

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**Xaverian
College**

April 1996

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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

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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.*

By June 1995, some 208 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 208 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-95

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	60%	28%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	13%	51%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	11%	56%	29%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 41/96

XAVERIAN COLLEGE
NORTH WEST REGION
Inspected May-December 1995

Summary

Xaverian College in Manchester is a large Catholic sixth form college. It provides mainly for Catholic pupils from Manchester. Over 80 per cent of students follow advanced level courses, usually at GCE A level. GNVQs have been introduced recently. Arrangements to help new students to decide on appropriate courses are helpful. Students receive valuable support whilst at the college and careers guidance is effective. The college has gone through a difficult time recently because of the two-year absence of the principal. Senior staff have worked hard and successfully on the day-to-day management of the college but important decisions have not been taken. Governors are committed to the college and its mission but have not fully adjusted to their new responsibilities. Management throughout the college is not rigorous enough and teachers have too much independence. This results in inconsistencies and different standards. Although teachers are well qualified and experienced they have too little in-service training. Standards in teaching and in examination results vary from excellent to poor. Systems to ensure consistently good teaching and examination results as well as other quality improvements are being developed but, as yet, they are rudimentary. There is good specialist equipment but some general classrooms are poorly equipped and furnished. Information technology resources are adequate. The library is a pleasant place to study but has too few books. Some of the accommodation is inappropriate and too many spaces cannot be used for teaching. The college should explore ways of making better use of its accommodation.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science	3	Humanities and modern languages	2
Mathematics/computing	3	English	2
Business	2	Sociology and psychology	3
Art and design	3		

INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of Xaverian College took place in four stages during 1995. Science, mathematics and computing were inspected in May; enrolment and induction in September; the remaining specialist areas in November and aspects of cross-college provision in December. The inspection took 59 inspector days.

2 Inspectors visited 146 lessons, some tutorials and an assembly. They examined samples of students' work and talked to students, staff and governors. One inspector attended two meetings of the governors. Inspectors took account of the college's mission, and its strategic plan, self-assessment report and charter as well as examining a range of other documents, reports and minutes provided by the college. They had meetings with parents, pupils (past and present), local headteachers, clergy, employers, and representatives from Manchester Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the careers service. The team also received letters testifying to the strengths of the college.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 Xaverian College in Manchester is a designated Catholic college. It was established as a boys' school in 1862 by the Xaverian Brothers, a religious order founded in Belgium in 1839. It became a sixth form college in 1977. The brothers are the trustees and have until recently worked in the college. The college mission states 'the love of truth and concern for the needs of others must be fundamental to our way of living. The obligation to help students to develop all their talents calls for a commitment on our part to good teaching, dedicated pastoral care and a readiness to relate to students both inside and outside the classroom.'

4 The college grew by 30 per cent from 1981 to 1990. Since designation there has been further controlled growth to the college's present roll of 1,210 students. The college works with eight Catholic associated high schools and, by special agreement, with a local Anglican high school to provide Catholic education for full-time students aged 16 to 19. It shares these partner schools with Loreto College, about three miles away. It also provides places to students from other Manchester schools and from schools further afield, including some in Cheshire and Derbyshire. Over half its students are from associated high schools and three-quarters from Manchester. Catholic applicants and those from its Anglican partner school have priority. Other students, from both other Christian and non-Christian backgrounds, who are happy to accept the Catholic ethos are welcomed, although the college turns down some 200 applications annually to preserve its Catholicity. The college's proportion of minority ethnic students, some of whom are non-Christian, is over 18 per cent as against the city's figure of 13 per cent.

5 Approximately half the local 16 year olds continue with full-time education after the age of 16. This compares with the national staying-on rate in 1994 of 68 per cent. In 1995, Xaverian College's associated high

schools had an average pass rate at GCSE grades A to C of 30 per cent which is higher than the general Manchester average of 23 per cent but significantly below the national average of 43 per cent. The pool from which to recruit students to a college in which General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses predominate is therefore limited. The potential for recruiting more Catholics to the college has slightly increased as the numbers of year 11 pupils in partner Catholic high schools has grown recently.

6 Most students come from economically disadvantaged areas. In the Manchester TEC area, for example, unemployment rates are consistently above regional and national levels. Youth unemployment is 21.9 per cent. The City of Manchester is the thirteenth most deprived local authority in England with the highest proportion of adults on income support and the highest proportion of children in households with no adults earning or only one adult in part-time work. A third of the college's students receive discretionary awards.

7 At the time of the inspection, the college was managed by the acting principal, three senior postholders and seven senior teachers who hold responsibilities across the college. Teaching is organised through 23 departments of unequal size.

8 Over half the students are on humanities courses and 25 per cent on science and mathematics courses. Just under three-quarters of students are on GCE A level courses, 10 per cent on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) advanced courses, 10 per cent on a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) resit course and 7 per cent on GNVQ intermediate courses. Enrolments by age, by level of study and by curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

9 The college's aims are:

- to offer traditional GCE A level and other academic courses of a high quality to enable all students to develop to the full their academic potential
- to offer an alternative progression route through GNVQ courses to students who do not want or who would not benefit from a traditional academic route
- to deliver the full mission of the Xaverian Brothers by maintaining the college student community as one for full-time students.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

10 The college interprets its mission statement as excluding part-time students and adults. Governors, management and staff are reluctant to move away from the well-established areas in which the college feels it has expertise and a reputation for success. This reputation is not wholly supported by the college's examination results.

11 The charter sets out the range of activities which make up a student's experience at the college. Students have a good balance of different educational experiences. They have two compulsory lessons of religious education, a programme of examination courses, timetabled pastoral time with a recommended programme of study, a general studies course and voluntary activities. First-year students have information technology lessons and careers education. There are 29 subjects at GCE A level and 18 at GCSE and any combination of subject choice can be made. Classes are re-timetabled to cater for student preferences. Subjects with low recruitment are dropped.

