

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Loreto College

September 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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

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

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

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

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 108/95

LORETO COLLEGE
NORTH WEST REGION
Inspected February–May 1995

Summary

Loreto College is a well-governed and well-managed Catholic sixth form college. It is run by the religious order of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary to meet the educational needs of students from its partner high schools and special schools in Manchester. It has good arrangements for advising potential students and easing their transition into the college. Tutorial arrangements are very supportive and the help and guidance that students receive are reflected in their achievements. The college is currently widening access and extending the range of its provision into vocational courses, while still maintaining its distinctive ethos. The general quality of its teaching is excellent; students are challenged and encouraged to become independent learners. Nevertheless, student attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. Student retention is good. Examination results at GCE A level are close to the national average for sixth form colleges and GCSE results are well above the national average. Staff have taken part in the strategic planning process, and communications are clear and effective. A detailed charter has been developed, which is well understood by students and staff. A comprehensive system for quality assurance is in the course of introduction. The college should continue to give attention to the management of accommodation and carry on with the refurbishment and redecoration programme.

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

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

| Curriculum area | Grade | Curriculum area | Grade |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Science | 2 | History, geography | |
| Mathematics and computing | 2 | and politics | 2 |
| Business | 2 | Languages and classics | 2 |
| Art and design | 2 | English | 2 |
| | | Psychology and sociology | 1 |

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INTRODUCTION

1 Loreto College was inspected in three stages during the academic year 1994-95. Arrangements for the enrolment and induction of students were inspected in early September 1994. Ten inspectors made specialist inspections of curriculum areas in the week beginning 27 February 1995. Five of them also inspected aspects of cross-college provision, principally during the week beginning 1 May 1995.

2 Altogether, 13 inspectors were involved for a total of 55 inspector days. They visited 96 classes, examined a selection of students' work and studied a wide range of college documents, including the college self-assessment report. They observed a full meeting of the board of governors and held discussions with governors, college managers, teaching staff, the college chaplain, support staff, students, former students, parents, and with representatives of partner high schools, church organisations, the local community, Manchester Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), and institutions of higher education.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Loreto College in Manchester is one of an international network of Catholic colleges run by the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a religious order founded in the seventeenth century by the Englishwoman Mary Ward. It has provided Catholic education for young people in Manchester since 1851 and was established as a sixth form college in 1977 as part of the reorganisation of Catholic education in the city. Since April 1993 it has been a designated college receiving funds from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college is situated in the inner-city area of Moss Side and Hulme on a single campus site with lawns, gardens and an adjoining sports complex totalling 8.19 hectares.

4 Hulme has been assessed as the second most deprived electoral ward in the north west excluding Merseyside, and Moss Side as the eleventh. Research carried out by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities in January 1995 showed that the unemployment rate in Hulme was 26.1 per cent and in Moss Side 21.5 per cent, compared with the Manchester average of 17.4 per cent. Both wards are the focus of a government Task Force programme and Hulme is currently the focal point of a major regeneration exercise through the government's City Challenge programme. There are firm proposals for new shopping, small business and science park activities in the immediate vicinity of the college along the major corridor from the city centre to the airport. An extensive housing programme is also underway. Estimated demographic changes in Hulme over the next 10 years show significant increases across all age groups and in particular in children of secondary school age.

5 The mission of Loreto College is to respond to the educational needs of young people from its partnership high schools and special schools in Manchester and surrounding areas. It also responds to the needs of other learners when it is confident these are consonant with its mission. Its

stated primary purpose is to challenge its learners to achieve academic and human excellence, and to support them in the pursuit of this excellence. Its distinctive Catholic ethos owes much to the college's connection with the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It aims to 'give expression to the core values of Mary Ward - freedom, justice, sincerity, truth and joy' and encourages those 'seekers of truth and doers of justice who are able to challenge accepted notions and modes of society'.

6 The college contributes to the wide choice of sixth form education available to students in Manchester. In the city itself there are two Catholic sixth form colleges, another sixth form college, two general further education colleges, an 11-18 high school, a large Catholic independent school and four other independent schools. Further afield, within a 10 mile radius of the centre of Manchester, there are another two Catholic sixth form colleges, six other sixth form colleges and five general further education colleges. School provision in neighbouring Trafford includes two Catholic 11-18 independent schools and five 11-18 maintained grammar schools, all with substantial sixth forms.

7 Loreto College's nine partnership high schools in Manchester and its five linked schools in Trafford, Tameside and Derbyshire form the college's local community. About two-thirds of its students come from these schools; the rest come from 57 other schools and colleges, including independent schools. In 1994, 31 per cent of pupils from the college's partner schools gained five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) passes at grades A-C compared with 23 per cent for Manchester as a whole and the national figure of 43 per cent. Staying-on rates in full-time education post-16 were 54 per cent for pupils from Loreto College's partner schools, 48 per cent for Manchester as a whole, and 68 per cent nationally. Though there was a 2 per cent fall in the numbers of year-11 pupils in Manchester continuing in full-time education in September 1994, there was a 14 per cent increase in first-year enrolments at the college. In order to protect its Catholic ethos the college limits the number of places it offers to non-Catholic students and turns down some 200 applications annually. However, applications from students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are accepted irrespective of religious background: 2 per cent of current students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Applications for entry to resit General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) examinations are also accepted without reference to religious background.

8 In November 1994 there were 823 students on roll: 790 full time and 33 part time. Of the full-time students, 93 per cent were in the 16-18 age range. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2 and by mode of attendance and curriculum area in figure 3. Some 31 per cent of the student population are from minority ethnic groups compared with 12.6 per cent of Manchester residents. Of these minority ethnic students, over 40 per cent come from the partnership high schools and other Catholic schools. Three-quarters of all students live in Manchester

and 12 per cent in Trafford. Others travel from Bury, Oldham, Salford, Stockport and parts of Cheshire. Data from the Advanced Level Information System indicate that most of the students come from families of skilled manual or non-manual workers. Over 30 per cent of students are in receipt of means-tested discretionary awards. At the time of inspection there was a full-time equivalent staff of 57 teachers, and 27 support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 In accord with its stated mission, and within its admissions policy, the college is very responsive to need. It has been successful in altering perceptions about its location in an area of urban regeneration. It has established a clear role for itself in the provision of Catholic education for pupils and students aged between five and 19 years. In addition a place is offered to all students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities for whom a suitable course can be provided. The college has also developed some provision for adults and part-time students, but to preserve the sixth form college ethos, classes for these learners are arranged separately, often in the evening or in outreach venues.

