

**REPORT  
FROM THE  
INSPECTORATE**

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# **King Edward VI College, Stourbridge**

**June 1995**

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**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

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## **THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

### **GRADE DESCRIPTORS**

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

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

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# FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 76/95

**KING EDWARD VI COLLEGE, STOURBRIDGE**

**WEST MIDLANDS REGION**

**Inspected April 1994 - March 1995**

## Summary

King Edward VI College, Stourbridge, is a voluntary-aided, non-denominational sixth form college. It offers, almost exclusively, GCE A level studies for 16-18 year old students. It has well-developed links with local schools. Examination results are outstanding and a large proportion of the college's students enter higher education. Teaching is well planned and staff are knowledgeable and well qualified. Students attend regularly and 95 per cent complete their courses. Tutorial guidance is good and includes thorough preparation of students' applications to higher education institutions. Senior managers closely monitor students' achievements. The college's fine historic buildings are owned by a charitable trust which has ensured that they are meticulously maintained. Attractive new buildings have been added by the trustees when needed. The governors have ensured that the college is financially sound. The college should: develop an effective system of quality assurance; further develop management roles and cross-college responsibilities; provide management training for heads of department; strengthen policy development and policy review; widen the range of methods of teaching and learning; address the inadequate resources for computing; improve the information technology skills of staff and students; and improve library resources.

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

<b>Aspects of cross-college provision</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Responsiveness and range of provision	2
Governance and management	3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	2
Quality assurance	4
Resources: staffing	3
equipment/learning resources	4
accommodation	2

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Mathematics	2	English	2
Science	2	Languages	2
		History	3
		Religious education	1
Art and design	2		
Music	3		
Theatre studies	3		

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1 King Edward VI College, Stourbridge was inspected between April 1994 and March 1995. The college's enrolment and induction procedures were inspected in June 1994 and the beginning of the autumn term 1994, specialist subject areas during April and November 1994 and January 1995 and aspects of cross-college provision from 20 to 23 March 1995. Eleven inspectors spent a total of 55 days in the college. They visited 140 classes involving 1,883 students, examined representative samples of students' work and held discussions with governors, college staff, students, local employers, two representatives of Dudley Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), parents, teachers from local schools and representatives of the local community.

## **THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS**

2 King Edward VI College, Stourbridge, is a voluntary-aided, non-denominational, sixth-form college which was established in 1976. It occupies the buildings of a former boys' grammar school which was founded by Royal Charter in 1552. The site and buildings are owned by a separate body of foundation trustees which works with the governing body to support the college. A major rebuilding programme was completed in the late 1980s.

3 Stourbridge is a manufacturing centre within the Dudley Metropolitan Borough. There are good communication and travel links with the West Midlands conurbation and bus and rail stations are close to the college. These links allow the college to draw students from a catchment area inhabited by a third of a million people.

4 The catchment area includes the whole of the Dudley Metropolitan Borough, where there are 21 partner schools, the villages of northern Worcestershire and South Staffordshire and parts of the metropolitan boroughs of Sandwell and Wolverhampton. There is some deprivation in parts of the catchment area associated with the loss of much of its manufacturing base in the recession of the 1980s. There has been a measure of economic recovery with the recent growth of service industries. A survey of the Dudley economy to the year 2000 predicts that the mix of jobs in the area will change rapidly, with an increase in managerial and professional posts. The percentage of those staying on in full-time education after the age of 16 is growing, but it remains below the national average.

5 Prior to its designation, King Edward VI College was funded by Dudley Metropolitan Borough. Enrolments grew as the college became a favoured centre in the borough for General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) studies. There are 88.5 full-time equivalent staff, 62 of whom are full time. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 1.

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6 The college is located on a small, intensely-developed and restricted urban site. Governors' concern about the effects of over-expansion on the college ethos have sat uneasily with the increasing demand for places at the college. Student numbers have risen from 836 in September 1992 to 940 in 1994 and are likely to exceed 1,000 in 1995. Demand for places has grown more rapidly than supply, with 1.5 applicants per place in 1993, 1.7 in 1994, and 1.9 for admission in September 1995. Enrolments by age are shown in figure 2.

7 The governing body has determined that the college's mission should be to provide high-quality academic, cultural and social education for students from Stourbridge and the surrounding area. In partnership with parents and secondary schools, it will maintain and develop the established character of the college.

8 Governors have decided that King Edward VI College should respond to the strong local demand for academic courses for the 16-19 age group. They intend that the college concentrates on its established areas of expertise rather than attempt to diversify and compete with local general further education colleges. The college seeks the balanced development of the individual student through a broad curriculum which includes varied activities. There is a strong tradition of team games and music making. The college is expanding its work experience programme, both locally and abroad. Enrolments by curriculum area are shown in figure 3.

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

9 In line with its mission, the college mainly provides full-time GCE A level courses. The strategic plan is informed by an awareness of the employment implications of rapid economic change in the area, in particular the anticipated need for more administrators and managers. Most students subsequently proceed to higher education.

10 There are effective links with twenty-one 11-16 partner schools many of whose pupils proceed to the college. About 80 per cent of students are recruited from schools in Dudley Metropolitan Borough. Each school has a college liaison tutor who, often accompanied by existing college students, regularly visits the school to advise on the courses offered by the college. The college provides schools with the GCE A level grades of former pupils and the names of the institutions of higher education to which former pupils proceed. School representatives praise the responsive nature of the college. The college has a committee of senior tutors and other senior staff which carries out a thorough analysis of applications to ensure that the entry criteria, which give preference to pupils in Dudley schools, are applied fairly. Links with schools at curriculum level are limited, although there have been some recent initiatives, particularly in art and design and in science where there is a compact through which year 10 pupils are invited to sample the science curriculum.

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11 The college is involved in a higher education compact with local universities and other institutions of higher education. An agreement with Wolverhampton University is in place and other arrangements are expected to be completed soon. The compact emphasises student goals in relation to education and employment at 18 plus. Given its recent introduction, it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of the compact.

12 Relationships with Dudley TEC are effective. The college is a member of the TEC-funded education business partnership. The TEC has supported pilot projects aimed at the development of work experience in the college and has assisted the college's preparation for the Investors in People award. The TEC believes that the college has begun significantly to improve its links with industry and commerce and that, in the particular context of post-16 education provision in Dudley, the college's mission is appropriate. However, the TEC believes that the timescales set by the college for obtaining the Investors in People award are overambitious and this view is now shared by the college's senior management.

13 There are close links with parents. They receive regular communications from the college including clear information on their sons' and daughters' progress. Student attendance is thoroughly checked. Accurate information is provided in advance on the likely costs associated with the choice of subjects, as promised in the students' charter. The King Edward VI College Association supports the college in various activities such as parents' meetings, careers conventions, a leavers' reunion and a prize day. Parent governors are elected by a ballot of all parents.

14 The college's increased responsiveness to community needs has elicited favourable comment. The Kinver Rotary Club was grateful for college support in accepting sponsored overseas students and the West Midlands Dyslexia Institute reported warmly on the college's contacts with it. The college has recently taken the initiative in establishing a fruitful relationship with Disability West Midlands.

