

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Knowsley Community College

May 1994

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

THE FURTHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a statutory duty to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements to assess the quality of provision in the further education sector. It discharges the duty in part through its inspectorate, which inspects and reports on each college in the sector every four years. The Council's inspectorate also assesses and reports on a national basis on specific curriculum areas and advises the Council's quality assessment committee.

College inspections involve both full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have specialist knowledge and experience in the areas they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member from outside the world of education and a nominated member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are described in the Council Circular 93/28. In the course of inspecting colleges, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also summarise their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses using a five-point scale. 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 38/94

KNOWSLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

NORTH WEST REGION

Inspected September 1993 – February 1994

Summary

Knowsley Community College is a major provider of post-16 education in Merseyside offering a wide range of full-time and part-time courses. The governors have a clear perception of their role and a strong commitment to the college. The strategic planning process is well managed and involves senior managers, staff and governors. The senior management team provides effective leadership and encourages an open style of management. Teaching is generally effective and sometimes of high quality. From entering college with modest qualifications, a significant proportion of students achieve good examination results. There is a comprehensive and effective system for quality assurance and a student charter. Teachers are well qualified and experienced and demonstrate a high level of commitment to the college. Some of the support services for students are at an early stage of development. There is insufficient learning support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for other students who need additional help with basic skills. Attendance in some areas of work is poor, although the college has a clear procedure for recording and following up absentees. The college should develop its computerised management information systems, improve the quality and effectiveness of its publicity materials, extend its curricular links with industry and schools, and improve the quality and quantity of equipment in particular areas of work.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	2
Governance and management	2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	3
Quality assurance	1
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	3
accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science, maths & computing	3	Care, catering & hairdressing	3
Construction	3	Art & design	2
Engineering	2	Humanities	2
Business & administration	2	Adult basic education	3

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INTRODUCTION

1 Knowsley Community College, Merseyside, was inspected in three stages. Enrolment and induction procedures were inspected in September 1993. During January and the early part of February, 79 inspector days were used for the inspection of specialist subject areas. Aspects of cross-college provision were inspected by a team of five inspectors who spent 25 inspector days in the college between 21 and 25 February 1994. Inspectors visited 237 classes, examined representative samples of students' work and held discussions with governors, senior managers, staff and students, local employers, head teachers, parents, two representatives from the local education authority and the director of development of the Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The inspectors also had access to an extensive variety of documentation relating to the college and its courses.

2 The inspection was carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. The framework describes a four-year inspection cycle. When this cycle becomes fully established, colleges will have the opportunity to respond to the findings of earlier inspection visits before their quadrennial inspection and the subsequent published report. As the inspection of Knowsley Community College occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response was not available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Knowsley Community College was established in 1990 following the amalgamation of a tertiary college and a further education college. It operates on two main sites in Kirkby and Huyton, seven miles apart, and has three smaller centres at Prescot, Kirkby and Knowsley Village. There are also several outreach centres providing adult education. Five of the eleven secondary schools in Knowsley have sixth forms and several offer adult education courses. Other Merseyside colleges within easy travelling distance include two colleges in St Helens, Widnes Sixth Form College, Hugh Baird College in Bootle and the City of Liverpool Community College.

4 Enrolments have increased by 30 per cent over the last three years. In 1992-1993, a significant number of income-generating courses together with recruitment to non-vocational and higher education courses increased enrolments over the full academic year to about 9,000 students. At the time of the inspection, there were 5,739 students. Of these 2,502 were full-time, the remainder part-time. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2. There is a full-time staff establishment of 265 teachers and 133 support staff. The numbers of staff expressed as full-time equivalents are shown in figure 3.

5 The college offers General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level), General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and vocational courses. There are separate management structures for resources and the delivery of the curriculum. Resources are managed in

nine schools: mathematics and science, art and design, new technology, humanities, business, service industries, craft and multi-skills, social and caring, and office technology. The curriculum is organised in three broad areas: vocational, general and community education. Enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by curriculum area and mode of attendance are shown in figure 4.

6 The college's unit of funding for the financial year 1992-93 was £1,827 per weighted full-time equivalent student. The median for general and further education colleges and tertiary colleges was £2,436. The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) allocates about half of the total income. The European Social Fund contributes a further 19 per cent, the training and enterprise council 14 per cent and 11 per cent is generated from sales and fees. Figure 5 provides a summary of estimated income for 1993-94; figure 6 shows the proposed pattern of expenditure.

7 Most of the students live in an area on the eastern edge of Merseyside which has been given European Objective 1 status in recognition of its relative poverty. Information drawn from the 1991 census demonstrates that Knowsley is one of the most deprived boroughs in the country. For example, 40 per cent of children in Knowsley live in a household where no adult is in employment, and one in four children is from a single-parent household. The population has fallen by 20 per cent between 1971 and 1991 to approximately 155,000. Knowsley's industrial base is dominated by manufacturing industries which have suffered significant decline. Sixteen per cent of Knowsley households are headed by someone of professional or skilled non-manual status compared with 33 per cent nationally. Only 17 per cent of Knowsley's school leavers achieve five GCSE passes at grade C or above, well below the national average of 41 per cent. About 46 per cent of school leavers enter further education compared with 66 per cent nationally.