10 The college offers:

- 32 subjects at GCE A level
- courses leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) in four subject areas: art and design, business, health and social care, leisure and tourism, each at foundation, intermediate and advanced level
- courses leading to awards by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) in information technology at first and national levels, and in business and finance at national level
- thirteen subjects at GCSE level
- the National Nursery Examinations Board (NNEB) course in childcare and education
- RSA Examinations Board (RSA) computer literacy and information technology courses
- the Associated Examining Board's basic skills certificates in English and numeracy
- an integrated foundation programme for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

11 There are opportunities for students to combine academic and vocational courses, and a number of GCE A levels can be taken as a one-year course. The development of vocational courses and the introduction of modular courses and flexible learning, to make courses accessible to more students, has met with a good response. The college also takes part in initial teacher training in partnership with the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University.

12 Liaison with partnership schools is effective. There are regular meetings, roadshows, open days, and taster days. Marketing activity is characterised by a high standard of presentation and a well-developed house style which promotes Loreto College's image in an attractive way. The head teachers of the Catholic high schools meet once a month at the college. Their support for the college has been an important factor in increasing enrolment. There is effective liaison between the partnership high schools and the college on the curriculum. Bridging courses have been set up for GCE A level students of biology, chemistry, French, mathematics and physics. There are link courses in GNVQ art and design, and business for pupils from two schools.

13 The college has welcomed adult learners and introduced full-cost courses for local business and commerce. Last year over 100 employees of Manchester City Council took courses in information technology, customer care and office skills, wordpower and numberpower. A similar number, partly funded by Manchester TEC, gained qualifications in first aid and in childcare by attendance at an outreach centre. Some students gained National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) units by workplace assessment at a centre run by Save the Children. The development of the new study centre has been particularly effective in providing open-learning facilities for adult students. There is a separate marketing strategy and admissions procedure for adult learners and short courses.

14 The college has developed a productive relationship with Manchester TEC, whose education officer praised it for its responsiveness and willingness to diversify. Special efforts have been made to attract students from minority ethnic backgrounds, women returners and others on low incomes, or with employment problems, who wish to return to study. Manchester TEC has funded the training of staff teaching vocational courses to the standards of the Training and Development Lead Body. It has partly funded a career information centre in the college, a pilot scheme for part-time GNVQs and improvements in the student tracking system.

15 Communications between the college and higher education institutions are effective. An access course in science and technology is being developed with University College Salford and Salford University. Contacts with local employers have led to the formation of a Young Enterprise Group and to project work with Antler Limited. There are links for students' work placements and industrial visits. A joint project with a construction company to produce a BTEC mathematics pack gave college students the opportunity to work with professional civil engineers. Another mathematics module was produced as part of a project with the Greater Manchester Police Accident Investigation Section.

16 The college is unique in Manchester in providing the only Catholic education for students with moderate and severe learning difficulties. Two foundation programmes accredited by the Open College Federation are available. These students are fully integrated into religious education

classes. Over a two-year period, between 25 and 30 students have benefited from this provision.

17 The college has responded well to initiatives in the Hulme and Moss Side area to promote industrial regeneration. It provides a venue, publicity and support for City Challenge and other educational and training working groups.

18 All students have the opportunity to take part in a good range of enrichment activities. General studies GCE A level is available to all and two-thirds of the full-time students attend regularly. Other enrichment courses which are well attended include German for beginners, European studies and an introduction to information technology. Hobby and leisure pursuits include video production, sailing and a wide range of physical and sporting activities including badminton, exercise to music, five-a-side football, squash, swimming, tennis, trampolining and weight training. Over 80 students regularly represent the college in sporting competitions in basketball, cricket, hockey, netball, soccer and tennis.

19 There are theme weeks focusing on aspects of importance to the mission and values of the college. During the inspection one theme was 'justice', and careers workshops with outside speakers were held on careers in law and social work. Other theme weeks throughout the year are on issues such as study skills and equal opportunities. Parents praise the generous contributions of time made by many staff to develop students' interests beyond their immediate studies. Students show their appreciation by the high level of participation in these activities and their commitment to them. Fell walking, theatre visits and debating have an enthusiastic following, while the musical and dramatic activities have, in the past year, given 250 students the opportunity to take some part in a production.

20 The college has successfully established a Christian community into which students with very different backgrounds and objectives are welcomed on an equal footing. This success has been achieved by the dedication of the teaching staff within an explicit Christian tradition and practice. The heads of partner schools, former students, and parents all pay tribute to this success and praise the college for a sense of purpose rooted in a strong and living religious faith.

21 Students respond well to a programme of current affairs and issues of moral debate. Three times a year there are days of reflection at which Church figures of national and international importance present topics such as the work of the Jesuit Volunteers, Church Action on Poverty, and Crisis. Students have contributed to the work of the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development, which has a permanent display area in the study centre. Young people from Cambodia, El Salvador and Mexico have visited the college to share their experiences with students.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

22 Governors fulfil their duties effectively. They understand their role and that of college managers. The board of governors meets once a term and the finance and general purposes committee meets once a month. Governors work well together, share their considerable expertise with college managers and offer their services to college staff. They have a broad range of expertise, have undertaken training for their role, and review their own performance. Six of the eight foundation governors, including the chairman, have experience in education to add to that of the principal, the two staff governors and the Manchester TEC representative. The professional expertise of governors includes industry, accountancy, law, the church and administration. Six members are women. There is provision for two parent governors, though at the time of the inspection only one was in post. There is no provision for a student governor.

23 Governors and staff share a vision for the continuing development of the college in consistency with its mission. The staff have undertaken extensive staff-development activity on the Catholic ethos; governors participated in this. The strategic plan asserts the importance of the quality of college structures and procedures to support the learning, progression, personal development and care of its students. The development of outreach work and the implementation of the admissions policy are other examples of areas of close co-operation between staff and governors.

24 The college is well led and well managed. The management structure is clear and effective, and there are clear job descriptions for all senior posts. Management responsibilities have been allocated to make best use of the strengths and skills of senior staff. Communications are good. The senior management team of seven comprises the principal, the vice-principal, the college services manager, the head of student services, the head of adult education, the marketing manager and the principal mentor for initial teacher training. Four of these are also senior tutors. The college is divided into five senior tutor groups and the seven curriculum areas of religious education, art and design, complementary studies, integrated studies, language and literature, science and mathematics, and social sciences. The senior management team, the senior tutors and the curriculum leaders together form the curriculum committee which monitors and reviews the academic development of the college.