12 The college offers a range of GNVQ courses. Vocational courses at intermediate level are well established following earlier experience in running the certificate of pre-vocational education and the diploma of vocational education. The college has expanded into GNVQ courses at advanced level since 1993. Currently, over 100 students are on four advanced GNVQ courses and 82 on four intermediate courses, including manufacturing. Just under 20 per cent of students are enrolled on intermediate level courses (GCSE and GNVQ intermediate). This provision does not wholly match the needs of pupils with low attainment in partner high schools. The percentage of pupils leaving Catholic high schools in Manchester with a minimum of five GCSE passes at grade C varies between 11 and 38 per cent. This suggests considerable scope for expansion at intermediate and foundation level.

13 Staff do not clearly understand national targets for education and training or the issues facing the further education sector. The college is uniquely placed to raise aspirations among pupils in Catholic high schools and could do more in this respect than its present rather routine contacts allow. Marketing activity is almost entirely based on promotion, publicity, and careers education in schools. The college does little market research and new markets are hardly considered.

14 The college is in a Catholic consortium with its high schools and their primary schools to provide a continuum of Catholic education from 5 to 19. Arrangements for advice and transfer for pupils from these schools are good; a designated member of the senior staff has responsibility for each school. Partnership activities include:

- help with careers programmes in years 9 and 10
- a 'roadshow' to publicise the college and its admission procedures which includes a professionally prepared audio-visual presentation
- open days which offer information about the subject departments, and are successfully organised on Saturdays and Sundays to help parents attend
- taster days for students who have been offered a place.

Outside Manchester, the college has links with four Catholic high schools. Headteachers find the link arrangements helpful but consider that the

college has been slow to develop courses other than GCE A level. They express concern that student numbers appear to have increased through the acceptance of non-Catholics to do GCE A levels, rather than by attracting Catholics on to courses more appropriate for their needs and abilities.

15 Most pupils who receive an offer of a place subsequently enrol, particularly those from partner schools. Thirty-five per cent of all year 11 pupils in these schools applied and 28 per cent enrolled. Thirty per cent of all applicants in 1995 were non-Catholics, but the college tries to limit its recruitment of non-Catholics to 20 per cent. Funds from the Manchester TEC have helped to establish a tracking system to identify and analyse the postcodes of applicants who do not subsequently enrol. The conclusion drawn is that applicants who would have to travel from over four miles away are least likely to enrol. Discussions are underway with the local education authority (LEA) in an attempt to preserve financial assistance for students' travel.

16 Students choose voluntary activities from a programme of 30 sports, arts, and social service activities. Some of these are organised voluntarily by staff during lunchtimes and after college, but the majority take place on Wednesday afternoons. Programmes in music and drama are particularly strong. Because the college has shortened the lunch hour to reorganise the college day, there is now less scope for its activities programme. A reduction in the voluntary commitment by staff to these extra-curricular activities and increasing participation by students in part-time work after college are also affecting the range of activities offered and the take-up by students. This year about 25 per cent of staff and 45 per cent of students are taking part.

17 In the first year, general studies comprises 30 course modules from which students choose three to complement their GCE A level subjects. Preparation for the general studies GCE A level examination takes place in tutorial time during the second year. Most students enter for the examination but results suggest that this preparation time is not enough for students to do well. The large numbers involved make a significant difference to achievement targets and the college's league table position.

18 Students also have opportunities to 'be of service to others in and beyond the college community'. The students involve themselves in practical caring activities. Every fortnight, six or so students bring to the college a group of young people from a school for those with severe and multiple learning difficulties. They help them enjoy the afternoon in new surroundings. Another group helps every week in a refreshment bar run by the St Vincent de Paul Sisters for the local homeless and underprivileged. Thirty students are learning sign language with the help of a local home for the deaf; others work with children in a special school, or gain pre-teaching experience in the local church primary school.

19 The formal religious education programme is sufficiently broad for those students who are non-Catholics or non-Christians. It pays careful attention to current moral and social issues of interest to young people.

20 Some subject departments have developed links with higher education institutions. Economics and business provide teacher training places for the University of Manchester's education department. The science department has curriculum links with Salford University and UMIST. The college has a representative on the Salford College access forum for further and higher education colleges in the North West, and has conducted some research on GNVQ progression routes for the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Of the 305 students who went on to higher education in 1995, almost a third went to the universities in Manchester and Salford. Departments do not make enough of the fact that there are universities nearby. The college could do more to develop curricular links with higher education, community arts organisations and high schools. Curriculum links with associated high schools need improving, particularly in subjects where enrolments have dropped such as science.

21 The college took part in the technical and vocational education initiative, but experience is fading with changes in staff. The college is predominantly examination focused. There is little pooling of information about external contacts to inform curriculum planning. Its links with the TEC are minimal, although the TEC nominated governor has helped to set up meetings to explore future developments. Course leaders and the GNVQ co-ordinators are responsible for making links with employers, mainly for arranging work experience, work shadowing or talks to students. They do not use the links to widen staff experience. Staff are reluctant to take part in schemes which will improve their understanding of industry and commerce.

22 The college has a policy statement about prejudice and it is assumed that the college ethos will ensure that equality of opportunity exists for all students and staff. No arrangements are made for monitoring equal opportunities in practice. Disciplinary action through the tutor system is taken against those displaying prejudice, but there is no record of the number of times this sanction has been invoked. There is some gender stereotyping in science. There is a good mix of male and female students in business.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

23 The college has gone through a particularly difficult time over the last two years. Because of the illness and subsequent early retirement of the principal, the four senior postholders became responsible for the college's management. This coincided with the additional pressures of designation in April 1993. They managed the college jointly until the governors appointed one of them as acting principal from the beginning of January

1995. A new principal takes up post in January 1996 and the acting principal retires. The senior postholders have worked hard and successfully on the day-to-day management of the college, but have left major strategic decisions to the incoming principal.