15 There is substantial demand for places at the college. Without further expansion the college will not be able to offer places to all students capable of benefiting from its provision. The curriculum offered is almost exclusively GCE A level with some GCE advanced supplementary (AS) courses and a small provision for General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in English, law, mathematics and Spanish. The college offers 35 courses in 26 subjects at GCE A level. Psychology has been introduced recently. Business studies and physical education are to be introduced in September 1995. In some subjects, notably mathematics, sciences, history and English there is a choice of alternative syllabuses. Modular courses have been introduced in the physical sciences and mathematics. The new business studies course will also be modular. Students are able to choose any combination of subjects although many follow the traditional clusters of GCE A levels in sciences and the humanities. At entry, all students take three or more subjects at advanced

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level. A significant disadvantage of the college's limited curriculum offer is that students who do not find GCE A level courses suited to their needs are obliged to transfer to other institutions to continue their education.

16 No evening programme is offered, as the governors believe this would conflict with the ethos of the college and the foundation trust's commitment to advance the education of young people under the age of 25. There is a regular weekly act of worship of a Christian nature open to students and staff. Christian theology is available within GCE A level religious studies and as part of the programme of complementary studies.

17 The rich and diverse programme of complementary studies is aimed at developing personal skills. It includes sport, which is compulsory in the first year. Imaginative short courses include religious studies, ethical and moral issues, and opportunities to evaluate contemporary social problems. Students can take part in courses as varied as desktop publishing or playing in a string orchestra. The second year of the complementary studies programme enables most students to enter for GCE A level general studies. These complementary studies are a useful addition to the courses offered, and provide opportunities for students to develop a wide range of interests and talents. They help to balance an examination dominated curriculum.

18 There is a substantial schools experience programme, offered as part of complementary studies, which is aimed mostly but not exclusively at students who are considering a teaching career. Currently, about 130 students participate in the programme which takes place on one afternoon a week. The great majority of students go to primary schools but a small number are placed in secondary and special schools. There is clear guidance on conduct and expectations, and both students and staff from the schools are requested to complete evaluations of the experience. Detailed records are kept.

19 Links with employers have been limited. However, the development of work experience for some students, beginning with a TEC-funded pilot project in 1994, has assisted in improving students' awareness and understanding of the needs of industry and commerce. There is a complementary studies module 'getting close to local business', in which employers introduce students to the nature of industry. A number of students undertake work experience in a small number of local companies. A distinctive feature is a European work experience project, sponsored by a locally-based company, in which a shadow firm trades with other practice firms in schools and colleges in Europe. There is considerable scope for the college to develop work experience which is more closely aligned to students' career intentions.

20 Historically, the college has taken very small numbers of students with a physical disability or impairment; for example, students with cerebral palsy and hearing impairment. It is also aware of the needs of students with dyslexia. In support of these students the college has developed links with relevant external agencies and also with students'



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previous schools. A senior tutor has been given responsibility for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the college has adopted a useful policy statement. This commits the college to encourage the recruitment of students with disabilities and seeks to promote positive attitudes towards disability among existing able-bodied students. Many parts of the college are inaccessible to students with restricted mobility.

21 The college governors have recently approved an equal opportunities policy but it has not yet been implemented. Heads of partner schools reported that students from minority ethnic groups had commented positively on the ease with which they settled into the college. The application form for entry in 1996 is to be modified to reflect equal opportunities issues. In particular, applicants will be asked to state their ethnic origin and students with disabilities will be asked to indicate their need for special support.

22 College marketing is effective. There is an attractively-designed prospectus which gives applicants clear information about the college and its courses. There are also subject leaflets, although these are not designed to a common format. Promotion includes attendance at local schools, careers conventions and invitations to college open days. There are precise checklists for college open days designed to maximise the marketing potential of this activity. Posters are produced and open days are advertised in the press. Students commented favourably on the impact of the college's marketing.

23 Market research is limited. Before committing itself to a GCE A level in business studies the college investigated the likely demand and the impact upon other subjects of the introduction of this new subject. The decision to introduce business studies was partly the result of research into student preferences.

24 Public relations are well developed and there has been a new emphasis upon promoting the college within the local community. There are regular press releases detailing the college's and students' achievements and substantial media coverage has been obtained. An attractive publicity board in the reception area highlights students' achievements. Awareness of the college and its links with the local community are also enhanced by letting college accommodation to a number of local sporting and cultural organisations.

#### **GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

25 The college is one of only four non-denominational, voluntary-aided colleges in the sector. A charitable trust owns, maintains and develops the buildings. There is some common membership of the trust and the governing body. There are 14 members of the governing body: nine are foundation governors, two are parent governors, two are staff members and one is a TEC nominee. Unusually, the principal has chosen not to be a member although he attends and contributes to meetings. Meetings of the

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governing body are held twice a term and are well attended. The governing body has seven committees: audit, finance and general purposes, remuneration, staffing, staffing appeals, student disciplinary appeals, and a joint foundation governors-trustees committee. Terms of reference have recently been agreed for all these committees, with the exception of the new student disciplinary appeals committee. In addition to these committees, there are also occasional meetings of the foundation governors to appoint new foundation members. Background papers considered at meetings of the governing body should be made available to staff, students, and members of the public.

26 Governors have a wide range of business and professional experience. They have been effective in achieving their mission of preserving the established ethos and traditions of the college, maintaining its reputation for achievements at GCE A level and ensuring sound finances. They have discussed the college's strategic plan in the finance and general purposes committee. However, the occasions when governors have worked jointly with members of the senior management team on strategic issues have been limited. The governing body may wish to consider how it can secure more involvement of senior managers in its discussions of strategic options and its reviews of performance. Governors have not had the benefit of training days as a body and there are no induction materials or arrangements for new governors.

27 The college's strategic plan includes an adequate analysis of aims and options, but it is too concerned with detailed operational objectives. There are over 100 objectives for the period up to August 1995 and departmental plans have added even more. As most managers carry substantial teaching commitments the objectives set should either be prioritised or rationalised. The accommodation strategy is detailed and there is a full appraisal of the options available.

28 The senior management team is a small and cohesive group which exercises a strong influence on the running of the college. It is led by the principal and includes two vice-principals, the college bursar and the head of student support and guidance. Management decisions are communicated effectively to staff through a variety of means. Members of the senior management team have wide-ranging responsibilities and some also carry significant teaching loads. Meetings are held twice a week and have agendas and brief minutes with clear action points. They are not always sufficiently focused on strategic issues and broad policy matters. Some administrative details could more appropriately be delegated to other levels.