25 Strategic and operating plans are understood, reflected in departmental aims and supported by staff. Subject teaching staff meet regularly to discuss their plans and resolve any problems, but some opportunities are missed for creating links between groups of staff in different but related subjects. Teachers of computing, information technology, and the three sciences all meet as separate subject groups. A staff handbook provides useful and comprehensive information; it is also used as a basis for the induction programme for new staff.

26 The college is developing an efficient and effective system for delegating budgets. This is understood by staff and accepted by them as fair. Acting on recommendations from the finance and general purposes committee, governors decide on the overall college budget. The main budget allocations are determined by the demands of the strategic plan. Teaching departments receive an allocation based on the expected student numbers in the following year. Allocations are reviewed in November following the census of student numbers. New courses receive pump priming funds. Capital equipment funding and non-teaching cost budgets are determined by a system of bidding against priorities.

27 The college is in the process of developing an integrated computer-based management information system. Modules relating to student records and finance are in place and the quality of information provided from these is good. Regular reports on the status of budgets are made to budget holders, the senior management team, and governors. There is evidence of the increasing use of the management information system in planning and in supporting the monitoring and review process. The college is acting as a pilot centre for the development of individual student records. It is planned to introduce a computer-based system for monitoring the attendance of students. However, staff do not yet realise the full potential of developed computer-based management information systems, and do not have easy access to the full range of data that present systems can provide.

28 The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 is £25.66 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.81. Summaries of the college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

29 Loreto College is a welcoming college. Young people are valued as individuals regardless of ability. Teachers are caring and generous with their time. Students are helped to develop their confidence and to recognise that they can achieve. The college works hard to give active expression to the core values of its founding order. Parents and students speak with great enthusiasm about the supportive nature of the college. Student services are being refined to respond to the needs of new kinds of learners.

30 The enrolment procedures in September 1994 were thorough and friendly, with clear and patient advice to new students by teachers who were well informed about the curriculum and the timetable. Advice was impartial and the guiding principle was to match achievements and career intentions to programmes of study. Teachers used records of achievement sensitively and showed interest in all aspects of a student's achievements. Tutors had clear information to advise them on procedures. There was, however, too much queuing and insufficient signposting for new students. The college recognised this in its own review of the process.

31 Before enrolment there is a well-devised and comprehensive range of recruitment activities for pupils from partner high schools, to inform them of the opportunities the college offers and to help them make choices. The prospectus and course leaflets are helpful and attractive. College teachers attend school parents' evenings from year 9. They give presentations in schools, and there is an open evening at the college. On taster days, held on Saturdays, students can sample classes while their parents attend a conference which gives them more information. This is intended to involve them in their children's education, in line with the commitments to parents made in the college charter. Head teachers speak highly of the college's work on transfer of students between school and college.

32 Induction is well planned and thorough, building on the close relationships already developed. Students speak highly of this support. After a well-planned introductory day, there is a month-long period of induction activities, with detailed materials provided by student services. Induction programmes and materials at subject level are thorough and effective. Students are able to transfer to more appropriate programmes where necessary, under clear procedures which may involve discussion of the consequences of course changes with parents.

33 Tutorial support is extensive. There are daily tutor group meetings, an extended tutorial period and twice weekly assemblies which are often presented by the students. Tutorial topics include study skills, careers, health matters, finance, and relationships. Tutors have reference files with detailed and comprehensive policies and referral documentation. Personal tutors are sensitive to the concerns of students and offer valued support and guidance. Students speak highly of the tutorial programme and assemblies and the patience and generosity of teachers who offer additional lessons, individual appointments and informal help. Senior tutors and tutors hold regular meetings to review and plan ahead.

34 Tutors monitor the progress of students in their groups by regular planned reviews. This process has been refined as a result of continual evaluation. Students create individual action plans and set targets for improvement and achievement against which their progress is monitored. Records of achievement are used extensively.

35 All students on GNVQ programmes have diagnostic tests to determine learning support needs. Students in need of additional support are interviewed individually and programmes of assistance are negotiated. Teachers set targets and reviews of progress are conducted after 10 weeks. There are plans to introduce similar screening for other students.

36 A newly-established and centrally-located study centre offers a range of learning-support activities. It is attractive, well resourced and well staffed, and its services are clearly advertised. Students are very positive about, and make much use of, the centre's support for study skills such as time management, essay writing and note taking. Centre staff provide

help in basic skills, in GNVQ core skills, and for students whose first language is not English. The centre also offers opportunities for individual study. There are 10 computers; learning packages are being developed. The college's adult students use the centre as a base.

37 The college's full-time lay chaplain is also a qualified counsellor and educational psychologist. All five senior tutors are trained in counselling skills. There are rooms for private interviews and a chaplaincy where students can meet. There are comprehensive links with outside agencies, to which referrals are made as necessary.

38 Careers education and guidance is well provided. A careers officer from the city's career service is available for two days a week. Careers advice is accessible in the study centre. Books, leaflets and videos are plentiful. There is a developing collection of course information for both higher and further education. Applications to higher education are well supported.

39 Attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory, despite thorough monitoring. Registers are taken both by subject teachers and tutors. Students causing concern are referred to tutors who also contact their parents. The parents of students with an attendance rate below 80 per cent have recently been sent letters by recorded delivery. The college intends to raise the attendance target to 85 per cent.