24 The governing body has 15 members. Ten of them are foundation governors appointed by the trustees to safeguard the college's mission. There are three elected governors of whom two are teaching staff and one a parent. The other two governors are the principal and the representative from the TEC. There are five subcommittees for finance, personnel, estates, audit and remuneration as well as a new policy and planning group. Governors meet once a term. Subcommittees meet as necessary but at least once each term. Attendance of meetings is good. Governors receive full information to inform their judgements, and agendas and minutes are clear.

25 The governors are committed to the mission and aims of the college. Most have attended training events and a few have sat on working groups with staff. A newly-formed staff/governors forum provides opportunities for governors and staff to meet each term. Governors have wide educational experience but limited industrial or commercial experience. They have not adjusted to the new demands placed on them since designation and have been reluctant to make decisions on pressing matters. They do not take the lead in strategic planning and have too little time in meetings to consider the college's future direction. They do not take into account local or national priorities, such as raising the aspirations of pupils in schools and improving the staying-on rate after 16. They have a narrow understanding of the sector and insufficient understanding of funding. They do not measure the performance of the college or their own performance.

26 The four senior postholders work well together. Staff value their support and open management style. They meet formally every week although there is also much informal contact. They cover the main management needs such as curriculum, student support, personnel, finance and estates. They have no job descriptions. Their current responsibilities are uneven and pressing operational matters come first. The recent appointment of three senior teachers with specific responsibilities for school links and admissions, curriculum management and examinations, and pastoral care, respectively, is starting to make a difference. The senior postholders together with the college's seven senior teachers who have duties across the college make up the senior management team which meets monthly. The responsibilities of the senior teachers are unequal and staff are unclear about lines of communication and accountability.

27 Subject departments have too much freedom to work independently. Senior management do not always give clear guidelines and do not do enough to monitor departmental performance and progress. The quality

of departmental management varies. In most cases, communication is good and there are regular formal meetings of staff as well as valuable informal ones. Roles and responsibilities within some departments are not specified. Some departments plan well; others do not. Sometimes where teachers share the teaching of the same group there are no formal arrangements to make sure they discuss their work; this confuses students. Many departments do not arrange to share good practice, methods, or materials. There is not enough communication between departments. Such independence for departments and teachers results in uneven curriculum development, duplication of resources, varied teaching standards and inconsistent examination results. More management training is needed at departmental level. The structure for the management of pastoral care, by contrast, is well understood and successful.

28 The college has planned and developed an integrated computer-based management information system which provides a range of reports relating to student records and finance. The reports are produced on a routine basis and also on demand. Staff value the information provided and are starting to use it in their planning as well as for administration. They do not yet use the information as a basis for calculating performance indicators or setting targets. Access to the system is limited. The network is in the main building only and very few teaching staff have direct access. The finance director is in charge of the system and he is supported by staff who enter data, but the level of staffing for the computer-based management information system is currently inadequate.

29 The college's financial affairs are well documented. There is regular and scrupulous reporting to governors. The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 is £19.67 per unit. The average for sixth form colleges is £19.37 per unit. Its salary bill is very high at 81 per cent of its total recurrent income. Because it did not meet its target enrolments for 1994-95, the college has adjusted its planned growth in enrolment figures downwards and revised its strategic plan. The college's financial position has worsened and further costs need to be cut. The governors need to attend to this as a matter of urgency. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

30 The college provides clear information about its values and the courses it provides. Its arrangements for transfer from school to college make sure that pupils get to know key staff. Each applicant has an interview with one of the senior tutors who remains a named contact throughout the enrolment process and is the student's senior tutor while at college. In admissions interviews, senior tutors try to match pupils' abilities, programmes of study and career aspirations, but more contributions from specialists are needed to ensure informed subject choices.

31 There is a strong pastoral system managed by a newly-appointed senior teacher and nine senior tutors. Each student has a personal tutor who is responsible for his/her welfare and is the main link with all other college services and facilities. Students meet briefly every day in tutor groups to register attendance. They have longer sessions for the tutorial programme which includes regular reviews of students' progress and work on matters such as study skills and careers education. A pastoral curriculum working party reviews and develops the programme. Some group tutors are concerned about differences in practice but students are generally positive about the arrangements. Parents and former students praise the attitude and commitment of tutors. Students often return to the college for advice, in many cases, several years after completing their course. Recording and reporting, including reports to parents, are comprehensive.

32 The college provides opportunities for prayer and worship according to its missionary aims. There is a daily mass and weekly assemblies, often addressed by outside speakers, as well as an annual community mass in the nearby church of St Edward. The college calendar closely follows that of the church in traditional observance of major religious festivals and feast days. There have been speakers on voluntary work, citizenship rights and the work of a chaplain in prisons. Representatives of international humanitarian movements, such as Food Aid for Yugoslavia and the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development, have visited the college. Students are introduced to a wide range of important issues to help their understanding and to stimulate their concern for others.

33 The chaplaincy is managed by a nun from the Cross and Passion Order. She is a full-time member of staff. She is assisted by a half-time chaplain provided by the Salford Diocese. The chaplaincy offers a counselling service and there are links with appropriate outside agencies, including the Educational Psychology Service. The chapel and chaplaincy lounge are quiet places for students during their free time. The chaplaincy provides valuable links between students and the communities outside college who run parishes, voluntary and charitable bodies and social services.

34 A small number of students with specific learning difficulties follow college courses. They receive regular extra support from a qualified teacher on a one-to-one basis and follow individual learning programmes. Arrangements for students with general learning difficulties are less structured. The college has no routine testing to assess students' basic skills in numeracy and literacy. Learning support arrangements are rudimentary with only 24 students receiving individual help. Teachers offer help to students informally but there is no organised referral system. The college recognises that the learning support arrangements are insufficient.

