

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Weymouth College

June 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.*

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 0203 863000
Fax 0203 863100*

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 40/94

WEYMOUTH COLLEGE

SOUTH WEST REGION

Inspected December 1993 and January and March 1994

Summary

Weymouth College, Dorset, is the major provider of academic and vocational education for 16-19 year old students in south and west Dorset and is increasingly successful in attracting adult students. The governing body is supportive and effective. The college is responsive to the needs of students with learning difficulties. There are strong links with local schools. Effective teaching and student support, delivered by well-qualified and experienced staff, help to ensure high levels of achievement in most curriculum areas. Students' results in external examinations are good. The college has some good quality teaching accommodation and well-resourced libraries. Student life is enriched by a varied programme of extra curricular activities. The college is working within a sound framework to develop its quality assurance although there are inconsistencies in the operation of existing procedures. It should ensure that the current restructuring of senior management results in an effective team approach to strategic planning. The college should strengthen its management information systems to ensure the greater reliability and availability of information. Other weaknesses include the lack of an effective overall marketing strategy and the poor access to rooms and buildings for students with restricted mobility.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	2	Hairdressing	3
Information technology	3		
Construction	1	Creative and performing arts	1
Engineering	2	Humanities	2
		Community studies	2
Business and administration	3	Adult education	2
		Foundation studies	2
Travel, tourism & leisure	2		
Hotel and catering	3		

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INTRODUCTION

1 Weymouth College, Dorset, was inspected over the period December 1993 to March 1994. In December and January 13 inspectors spent 35 days inspecting specialist curriculum areas. Aspects of cross-college provision were subsequently inspected by a team of eight inspectors who spent 28 inspector days in the college during February and March 1994. Inspectors visited 206 learning sessions, examined samples of students' work and held discussions with governors, college staff, students, parents, local employers and representatives of the Dorset Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

2 The inspection was carried out according to 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 Weymouth College occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response has not been available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Weymouth College was established in 1985 as a tertiary institution for post-16 education and training. Situated in the town of Weymouth, it operates on two sites at Newstead Road and Cranford Avenue, which are two miles apart. The college is responsible for education services at the Verne prison, Portland and at two young offenders' institutions Portland and Guy's Marsh.

4 At the time of the inspection, there were 5,501 enrolments, including 2,124 students who were studying full time. Enrolments by age and level of study are shown in figures 1 and 2, respectively. The college employed 356 full-time equivalent staff, 212 of whom were teachers (figure 3).

5 The college is organised into 11 sectors. There are eight curriculum-based sectors offering full and part-time courses: business and catering studies, community studies, construction, creative and performing arts, engineering and electronics, foundation studies, humanities, and science and mathematics. The other three sectors are the flexible learning centre which sells training and consultancy; the information technology unit which is responsible for co-ordinating and procuring resources and systems as well as offering courses, and 'Train West', the college's response to the TEC initiative on vocational programmes for youth training and the unemployed. Full-time equivalent enrolments by curriculum area and mode of attendance are shown in figure 4.

6 The senior management team comprises the principal and three senior managers for curriculum and student affairs, personnel planning and quality, and resources. The college management team is made up of senior managers, heads of section and the cross-college co-ordinators for information technology, work experience placements, curriculum, staff

development, quality assurance and the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) matrix.

7 The catchment area for the college is primarily south and west Dorset, including Weymouth and Portland, Dorchester, Bridport, Sherborne, Lyme Regis and Beaminster. The area has a population of approximately 147,000, which includes more than 61,000 for Weymouth and Portland alone. Some specialist courses recruit further afield. Courses in stonemasonry, for example, have developed as a result of the college's proximity to Portland and these attract students nationally and internationally.

8 As a tertiary establishment, the college's core market is for full-time 16-19 year olds. The percentage of 16 year olds staying in full-time education and training in the area is approximately 80 per cent. Of the 700 students leaving the four local 11-16 comprehensive schools in July 1994, 503 transferred to the college. The college took 264 students, approximately 18 per cent of their leavers, from other neighbouring schools and a further 282 students, 19 per cent of their leavers, from independent schools and other schools further away in north and west Dorset. The college also recruits from schools catering for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The main competitors for school leavers are the sixth forms of schools in local towns. The nearest colleges are Bournemouth and Poole College of Further Education and Yeovil College, 29 miles and 28 miles away, respectively.

9 Ninety-six per cent of firms in Dorset employ fewer than 25 people, and 15 per cent fewer than six people. The local job centre advertises employment opportunities in leisure, travel and tourism and catering but many of these positions are temporary and part-time. According to the 1991 census, the largest local employment categories for south and west Dorset were distribution, hotel and catering and other services, followed by engineering and banking and business services.

10 Employment trends in the area are downwards, in part as a consequence of the running down of the local defence industry. The unemployment rate in the travel-to-work area of Weymouth is 9.3 per cent and in Weymouth/Portland it is 8.8 per cent.