29 The management structure below the level of the senior management team is strongly departmental. This militates against the development of cross-college roles. Responsibility for many cross-college matters resides with senior staff who are stretched to meet all the demands made on their time. Some other staff with cross-college roles lack the necessary status

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to fulfil their responsibilities. Management responsibilities and accountability have become clearer and more explicit during the period of the inspection. The recent creation of a performance review process for the senior management team has provided senior managers with clear objectives. Job descriptions of senior post holders indicate the areas for which they are responsible but do not describe the skills and expertise that are required. Heads of department have recently been provided with a generic job description. Their management objectives are partly set by departmental plans. Other targets are set as need arises. The college should consider establishing a management development and training programme to assist heads of department in carrying out their additional responsibilities. Action is also required to ensure that the understanding of managerial roles at head of department level is also more consistent across the college.

30 The basis on which resources are allocated has not been clear or well understood. Significant improvements are being introduced. Traditionally, budget holders have made bids for funds and have been awarded varying amounts for new items of expenditure. There are well-advanced plans to use a formula for future allocations. Financial statements for budget holders have not been provided on a regular monthly basis and the lack of an automatic supply of such information has been a concern of managers, though information on budget balances is available by special request. The bursar is moving rapidly to ensure that regular budget information is sent to budget holders. Despite the lack of information for budget holders, the college keeps a tight control on finances. The governing body has regularly and closely scrutinised spending, income, and asset management. The college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 4 and 5. For 1994-95 the average level of funding for the college is £21.29 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.81.

31 The college lacks a consistent approach to formulating and reviewing policies. They vary considerably in format and effectiveness. The health and safety policy is comprehensive but review arrangements are not yet adequate. The college's equal opportunities policy, which was approved by the governors in July 1994, needs further development. The monitoring arrangements for this policy are unclear. The college's overall policy for management information is too broad to provide an effective guide to the aims, development, management, and review of the system.

32 Enrolment targets have been met with ease and a clear view of the college's likely intake numbers is available well in advance of the start of each academic year. Good advance planning ensures the college is well prepared for the arrival of students in September. Retention rates and destination statistics are effectively collected and reviewed. The overall retention rate has been calculated for a number of years. In 1993-94 it was 95 per cent. A central record of student destinations is published each year. A particularly thorough approach is taken to monitoring

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students' destinations. The final results of former students on higher education courses are also collected.

33 Management information is entered into databases. Examination results are automatically transferred from examining bodies to the college's computerised system. At present the financial information system is being restructured. Records are kept of students' course options, attendance and progress but the management information system could serve these areas better. Access to computerised information is improving and the use of the system should be further developed.

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

34 Contact with the college prior to entry is co-ordinated by the admissions secretary. Enquiries are directed to college liaison tutors, who have close contact with local schools. This is a help when applicants are counselled on their choice of GCE A level subject. All applicants are interviewed. Students commented on the friendly nature of the process and the helpful course guidance received. The college seeks to recruit students who can profit from a GCE A level course. GCSE examination results, both predicted and actual, are used to assess students' suitability for GCE A level courses and to provide guidance on appropriate study programmes. Approximately 20 per cent of places are reserved for students who live outside the immediate area and who do not have a brother or sister at the college. There is an appeals procedure for unsuccessful applicants and a waiting list.

35 Thorough analysis and planning has led to the development of an induction policy document with clear aims and objectives. An effective induction day for prospective students was held in July 1994. It was carefully prepared and provided a good introduction to the nature of studies at the college. Prospective students had an opportunity to get to know each other, their group tutor and existing students. Individual student timetables provided a focus for discussion on the programmes of study. An introductory talk, coupled with a short slide presentation on the college library, was of particularly high quality. The presence of parent governors and representatives of two partner schools emphasised their co-operation in the admission of students to the college. A survey of 100 students carried out in December 1993 indicated strong support for the advice and guidance processes which students had experienced. The second stage of induction in September had a tight time schedule. This, together with a lack of staff training on interviewing techniques, meant that in some cases too much time was devoted to administrative procedures, leaving little time for discussion with students to identify their needs. It was not clear that all students grasped the significance of the learning agreement and initial advice and guidance form which they signed. Opportunities for transfer between GCE A level courses occur both during the induction process and at all stages up to the fifth term of the course. Almost 8 per cent of students changed or dropped a subject between September 1994 and January 1995.

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36 Students meet their group tutors daily and have an extended tutorial session once a week. Students are usually taught one of their GCE A level subjects by their tutor. These frequent contacts ensure that students are well known to their tutors. Pastoral and academic support and guidance are integrated. Students spoke well of the support received from their tutors. The college has recently adopted a policy document on tutorial systems and their delivery. This reinforces the strengths of the tutorial system, which include a close working relationship between students and their tutors, as well as a partnership with parents. The strong emphasis on preparation for higher education is to be retained. However, there is no co-ordinated programme for the whole year. High-quality material on some topics is available to tutors, but tutorial time is not always well used. If it is to equip students fully for future study and employment, the college should develop a comprehensive tutorial programme which addresses academic, personal and social needs. Further training for tutors would enable them to be more effective in their role and ensure greater consistency in the delivery of tutorials. The college is participating in an innovative project with the Dudley Health Promotion Department, in which students counsel each other.

37 Students may consult their group tutor or their senior tutor on academic and personal matters. The careful monitoring of individual progress ensures that students experiencing difficulty with their studies are identified and counselled. Parents are kept fully informed of students' progress. Students who fail first-year examinations are required to resit them. Although both parents and students are invited to discuss this with a senior tutor in July, the college does not offer guidance on alternative courses elsewhere, or the possibility of employment. Failure in September, and a consequent college decision to terminate their course, leaves students in a particularly vulnerable position. The intention to refer such students, in future, to the Black Country Careers Service, is only a partial solution to the problem.

38 The responsibility of senior tutors to act as counsellors as well as educational advisers places an increasing burden on them as student numbers increase. Although they have become experienced in assessing when to refer students to external agencies, they have not been trained for this work. The college should consider whether students would be better served by the appointment of someone with a professional counselling qualification. In the absence of a college counsellor, students are referred to a nearby centre which provides advice and professional counselling for young people in the area. This centre is advertised within the college, and is highly regarded by both staff and students.

39 In keeping with the college mission, students are given a great deal of support in preparing for higher education. The well-planned careers programme extends over the whole two-year period. Students benefit from an early introduction to the careers library, which is stocked with up-to-date literature and a range of computerised careers packages. A file of

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reports by previous students on their university admission interviews is useful. An impressive series of events gives students the opportunity to investigate various careers and to speak with representatives of many higher education institutions. Students and their parents are able to attend an evening higher education forum, timed to encourage early planning for the next stage of education. Preparation for applications through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) is thorough and students can request a mock interview. Tutorial preparation includes aspects of student life such as budgeting and a 'student survival guide'. An information service is available in the summer to support and assist students who do not obtain the grades required by their first choice higher education institution.

40 The college has an agreement with the Black Country Careers Service. Any student can arrange an interview, in college, and obtain assistance in drawing up a career action plan. Although the college programme does not cater for the very small minority of students who do not wish to continue to higher education, access to professional advice is available during their second year in college through the Job Seekers programme arranged by the careers service.