35 Careers guidance arrangements are effective. Two specialist careers teachers work from well-resourced areas which students use frequently. Students can have up-to-date information through multi-media technology. Manchester Careers Service officers work in the college three days a week. They advise many of the students. Careers guidance is part of the first-year tutorial programme and includes mock interviews and the writing of personal statements for university applications. There are valuable work-related activities. For example, for girls studying GCE A level mathematics and science, 'Insight' provides the opportunity to spend a week in a university engineering department. Some students are handling press and public relations for a project with the BBC and the Manchester Education Partnership. The annual careers fair in college which has representatives from higher education, business, industry and many professions, is well attended by students and parents. Many former students (between 50 and 60 this term) use the college careers service and former pastoral links to get help. The links between the careers department and subject areas need to be strengthened to help students understand better the vocational relevance and potential of their courses.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

36 The quality of teaching varied across the college. In 62 per cent of the 146 lessons observed, strengths clearly outweighed weaknesses. Over 10 per cent of lessons had weaknesses which clearly outweighed strengths. Just under 70 per cent of GCE A level lessons were well taught, as against only 39 per cent for GCSE and 63 per cent for GNVQ lessons. The grades awarded for the teaching sessions inspected are shown in the following table.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level		28	41	21	10	0	100
GCSE		2	9	12	5	0	28
GNVQ		2	8	5	1	0	16
Other		0	1	0	1	0	2
Total		32	59	38	17	0	146

37 In general, business studies, English and humanities were better taught than mathematics, science, social sciences and art and design. The average attendance at lessons was 83 per cent, excluding lessons in science, mathematics and computing which were inspected towards the end of the previous academic year when figures were not collected. The attendance for GCE A levels and GNVQ advanced courses was higher at 88 and 86 per cent, respectively. The lowest recorded attendances were in GCSE business studies at 71 per cent and GCSE sociology and psychology at 61 per cent. The average size of classes observed was 14.3 students.

38 Business studies and economics lessons were interesting and varied. Students were developing a good understanding of the subjects. Teachers had observed each others' classes and thought carefully together about method as well as content. They used a range of approaches to make sure that students were following and understood the work. Staff produced well-presented materials. Students were expected to conduct their own research and use sources such as compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases. In one session, groups of students were required to report their work to the whole class. They prepared slides for an overhead projector and wordprocessed outlines of their conclusions on computer disk. The teacher combined their contents on a printed handout for students. Although the teaching is skilful, in both GCE A level and GNVQ there are no schemes of work for teachers or students to refer to for a detailed overview of the course. Assignments thoroughly test subject knowledge and a spread of skills, but those set in GNVQ courses do not provide the necessary opportunities for the testing of students' core skills. Students did not use information technology skills to produce their coursework.

39 In British government and politics, history, law, classical civilisation and Christian theology, course and lesson planning were good. Subject files were comprehensive and generally contained schemes of work and assessment schedules appropriate to the syllabuses. However, there was no reference to the development of core skills. Teachers set and marked work regularly. They returned it promptly. Marking was consistent and accurate and teachers provided supportive comments that identified strengths and weaknesses. Lessons had clear objectives and built on previous work. In some lessons, teachers explained subject matter clearly, questioned students skilfully and summarised key points on the board. In others they took little notice of different ability levels and expected students to take notes passively. Lessons in Christian theology, government and politics and classical civilisation were particularly impressive because they were lively and students took part. In Christian theology and classical civilisation the style of learning contributes to consistently high levels of examination achievement. In one class of 17, Christian theology students analysed verse extracts from the Bible. Challenging questions and a willingness of students to participate led to a rapid understanding of the points raised.

40 Modern language teachers are good linguists with a variety of relevant background experience. At the start of the course students received clear information on the nature and demands of the subjects and the help available. Teachers prepared well and generally demanded high standards. Some lessons included imaginative tasks and interesting activities which helped students understand and learn. For example, in a GCSE lesson on reflexive verbs students learned and practised the grammar in a range of circumstances almost without realising it because of the thoughtful way the teacher presented the topic. Teachers

successfully encouraged students to speak in the language they were studying and prepared them well for public examinations. They took care in choosing material for written and aural tests and returned marked work promptly with detailed comments to help students improve. However, some lessons were dull and students lost interest. In these lessons students did not learn or develop language skills because the teachers did most of the work and did not check whether students understood.

41 English teaching was of a generally high standard. Teachers encouraged students to aim for excellence in examinations and they gave particular attention to the quality of written work. They set regular assignments and marked them promptly and fully. They took great care over examination coursework and students' results in 1995 reflect this detailed approach. The scheme of work for GCSE English was well prepared and lessons emphasised spoken as well as written English. Schemes of work for GCE A level were not properly developed. Some literature lessons, in particular, had no clear structure. Students did not have enough opportunities to get involved in the lessons because teachers analysed passages line by line whilst students took notes with no sense of overall understanding or enjoyment. Teachers generously arranged numerous theatre and lecture visits and debates and public speaking events.

42 GCE A level psychology and sociology students received useful handbooks which covered the main course features and gave helpful advice on planning and essay writing. The range of options available in GCE A level psychology is limited but students are provided with local work experience relevant to the course as a whole. Lessons varied significantly in organisation and quality and this was reflected in the way students organised their files. In one successful lesson, students worked together in a relaxed yet purposeful way on set tasks. The teacher used transparencies on the overhead projector to clarify and emphasise key points. Students were attentive and learned more about the subject. In poorer lessons, teachers relied too much on handouts and answered their own questions without waiting for students to attempt answers. In general, teachers had not fully developed their schemes of work, lesson plans and assessment schedules and had not given enough thought to teaching methods.

43 In art and design, design technology, drama and music, the quality of course planning varied. In music and design technology teachers had well-planned schemes of work but schemes for GCSE drama and GCE A level theatre studies were poor. Some lessons were well planned and conducted at a good pace; others lacked direction and enthusiasm. In music the quality of teaching and the standards set were high. Students understood the aims of each lesson and took part with interest. They experienced a careful balance of theory and practice and received helpful worksheets to support and test their learning. In theatre studies and drama the standard of work was appropriate but in some lessons the pace

of work was slow and students had little to do. Design technology students worked at appropriate levels. Homework was set regularly and marked carefully and targets were set for further improvement. In GCE A level art, the range of options was narrow and students were sometimes not encouraged to learn more about the subject and their own talents through personal response or experimentation.