11 In its mission statement, Weymouth College aims to 'meet the needs of the community by providing a quality service which achieves positive outcomes'. The statement refers to proper initial guidance and induction; excellent on-course support and guidance; close work with schools, parents, employers and local interests to serve needs and maintain breadth of provision; continuous improvements in efficient and effective use of resources; maximising the professional and personal effectiveness of staff; and commitment to quality through all aspects of the college's operations.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

12 The college offers a good range of full-time courses in vocational and academic areas. There are 36 GCE A level, 22 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) and 30 GCSE subjects, some 40 full-time vocational courses, and three full-time courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A programme of additional activities offers students an appropriate range of opportunities to develop core skills including information technology. Additional subject support is available, for example, for GCE A level students seeking entry to Oxford and Cambridge universities.

13 There is a variety of part-time courses, both day and evening, in vocational and academic studies and leisure activities. These include GCE A level, business and management qualifications, languages and health care. The flexible learning centre provides development and training for individuals and businesses. There are examples of the accreditation of prior learning in the flexible learning centre and in the 'Train West' section, but its development to date has been limited. Adult returners' access to higher education courses have been developed in partnership with the University of Southampton. The college acts as a sponsor for the south and west areas of the local education authority (LEA) adult education service, but there is no mechanism for the joint planning of LEA and college provision and no formal arrangements for student progression. At the time of the inspection, part-time enrolments at the college accounted for 394 full-time equivalents, approximately 16 per cent of all full-time equivalent enrolments.

14 A good range of leisure and cultural activities adds a valuable dimension to college life. The Cranford Avenue campus is the venue for a variety of amateur and professional music and drama events. The sports programme involves regular team fixtures, and the college is a member of the British Association for Sport in Colleges.

15 There are appropriate systems in place for the identification of courses and support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Greenhill Centre on the Cranford Avenue Site, part of the foundation studies sector, offers a range of specialist courses; the college co-ordinator organises learning support, and the 'work preparation' programme provides tutor support for students in the workplace. Each element of provision operates effectively, but the links between them are insufficiently developed. For example, the issue of routes for student progression between the planned General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in the foundation sector and GNVQ provision in other sectors have not been addressed.

16 A comprehensive equal opportunities policy statement, approved by the corporation, is supported by detailed procedural documentation. The policy has been disseminated widely. Associated literature includes information on students' rights and responsibilities. There is an active

equal opportunities committee which is currently involved in the drafting of the college charter. Among its past achievements was the part it played in establishing a college nursery. The committee should have better quality data on student retention rates and the needs of various community groups if it is to carry out its monitoring role successfully.

17 The college is to appoint a new manager with responsibility for marketing. Present arrangements are transitional. Sector staff have a reasonable knowledge of likely demands in their areas of work, but the college lacks an overall strategy for market research, which would enable it to conduct an effective review of existing programmes and consider new developments. There are examples of innovative work by the catering sector and by tutors teaching brickwork in preparing and marketing nationally material for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). The opening of the Cranford Avenue library on Saturday mornings is proving an effective means of marketing as well as providing a valuable service to the community.

18 There is a high level of awareness of national educational initiatives, encouraged by items published in a useful college newsletter. GNVQs are being introduced across the college but progress varies between the different sectors depending on the availability of programmes and tutors' assessments of potential markets.

19 Links with employers are generally good. In both the flexible learning centre and the information technology unit there is a good range of courses for local businesses. The college's research on employers' future training needs is limited but the recent employers' brochure and questionnaire has been seen by employers as a useful development. Links with the Dorset TEC are positive.

20 Work experience forms an integral part of vocational programmes. There are examples of good practice in science, and on the supported employment programme for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In other areas, work experience is not always related effectively to students' career aspirations. The recent appointment of a work experience co-ordinator for the college is intended to address many of the inconsistencies which presently exist in the planning and monitoring of work placements.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

21 The college has a committed, hard-working and supportive governing body. There are 19 governors including the principal, and staff and student representatives. Other governors represent a range of interests and experience: banking, accountancy, broadcasting, hotel and catering, civil engineering, secondary education, law and personnel management. Members of the governing body have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and of educational principles. Their expertise is well used and they are positively involved in college life. The board of governors has appropriate subcommittees, all with clear terms of reference.

22 The present organisation of the college is the result of a major restructuring which took place three years ago. Large departments were replaced by smaller sectors and a number of cross-college responsibilities were created. Sector heads form a significant and effective level of management within the existing structure. Senior managers, sector heads and cross-college co-ordinators meet regularly as a college management team, providing an important forum for management issues. There are also regular minuted meetings of sector and course teams. Part-time day and evening provision is developed and managed by the heads of sectors. This provision is well-organised at the sector level, but lacks central co-ordination.

23 There is widespread good practice within the sectors which is not being effectively co-ordinated at senior management level. For example, curriculum planning and development has been largely dependent on the work of sector heads and the college development group. Senior managers do not always operate effectively as a team in discussing and planning strategy.

24 The number of senior managers is being reduced from four to two. It will be important for the college to ensure that it has the capacity at a senior level to address major co-ordination issues so as to avoid inappropriate delegation of further work to sector heads, who already carry major academic, pastoral and personnel responsibilities.