8 The college in its mission seeks to address the needs of the area by providing effective, accessible education, delivered in a professional and caring way, through an environment which stimulates and develops potential. The aims of the college include the provision of effective learning support services, achieving customer satisfaction through continuous improvement in quality, maximising income generation and active involvement in the social and economic development of Knowsley.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 The college offers a wide range of provision and responds effectively to national initiatives. There are courses in business and administration, construction, engineering and technology, humanities, horticulture, science, mathematics, computing, art and design, care, leisure, catering and hairdressing. There is a good spread of GCE A level and GCSE subjects. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are available in a number of areas. Six General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses are currently on offer, two at advanced, four at intermediate level, and others

are being introduced. A GNVQ foundation level course in health and social care is being piloted.

10 Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are offered a suitable programme, which includes separate specialist courses and opportunities to join mainstream courses. Adult training courses are targeted at the unemployed and there is a wide-ranging youth training programme. Mature students are well served by a portfolio which includes access to further education and access to higher education courses. An excellent outreach programme is designed to attract groups under-represented in further education. The adult education programme, which includes basic education, vocational and leisure courses, is accessible at a range of venues. Creches, fee remission and flexible timetables help in attracting students.

11 Some groups of students have insufficient choice of courses. The college offers a narrow range of courses in construction. There is limited provision for employed adults, who may wish to attend the college in their own time, and a lack of alternative provision for young people for whom the GCSE programme is inappropriate. While there are several courses designed to attract women to areas where they traditionally form a small minority, women are under represented in mainstream courses in computing, construction and engineering, as is the case nationally.

12 A good range of strategies is employed to foster effective links with schools. A schools liaison team keeps in regular contact with partner schools and teachers from the secondary and primary sectors are invited to the college to update their knowledge of its courses and facilities. Open days and attendance at careers functions provide further points of contact. The college is involved in the 'Cities in Schools' initiative which is targeted at pupils who are not attending school, and in the Knowsley Education Industry Centre which offers simulated enterprise experience to 15-year olds. Contacts with a number of schools outside the local area have been used successfully to attract additional recruits. Taster sessions and curriculum links have been developed by some areas of the college but there is no uniform approach.

13 The recently-established college company has been successful in developing an enterprise culture within the college and enhancing links with employers. Responses to requests for tailor-made training courses are fast, and delivery takes place at a time and venue to suit the customer. Effective links with industry have also been developed through industrial secondments for college staff and by employing industrialists as visiting lecturers. Opportunities for industry to influence curriculum development vary. In some areas of work, employers' contributions to course development and evaluation are negligible.

14 There are productive links, both formal and informal, with the local authority and the TEC. Funding has been made available by the TEC for a number of projects, including a scheme to investigate home-based training for adults with disabilities. Representatives from the college work through

appropriate committees including the local authority's social services practice group and the strategic forum of the TEC.

15 The marketing unit is under-resourced and staff do not fully understand its functions. Publicity materials vary in quality and effectiveness. They would benefit from adopting a standardised format. The information leaflets relating to learning support are confusing and fragmentary. They do not give a clear indication of the range of provision available for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

16 The governors have a clear perception of their role and show a strong commitment to the college. They are well informed about major issues and enjoy good working relationships with senior managers in shaping strategic aims and objectives. At the time of the inspection there were 16 governors. Seven are drawn from local businesses, industry, the probation service and the area health authority, two are local authority representatives and one is the nominee of the TEC. Other members of the governing body comprise a local member of parliament, a headteacher, a clergyman, two college staff and the principal. There is a place for a student governor but this was vacant at the time of the inspection. Three governors are women.

17 The strategic planning process is well managed. It involves the senior management team, the governors and a wide range of staff. The educational and social aims of the college are translated into specific objectives and targets which provide a clear sense of direction for the college's development. The allocations of financial and human resources match the strategic aims and objectives. Governors who are members of the finance and general purposes subcommittee carefully monitor the college's expenditure.

18 The management structure is complex. It seeks to unite the staff and students working in the five college locations by separating responsibilities for curriculum and resources and by encouraging a sense of responsibility among staff and students. Four assistant principals and six course managers are responsible for the development of the curriculum. One assistant principal looks after each of the three curriculum areas and another has oversight of learning support. Three course managers are responsible for vocational provision, one for pre-vocational and GCSE provision, one for GCE provision, and one for community education. Four assistant principals and nine heads of school are responsible for human, physical and financial resources. Teaching staff are managed by the heads of school. All teaching and support staff also belong to quality teams, headed by quality team leaders, which meet fortnightly to monitor and review courses and procedures.