44 In mathematics and science, the standard of teaching was inconsistent. In some lessons the teaching was of a high standard; students contributed well, the atmosphere was purposeful and teachers checked that students understood and could apply their knowledge. In others, students remained passive and unenthusiastic and had insufficient opportunities to contribute to the work. Teachers provided good written notes but relied too heavily on dictation. They did not encourage students to learn by working independently or in groups. Students made little use of the library for research and they had few opportunities to apply information technology skills. Schemes of work did not plan for different ways of teaching different topics. All students received regular homework of an appropriate standard for the course. The standard of marking was clear, consistent and generally accompanied by helpful comments. Work was returned promptly to students. Teachers made good use of past examination questions for homework and revision, and students had regular tests. Teachers kept detailed records of students' progress.

45 In computer studies, teachers made sure that their students participated in classes and practised their skills. For example, in one revision session before the public examinations students had to present to the class their solutions to examination questions they had been given earlier. They drew their own diagrams on the board, discussed the options they had considered and defended their solutions. Teachers made sure that students understood the work before moving to the next topic and made clear links between theory and practice. They made effective use of different learning aids.

46 In GNVQ manufacturing, leisure and tourism and health and social care, teachers had a thorough knowledge and understanding of the awarding body's requirements. Students received helpful advice on the development of their portfolios. Teachers kept full records of students' action plans and progress, including the development of core skills. The standard of work was appropriate and assessment tasks conformed to GNVQ requirements. Teachers had planned the units of work well and students understood what was required of them. Teachers used everyday experiences and local issues where possible to help students understand the work better and see its relevance. In some lessons, teachers effectively combined vocational learning with the development of core skills, such as communication and mathematics. However, lessons specially for the development of core skills were unimaginative and students were subdued. In general, students did not receive the support they needed in basic skills to help them make good progress. Teachers did not rigorously identify

weaknesses and invent ways to help students improve. There was little material available to help students who had difficulties.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

47 Four hundred and sixty students aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE A level examinations in 1995 scored, on average 3.9 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college in the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1995 tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. The average points score per entry for sixth form colleges is 4.8. The college's self-assessment report recognises that for 1994 the results of the college are below the national average for sixth form colleges.

48 In GCE A level the quality of examination results varies between subjects. Pass rates for students on one-year GCE A level courses were often significantly higher than those for two-year courses, although sociology and government and politics, both new one-year courses, had pass rates of 70 per cent or less. A comparison with 1994 national averages at grades A to C for 18 year olds in sixth form colleges shows:

- results similar to or better than national averages in half the college's subjects, with results in mathematics, computing, art, business studies, Christian theology, German and Spanish significantly better
- results significantly below national averages in biology, chemistry, design technology, economics and English literature.

49 For the three-year period 1993-95, a comparison of GCE A level results in individual subjects at grades A to E presents a mixed picture:

- 100 per cent pass rates in art for the three-year period and 100 per cent pass rates in Christian theology, computing, further mathematics and German over the last two years
- notable improvements in pass rates for chemistry, English language, English literature, theatre studies, government and politics, classical civilisation, economics and French
- inconsistent results for business studies, biology, design, graphical communication, geography, Latin and general studies
- a decline in pass rates for law and physics.

50 The college subscribes to the Advanced Level Information System plus GNVQs service of the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne which provides an analysis of actual performance in GCE A level linked to predicted performance based on students' GCSE results. According to their latest report covering the two-year period 1994-95:

- students did better than predicted in English language, classical civilisation, computing, and mathematics

-
- students did worse than expected in Spanish, history, law, government and politics and general studies.

51 In the GCSE examinations for 1994, comparisons with national averages for 16 to 18 year olds in sixth form colleges gaining grades A to C show:

- modern languages, history, physics and design well above, and mathematics, biology, business studies and sociology above, national averages
- computing and drama results below, with art, chemistry, economics and geography well below, national averages.

52 In 1995, 56 per cent of the small number of GNVQ students aged 16 to 18 in the final year of study on the vocational courses included in the performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment were successful. This places the college in the bottom 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure.

53 In 1995, students on the GNVQ intermediate course in business had a 73 per cent pass rate from enrolment which compares with the national average for completion within the standard time of one year of 54 per cent. Health and social care, and science intermediate courses had much lower pass rates but they were in line with national averages. Pass rates in manufacturing at 22 per cent and leisure and tourism at 20 per cent were considerably below the respective national averages of 32 and 43 per cent. At advanced level, pass rates in business, and health and social care were slightly below national averages.

54 Retention rates on courses were 86 per cent for GCE A level courses and 83 per cent for GCSE courses. Retention rates of students on one-year GCE A level courses are very high. An analysis of retention in two-year GCE A level subjects shows:

- high rates of retention above 90 per cent in music, theatre studies, history, classical civilisation, French, Spanish, business studies, economics and graphic communication
- poorer levels of retention at below 80 per cent in chemistry, computing, English language, art, design technology and German.

Three-quarters of GCSE courses had generally adequate student retention rates but in law, sociology, art, business studies and French they were low.

55 The college collects information on students' destinations and knows the destinations of almost all GCE A level and GNVQ students and 90 per cent of GCSE students. Figures for 1995 are not yet available but, in 1994, of the college's GCE A level students whose destinations were known:

- 64 per cent went on to higher education, many to regional universities

-
- 17 per cent went on to further education and about 10 per cent went in to employment.

Figures for GCSE show:

- 73 per cent continued their studies, 60 per cent at college, and 13 per cent in other colleges
- 13 per cent went into training, 3 per cent found jobs and 3 per cent were unemployed.