25 Staff at all levels have been involved in the college's strategic planning. Last year, each sector produced its own plan. Monitoring reports were produced in the autumn term and these were used as the basis for a draft of the college's strategic plan, subsequently discussed by the governing body. Sectors have now produced operational plans which cross-refer to the college plan and identify resource implications. The objectives in the strategic plan are not costed.

26 There are weaknesses in the operation of management information systems which are creating difficulties for managers at all levels. Although a wide range of information is recorded centrally, and available on request, what is produced is not well organised and staff find the formats difficult to understand. The college is working to resolve the technical difficulties and to overcome the general lack of confidence in the system's capacity to produce useful information. It should also establish clearly what the requirements are for management information at different levels of the organisation.

27 In 1992-93, the college's unit of resource was £2,574 per weighted full-time equivalent student. The median for general education and tertiary colleges was £2,444. The college receives 72 per cent of its income from the FEFC. Summaries of its income and expenditure are shown in figures 5 and 6.

28 The college operates a largely centralised approach to resource allocation. All full-time and part-time staffing resources are centrally

managed. Sectors have devolved budgets for materials and staff travel. There is a bidding process for books and equipment. Regular financial reports are received by the finance, policy and resource sub-committee of the board. However, sector heads and course managers are unclear about the operation of the college budget and the rationale for resource allocation. An effective system for monitoring the allocation of staff time to courses has been developed. Unit costs are in the process of being calculated.

29 Enrolment figures for autumn 1993 showed a shortfall from targets of approximately 3 per cent, largely in numbers of full-time students. Successful action on the part of the college has resulted in an increase in enrolments since that time. If the college is to take advantage of the high proportion of students remaining in full-time education after the age of 16, it should set achievable targets, improve its market research and continue to look carefully at the range of courses and modes of study which are attractive to adult learners.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

30 The creation of a centralised system has improved the management of student information. There are efficient procedures for tracking full-time students from first application to their allocation to tutor and subject groups. Applicants are interviewed by trained college interviewers equipped to give impartial advice. All full-time applicants are re-interviewed before enrolment and subsequent information is collated by the central admissions unit. The new system worked well last September. In the humanities sector, for example, only one student had not been placed on a course by the first day of term. The admissions unit also monitors all early course changes, which occur only after students have received counselling and advice from personal tutors and subject teachers. Staff value the centralised system, because they can readily obtain information on recruitment to their courses. The installation of a new computer network should further improve efficiency.

31 For adults and part-time students, first contact with the college can be through a variety of means: word of mouth, publicity in a local shop or library, or through the workplace. Those needing guidance spoke highly of the service they had received. Students on adult returners' access or flexible learning centre courses can opt for detailed diagnostic testing to establish their learning needs. Some accreditation of prior learning is also undertaken by the centre.

32 The full-time induction programme is thorough and effective. Students are well informed about available provision for support and guidance, administrative arrangements, and the extensive range of additional college activities. The degree to which students receive further curriculum-based induction, for example into the skills and methodologies of particular GCE A level subjects, varies.

33 Full-time students are usually taught by their personal tutors which strengthens the relationship between academic and pastoral concerns. A comprehensive handbook for tutors helps to ensure that practices are consistent. An efficient 'notices of concern' system facilitates effective communication between staff on any matter affecting students.

34 Staff new to the personal tutor role are inducted by trained and experienced colleagues, four of whom have had further training which enables them to contribute much to the college's tutor development group and to staff development. The institution has a high level of commitment to the role of the personal tutor.

35 Effective learning support is offered throughout the college. Most sectors organise workshops within which individuals or groups can receive help. Part-time students were particularly appreciative of the patience and skill routinely demonstrated by lecturers offering informal help. For those with more general learning difficulties, a well-publicised learning workshop offers specific learning programmes and help with devising strategies for coping with their work.

36 Student guidance and personal counselling arrangements are well-known and used. The student guidance team operates in a mutually supportive and efficient manner and has ready access to specialised professional assistance. The team keep themselves up to date on the financial and social welfare context of students and provide an excellent service. Part-time students usually use either their subject teachers or the student guidance team of counsellors for personal and pastoral support.

37 Individual careers guidance is provided by the local education authority service in collaboration with the student guidance team. A careers workshop has attracted national recognition. This facility is offered to tutorial groups and is effective in allowing young people to appreciate the range of careers opportunities open to them. It is less well used in the college's vocational sectors. There is a good careers section in the library, with information technology support. Some part-time students were not aware of this resource.