In spite of its complexity, the management structure works well. On occasions, resources and curriculum management are not sufficiently

integrated, but these are exceptions to the general pattern. Lines of communication and accountability are clearly defined and are generally effective. The principal and deputy principal provide effective leadership and encourage an open style of management. They and other members of the senior management team are accessible and responsive. There is a strong commitment to quality and an emphasis on accountability. Most course managers and heads of school carry out their work effectively whilst having significant teaching loads. There is a well- defined methodology under which budgets for consumable items are allocated to middle managers.

20 There are some weaknesses. The different roles and responsibilities of heads of school, course managers and quality team leaders are clearly stated, but they are not always understood by some members of staff. There is no single focus for the development and management of individual subjects across the college as a whole, and as a result opportunities for staff from different schools to share common curricular issues are sometimes lost.

21 There is a systematic approach to the collection of data relating to enrolment targets, attendance, retention and student destinations, and the information is used effectively to measure progress in achieving quality standards. However, the computer-based management information systems are under developed. There are several separate systems which provide useful information relating to student records, the management of resources and finance, but there is no single, integrated system to calculate unit costs and other performance indicators. The present arrangement is not capable of meeting requirements and steps are being taken to remedy this.

22 Attendance is poor in some areas of the college. There is a clear procedure for recording and following up absentees and this works reasonably well. Reasons why students are not attending college or fail to complete their courses are analysed carefully and inform subsequent actions.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

23 Student support services work within a clear structure. A senior member of the management team is responsible for student guidance and admissions, the development of the tutorial system, personal support services including careers guidance, support for learners through the libraries and learning centres, support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and equal opportunities. Some of these services are at an early stage of development.

24 There are good systems in place for pre-entry guidance. The schools liaison team and the central admissions service work together closely. Impartial information and advice is available to students who are uncertain about their choice of course, and all students are entitled to have interviews with the relevant subject specialist. Staff are being trained in interview

techniques. Procedures are not yet fully developed at the Kirkby site, but good documentation has been developed to try to ensure consistent standards of service across the college.

25 A well-thought-out induction programme for young people and adults enables most students to become familiar with the college quickly. Within the first two weeks, students are offered further guidance to ensure they are on the right courses. Appropriate transition between programmes is possible.

26 A tutorial system is in place for the majority of students. Tutorial periods are timetabled and there are regular interviews to monitor students' progress and set targets for future work. Attendance at tutorials is poor on some courses, particularly GCSE courses. Nevertheless, students spoke appreciatively of the support they received from members of staff.

27 There is not much careers education given in tutorials. However, the local careers service provides a good level of staffing for general work within the college and there is an excellent resource base. Insufficient numbers of students are making use of these opportunities. Adequate facilities exist for specialist counselling and advice on financial and welfare matters. A significant proportion of the students has already used this service during the current academic year.

28 Learner support is insufficiently developed for the high proportion of students needing additional help with basic skills. Initial diagnostic tests are used by some subject areas and some students are benefiting from using the workshop-style learning centres. However, the optional arrangements for identifying need and the voluntary nature of attendance at learning centres mean that substantial numbers of students fail to receive the support they require and are left struggling with their coursework. Support for basic skills has not been integrated sufficiently into the curriculum in a number of areas, including science, construction, business, history and mathematics.

29 For students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities a range of appropriate materials is available within the learning centres to support their work. Good arrangements have been made to ensure that students with particular disabilities have access to specialist assessment of their needs for information technology equipment. There is insufficient support for some students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are integrated into mainstream provision. For example, there is a lack of specialist support for people who are deaf or whose hearing is impaired and there is insufficient additional care for students with physical disabilities. Not all staff fully accept and understand their responsibility for supporting these students within classes.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

30 The following table summarises the grades given for the 237 teaching sessions which were inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A/AS level	7	19	16	1	0	43
GCSE	2	7	13	2	0	24
GNVQ	1	5	8	6	0	20
NVQ	8	20	24	2	0	54
Other	10	39	36	11	0	96
Total	28	90	97	22	0	237

31 The strengths of the work clearly outweighed the weaknesses in 50 per cent of the classes inspected. Teaching was generally effective. Students were provided with some good learning experiences in most subject areas. The best teaching sessions often involved a mix of learning activities within which the subject material was introduced and developed. Most teaching was carried out at a level and pace which were appropriate to the topic and to the needs and abilities of students in the class. In all subject areas, there were examples of students engaging in challenging tasks which effectively maintained their interest and commitment. In business and administration, and hairdressing classes, there were also good examples of students making valuable contributions based on their own experiences.

32 Some teaching had clear weaknesses. For example, in aspects of business and administration, science and mathematics, and in the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, insufficient account was taken of individual students' differing needs and abilities. In a number of classes, potentially useful opportunities to develop students' skills and understanding, to check on progress and to consolidate learning, were being missed. Some sessions in catering, engineering and the humanities, relied too heavily on teachers talking to the class. In other curriculum areas, some of the work lacked pace, activities were too undemanding or students were insufficiently involved in their work. A significant proportion of GNVQ classes had weaknesses which clearly outweighed the strengths. The main reasons for this were teachers' inexperience of offering the new courses, a lack of information from external sources and poor attendance levels.