41 Students are asked to produce their school record of achievement both at interview and during the induction process. A college review and guidance group has met over a three-year period and developed elements of a college record of achievement. A well-developed process ensures that students build up a detailed record of many aspects of their academic life. There is tutorial guidance on the production of other items, such as a curriculum vitae, and documentation on the completion of subject profiles. At present, there is no permanent staff appointment for the co-ordination of this work and no quality check. Practice varies according to the group tutor and, while some students leave college with a comprehensive record of achievement, others see little value in the subject profiles and other documents.

42 Attendance at the college is monitored thoroughly by group and subject tutors. Parents are informed of persistent absence. Students may be asked to report daily to their senior tutor. Levels of attendance are high. The attendance rate for classes inspected was 94 per cent. It would assist senior tutors if the computerised records available to them were to include details of attendance.

43 There are nominations and elections for officers of the Junior Common Room. Officers hold regular meetings with the principal. The Junior Common Room arranges student functions and is active in raising funds for various charities. Through their representation on several college committees, students are able to contribute to aspects of college planning. They are informed of their rights and responsibilities in the student charter. A grievance procedure is in place, but is rarely used. During their induction, students should be more fully informed of their responsibilities in respect to health and safety.

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## TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

44 One hundred and forty teaching sessions were inspected. Strengths clearly outweighed the weaknesses in 63 per cent of the sessions inspected; weaknesses were predominant in only 3 per cent of sessions. The following table summarises the grades given to the sessions inspected.

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

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		25	56	41	3	0	125
GCSE		0	0	2	0	0	2
Other		3	4	5	1	0	13
<b>Total</b>		<b>28</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>140</b>

45 In all departments, schemes of work closely followed the requirements of examination syllabuses. The best schemes were detailed, included references to resources and appropriate teaching methods and had clear aims and objectives which were shared with students. Some schemes were little more than a list of topics to be covered. Teaching was well planned and lessons were managed competently. Teachers displayed sound knowledge and understanding of their subject areas. Relations between staff and students were good. In some subjects students experienced an appropriate range of methods of working. However, the range of teaching was often narrow. In some sessions, students were not given enough opportunity to think for themselves to take initiatives, and in others the teaching was excessively orientated towards examinations. The college day is divided into 40-minute sessions. Some periods are doubled to 80 minutes, but the single sessions do not always allow teachers or students time to develop their ideas.

46 The college has an assessment policy which ensures that clear and detailed records of students' progress are maintained. Students receive regular homework set at an appropriate standard and this is assessed fairly and returned promptly. There is no college-wide policy on the marking of work and feedback to students. This is the responsibility of individual departments and practice varies.

47 Teaching schemes in science were thorough and students were well prepared for examinations with regular tests. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Courses in chemistry and physics included ample practical work, but in biology the proportion of practical work was small. Teaching styles and methods of working were restricted. In biology, chemistry and physics visual aids were not always used and little attempt was made to tailor the work to the differing abilities of students. Students' written work focused mainly on examination questions, apart from small amounts of project work, set towards the end of the summer term. In biology, apart from tests and assessed practicals, there was little evidence

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of work which was marked directly by teachers. Teachers keep clear records of students' assessment grades. There were examples of good practice. In a well-managed practical chemistry session students worked competently, and with good attention to safety, on cracking a liquid hydrocarbon. The session concluded with a brief discussion of the results and their theoretical significance. Imaginative preparation for an electronics design and build exercise included discussion of methods for bringing together several inputs and weighting signals as, for example, in balancing the sound system used by a rock band. A lecture demonstration in physics on alternating current included good use of large-scale meters and an oscilloscope, all readily visible to a large class of students seated in a tiered lecture theatre.

48 In mathematics, the overall quality of the teaching was good. All sessions were thoroughly planned. Students were well motivated and good records were kept of their progress. During several sessions appropriate and effective use was made of learning aids, including overhead projectors. However, there were limited opportunities for students to undertake creative design work. Students were often required to work individually or in small groups. During the groupwork, teachers encouraged students to make substantial contributions to the development of the topics under discussion. Students preparing to resit GCSE mathematics could be helped to focus on their weaknesses by undertaking more supported self-study.

49 There was a coherent and structured programme of studies in art and design, which gave students good opportunities to discover and build upon their individual strengths. However, there were limited opportunities for students to undertake creative design work. Students' progress was monitored at regular intervals and appropriate targets were set for individuals. There was a good rapport between staff and students and the department fostered a broad range of learning activities. Computer software was used frequently and constructively as an additional tool applied to a number of creative activities. Studies in art history formed an integral part of studio activities, enhancing students' appreciation in both fields of learning.

50 In music, there was a comprehensive programme covering the teaching of history of music, harmony, dictation, aural perception and general musicianship in addition to large group work with choir, wind band, and orchestra. Individual instrumental tuition was available for all students requiring it. The quality of all the teaching was good. Students were given every opportunity to demonstrate and practice their abilities in practical performance and in theoretical work such as harmony and composition. The 40-minute length of some lessons limited the range of activities that could be carried out. The lunch time for the choir and the rehearsal times for the wind band are too short for a fully effective rehearsal.



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51 In English, teaching and the promotion of learning were generally of a good standard. Lessons were soundly prepared and well taught, and relationships in the classrooms were good. Students were well motivated. An overemphasis on examinations tended to produce a certain monotony in the work in classes. There was good use of paired and group activity and effective use was made of audio-visual aids. Coursework was comprehensively and supportively marked; some of it was of a very high standard. In theatre studies the teaching was effectively geared to the demands of the GCE A level syllabus but the students were not extended beyond it. The range of teaching styles was limited. Work was set and marked regularly and students' progress and achievement was closely monitored. The splitting of the theoretical and practical papers between the teachers restricts opportunities for the promotion of learning through joint projects.

52 In modern languages, the schemes of work were sound and individual lessons were generally well planned and managed. Some particularly effective teaching occurred in literature classes. Teachers had a good command of their subject but the teaching was almost always carried out through the medium of English, with heavy emphasis on grammar and translation. Teaching styles varied little and there was limited and unimaginative use of audio-visual aids. Students were studying languages rather than learning them. The lessons relied heavily upon teachers' input. In many lessons, students made little contribution except when called upon to do so. In contrast, there were some good examples of student involvement including lively groupwork, particularly in literature lessons. In a GCE A level German lesson one student made a prepared presentation on themes relating to the text being studied. A lively group discussion followed. Students challenged statements made by the presenter and defended their own and others' points of view. They worked with genuine interest and obvious enjoyment and the tutor was skilful at eliciting responses.

53 History staff are knowledgeable and well informed and this was evident in their teaching. The aims and objectives of lessons were clear and the pace of learning was brisk. In the best sessions, students were able to respond to questions, to articulate ideas and engage in debate. The shortness of the teaching sessions did not always allow students sufficient time to develop their ideas. A significant minority of students did not participate in discussion, and some require more direct help in developing their oral skills. Students were given effective guidance on assessments and there were regular assignments, including timed essays in the second year of their course. There was a lack of consistency in the award of history grades, and the standardised assignment cover sheet was not universally used. The college, at present, offers few opportunities for use of information technology within the study of history.