Figures for GNVQ (intermediate and advanced) show:

- 53 per cent continued their studies, 23 per cent in higher education and 30 per cent back at college
- 12 per cent entered training and 15 per cent found jobs
- 17 per cent were unemployed, as against Manchester's youth unemployment figure of 21.9 per cent.

56 Some students achieve high standards, both in their studies and extra-curricular activities. Students of GCE A level politics developed their awareness and ideas from sources other than textbooks and the classroom. They were encouraged to enter competitions to develop their skills in structured argument. In 1995, a student won the 'Guardian-Hansard Society Young Political Writer of the Year' competition, a notable testimony to the college's policy of encouraging students to develop their skills beyond those required by the examined syllabus. Essays, assignments, case study work and note-taking in English and humanities showed good understanding and reflected developing study skills. Work was generally well presented and well structured, although there were understandable variations. The standard of written work in business studies was high and it was evident that students were acquiring good study skills. Students applied their knowledge to the analysis of business or economic problems and issues and showed a good awareness of the contemporary business environment.

57 Students' ability to work well in groups and the opportunities they had to develop relevant skills varied from subject to subject. In some subjects students showed skill in explaining, discussing and defending their points of view. In this way, they clarified their learning. Yet the same students in other subjects were passive and hesitant. Levels of class participation and debate in classical civilisation, Christian theology and politics were particularly impressive. By contrast, in English, science and mathematics students did not work successfully in groups. In computing they were encouraged to take part and were more confident. Many students were developing independent study skills with the help and guidance of their teachers. The college has no systematic approach to the development of core skills and most departments do not formally consider them. Students' information technology skills were not well developed, although the college has recently invested in information technology

equipment which is readily available to students. In English good practice is developing.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

58 The college's first aim is to provide high-quality courses. However, its systems to achieve and monitor continuous quality improvement are underdeveloped. It has recognised recently the need to develop a college-wide system and a working party has been formed to develop and put into practice agreed procedures. Before this the approach was fragmented across the departments and examples of effective measures to assure and, where possible, to improve the quality of courses were isolated. The college has an appropriate charter but levels of awareness and understanding of its implications vary amongst students.

59 The current procedures for monitoring and reviewing the quality of courses are not systematic or rigorous enough. For some years departments have been required to review their courses and to list priorities in the form of development plans for the next year. The college provides guidelines which require departments to identify staff-development and resource needs. More recently it has required heads of department to produce self-assessment reports for their areas of responsibility. The quality of the reviews and reports varies. Frequently they are not evaluative enough. Conclusions reached and courses of action agreed to improve on identified weaknesses are not recorded. Action is taken to improve matters as they arise but there is no framework for implementing or monitoring such action.

60 The college has not fully developed the use of performance indicators and the setting of standards and targets. Where the college measures performance it relies heavily on informal processes. Although senior managers ask departments to set targets in their development plans, the targets are frequently descriptive rather than measurable. Departments make limited use of the value-added data provided by the Advanced Level Information System plus GNVQs. The college needs to develop a range of targets and more rigorous systems for monitoring the college's and departments' achievement of them.

61 Staff use questionnaires to get students' views on different aspects of college life. Questionnaires in the past have varied widely across departments. Some of those used have been detailed and of high quality and have prompted useful responses from students; others have been of little use. Recently questionnaires have followed a more standard pattern. Students do not receive feedback on the conclusions drawn from the questionnaires.

62 Staff development is insufficient to meet pressing curriculum and management demands. The programme of staff development has been restricted because of lack of money. This year £8,000 has been allocated for such activities though an additional £2,000 is available to support

attendance of senior managers at conferences. This is about one-third of 1 per cent of the staffing budget. It is inadequate to meet pressing curriculum and management demands. There has been effective staff development in a few areas and the college has identified its priorities for staff development. However, middle managers have received no training for their developing role since designation, and of the 35 staff who work on GNVQ programmes only four have completed the required assessor qualifications. A working party has recently been set up to consider possible schemes for appraisal but there is, as yet, no formal system.

63 Newly-appointed staff receive good induction and support through a well-organised mentoring system. Experienced colleagues act as mentors. They meet often and informally as well as having a formal meeting every fortnight to discuss progress, provide guidance and check schemes of work and lesson plans. New staff also have regular individual meetings with heads of departments and senior members of staff. They have a formal meeting with the principal towards the end of their first year.

64 The college's self-assessment report cautiously indicates 'areas for review' and is largely accurate. It is based upon the reports from departments. Headings within the report match those within Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. There is a helpful introduction to the college and its aims and useful appendices, for example, on students' achievements. In some areas the report is mainly descriptive and makes insufficient use of quantitative evidence. The report makes no attempt to grade curriculum areas or aspects of cross-college provision.

RESOURCES

Staffing

65 Altogether there are 122 full-time equivalent staff; there are 90 full-time equivalent teaching staff and 32 full-time equivalent support staff some of whom support direct learning contact and others who provide general support.

66 Teaching staff have good academic and teaching qualifications. More than 90 per cent have degrees, 20 per cent have higher degrees and 85 per cent have teaching qualifications. In almost all cases, staff qualifications and experience closely match the requirements of the various subjects and syllabuses. The college mission emphasises the creation of colleges as communities and many staff have served in the college for a long time; for example, 43 per cent have been in the college for over 15 years. Eight new staff, mostly newly qualified, started in September 1995. Only about 10 per cent of teachers have industrial experience and, for many, this was a considerable time ago.

67 Non-teaching staff are well qualified and provide a good service. Five assistants work with the office manager to provide general administrative support to senior managers and teachers; two of them provide specific support for finance, and admissions and examination entries as well as

general support. Six technicians support the various laboratories and services including reprographics. Technical staff provide particularly good support in design and technology and in science. The library and information technology facilities have appropriate staffing levels to meet current needs.

Equipment/learning resources

68 Between 1993-95 the college spent £161,440 on capital equipment, half of it on information technology equipment which is seen as a continuing priority. Departments and other cost centres receive money, partly allocated on a historic basis, for books and equipment. Allocations are converging towards a 'weighted student number' model to be achieved within the next two years. Many heads of department do not understand the funding system.