33 Relations between staff and students were friendly. There were good levels of classroom discipline. Instances of inappropriate behaviour by students were isolated. Teachers were highly motivated and enthusiastic. They were committed to providing the help and support which students require to achieve their potential.

34 Good teaching was often linked to the effective use of teaching aids. For example, well-designed and well-prepared learning packages were available to construction students. In carpentry and joinery, the workshop

contained many good examples of previous work for students to study and emulate. In other areas, many teachers make good use of visual aids, including overhead projector transparencies, which were related to texts or reference notes.

35 Programmes of study are coherent. Curricula are balanced and relevant. Schemes of work and assessment criteria are usually well developed and, in many instances, these are discussed and shared with students. Most class and workshop activities are designed appropriately to meet the curricular and assessment requirements of validating or awarding bodies. The foundation programmes in engineering and construction are particularly well designed for meeting the needs of weaker students. Individual teachers of English and mathematics have developed their own schemes of work, but there is no unified approach to the development of courses in these areas.

36 Written and practical assignments are of an appropriate standard to test students' achievements. Students' work is usually marked fairly and conscientiously, using clear assessment criteria. Although there is helpful feedback for students, spelling mistakes and grammatical errors in marked work often went uncorrected. Overall, teachers maintain good, up-to-date records of students' progress.

37 The processes of recording students' achievement and planning subsequent actions are a feature of many of the academic and vocational courses. Students' individual action plans are often developed in negotiation with the students themselves. However, practice is not uniformly successful. In some subjects, the issues identified in discussion with individual students are followed up incompletely or ineffectively and in adult basic education the arrangements both for recording and planning, are inadequate. In some cases, poor attendance levels also inhibit the development of comprehensive records of achievement.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

38 The following table highlights the significant improvements in the colleges average examination pass rates since 1991.

Average pass rates in public examinations as a percentage of those entered 1991-1993

	1991	1992	1993	target for 1994
A Level (A-E)	59	79	82	85
GCSE (A-C)	52	62	64	65
BTEC national	88	85	90	90
BTEC first diploma	68	75	65	75
CGLI	65	68	76	76
RSA	62	75	71	75

39 In 1992-93, GCE A level students achieved an overall 82 per cent pass rate at grades A-E, compared with an average of 77 per cent for all schools and colleges and 66 per cent for further education colleges other than sixth form colleges. A 100 per cent pass rate was achieved in eight subjects including art and English literature, but the pass rates in chemistry (29 per cent), physics (38 per cent) and mathematics (45 per cent) were poor. The average points score of students aged 16-18 who entered for two or more GCE A level subjects was 9.3 (where A=10, E=2), which places the college below the mid-point of all the colleges within the sector. However, from modest entry qualifications, a significant proportion of students has achieved good results, and about 40 per cent have gone on to higher education.

40 Of the 807 entries for the GCSE examination in 1993, 64 per cent of students achieved grades A-C. This compares favourably with the national average for the sector which was 50 per cent. Although 70 per cent of the 243 entries in English achieved grades A-C, only 47 per cent of the 125 entries in mathematics were similarly successful.

41 Students' results on the access to higher education course are good. In 1993, 136 students enrolled, 80 graduated with the full access certificate and 29 returned to a second year on the programme. Ninety per cent of those who graduated gained places in higher education. The achievements of students on the pre-degree and pre-foundation courses in art are excellent. In 1992-93, there were 44 students and all passed.

42 In 1993, the students in their final year of study for the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) or City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI) national diplomas achieved an 82 per cent pass rate. This places the college just below the halfway mark in the table for all institutions within the sector. In business and finance, there was a 94 per cent pass rate, 49 out of 52 students obtaining the national diploma. Good levels of success have been achieved in each of the NVQ unit-based programmes. In business studies, for example, 97 per cent of the 66 entries were successful in the units devised by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), and in engineering and construction, 126 students achieved 158 units awarded by CGLI at NVQ intermediate level. By contrast, there are vocational courses which have poorer results. These include aspects of provision in business and administration, information technology, hotel and catering, engineering and construction. In 1993, there were three BTEC courses, four CGLI courses and six RSA courses with success rates of 50 per cent or lower. In many instances, the courses which have poorer results are those at lower levels of study.

43 Most students demonstrate high levels of motivation and enthusiasm; they are positive about their studies and respond well to teaching. Many are making the best of their opportunities in the college, progressing well in their chosen area of study. However, a significant number of students, in both academic and vocational areas, exhibit poor attitudes and have low levels of expectation. There are significant economic and social reasons

for students not completing courses or attending regularly, and these have an influence on progress and on overall levels of achievement.