38 Advice and guidance on higher education opportunities is of a high standard. There are several occasions in the year when students visit universities. Some of these are institutions with which staff have particularly good personal links. Contacts with former students mean that those going to visit universities may be shown round by an ex-Weymouth College student. The support provided for students, after they have received their A level results, is highly effective.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

39 Of the 206 learning sessions inspected, 63 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. The inspection grades awarded to sessions are summarised below.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A/AS level		9	24	12	1	1	47
GCSE		3	5	9	3	0	20
GNVQ		3	6	3	0	0	12
NVQ		3	10	8	4	0	25
Other		18	49	25	8	2	102
Total		36	94	57	16	3	206

40 Working relationships between staff and students were generally friendly and productive.

41 The more successful learning sessions were characterised by an appropriate range of well-planned tasks. An effective balance was struck between building students' confidence and challenging them with well-paced and varied work. Teachers were accurate in their estimates of the degree to which students could take responsibility for their own learning, and guidance was firm and sensitive, encouraging students to express themselves and develop their skills. Productive links were made between theory and practice. Practical work was well supported with information and effectively followed up in terms of analysis and explanation. Teachers demonstrated a high level of specialist and technical expertise which students used to their advantage and which earned their respect. Sessions had clear objectives. Group discussion was well managed. Students faced rigorous questioning on their responses. Some teachers were skilled in drawing on students' own experiences. Successful examples of students working independently included an evening class on bricklaying, software use by geography students, a history course-book produced in house, a science class for hairdressers, and rehearsal and production work in performing arts and media. In some sessions, teachers made good use of wall displays to inform and support learning activities.

42 Weaknesses evident in the less successful learning sessions included some dull information-giving, the slow pace of work, a lack of questioning of students, the failure to check on the progress students were making, and low expectations of students which resulted in work which held little challenge or interest for them. In one area of work, there was some poor sequencing of practical and competence-based learning, resulting in confusion and repetition for students. A small minority of class discussions lacked clear objectives and teachers failed to organise activities effectively to meet the needs of students with varying levels of ability.

43 Many of the schemes of work were thorough and well organised. In some cases, these had been effectively shared with students. In others, particularly in some GCE and GCSE subjects, students were not aware of the course content, course objectives and methods of assessment contained

in such schemes. Some students benefited from exceptionally well-planned individual programmes. Assessment procedures were thorough and linked to well-prepared assignments and challenging tasks calling for student initiative.

44 Assessment criteria were clear to students on vocational courses and in most other areas. Teachers' comments on student assignments were full and detailed. Consequently, students had detailed written advice to help them raise the standard of their work. Written work was usually returned promptly. Students valued teachers' help with assignments. Some commented on teachers' willingness to find time for discussion outside the working day.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

45 Students were reaching appropriate standards in their classwork and written assignments. The majority were highly motivated and committed to their studies. Some students were questioning teachers as well as their peers confidently and effectively. In many areas, effective course design and well-supported independent learning were helping students to acquire and strengthen their basic skills.

46 Part-time adult students in A level and GCSE classes were highly responsive and quickly developed confidence and self-esteem. The proportion of full-time adult students enrolled on media, music diploma, and performing arts courses is considerable and in these groups and in others, students of widely differing ages were working together successfully.

47 Students in art and design, community studies, performing arts, information technology, media and humanities were amongst the most highly-motivated, well informed and enthusiastic. Students in these areas were also amongst those showing a particularly high standard of practical achievement.

48 The achievements of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are of a high standard and all students have the opportunity to gain nationally-recognised certification and accreditation.

49 Students' achievements in vocational areas were generally satisfactory and sometimes good. There were several courses on which all students gained their qualification, amongst them mechanical and civil engineering, building and construction, hotel and catering, leisure studies and media studies. Eighty-seven per cent of the 175 students, age 16-18, in their final year of study for Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) or City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI) national diplomas achieved their qualifications. This placed the college in the top 40 per cent of all institutions within the further education sector.

50 In 1993 the full-time students taking GCE A level examinations, achieved a pass rate, grades A-E, of 82.5 per cent. This compared with a national average of 80 per cent for sixth form colleges and 66 per cent for

other colleges within the sector. Especially good results were achieved in media studies, art with art history, some areas of mathematics, and English, and there were also good levels of achievements in history, Spanish and sports studies and science. Only a few subjects had pass rates significantly below the national average. Tables published recently by the Department for Education show that the 290 students aged 16-18, entered for two or more A levels, achieved an average points score of 12.3 (where A = 10, E = 2), a performance which put the college in the top third of institutions within the sector.

51 In 1993, GCSE full-time students achieved an average pass-rate, grades A-C, of 64 per cent, compared with a national average of 50 per cent for the sector. Pass rates in individual subjects varied widely. There were disappointing results in intermediate mathematics, satisfactory results in English, and good results in home economics, drama, Spanish, history, and community studies. Part-time students' results in English and mathematics were also good.

52 Adult returners' access to higher education courses had high completion and success rates. Levels of completion and success were lower on the access to science course. Students following the access to jobs programme achieved better results in the GCSE English examination than other groups of students taking the same examination.

53 Other distinctive student achievements include: a video project on the plight of Sudanese people, which received national media coverage; the bronze medal for masonry, one of the three medals won by the United Kingdom at the Skills Olympics in Taiwan, and the significant numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who gained the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

54 The college is developing an effective quality framework which builds upon existing good practice. The framework is already increasing the consistency of quality management. Currently operating as a pilot study, it is scheduled for full implementation in September 1994. At present, the college has a set of agreed quality assurance procedures and a general consensus on their implementation and development rather than a coherent policy. Staff awareness of quality issues is high as a result of the work of the college quality co-ordinator, a cross-sector team which the co-ordinator chairs and the progressive introduction of the new framework.