69 The ratio of computer workstations to students is about 1:13, an appropriate level at this stage. The college has over 100 computers, many of which have been purchased recently. The main building has four computer workrooms, three of which have networked personal computer based machines. The library, careers area and the general resource room in the Marylands building have computers for students' use, some with CD-ROM and multi-media facilities. In departmental bases there are at least 30 other computers, many recently purchased. Students have easy access to computer workrooms, the library and other computers around the college during the college day.

70 The business studies department is developing information technology facilities in the department for its large number of vocational students, although more are needed. Some science departments have personal computers with CD-ROM facilities, but much older ones are still in use. Information technology equipment in computer studies is adequate but will need to be extended if computing continues to expand. In history, law and politics the level of information technology and support materials is expanding rapidly and already helping students to learn independently. The range of relevant software for psychology and sociology is small.

71 The college has plenty of study spaces. There are 120 spaces in the library as well as other spaces in the general resource centre and in the five subject resource centres, though the latter are too small to be used economically, especially since it is college policy to have them supervised by staff. The recently refurbished library is a pleasant place to work; it has a careers suite, a computer room and good-quality quiet study facilities which are well used by students. Staff provide an effective service in the library and in the general resource centre. However, there are not enough relevant books; there are only 7,200 volumes as well as its 60 regular periodicals and newspapers. The library budget for 1995-96 is low at £7,000 or £5.60 per student. GNVQ students have insufficient material; English language students do not have enough books available for loan; books for science are old and inappropriate. The practice has grown of

departments developing their own bookstocks stored in resource centres or departmental bases. However, the college has no single record of acquisition, nor a central catalogue showing where books and resource-based learning materials are held. Subject staff do not work closely enough with the librarian. The library loses too many books; 3.7 per cent are lost each year. The library has no security system other than by manual checking of books at the issue desk.

72 Learning resources held elsewhere in the college are generally adequate. Music, English literature and general humanities, with the exception of law and geography, have relevant texts and handouts. The departmental approach to providing reference stock denies some students the opportunity to develop library research skills.

73 Some classrooms have appropriate equipment; others do not. In business studies and languages, for instance, classrooms have whiteboards, overhead projectors and screens, and teachers have access to video and television. Language laboratory equipment is old, unreliable and inappropriate. Its replacement is on the college's priority list. In some sociology and psychology rooms teachers do not have easy access to an overhead projector and screen. Chalkboards used in many mathematics rooms are poor. Practical subjects have appropriate resources. Science has a good range of consumables and all laboratories have adequate equipment. In art and design, there is sufficient equipment to support a range of specialist studies. Design technology, drama and sports equipment is good.

Accommodation

74 The campus has a pleasant ambience. The college is quietly situated in its own grounds, divided by a minor, formerly residential road. There are adjacent tennis courts, and playing fields a short distance away.

75 There are seven buildings. The listed Victorian buildings were designed for residential use and some rooms are inappropriate for teaching purposes. More suitable buildings date from the 1950s and 1960s. The most recent building was opened in 1976. The college has facilities which are determined by its Catholic character. In particular, the chapel and chaplaincy lounge offer students a peaceful space, away from the often overcrowded common room and canteen.

76 The college has a programme of planned maintenance. Two buildings have been refurbished. As a result, accommodation for science, languages, and the library is good. The separate music, drama, physical education and art block provides good-quality accommodation, not all of which is fully exploited for specialist work. English and history classes are held in a splendid Victorian building which the students like, even though the rooms are almost too small for some class sizes. The hatted accommodation is ageing and, together with some parts of the older buildings, is not suitable for teaching and learning. The number of separate

blocks presents security problems, which the college deals with unobtrusively. Access for anyone with restricted mobility is almost impossible. Signing is poor in the main building. There are wide variations in temperature around the campus; some rooms are hot and stuffy, and others cold and draughty.

77 Growth in student numbers has been accommodated by increasing class sizes and by increasing attention to the efficient use of space. There is still some way to go. The allocation of physical space to curriculum areas does not always allow accommodation to be used in the most efficient way. The space demands of examinations are particularly disruptive to sports and physical education.

78 The college faces some difficult dilemmas over its management of accommodation. By a standard calculation of space and its utilisation, it has excessive, poorly-utilised space. This is due to the variety of buildings, and the fact that large areas within them cannot be used for teaching. Only 46 per cent of the available space is designated for education. A short teaching day, and a single midday break worsen these poor utilisation figures.

79 Building adaptations completed this year have created a larger common room and refreshment area. One room is designated for smoking; it is often unpleasantly crowded. Common areas are cleaned several times a day, but they are overused. The college is clean and well kept.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

80 The strengths of the college are:

- wide-ranging arrangements to help students experience a Christian community, which is at the heart of the college's mission
- experienced and well-qualified senior, teaching and support staff who are generous with their time and support the values of the college
- governors who are committed to the college and its aims
- close transfer contacts with associated high schools, effective arrangements for advising pupils on the college's courses and the care taken over their transition to college
- the introduction of GNVQs to provide alternative opportunities for students
- strong tutorial arrangements for the support and guidance of students
- effective careers help
- some good teaching, particularly in English, humanities, modern languages and business studies
- good examination results in some subjects.