44 Courses provide a variety of opportunities for students to display their oral and writing skills. Note-taking in classes, and the recording of information in workshop log-books are of an adequate standard. In the best examples, the work is thorough, well written and carefully presented. Some students of English, history, social studies, modern foreign languages and adult basic education have well-developed oral skills. They join readily with others in class discussion and can articulate their thoughts with clarity. However, a significant portion of students have poorly-developed communication skills. In business and administration, engineering and construction, some students displayed low levels of oracy and literacy and others were nervous and uncommunicative when questioned about their work. Some students, including a few studying English or a modern foreign language, have poor grammar, syntax and spelling. Some information technology, engineering and construction students have difficulty in communicating a clear understanding of their work.

45 Students' mathematical skills are developed mainly through their programmes of study. Some science, engineering and construction students have difficulty in coping with the mathematical content of their courses and this usually corresponds with their low achievements in GCSE mathematics before enrolling at the college.

46 The use of information technology is under-developed in many of the curriculum areas and in social care, hotel and catering and business and administration, information technology is not effectively integrated with other aspects of the work. While individual students are using the available information technology facilities to good effect, it is possible for some students to complete their studies without using a computer.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

47 In August 1993, the college achieved the designation of Investor in People, which is a national award to companies who have satisfied independent assessors that they have put into practice effective strategic planning, a comprehensive identification of training needs, training for staff to meet company objectives and a thorough evaluation of investment in staff development. The standard is assessed through regular inspection of written evidence and confidential interviews with individual staff at all levels in the organisation. Investor in People standards are key components of the college's quality assurance strategy.

48 The quality assurance system is comprehensive and effective, and integrates well with the organisational structure of the college. Its aim is to deliver all learning programmes and services to meet, and preferably exceed, the expectations of clients, through a process of continuous quality improvement. The system is implemented through the quality teams, each of which owns a group of learning programmes or a service. Each team is expected to set standards, monitor, evaluate and make appropriate recommendations for quality improvements.

49 The system is managed by the deputy principal, who works directly with the quality team leaders. The regular meetings of quality teams have clear agendas and good procedures for planning and carrying through the requisite action. Reports and recommended actions are actively pursued by senior managers. On occasions, the principal and other senior and middle managers are invited to quality team meetings to provide more information about particular parts of their work. This emphasises the commitment to accountability which underpins the college's work.

50 Good use is made of performance indicators to measure quality improvements. The following table highlights the progress made by the college in some areas of its work.

	1991	1992	1993	target for 1994
Retention rates	78%	81%	82%	84%
Income generation	£140k	£600k	£750k	£850k
Student satisfaction	89%	88%	92%	92%
Employer satisfaction	76%	80%	83%	85%
Parental satisfaction		89%	92%	92%
Early leavers' satisfaction		80%	82%	85%

The surveys to test opinions of students, parents and employers use a range of methods and produce evidence which is analysed in detail in the quality team meetings. Concern about the college's retention rates has led to a research project in the local area currently being carried out by the University of Lancaster.

51 Staff development is seen as an essential component of the quality system and is funded appropriately. All applications for staff development are channelled through a staff development committee which considers the relevance and appropriateness of the proposal, the benefits to the individual and its value to the college in the context of the college achieving its strategic objectives. Participation in a number of interesting European projects and good use of industrial placements are examples of effective activities for meeting staff needs.

52 A staff appraisal scheme was introduced in September 1993. The scheme focuses on the training needs of individual staff and is linked to the staff development process. There is no evaluation of performance against formal criteria and the process is not related to pay. The principal's appraisal by governors marked the first step in the scheme's implementation.

53 The college's student charter based on the charter for further education, is reproduced in the student handbook. Quality characteristics and standards are clearly identified and formal procedures are in place to deal with complaints, and grading and assessment appeals. At the final stage of the complaints process, the governors are prepared to consider a

refund of part or all of the course fee for a student who is found to have a reasonable claim.

RESOURCES

Staffing

54 Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced. They have a good range of expertise and a high level of commitment. They are well supported by learning supervisors who are employed in the various workshops and practical areas. The number of teachers is adequate in most areas of work. However, in adult basic education there are insufficient full-time teaching staff, and too much of the responsibility for curriculum development falls upon learning supervisors whose range of experience is limited. These are also insufficient numbers of staff to provide additional support for the significant number of students in mainstream classes who have weaknesses in basic literacy or numeracy and for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who progress to mainstream courses. Levels of technical and administrative staffing are generally satisfactory.

Equipment

55 There is an adequate range of equipment, teaching materials and consumables for most subject areas. There are also some deficiencies: the machine tools in engineering are wearing out and in need of replacement; there is a lack of small equipment and utensils in catering; science at Kirkby is short of equipment unless key pieces of apparatus are transported from Huyton; and some students following courses in English, sociology, mathematics and hairdressing lack up-to-date textbooks.