55 Outside the current pilot, there are considerable variations in the degree to which courses are reviewed, students' opinions are sought and action plans are generated. The GCE A level programme in the humanities sector, for example, sets itself general targets for retention and examination success but the individual subject teams are not working to specific targets. Best practice, often derived from BTEC moderation requirements, is

effective in respect of setting targets and generating improvements. However, there are no standard requirements for programmes and sectors to produce course reviews, action plans or any other kind of quality report. In some programmes, regular course review and evaluation take place in minuted meetings of course teams, but in other programmes, such activities have yet to develop.

56 Performance indicators are used to varying degrees in different parts of the institution. Retention rates, for example, are not systematically analysed although within sectors there is frequently a high level of awareness concerning student non-completion and the reasons for it. Similarly, information on students' destinations, although collected and used within the sectors, is incomplete. Full implementation of the quality framework will require the systematic collection and analysis of non-completion and destinations data.

57 The college has committed itself to joining the Advanced Level Information Scheme (ALIS) developed by the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. At present, a few areas are experimenting with value added analysis, measuring the extent of students' achievements at college by comparing their qualifications on entry with their performance in final examinations.

58 Students are increasingly being asked for their views on the quality of provision. Such views are collected in a variety of ways; for example, through meetings with tutors, individual student progress reviews and subject-based questionnaires. The quality framework requires a three-stage questionnaire process for recording student perceptions of college, and additional questionnaires for employers and parents are also being piloted. When fully implemented, an effective range of methods for sampling opinion should be in place. The degree to which students feed views into course review meetings varies considerably. Some programmes operate a system of student representation at staff and course team meetings.

59 New courses are required to go through an internal validation process which has been useful in clarifying the potential market, estimating resource demands and providing a curriculum rationale. The college group responsible for internal validation is re-defining its terms of reference to take account of the quality framework. A different college group validates records of achievement for each course, a process which has been useful in clarifying the function and improving the quality of the records.

60 Teaching and support staff are familiar with the Charter for Further Education. The college is in the process of creating its own student charter. Evidence is being collated by a working party led by the college's quality co-ordinator. Information on equal opportunities and students' rights is already published and available to staff and students.

61 The college has made progress in implementing an action plan to meet the quality assurance requirements of Dorset TEC. The college has

made a commitment to the achievement of the British Standards quality control kitemark (BS5750) for 'Train West' by 1994 and the flexible learning centre by 1995.

62 A well-established staff appraisal programme is linked to the formal analysis of staff development needs. At appraisal, staff identify their training needs in discussion with line managers, who then relate individual needs to institutional priorities. Staff development requests have to be cross-referenced to the strategic plan for approval by line managers and training managers. Institutional priorities are also addressed by an effective and varied in-house programme. The achievement of the Investors in People award, the first in the country for a further education college, has confirmed and developed the strengths of the staff development programme. Individual staff development activities are evaluated, as part of the evaluation of the entire programme, and an annual report is submitted to senior management.

63 There is an induction programme for full-time and part-time staff which includes a mentoring system. All staff receive an informative newsletter which deals extensively with training and quality development issues. Staff development outcomes are effectively disseminated and staff are well informed about opportunities for training. Development and training have a high profile throughout the college and activities are well resourced.

64 Quality assurance at Weymouth College is developing rapidly. At present, the effectiveness of procedures varies considerably. There is much good practice, but quality assurance is unlikely to become systematic and consistent until the framework is fully operational. The framework itself is thorough; its objectives and the individual responsibilities within it are clearly defined, and a timetable is established for action.

RESOURCES

Staffing

65 Full-time teaching staff are generally well-qualified and experienced. Most hold a degree or comparable professional qualification, and a teaching qualification. Teaching staff are effectively deployed and there is a good match of expertise to teaching groups.

64 Support staff, including secretaries and technicians, are allocated to teaching sectors or cross-college functions. Clerical and technical support within sectors is generally satisfactory, although the increasing demands for equipment maintenance will require regular review of the skills and deployment of technicians.

65 The number of technicians supporting cross-college information technology is inadequate, and the development of communication networks and the increasing use of information technology in the curriculum is exacerbating the problem.

Equipment

66 Despite substantial investment in recent years, the amount and quality of specialist equipment vary in their adequacy. There is good specialist equipment in humanities and performing arts, and for video and satellite provision in languages. In engineering, hairdressing, beauty therapy and the language laboratories much of the equipment is old. A programme for the replacement and enhancement of equipment is being implemented. In some areas, arrangements for the repair and maintenance of equipment are unsatisfactory.

67 A strategy for developing information technology has been in place for some years and has been implemented to good effect over the last three years. There are over 300 work stations for students, giving a favourable student-to-work-station ratio of approximately 7:1. The majority of machines are of a high specification. There are open-access computer facilities at both sites but the location of many work stations in rooms timetabled for classes detracts from their effective use. Communications networks are being developed for both teaching and administration.