40 Students are expected to attend and play an active part in religious education; over three-quarters do so regularly. They contribute ideas, readings and music to special events and assemblies held twice a week, to the daily morning prayers, to weekly mass, and to college masses on feast days and special dates in the college's calendar. The opinions and attitudes conveyed by students in class and in informal situations suggest that even when they are from other faiths, many of them have a sincere attachment to the college and an appreciation of the Christian values that infuse every aspect of its life. The preservation of this distinctive ethos is seen as a vital part of Loreto College's future.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

41 The overall quality of teaching is excellent. In 81 per cent of the 96 sessions observed, strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses. Lessons are interesting and challenging. Sociology and psychology classes were outstandingly good. GCE A level lessons received better grades than those in GNVQ courses. There were only two teaching sessions in which weaknesses clearly outweighed strengths. Some teachers use information technology well, although it is sometimes underused. Vocational courses would benefit from better links with industry.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

| Programmes | Grade | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Totals |
|-------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|---------------|
| GCE AS/A level | | 29 | 29 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 66 |
| GCSE | | 1 | 8 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| GNVQ intermediate | | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| GNVQ advanced | | 0 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 11 |
| Other | | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | | 30 | 48 | 16 | 2 | 0 | 96 |

42 The teaching of sociology and psychology is well organised and of very high quality. Teachers are knowledgeable and convey great enthusiasm. Students are interested, involved and keen. Schemes of work and lesson plans are thorough and shared with students. Teachers support and encourage students, and stretch the most able. Sessions are varied and extra classes are provided to help clarify uncertainties. There is appropriate use of discussion, small groupwork and television. In a particularly effective GCE A level psychology lesson on Piaget's learning theory, students did small group exercises using toys and games after watching a videotape and holding a discussion. Teachers also emphasise the key skills for examination success. They guide and encourage the development of coursework and practical work. Assignments are set regularly and marked promptly.

43 In geography, history and politics, teachers are well qualified, knowledgeable and experienced. They prepare students thoroughly for public examinations, have detailed and appropriate schemes of work and clear lesson plans, and use a range of different approaches in lessons. Their students know the course requirements, enjoy their work, and engage in spontaneous and purposeful discussion. However, in history and politics in particular, students are sometimes not given enough opportunities to become fully involved. The teaching is not always matched closely enough to the individual ability of students, and some students lag behind. In one good history lesson on the Korean War, groups of students were working together to prepare a presentation. The teacher had provided a clear framework and students were developing skills in decision making, problem solving, research, analysis, and presentation. In a geography lesson, good use was made of a video programme, question sheets, the chalkboard, and an overhead projector, in a well-designed lesson on the effects of genetic engineering on the human environment.

44 Students find English lessons enjoyable and rewarding. They are encouraged to achieve high standards in written work across a broad range of topics. Teachers prepare effective lesson plans and use a variety of methods in the classroom. There are regular tests, timed essays, homework, examination practice and a clear schedule for the submission of coursework. Skills in information technology are encouraged. Marking

of internally assessed coursework is sometimes inconsistent. Each teacher has developed a separate scheme of work, but these are not shared with students. There are no detailed course guides for students.

45 Practice in modern languages is good. Lessons are well planned and prepared, and the aims and objectives of the course are shared with students. Schemes of work are comprehensive. Teachers are committed, hard working and knowledgeable. They use a variety of teaching methods and materials to good effect to capture the interest and involvement of students. Written work is carefully read and marked and students receive detailed and constructive feedback. Foreign language assistants contribute to the programmes. A wide range of materials is available for independent study. Information technology plays an exciting part in language learning. Students benefit from the use of camcorders, satellite television and imaginative software, some of which is produced by their teachers. Some opportunities to make more extensive use of the target language and to improve background cultural knowledge are, however, being missed.

46 On business courses students are successfully involved in their own learning. Teachers share their schemes of work with students and learning is planned in a logical and ordered way to ensure good progression in the development of knowledge and skills. The range of teaching methods adopted, for both GCE and GNVQ courses, is wide and appropriate. Lessons are relevant and interesting and contain a mixture of teaching, groupwork, oral exercises and project research. Teachers have high expectations of students, and encourage them to work at a good pace, while taking careful account of the range of differing aspirations and ability levels. Stronger links with local businesses would give greater relevance and realism to the work.

47 Science courses are well planned and organised. At the start of their course, students of GCE A level physics and chemistry receive a useful handbook containing laboratory rules, advice and guidance, and details of what they will be expected to have learned by the end of each unit of work. For GCSE chemistry a full set of interactive study notes is provided to cover the whole syllabus. Teachers have a sound knowledge of their subject and use a variety of teaching methods to involve students in their own learning. There is effective use of worksheets and summary notes but written lesson plans are sketchy. Most classes involve students in well-organised practical work with due attention to safety. Teachers make a well-judged use of questioning to check on the development of understanding and to stimulate discussion. Student progress is closely monitored through regular homework, tests and individual reviews. In a minority of classes some of the tasks set are undemanding. The use of computers is underdeveloped.

48 Mathematics teaching is of a high standard. Schemes of work are detailed, thorough and shared with students. An impressive compendium of policies and procedures has been assembled from the sharing of good practice between teachers. Lessons involve activities for the whole class, small groups or individuals. Presentations by teachers are lively,

interesting and challenging and questions are used frequently to encourage students to participate. Students are well motivated, lively and inquisitive. They receive regular set work which is returned with constructive comments. In some computing and information technology lessons students are involved in too limited a range of activities and some spend too much time taking lengthy notes.

49 On courses in the art and design programme area, aims and objectives are clearly defined and schemes of work effectively cover syllabus requirements. Assignments provide students with a range of assessment opportunities. Teaching in theatre studies and performing arts is lively and encourages thought-provoking and imaginative responses. Students studying textiles produce work of a high standard, interpreting briefs in a creative way and using a variety of media and materials. They have well-developed design sheets and sketchbooks. On GCE A level art courses, lessons are highly structured but rather conservative. They encourage the development of sound drawing skills but this is at the expense of experiment or innovation. In the GNVQ art and design programmes, teachers are not sufficiently aware of vocational requirements. Programmes would benefit from a greater contribution of professional experience. Although the core skill of information technology is provided for and assessed, the communications element, particularly at advanced level, is not rigorously assessed in any integrated way. At intermediate level, insufficient time is allocated for creative activity: a bias reflecting staff experience gives too great a prominence to design technology.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

50 Science students participate actively in lessons and work co-operatively with their teachers and peers. They show an interest in their work, speak knowledgeably about their studies, and show ambition to progress to higher education. Mathematics students could describe their work clearly and with understanding. In business studies, relationships in each classroom are friendly and supportive and teachers give a substantial amount of individual help to students who need it. In English, student participation in lessons is good. In psychology, sociology, geography, history and politics students enjoy their study programmes and speak confidently about their work. They show a high level of oral competence in contributing spontaneously and expressively to classroom discussion. Language students also participate well in class and keep up a high level of concentration. However, in some of the long GCSE teaching periods some pupils lost concentration towards the end.