56 There are good learning resources and information technology facilities available in the main learning centres at Huyton and Kirkby. Teachers in several subject areas, including English, sociology, construction and engineering, are producing an increasing range of good-quality learning support materials for students' use. Learning resources for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are limited. The overall number of computer work stations available to students is now approaching an adequate level but some work stations are not able to support the latest versions of software.

Accommodation

57 The quality of accommodation across the five college locations is variable. At Kirkby and Huyton, the main sites, there are some new or refurbished areas which provide good learning environments. These areas are well decorated and appropriately furnished. The accommodation elsewhere is not as good. For example, the buildings and teaching accommodation at Prescott, where art and design students are based, are poor. Some buildings at the Kirkby site are in need of external repair and decoration and parts of the Kirkby campus are not equipped for wheelchair users.

58 Much of the specialist accommodation for practical work is good. It is of a particularly high standard for hairdressing and science at the Huyton centre, and for aspects of engineering and construction at Kirkby. Classroom accommodation is generally used appropriately, but there are several examples of student groups in rooms which were too small or of activities being conducted in unsuitable spaces.

59 There is good library accommodation at Huyton and Kirkby. More limited facilities are provided at the smaller centres. There are an increasing number of learning centres, equipped with information technology equipment and a wide range of resources, for students to be able to study in their own time.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

60 Knowsley Community College is making good progress towards satisfying its mission. Particular strengths of the provision inspected are:

- the governors' clear perception of their role and their strong commitment to the college
- the quality of the strategic planning process, which involves governors, senior managers and staff
- the clear leadership and open style of management provided by the senior managers
- the college's responsiveness to the local community
- the quality of advice and guidance offered to potential students
- a comprehensive and effective quality assurance system
- the effectiveness of much of the teaching
- well-qualified staff who have a high level of commitment to the college.

61 In order to make further progress, the college should:

- develop its computerised management information systems
- improve the quality and effectiveness of its publicity materials
- extend its curricular links with industry and schools
- ensure that students with poor levels of literacy and numeracy are identified and supported
- continue to analyse the reasons for absenteeism and non-completion
- improve the quality and quantity of equipment in those specified areas of work where the standard of students' work is adversely affected
- provide effective learning support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are following mainstream courses.

FIGURES

1 Percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)

2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)

3 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)

4 Enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)

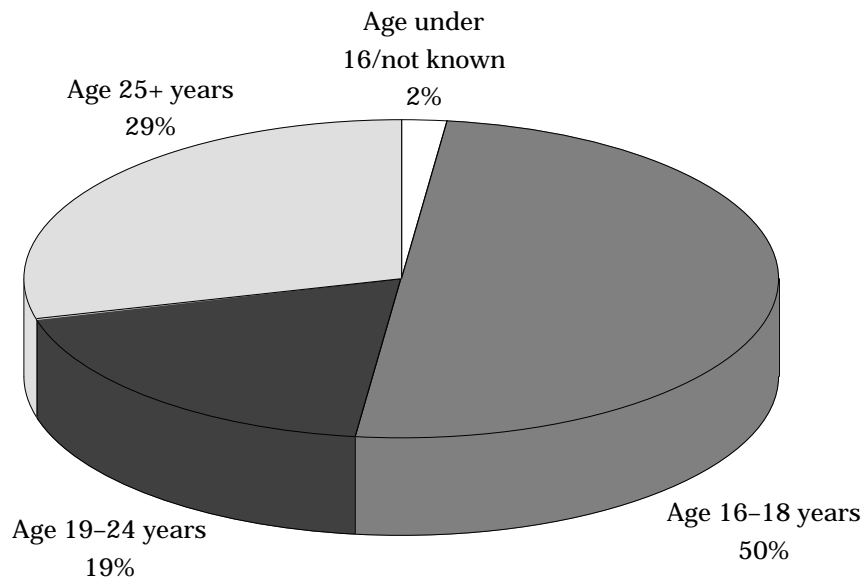
5 Recurrent income (April 1993-July 1994)

6 Estimated expenditure (April 1993-July 1994)

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

Figure 1

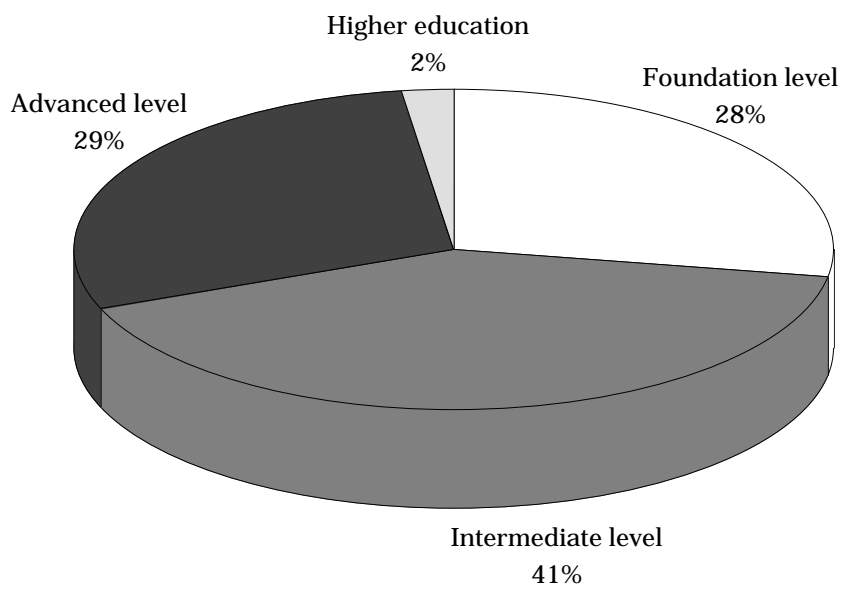
Knowsley Community College: percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)