68 Comprehensive library facilities are available at both sites. In addition to books, journals, reports and reference materials, staff have organised useful collections of newspaper cuttings and topic folders. Other learning resources include CD ROM, computers, videos and audio cassettes. The library also has a shop selling stamps, stationary and art materials. Students are encouraged to use the inter-library loan service. They can also borrow equipment. The library is well managed and meets the needs of staff and students, although there is a shortage of study spaces at Newstead Road. Stock is transferred between sites three times per day. The library is open in the evenings and on Saturday mornings in term-time at Cranford Avenue. Informal links with teachers in the sectors are effective in identifying subject requirements.

Accommodation

69 Accommodation at Cranford Avenue is generally well furnished and decorated, and maintained to a suitable standard. Many of the teaching rooms at Newstead Road have been upgraded to provide appropriate general and specialist accommodation. Standards of cleaning on both sites are good. The college has adopted an approach to energy conservation by installing computer-controlled monitoring systems. Some cross-college service areas, for example the Cranford Avenue library, the sports centre and the nursery, provide a particularly high standard of accommodation. Teaching areas for engineering, performing arts, travel and tourism, science laboratories and the flexible learning centre are also of a high standard. Areas of weakness include the accommodation for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, hairdressing, and hotel and catering. Staff accommodation is generally good.

70 Many general-purpose teaching rooms are small and in some areas of work there is a mismatch between the size of the group and the space

available. Refectory accommodation at Newstead Road is poor. Opening hours of both refectories do not cater for evening students. There are no common room facilities on either college site, although the students consulted during the inspection had widely varying perceptions of the need for such facilities. Access for disabled students at both sites is poor. There are no lifts and few ramps. The cross-college co-ordinator for students with special learning difficulties and/or disabilities can bid each year for funds to adapt specialist teaching areas.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

71 The college is making good progress towards achieving its mission. Its particular strengths are:

- an effective and supportive governing body
- strong links with local schools
- good pre-course guidance and induction for full-time students
- high quality academic and pastoral support for students including careers and guidance on higher education opportunities
- the generally good quality of teaching and learning
- good results in external examinations
- the varied programme of extra-curricular activities available to students
- the creation of an effective quality framework
- a responsive and well-resourced staff development programme
- good teaching accommodation
- the well-resourced library provision.

72 If it is to improve further the quality of its provision, the college should address the following issues:

- a more effective approach to strategic planning on the part of the senior management team
- the lack of consistent and readily-available management information
- the costing of proposals in the college's strategic plan
- the development of an overall marketing strategy
- greater consistency in the operation of existing and developing quality assurance procedures
- improved access to rooms and buildings for those with impaired mobility.

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 Full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)

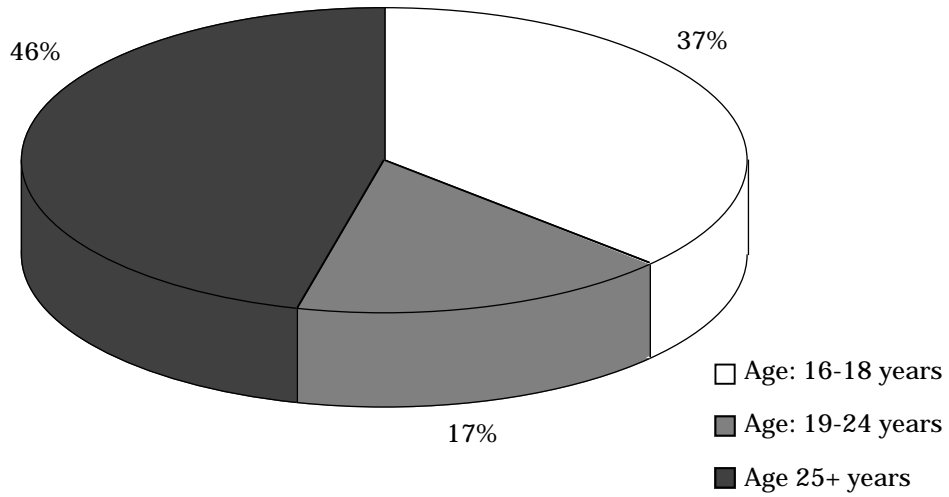
 - 5 Recurrent income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 6 Estimated 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