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54 In religious studies, staff know and enjoy their subject. The course is well documented in detailed schemes of work and in the information provided to students. Relations with students are good. Teachers use a range of exciting methods and resources without sacrificing the attention they give to preparing for examinations. All study, including the non-examination work in complementary studies, was set in context and related to relevant source material. A few students failed to contribute to group discussions but when several of them were questioned afterwards they spoke of the lessons with interest and enthusiasm. Project work enabled able students to demonstrate high levels of skill in oral presentation and in leading discussions. A successful lesson on the problem of evil included discussion of the use of symbols and students' deeply personal experiences and reactions to catastrophic events, all related to the question 'why have a universe in which these things happen?'. This was a difficult topic explored in a dynamic way. Another difficult topic, miracles, was explored by reference to videos, including one about a father convinced that his son had been brought back to life in response to his prayers. Students made constructive criticisms while showing respect for the views of others. The teacher related the example to the various definitions of miracles provided in well-prepared departmental student notes and led students to discuss Hume's view that ignorant and barbarous people believe in miracles.

55 In both complementary and general studies, teachers were knowledgeable and enthusiastic and clearly enjoyed their teaching. They had devised interesting options and their classes had clear aims. Students often learned through question and answer sessions which gave them opportunities to participate actively and expand their knowledge. Staff occasionally encouraged group discussions but often they were not effective as students lacked the necessary communication skills. Students and parents expressed differences of opinion about the value of complementary studies. While there were some positive responses, some remain to be convinced of the value of these sessions and some students said they found them boring.

56 Although there was good use of information technology in art and technology and by some individual students, elsewhere in the curriculum there was a notable absence of information technology. Some students had used better equipment in their secondary schools than was available to them in the college. Complementary studies sessions on information technology were satisfactory but uninspiring. There was little connection made to the rest of the curriculum in these sessions. A small number of students have taken the optional course in basic information technology skills, mainly to learn wordprocessing. Only a few departments in the college actively encourage students to make use of information technology to produce coursework and projects.

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## STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

57 Students at the college are highly committed to their studies. They speak and write about their work clearly and in many cases display a high degree of self-motivation. A small number of students in the physical sciences appeared anxious when unable to answer questions in class. Students of modern foreign languages were often hesitant about speaking the foreign language in class and there is a small but steady loss of students from the department, in some cases because they cannot cope with the pace of the work.

58 Students are articulate and the standard of their written English is generally good. Students develop study skills appropriate to their subjects. Mathematics workshops are provided by physics teachers to help students to develop their mathematical skills and some students of biology would benefit from a similar facility. The majority of students are not being equipped with the information technology skills needed in higher education or employment.

59 Almost half of the students in the college follow courses in mathematics, including pure and applied mathematics and further mathematics and statistics. Students' responses to internal assessments are frequently of a high standard. In science lessons, students display good levels of knowledge and understanding; in their practical work they pay suitable regard to safety. Biology students have developed good note-taking skills. Science projects reach high standards. Projects presented for GCE A level chemistry included an investigation of amounts of iron and manganese in tea and a consideration of the effect of the molecular structure on the anti-bacterial activity of penicillin. Students have received silver, bronze and nickel medals in the British Physics Olympiad in recent years, and in two out of the last three years female students at the college have won the regional Women into Science and Engineering essay competition. The college has also won regional awards for engineering and for technology. There are few opportunities for science students to develop group-working skills other than in scheduled practical sessions. However, several students formed their own informal study groups at weekends.

60 The work achieved by students in art is characterised by thoroughness of application and a breadth of exposure to the various aspects of the subject. Students achieve a broad range of skills in two and three-dimensional work, textiles and printmaking. Students are developing good research skills and their written assignments in art history are of a good standard.

61 All students of theatre studies work at an appropriate level and display well-developed communication skills. Theoretical assignments are completed thoroughly but students have a narrow range of experiences and carry out little work beyond the requirements of the examination. Although practical work is carried out competently, some groups do not

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settle to practical tasks well. Areas of theatre other than acting are not explored in depth.

62 Many music students are talented performers who individually and collectively bring much credit to the college by their performances in and outside the college. Performances by groups in the National Festival of Music for Youth have been a regular feature for many years past. There has been a decline in the standard of GCE A level results in the last two years. Not only has the overall pass rate fallen below the national average but the average grade has dropped from grade C to grade D with a relatively small number of passes at grades A and B.

63 Forty-six per cent of students in the college continue to study one or more foreign languages. Students are well motivated and the best written work shows a high level of fluency and accuracy, a near-native command of idiom, and good organisation of ideas. Oral skills are less well developed. When given the opportunity, students are able to work well in groups. In general, students do not make use of many of the resources, including computers, which are available to them and rely on notes handed out by teachers. Although attentive in class, they take few initiatives.

64 Almost half the students in the college follow courses in GCE A level English. They are articulate and they work well in groups. Standards of written work are generally high and writing is often exciting and perceptive. The overall levels of attainment are high. History students produce good-quality written work; writing is fluent and grammatical. Although examination results are satisfactory overall, history students frequently receive lower grades than in other subjects they are studying and levels of achievement are lower than might have been anticipated. Examination grades for general studies are also lower than the college average. Some students are handicapped by their relatively low level of general knowledge.

65 Religious studies is a popular subject at GCE A level and is also chosen as a complementary studies option by almost a third of the students. Students participate enthusiastically in class discussions and display high levels of knowledge, understanding and presentational skills as, for example, in some observed presentations on medical ethics. The standard of written work is high and the tasks set enable students to develop their communication and study skills.

66 The 417 students aged 16-18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1993-94 scored, on average, 5.7 points per subject entry. This places the college in the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. Taken overall, the GCE A level results of the college have consistently been among the best in the country. The overall pass rate at grades A-E has, over the last five years, varied between 86 and 90 per cent. In 1994 the average pass rate in all subjects was 90 per cent compared with a provisional average pass rate

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for sixth form colleges of 83 per cent. The percentage of passes at grades A-C has also been consistently high.

67 In 1994 there were 35 syllabus or subject entries. In 10 syllabuses there was a 100 per cent pass rate and over 90 per cent pass rates in an additional nine. In 12 of the syllabuses over half of the passes were at grades A or B. The pass rate was above the national average in all except eight subjects. Subjects with very high pass rates both at grades A-E and A-B included mathematics, biology, chemistry, electronics, technology, art, practical music, economics, English and religious studies. There were high pass rates at grades A-E in physics, geography, geology, French and German, but fewer passes at the higher grades. In previous years, the number of higher grade passes in modern languages was in line with college averages. The subject with the lowest pass rate at grades A-E in 1994 was general studies, which had a pass rate of 77 per cent, which is the same as the provisional national average for sixth form colleges.

68 The college has very few entries for GCSE. In 1994 all six candidates in the one-year Spanish course achieved grade A; 57 per cent of the seven law candidates were graded at A-C and three out of four of the candidates entered for GCSE English in their first term at the college obtained passes at grades A-C. Out of the 23 candidates entered for mathematics in their first term 61 per cent achieved grades A-C.