Enrolments: 5,739

Figure 2

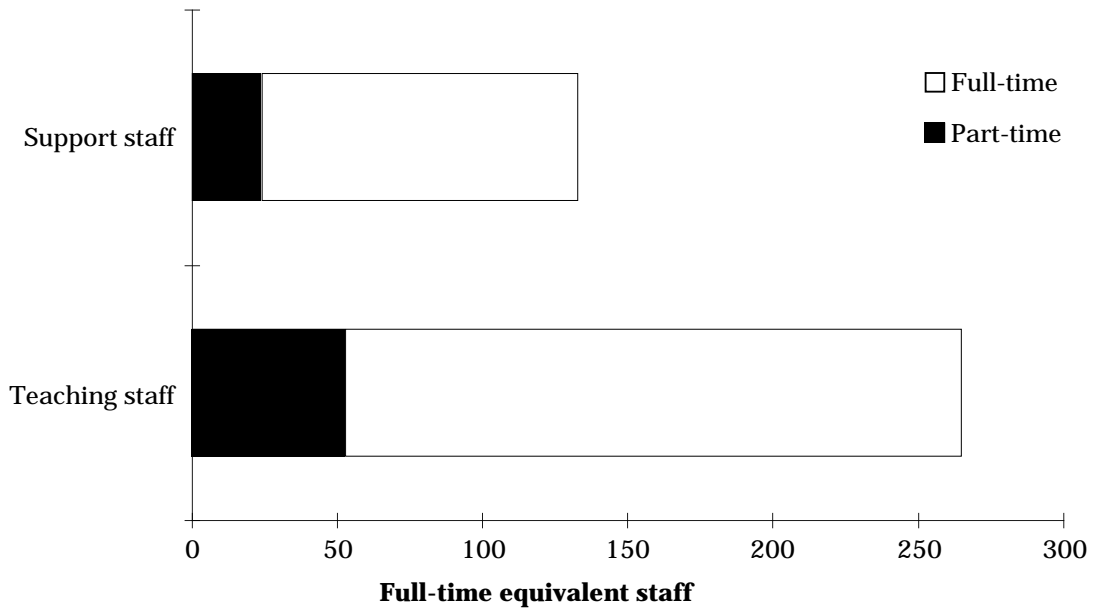
Knowsley Community College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)



Enrolments: 5,739

Figure 3

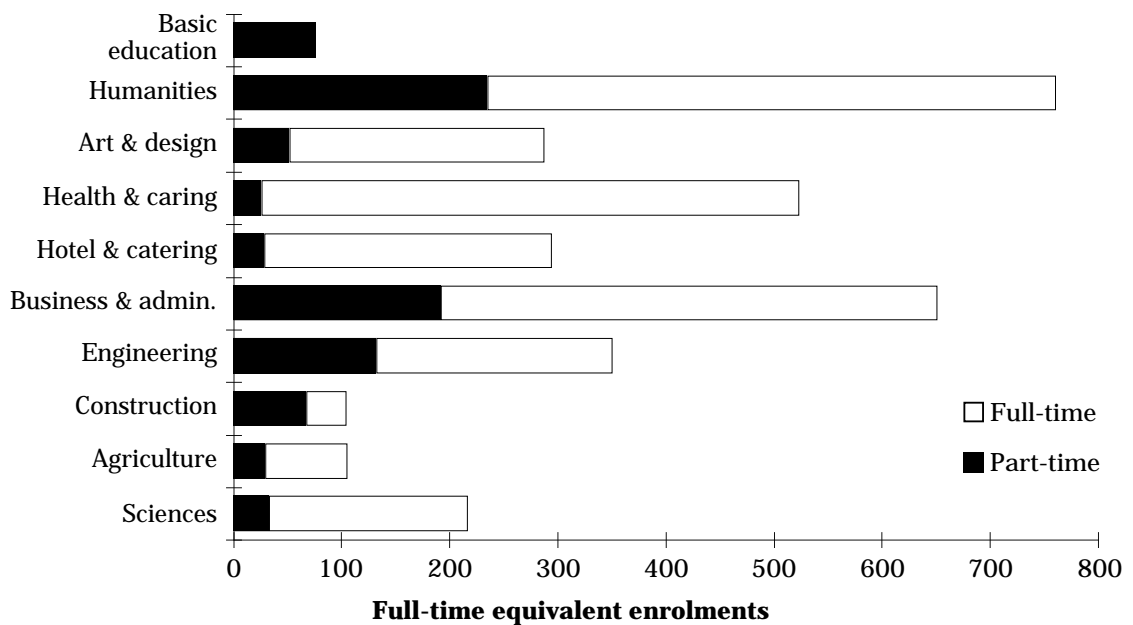
Knowsley Community College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 398