51 Most science students make good progress towards understanding basic scientific principles and applying their knowledge in solving problems. They co-operate with teachers and their peers and work competently and safely on practical tasks. In a second-year GCE A level human biology class students had prepared very good posters illustrating the lines of hominid evolution. They made presentations on their topics,

and the teacher made useful links between these presentations. In English, students show a command of all the subject-based skills and knowledge; personal and social skills are also well developed. In politics, levels of achievement are appropriate to the courses. Written work in psychology and sociology is of a good standard. Students show understanding and knowledge of past work, good levels of perception and relevant skills. Language students help each other to achieve confidence through working in pairs and in groups. In performing arts students work well together.

52 Students aged 16-18 entered for GCE advanced supplementary (AS) and GCE A level examinations in 1993-94 scored on average 4.6 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college in the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education. This score was the highest achieved by colleges in the Manchester TEC area. In that year the college offered 27 subjects at GCE A level. College figures show that in eight subjects all 16-18 year old candidates entered in the GCE A level examination were awarded grade E or above. These subjects were design and technology, environmental science, further mathematics, home economics, music, performing arts, politics, and theatre studies. In addition, all of the relatively few 19 year old candidates were successful in art and design, English language, English literature, law, mathematics, politics and psychology. Examination results in politics were particularly good.

53 Subjects where 16-18 year old GCE A level candidates achieved a higher proportion of grades A-C than the national average for English sixth form colleges include art and design, further mathematics, German, mathematics, music, performing arts, politics, physics, sociology and sports studies. In contrast, in biology, business studies, computing, design technology, English, fashion and fabric, French, general studies, geography and history the numbers of candidates gaining grades A-C was below the national average. GCE A level results in computing have been poor. Science examination results at GCE A level are below the national average for sixth form colleges but value-added analysis indicates that students achieve success in line with their qualifications on entry in physics and better than expected in chemistry. In GCE A level business studies results are below the national average. In this subject evaluation is by continuous assessment and students have not succeeded in consistently producing the good coursework needed to achieve high grades. The result in English literature at GCE A level is 2 per cent higher than the national average, but the English language result is 16 per cent lower. Here also there were problems with students who did not complete coursework satisfactorily, or were persistently absent.

54 In 1994 the proportion of GCSE entrants in all subjects awarded grades A-C was 63 per cent, which was well above the national average for sixth form colleges. Exceptionally good results (more than 70 per cent awarded grades A-C) were achieved in environmental science, physics,

sociology and Spanish. In 1993 the corresponding figure was 57 per cent compared with the national average for sixth form colleges of 50 per cent. Of the 1994 GCSE cohort, 84 per cent stayed on for a further course at Loreto College.

55 Eighty-three per cent of students in the final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education's 1994 performance tables were successful. This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. For the current year, the GNVQ courses in business studies have replaced the BTEC first and national diploma courses, on which students achieved 61 and 83 per cent pass rates, respectively, last year. All 10 students on the national diploma course who applied for admission to university degree courses were successful. Poor results were achieved last year on the BTEC first diploma in information technology.

56 Student attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory. During the week of specialist inspections, on average about 18 per cent of student were absent from their classes. The average attendance rate in English was 77 per cent; in psychology and sociology classes it was 82 per cent. Attendance on GCSE courses in science was less than 80 per cent. In art and design attendance rates varied between courses. It was over 80 per cent in GNVQ art and design (advanced), in GCE A level art and GCE A level textiles, but in GCE A level design technology it was 75 per cent and in GNVQ intermediate art and design only 68 per cent. Erratic attendance by students in some language classes undermines the efforts made by teachers.

57 The college retention rate is relatively high: on 1 May 1995 the college had retained 91 per cent of the students who had enrolled by November 1994. Eighty-three per cent of students who enrolled on a GCE A level course in 1993 were still on the course in May 1995. Of the GCE A level subjects taken by second-year students in 1994 almost one-third had a 100 per cent completion rate. Completion rates are exceptionally good for students on one-year courses; in the last two years about two-thirds of these courses retained all their students and in only one subject did retention fall below 85 per cent. Retention on GCE A level courses in science and in computing could be improved; in GCE A level chemistry and physics over the last two years retention rates have ranged between 60 and 77 per cent. Completion rates are generally good in GCE A level groups in English at around 90 per cent. Twelve of the 15 GCSE subjects taken in summer 1994 had a retention rate above 85 per cent. However, only 38 per cent of GCSE business studies students completed their course last year, compared with 44 per cent in 1993. GCSE English classes and some language courses show poor retention rates. One hundred and twenty-four students enrolled in September 1994 but the number has dropped to 97 examination entrants. In part, this reflects November examination successes and in part it is a consequence of the policy of

encouraging all students to acquire an acceptable level of English language qualification. An improvement in retention rates has been achieved in politics, history and geography. Staff are conscious that they need to improve retention rates of students in the two-year GCE A level programmes in sociology and psychology, which have been between 74 and 88 per cent for the last two completed cohorts.

58 Data from the Advanced Level Information System demonstrate the college's success in raising the aspirations of its students. Three-quarters of GCE A level students were successful in achieving places in higher education in 1994.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

59 The comprehensive college charter was produced after consultation with the governors, students, parents and staff. It includes clear statements of standards that the clients can expect, including commitments to parents, applicants, students and employers. Responsibility for implementing the charter and for reviewing, monitoring and evaluating its objectives lies with the vice-principal. Although a number of quantifiable targets has been identified, evaluative measures have yet to be devised and implemented. Teachers and students have a good understanding of the charter and its significance for them. Learner agreements have been established and much good practice already exists. Non-teaching staff have a more limited knowledge of the charter as did some employers.

60 The college has recently introduced a comprehensive system for quality assurance, building on good features of previous practice. The new system, introduced during 1994, is based on a statement of quality characteristics and associated standards, relating directly to the mission and aims of the college. It also involves the detailed prescription of a quality assessment cycle for academic subjects, with target dates specified for the production of monitoring and review reports. The review process is focused on students' achievements, course responsiveness, students' responses and resources. Substantial use is made of students' comments and criticisms obtained by questionnaires. The cycle also includes writing of an annual quality report, setting targets, and the use of a range of performance indicators. Particularly demanding targets have been set for the number and frequency of monitoring and review reports. The review process extends beyond academic subjects and courses to some cross-college and non-teaching aspects of performance. The work of governors is also subject to evaluation.

61 Although they have only recently been introduced, the policies governing quality assurance are well understood and generally supported by the staff. Detailed practices are evolving. Implementation across the college during the first year has been variable. The quality of the first annual reports on subjects varies considerably, with inconsistent use of target setting. In psychology, for example, the report clearly evaluates

achievements against performance indicators and sets new targets. In other subjects this process is less clear. There is only limited evidence of the sharing of good practice at the operational or subject level.