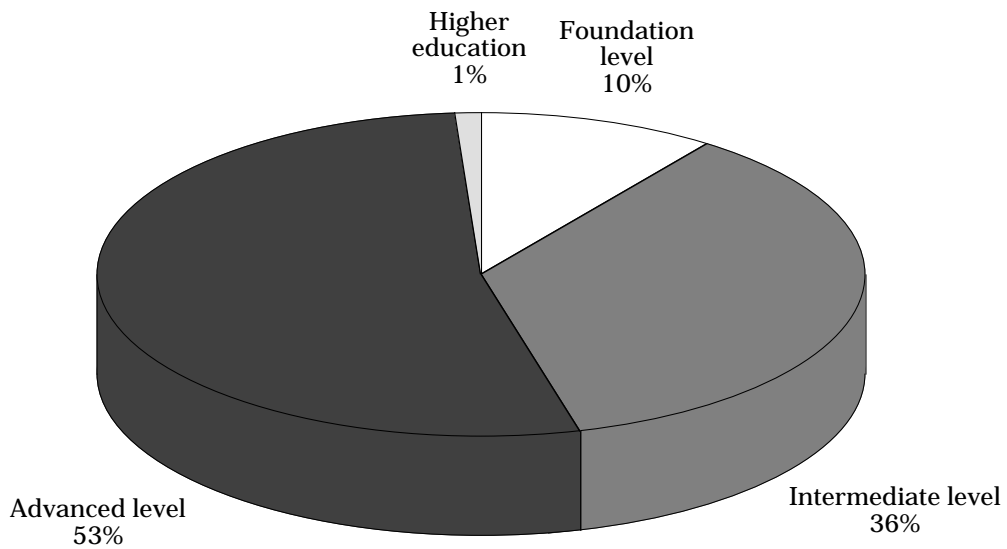
Weymouth College: percentage enrolments by age (1993-94)



Enrolments: 5,501

Figure 2

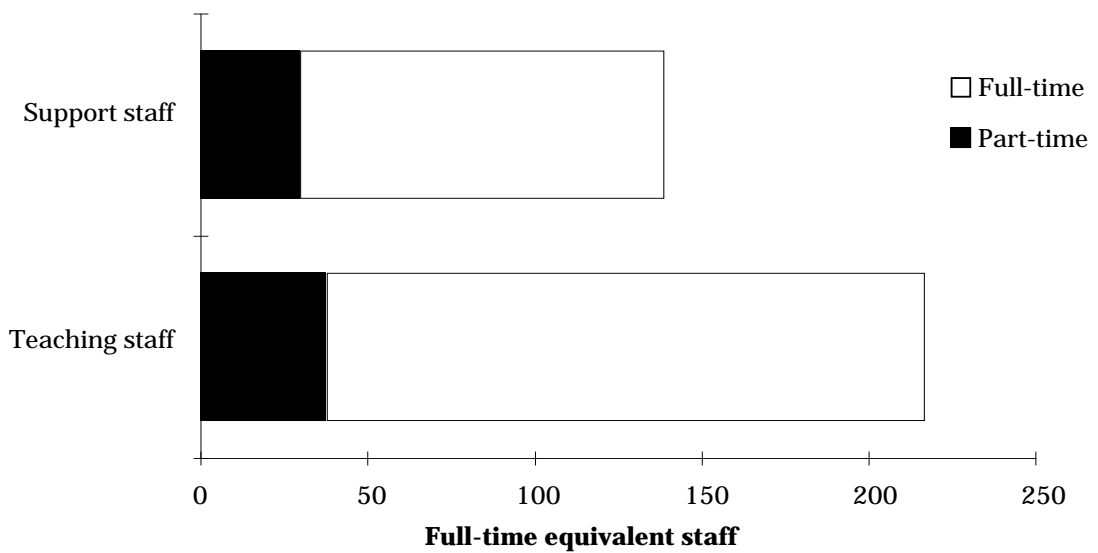
Weymouth College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1993-94)



Enrolments: 5,501

Figure 3

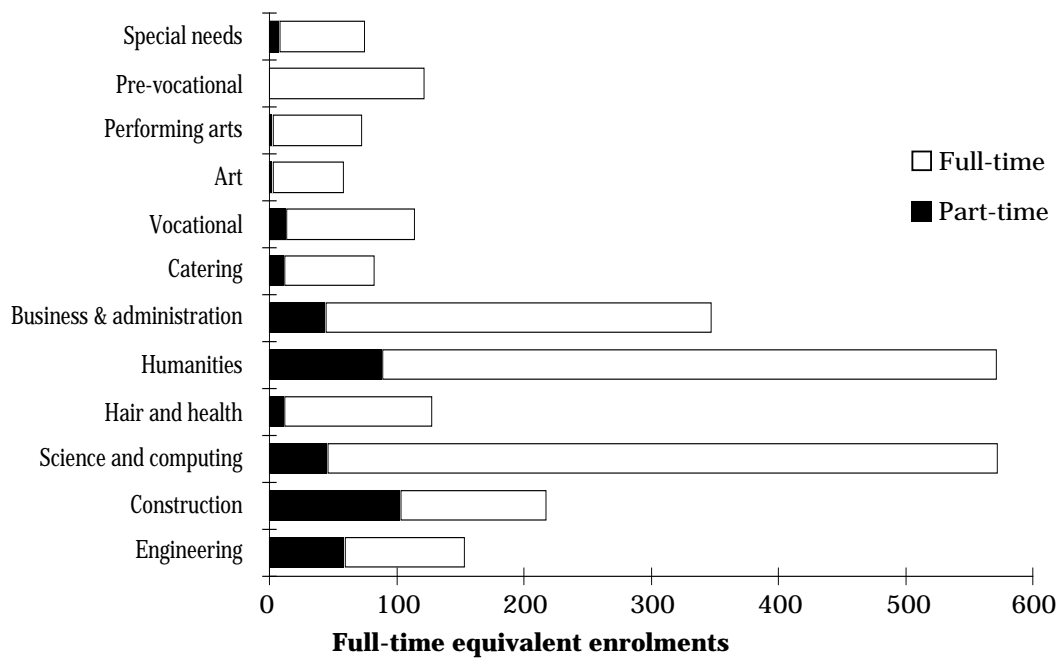
Weymouth College: staff profile-staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 356