69 The college participates in the Advanced Level Information System which gives an indication of value added in GCE A level examinations by comparing students' results with predictions from their GCSE scores. Students studying some mathematical syllabuses, biology, chemistry, art, one English syllabus and religious studies achieved GCE A level results better than those predicted from their GCSE scores. In some subjects there were indications that students underachieved. These included classical civilisation, general studies, history, music, sociology, Spanish and theatre studies.

70 Retention rates at the college are high. About 95 per cent of students continued on their courses in 1994. Progression to higher education is also high. In 1994, 95 per cent of students entered higher education. Departmental use of detailed information about students who proceed to higher education is at an early stage.

#### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

71 In June 1994, the college published a comprehensive and informative students' charter, which also makes reference to the standards which employers, parents and the local community can expect. All staff were consulted on the draft at a staff meeting and there was debate on its length since the charter also incorporates the detailed student guide. Some students had limited awareness of the implications of the charter.

72 The college's view of quality is that it consists of achieving excellent GCE A level results. This is made clear in its mission statement, its definition

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of quality within the college, and its key objective which is to enable students to achieve their goal of higher education. The college has given low priority to the development of comprehensive quality assurance systems.

73 A paper on quality assurance was drafted in the summer of 1994 and circulated to all staff for comment. The strategic plans for both 1993-94 and 1994-95 made explicit commitments to the development of a whole college plan for quality assurance with key actions timetabled. On almost every quality target the college has set for itself, the timescale has been allowed to slip. A major reason given has been the need to proceed with caution since some staff are apprehensive about these developments. For example, the current strategic plan sought to establish quality assurance teams and quality statements in academic departments by autumn 1994. The college now envisages that these will be in place in autumn 1995 at the earliest. A quality assurance committee, recently established, has begun drafting a framework for a cross-college quality audit to identify priorities for improvement. This will be finalised during the summer term. The college does have in place a number of elements relating to quality assurance. The main one is the analysis of examination results. Heads of departments report to the principal and vice-principal on their results each September.

74 The college is on target to produce the six key performance indicators required by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) for the current academic year. In respect of other indicators of performance, the strategic plan confines itself to suggestions, for example, that departments may wish to collect retention rates. The college conducted surveys of students' perceptions of induction arrangements in 1993 and 1994. The results for both years were analysed and led to improvements in the quality of induction. It also undertook a first survey of all students leaving in summer 1994, but for a number of reasons, little use has been made of the results. The college plans to conduct another this year. Pilot surveys completed by students in the English and mathematics departments have also been carried out but there are, as yet, no plans to extend these to the rest of the college.

75 Departmental strategic planning began in April 1994 and followed phase one of the college's strategic plan. The first round of annual departmental reviews is thus only currently underway. These reviews are not yet concerned with programme evaluation. The college intends that the 1995 examination analyses will inform the next round of departmental plans.

76 The college has produced its own assessment of quality, using the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. The college's assessment makes some reference to sources of evidence but is principally a list of strengths and weaknesses with grades attached under each heading. The document represents a useful first step towards developing the proposed quality audit. The findings accord in some respects with those of the inspection team.

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77 The college's commitment to seek Investors in People status was made in 1993. Progress on putting into place some of the elements in the plan has been slow. The original target of July 1995 for achievement of the standard has been revised and, in practice, it is unlikely to be reached before January 1996.

78 Staff development is managed by the vice-principal for curriculum and staff development, assisted by a staff-development officer. The role and remit of the staff-development officer requires clarification. The college has recently revised its staff-development procedures and has established a new system for the current academic year. In the past there were varying levels of staff participation in professional development and no formal links between individual staff development and overall college and departmental priorities. Support staff were not included. A reconstituted staff-development committee now includes two members of the support staff. The budget for staff development has been increased threefold but at £23,000 still represents only 0.7 per cent of college expenditure. However, this does not include some of the associated costs of staff development, including staff salaries and replacement costs. There are now clear links both to the strategic objectives of the college and to departmental plans. All staff who attend training events are required to report upon them. A new strategy for linking in-house staff development to the needs of the college and of individual members of staff is already proving effective.

79 The college has yet to establish clear criteria for the approval of requests for staff development and a secure method for identifying and meeting the training needs of individuals. Although considerable staff development associated with curriculum delivery has been undertaken, middle management training and training for staff in the use of information technology have not been systematically addressed. There is also a need for training for personal tutors to ensure that they are consistently effective in their role.

80 Progress on appraisal has been slow. The college has had an appraisal scheme in place for all full-time and some part-time teaching staff since September 1992. Two-thirds of these staff have now had their first appraisal and some have undertaken the follow-up review meeting with their appraiser. The scheme is limited in scope and the college strategic plan indicates an intention to extend it during the second phase. The target for completion of the first appraisal cycle is December 1995. The college plans to introduce an appraisal scheme for support staff in June 1995.

81 Since September 1994, there has been a basic formal induction programme for staff new to the college. Plans are in hand to expand it in 1994-95. It includes timetabled arrangements for new staff to meet with their line managers and this has proved valuable. Monitoring of the programme should be formalised.

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## RESOURCES

### Staffing

82 The college has a well-qualified and experienced teaching staff. Of the 80 full-time and part-time teachers, 76 are graduates. Fourteen hold higher diplomas and degrees, including six doctorates. Sixty-six have formal teaching qualifications, while the remainder have qualified teacher status. A number of staff are or have been examiners in their curriculum area or sit on subject committees. Many teachers are long-serving members of staff and identify very closely with the college and its traditions. Staff are deeply committed to achieving high standards.

83 The student to teacher ratio is approximately 13.7:1. This level of staffing helps to provide good support for students and to encourage high levels of achievement. The college's staffing costs in the 1994-95 academic year amount to 74 per cent of total expenditure. The seniority of staff is a contributory factor to the high cost; most teachers are between the ages of 40 and 60 and the proportion of younger staff is low. Recent appointments have begun to redress the balance, especially at middle management level. The college strategic plan envisages an increase in student numbers without a corresponding increase in staffing, thus reducing the proportion of staffing costs.

84 More than half the full-time teaching staff are male, while 82 per cent of part-time staff are female. Women are not well represented in senior positions. There is no woman in a senior management team of five and only one woman at senior tutor level. Of the 14 heads of department only one is a woman.

85 Of the non-teaching staff more than half hold recognised qualifications, including degrees, higher national certificates and RSA Examinations Board certificates. The college has only recently begun to work towards integrating teaching and non-teaching staff, for example by including the latter in staff development. Support staff share with teachers a sense of deep commitment to the college and its students.

86 A number of teaching and non-teaching staff have had experience in industry or commerce but there is a need for further training in some areas. Some non-teaching staff have no formal qualifications and there are none in the library with professional librarian qualifications. Some teaching staff, for example in design, science and theatre studies, lack practical, professional and industrial experience in relevant areas.

