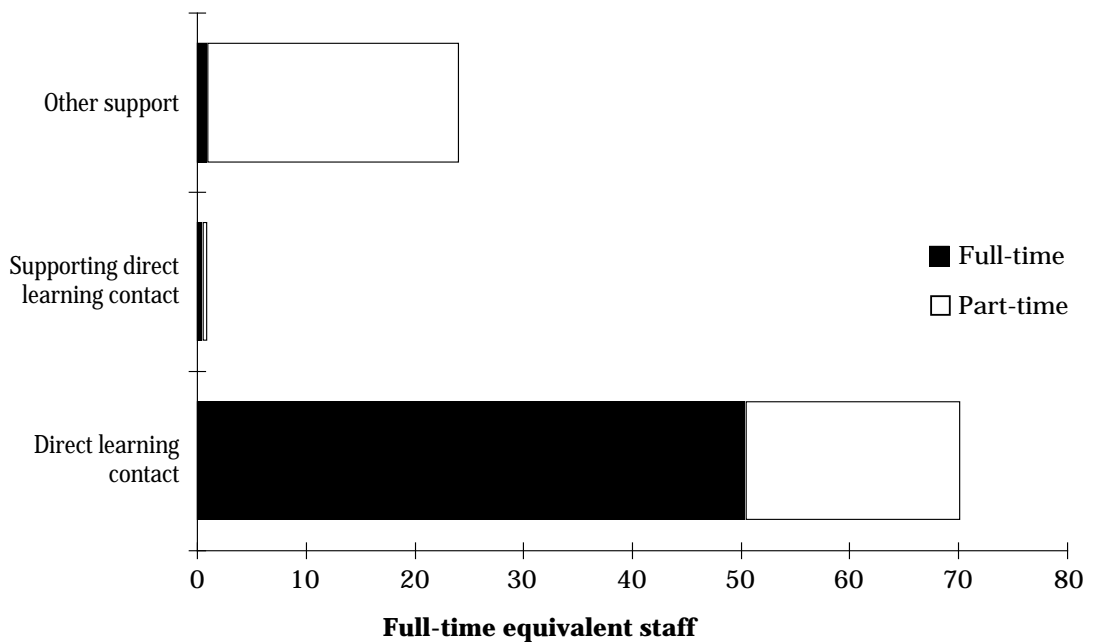


Enrolments: 1,685

Note: this chart excludes non-schedule 2 enrolments.

Figure 4

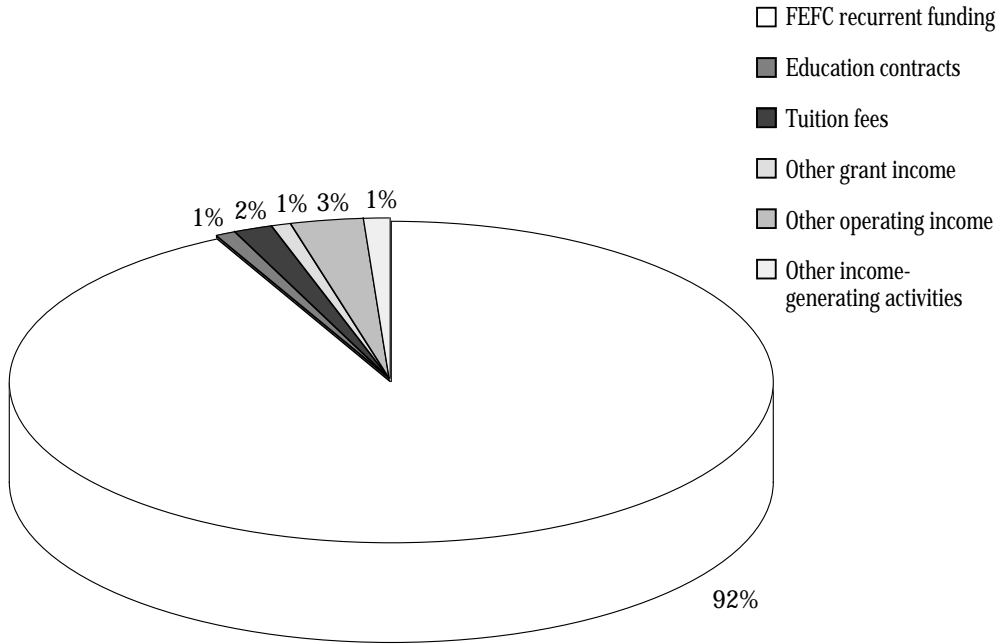
Itchen College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 95

Figure 5

Itchen College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)

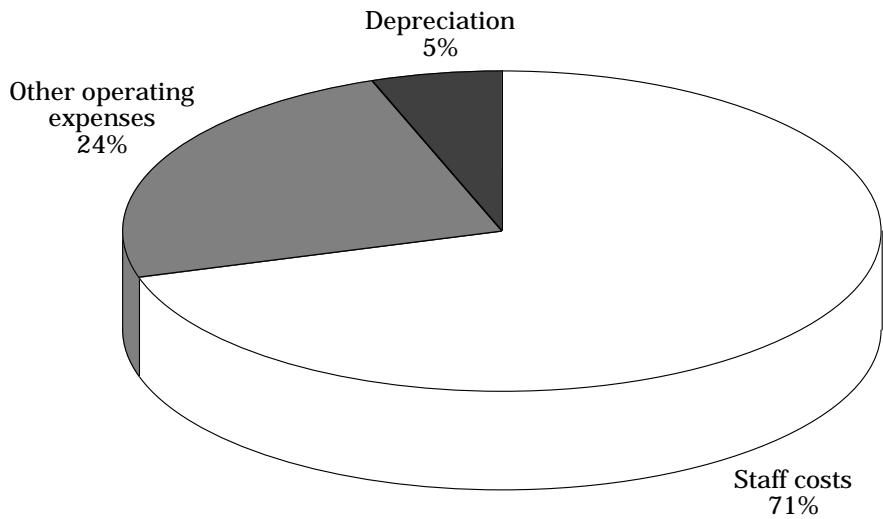


Income: £3,714,000

Note: this chart excludes £17,000 capital grants.

Figure 6

Itchen College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £3,688,000

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