62 Although the procedures are new there is evidence that action is taken where the review process indicates that it is needed. The college has been particularly responsive to issues raised by students. External moderators and verifiers describe the procedures for review and evaluation as effective. There is a need to spread more widely the best practice in monitoring and review and to clarify who is responsible for taking action.

63 There is a commitment to staff development, and currently, 1 per cent of the staffing budget is allocated to its support. Staff-development activities are particularly encouraged in the four areas of vocational assessor awards, senior management training, training to support adults and flexible learning. Thanks to the priority accorded to the first of these areas, about 34 per cent of the teaching staff have achieved, or are in the process of achieving, relevant vocational assessor awards. This is a reflection of the college's increasing involvement in the running of vocational programmes. Staff have also benefited from placements in industry. Many have attended college-based courses in information technology. Support staff are also encouraged to participate in development activities, for example, in the areas of health and safety, reception skills, and information technology. Newly-appointed staff speak appreciatively of the induction programme which the college provides. A staff-appraisal scheme has been agreed and all staff were trained in preparation for its introduction in January 1994. Links between the appraisal process and staff-development planning need to be strengthened.

64 The college's self-assessment report is detailed and of good quality. It is intended to produce such a report annually, on the basis of the new quality review process, for submission to the governors. The report uses headings which relate to the students' learning experience and cross references are made, in an appendix, to Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. It is evaluative throughout and awards grades for aspects of cross-college performance. The grades awarded, largely coincided with those of the inspection team. On one aspect the college was more critical than the inspection team.

RESOURCES

Staffing

65 Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced; they carry out their professional duties thoroughly and with enthusiasm. Eighty-nine per cent of full-time staff are graduates and 33 per cent have higher degrees. Almost all are trained as teachers. Thirty per cent of staff have recent industrial or commercial experience relevant to the development of

vocational courses. This has been achieved through new appointments, some part-time staffing, and the extensive use of industrial placement schemes. A recent efficiency exercise is supporting progress towards better matching of staff expertise to the expanding curriculum of the college.

66 The college attaches importance to good teamwork, which is evident in the way college staff work together and in their flexible deployment. There is a good gender balance in all areas of academic staffing, including the senior management team. There is a refreshing absence of subject stereotyping: women are prominent in the sciences and men are well represented in the humanities.

67 There has been a recent increase in the number of support staff who directly support student learning. They are well qualified for their posts. Thirty-six per cent have degree or diploma qualifications. This development has enabled the college to put more emphasis on learning support and to strengthen assistance for students in the use of information technology. There are adequate numbers of administrative and clerical staff who give good support to teachers, learners and applicants. Technical support is good and the college library is professionally staffed.

Equipment/learning resources

68 The college has sufficient specialist equipment in the main, though some is old. Other equipment could be better deployed. A strategy for equipment replacement is being developed. There is a good level of equipment in the politics and geography rooms. Social sciences rooms are inadequately equipped to encourage the use of audio-visual aids. The use of satellite television, camcorders and computing packages to enhance teaching and learning in modern languages is well developed, although the standard of television equipment is inadequate. In art and design the equipment available is innovatively used to ensure that most syllabus objectives are met. There is an excellent range of equipment to support three-dimensional work, but some of it is not easily accessible to students. Science laboratories have sufficient specialist equipment to allow students to work individually or in small groups, but the use of computers could be further developed, the stock of microscopes needs to be upgraded and fume cupboard space is restricted.

69 The standard of written teaching materials across the college is high. For example, there are good-quality learning support documents in history, geography and politics. Staff have invested hard work and discrimination in the development of teaching materials in psychology and sociology. The displays on the walls of many teaching rooms are attractive and stimulating. For most courses appropriate textbooks are available and there is a growing use of compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) database equipment. Languages staff have developed software for student use. Books and equipment for business studies are insufficient.

70 There is sufficient computer hardware and software for students. At the time of the inspection there were some 100 computers available for use by students, about half of them capable of supporting the latest versions of software. Students have access to appropriate information technology resources in all subjects other than science. Some of the computer resources are available on an open access basis, particularly in the study centre. Elsewhere, access is constrained to the extent that rooms containing computer equipment are timetabled for formal teaching sessions. The college needs to decide whether open access or subject use is a priority, bearing in mind security considerations.

71 The college library has recently been refurbished and now provides a quiet study area for 110 students. It is spacious and well stocked in established subject areas with some 19,000 books, 300 audio cassettes, 70 newspapers and journals and 10 CD-ROM packages. The college has provided a good level of library resources for sociology and psychology students and there is improving stock in politics and geography. In general, only a small proportion of the stock is outdated but there is some under resourcing in business studies. Attention should be given to the progressive improvement of provision for new and developing areas of study such as vocational courses. In addition to the library there is a new, and well-used student study centre, which facilitates co-operative and group work. It houses a well-resourced careers guidance area, study skills support facilities and study areas for numeracy, communication and information technology.

Accommodation

72 The college is housed in a range of buildings which date from between the 1820s and the 1970s. Overall, the accommodation is more than adequate for current student numbers and most is fit for its purpose although dated in style. Some corridors are narrow and access to some college areas is difficult, particularly for wheelchair users. Classrooms, circulation areas and the college grounds are well kept. A welcoming and attractive foyer adjacent to the college office handles enquiries efficiently. A recently refurbished student study centre is nearby. The chapel, formerly part of the convent building, is used for worship and provides a quiet space. Student common room space is inadequate.

73 The location of business studies in the St Joseph building has provided this curriculum area with a sound working environment. Accommodation for history, geography and politics is good, clean, well maintained and adequate for group sizes. Attractive wall displays help to create good learning environments; these are a particular feature of the politics room. For some sociology and psychology groups the rooms are too small. There are heating problems in some rooms and a number do not lend themselves to the use of visual aids because they lack window blinds, projection screens and properly positioned electrical sockets. The college is tackling such issues in the short term and has a strategy for longer term improvements.

Planned developments to buildings and grounds are in harmony with the extensive programme of urban renewal which is currently transforming the immediate vicinity. The college is fortunate, for an inner-city establishment, in having a sports hall and playing fields immediately opposite its site. These are used for early evening team and training activities.