87 The college has a comprehensive staff handbook. Most teaching staff now have up-to-date job descriptions and all are working to new contracts. The deployment and number of support staff is under review. Audits will lead to updated job descriptions. There is good technician support in science but a shortage in a number of curriculum areas including information technology, art and design, modern languages and theatre studies. There is little specific administrative support for curriculum areas



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other than science. Foreign language assistants make a valuable contribution to the work of the modern languages department.

### **Equipment/learning resources**

88 Some departments are adequately equipped with the specialist and general purpose equipment and resources needed to deliver the curriculum. Departments where equipment is a strength include art, English, physics and chemistry, modern languages, religious studies and theatre studies. There are serious weaknesses in several departments, mainly associated with wholly inadequate and out-of-date computers and software, and shortages of other learning-resource materials, particularly modern books. There has been no college policy for planned replacement of equipment. Until recently, the budget for equipment and learning resources has been inadequate.

89 Information technology has been a particular weakness and almost all the computers in use are old and outdated. Until September 1994, GCE A level computer studies was taught at nearby Stourbridge College under a joint arrangement which has now been terminated and a new computer suite has been set up for the teaching of this subject. A recently-devised long-term information technology replacement policy identifies the need to move over to industrial standard computers but the four-year timescale envisaged for this is too long. The art department has recently obtained four new computers and even more recently the library has taken delivery of new machines for general use by students. In the meantime mathematics, science, modern languages, music and other departments continue to use inadequate computers.

90 The library has an inadequate bookstock. There is an insufficient number of books and many are out of date. A library strategic plan for 1993-96 identifies the need for new equipment which includes an automated book-loan and cataloguing system, open-access information technology facilities and compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases. Expenditure on library resources has been greatly increased reflecting the governing body's intention to rectify many years of under resourcing. An additional member of staff has been employed since September 1994. The opening times of 08.20 to 16.15 hours are reasonable, given the length of the college's working day.

### **Accommodation**

91 The college has a restricted town-centre site in which all the buildings, separated by pleasant courtyards, are located. The buildings are of varying ages, have been well cared for and are in excellent condition. Although the campus does not have any space for further major developments, the library/learning resources centre is directly adjacent to the hall and could expand into it.

92 Most of the teaching accommodation is of a good standard, well maintained, clean, well decorated and generally well furnished. The

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students themselves clearly take pride in their surroundings and treat them with respect. In some cases, the capacities of the rooms have now been reached, or exceeded, with present group sizes. However, analysis of current space use shows that there are 12 spare teaching rooms. All teaching rooms are nominally allocated to departments. This limits their wider use.

93 Teaching areas generally have good wall displays. The religious studies rooms in particular, are visually stimulating and supportive of study, the walls being covered from floor to ceiling with religious artefacts representing present and historical aspects of major world faiths. Many rooms have flexible layouts to facilitate discussion and groupwork. There are unhelpful acoustics in the modern languages rooms due to the high ceilings. The art rooms and associated textiles workshop, and the music teaching rooms, are too small for the number of students who use them.

94 The library provides pleasant accommodation, but it is too small for the numbers of students and often overcrowded. Improvements are under way. Additional private study areas are being created and computer facilities installed for students to use when required. It is planned to add the present GCE A level computing rooms to the library and learning-resources centre to provide additional private study areas. This should address students' complaints about insufficient private study spaces. Students' social accommodation is poor. A new junior common room has been created from part of the dining room, but the students' verdict is that this is not satisfactory. Accommodation for support staff is inadequate.

95 Throughout the campus access for wheelchair users is restricted mainly to ground floor areas. Several specialist areas, for example, the biology, art, drama and music areas and much of the library are wholly inaccessible to wheelchair users.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES**

96 The college is highly successful in achieving its aims. The strengths of the college are:

- consistently outstanding examination success at GCE A level
- well-planned teaching programmes delivered by qualified, knowledgeable and committed teachers
- effective and valued links with partner schools
- high rates of course completion and attendance by students
- effective tutorial guidance and good preparation for higher education
- an attractive environment with meticulously-maintained buildings and premises.

97 If the college is to continue to build on its success it should:

- increase the provision of computers and support the development of information technology skills for students and staff

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- improve the bookstock in the library
  - develop an effective quality assurance system
  - implement planned improvements in staff development
  - further develop management roles and cross-college responsibilities below the level of the senior management team
  - strengthen the attention given to policy development and policy review
  - encourage the development of a wider range of methods of teaching and learning.

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## FIGURES

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

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2 Percentage enrolments by age (1994-95)

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3 Enrolments by curriculum area (1994-95)

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4 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

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5 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

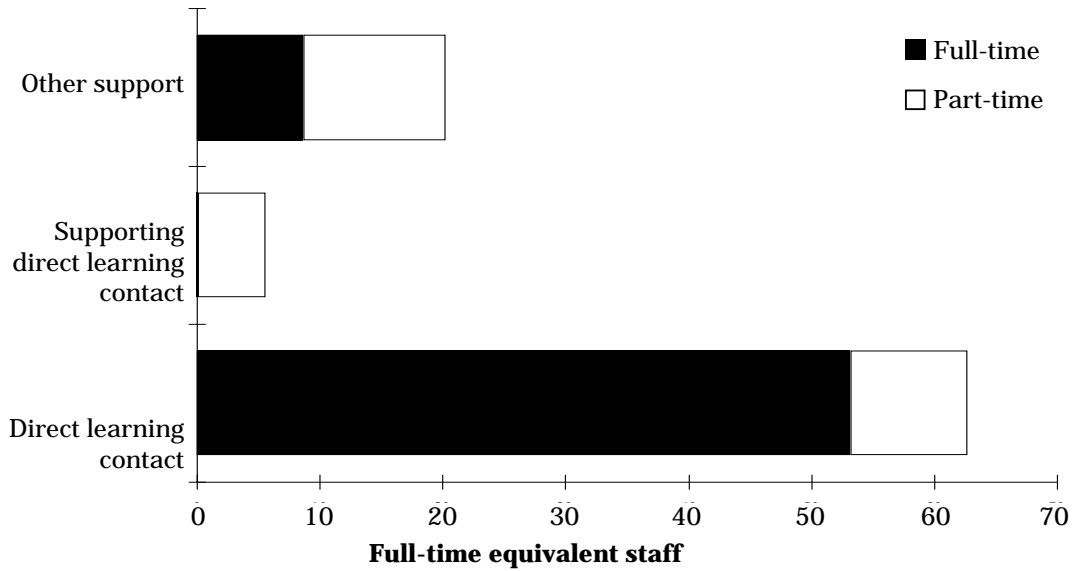
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**Figure 1**

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**King Edward VI College, Stourbridge: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994–95)**