Figure 4

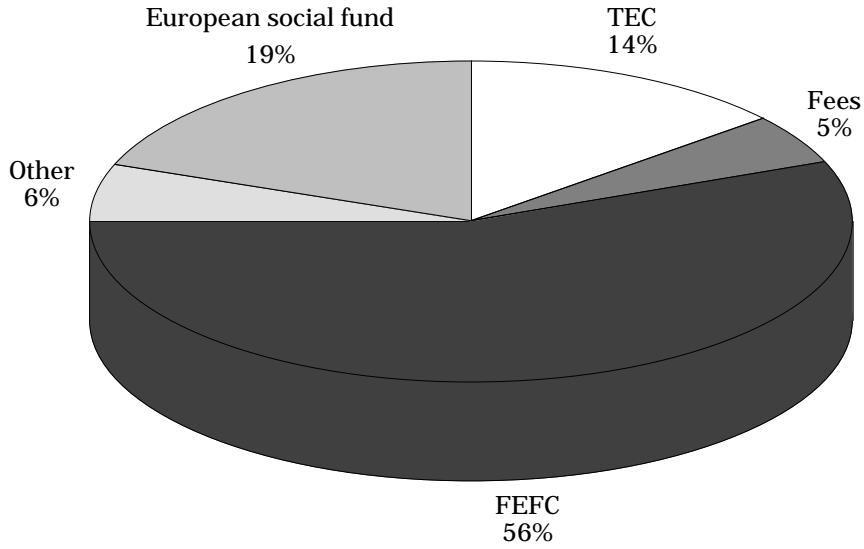
Knowsley Community College: enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent enrolments: 3,375

Figure 5

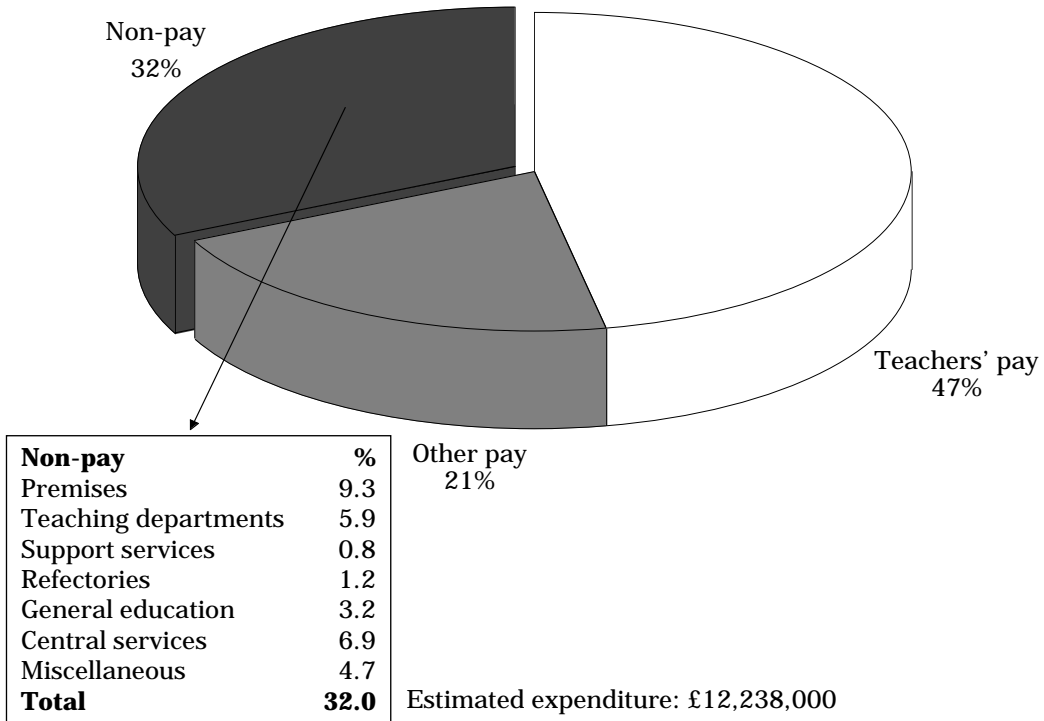
Knowsley Community College: recurrent income (April 1993-July 1994)



Recurrent income: £12,210,000

Figure 6

Knowsley Community College: estimated expenditure (April 1993-July 1994)



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