74 There are sufficient science laboratories to accommodate all science classes for practical work, but the majority are old-fashioned and in need of refurbishment. The accommodation used for mathematics and computing teaching is generally appropriate. The mathematics suite provides a physical focus for the subject but cannot satisfactorily meet the occasional need to house large student groups. The dispersed nature of the accommodation for art and design and performing arts restricts the development of this curriculum area, even though the accommodation is visually stimulating and of an appropriate size for the student numbers. The three-dimensional workshop is excellent, but its use as a base room for the GNVQ intermediate programme in art and design is unsatisfactory and raises issues of health and safety.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

75 The college has made significant progress towards achieving its mission. Strengths of the provision inspected are:

- retention of the college's distinctive ethos while at the same time appealing to a wider market
- the generally excellent teaching
- the well-considered and thorough arrangements to advise potential students and ease their transition from the partner high schools
- the highly-supportive tutorial arrangements to guide students and to maintain their progress, the effective careers guidance and the comprehensive arrangements for additional learning support
- the new and comprehensive system for quality assurance
- the development and dissemination of the college charter
- the significant progress made by the college on the efficient and flexible deployment of staff.

76 In order to continue its progress, the college should:

- seek ways to encourage better student attendance and punctuality
- continue to promote the new quality assurance system, and ensure the consistent implementation of procedures across the college
- continue to give attention to the management of accommodation and carry on with the refurbishment and redecoration programme.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1994)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1994)

 - 3 Enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1994)

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

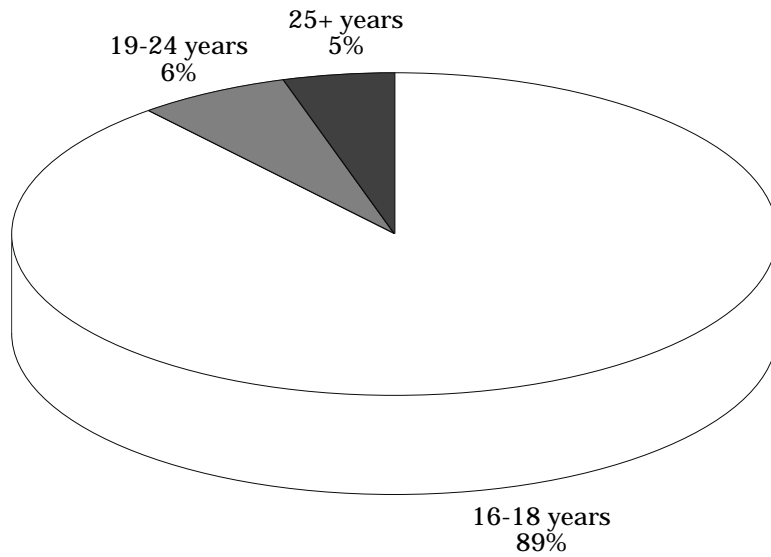
 - 5 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

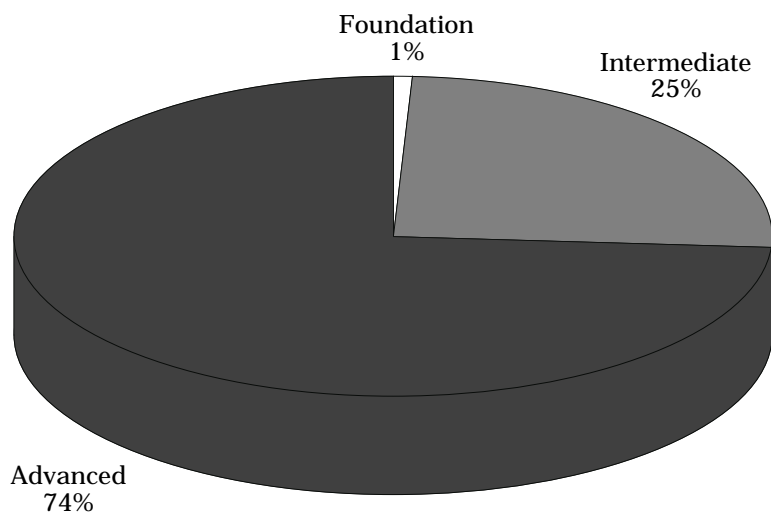
Loreto College: percentage enrolments by age (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 823

Figure 2

Loreto College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at November 1994)



Enrolments: 823

Figure 3

Loreto College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1994)