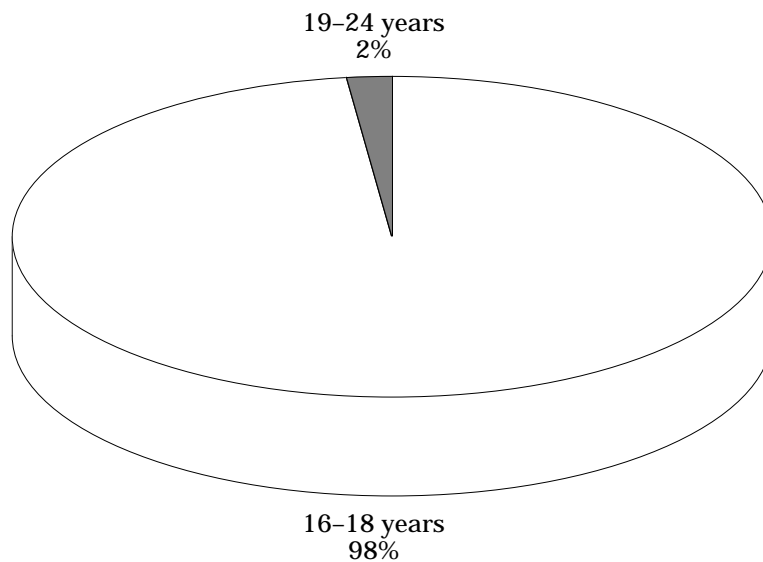


Full-time equivalent staff: 89

**Figure 2**

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**King Edward VI College, Stourbridge: percentage enrolments by age (1994–95)**



Enrolments: 940

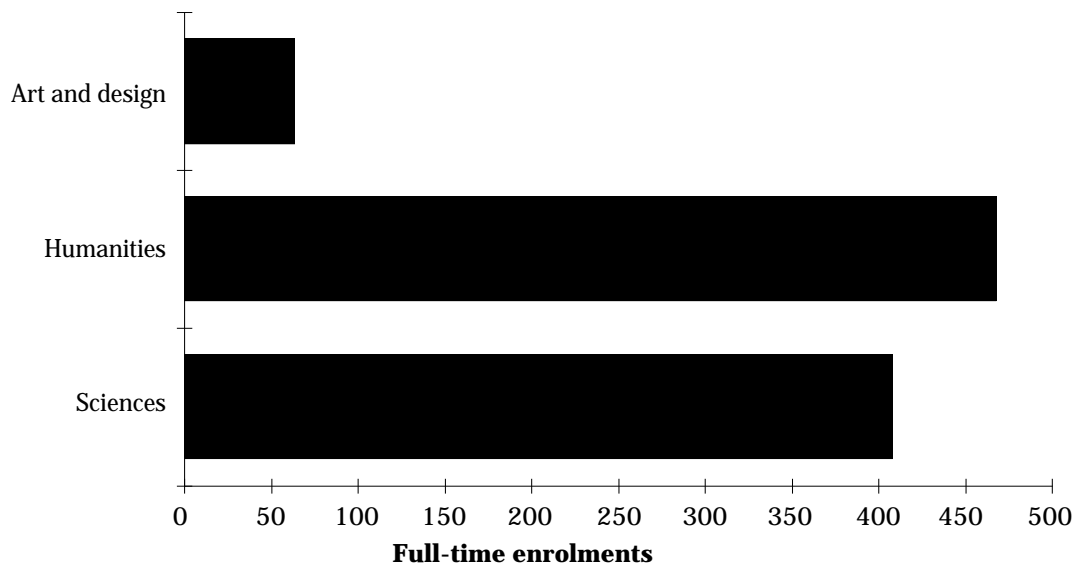
*Note: this chart excludes one enrolment under the age of 16.*

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**Figure 3**

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**King Edward VI College, Stourbridge: enrolments by curriculum area (1994-95)**

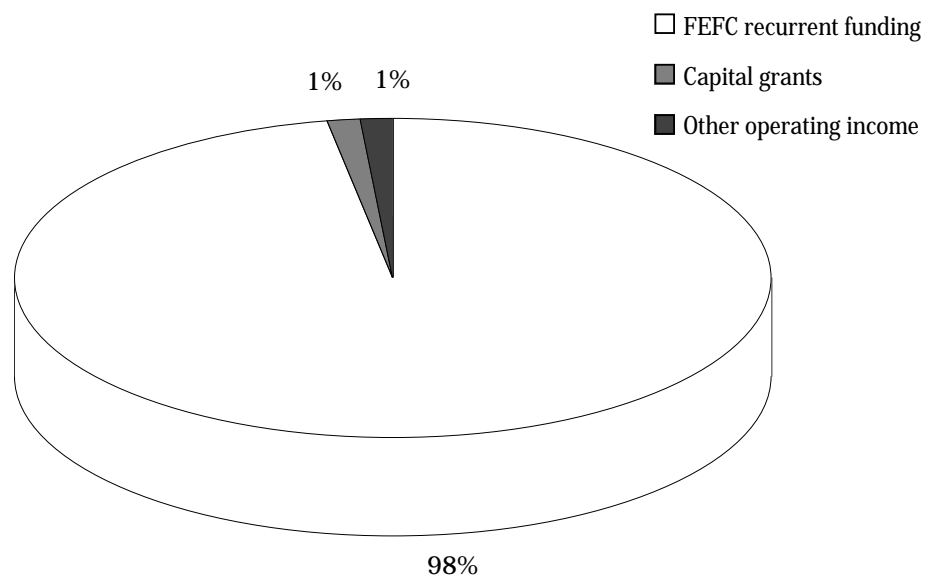


Enrolments: 940

**Figure 4**

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**King Edward VI College, Stourbridge: income (for 16 months to July 1994)**



Income: £3,611,601

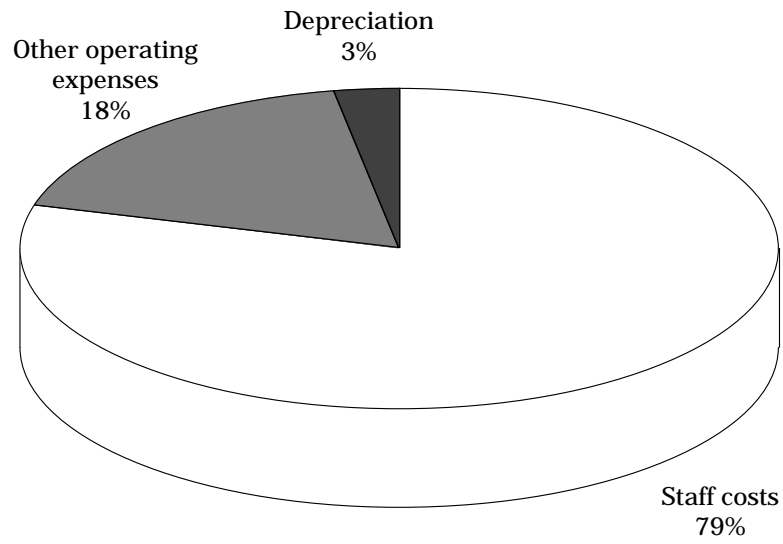
*Note: this chart excludes £7,200 education contracts.*

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**Figure 5**

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**King Edward VI College, Stourbridge: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)**



Expenditure: £3,362,700

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