Figure 4

Weymouth College: full-time equivalent enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent enrolments: 2,518

Figure 5

Weymouth College: recurrent income (for 16 months to July 1994)

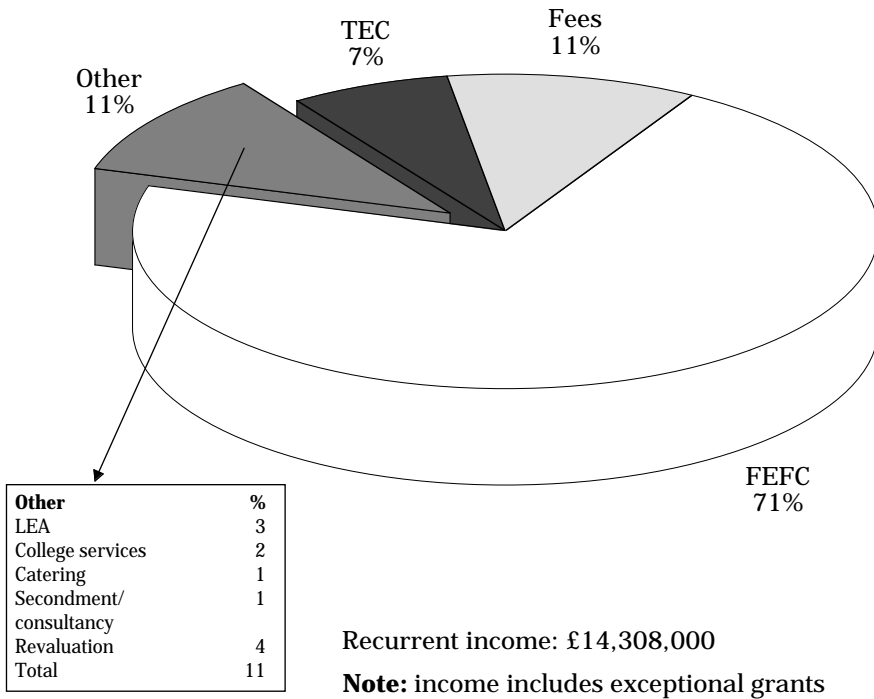
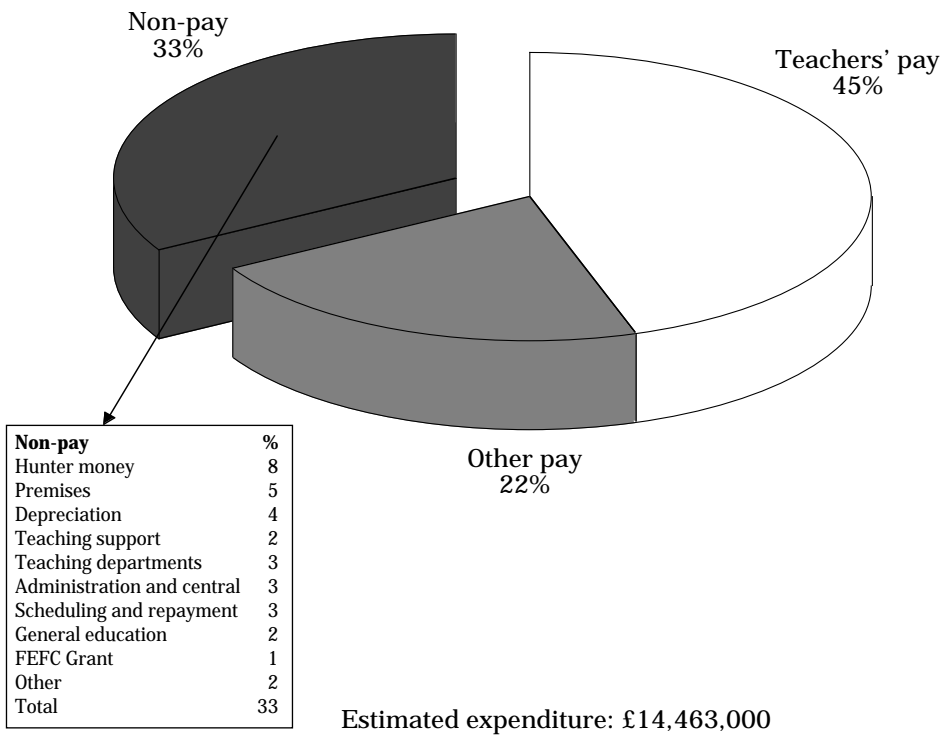


Figure 6

Weymouth College: estimated expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
June 1994