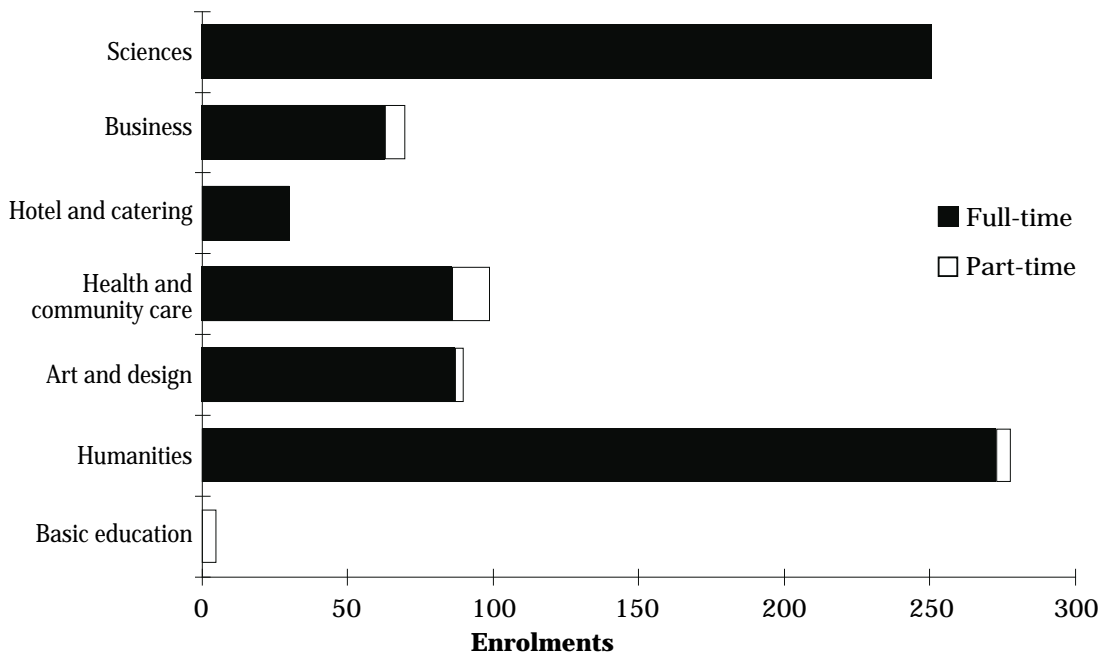


Figure 4

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

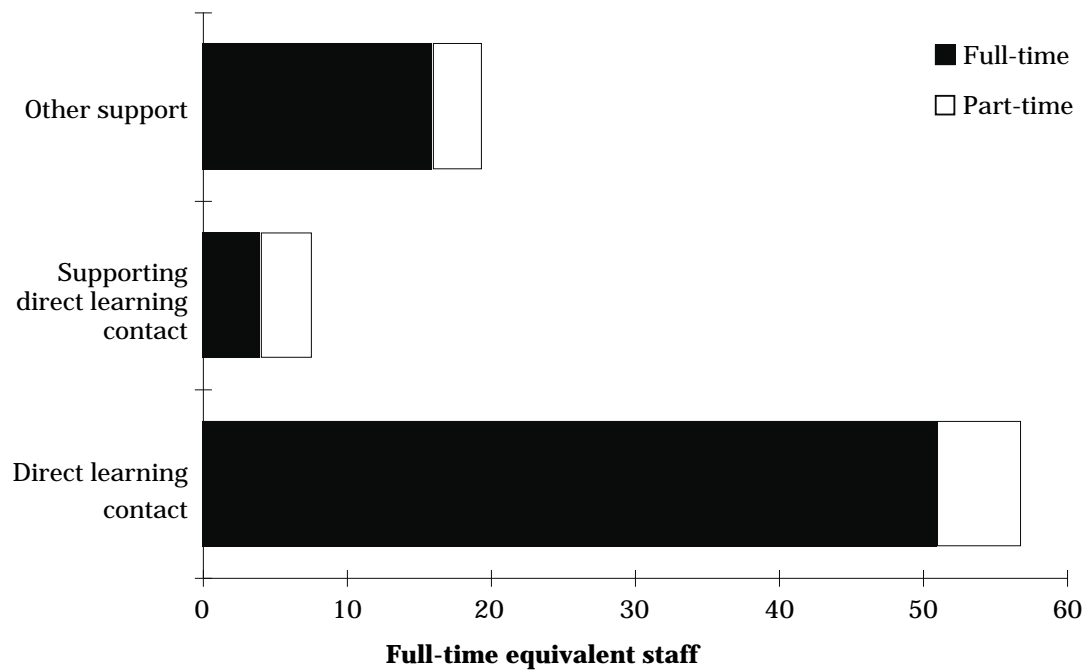
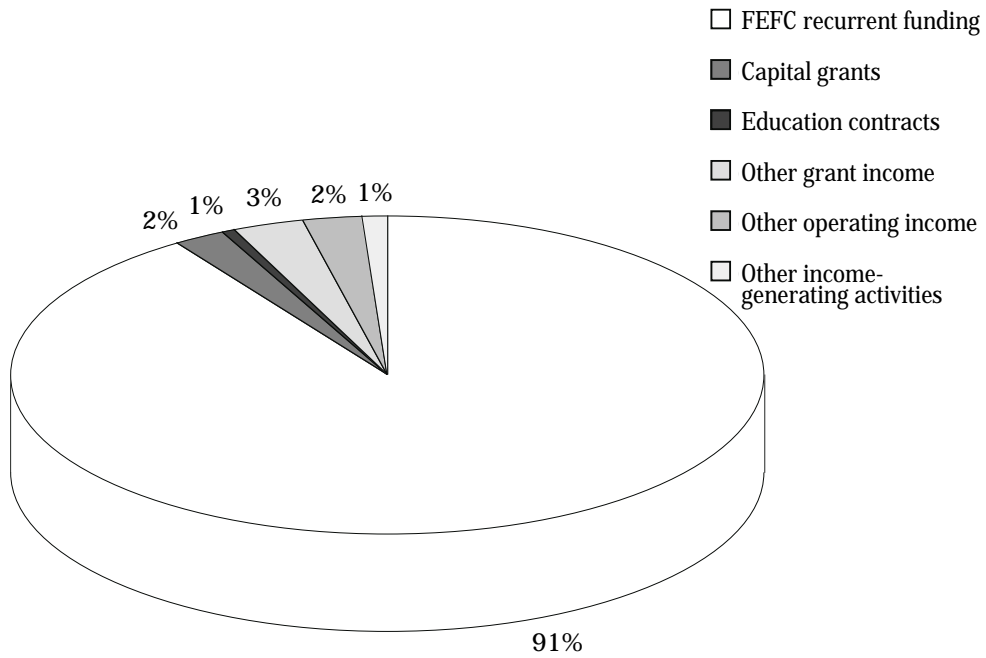


Figure 5

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

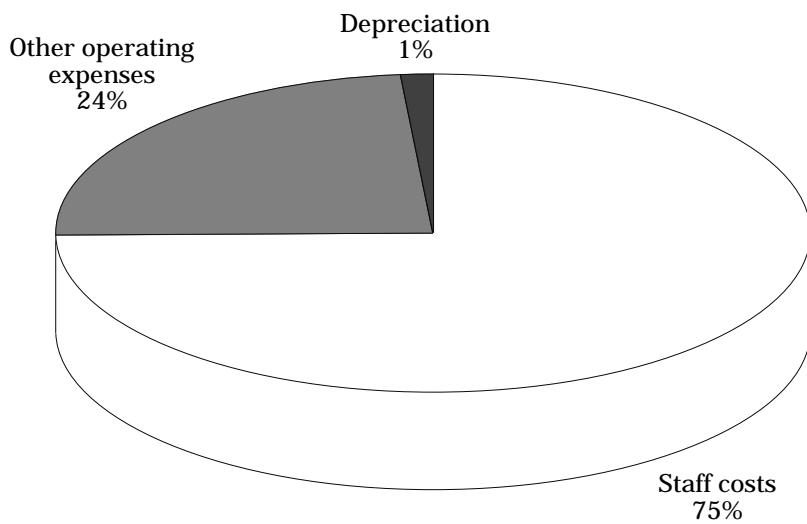


Income: £3,893,000

Note: this chart excludes £8,000 tuition fees.

Figure 6

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



Expenditure: £4,038,000

Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
September 1995