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- 81 To make further progress the college should:
- improve its governance by a more rigorous and systematic approach
 - review its management structure, roles and responsibilities and make lines of communication and accountability clear
 - provide systematic in-service training for all staff, including those with management responsibilities
 - develop its management information system further
 - develop its quality assurance system further
 - provide courses appropriate to the needs of Catholic pupils with low achievements
 - ensure proper course and lesson planning and a fuller consideration of teaching methods
 - ensure consistently good teaching and improvements in the teaching of GCSE in particular
 - improve students' skills in information technology
 - improve examination results in some subjects
 - improve retention and attendance rates where necessary
 - improve the quality and availability of equipment as necessary and ensure minimum standards
 - improve the library bookstock and overall management of learning resources within the college
 - explore ways of making better use of accommodation including a review of the timetable.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by age (as at August 1995)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments by level of study (as at August 1995)

 - 3 Full-time enrolments by curriculum area (as at August 1995)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at August 1995)

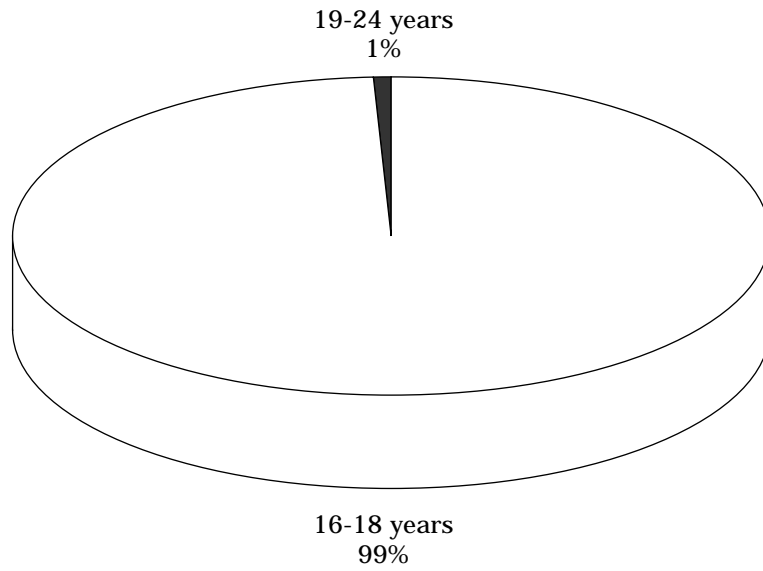
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)

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

Figure 1

Xaverian College: percentage enrolments by age (as at August 1995)

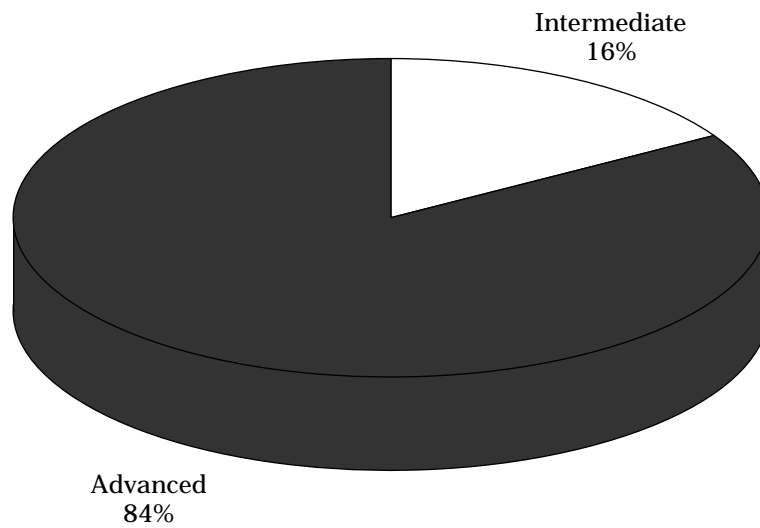


Enrolments: 1,210

Note: this chart excludes six enrolments under the age of 16.

Figure 2

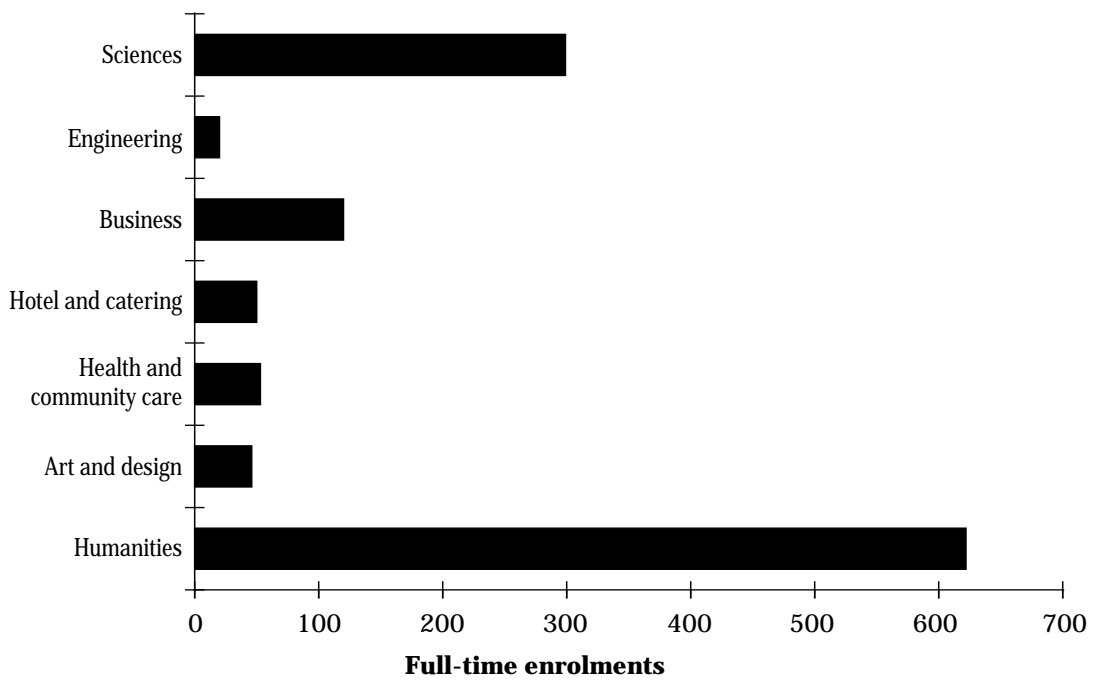
Xaverian College: percentage enrolments by level of study (as at August 1995)



Enrolments: 1,210

Figure 3

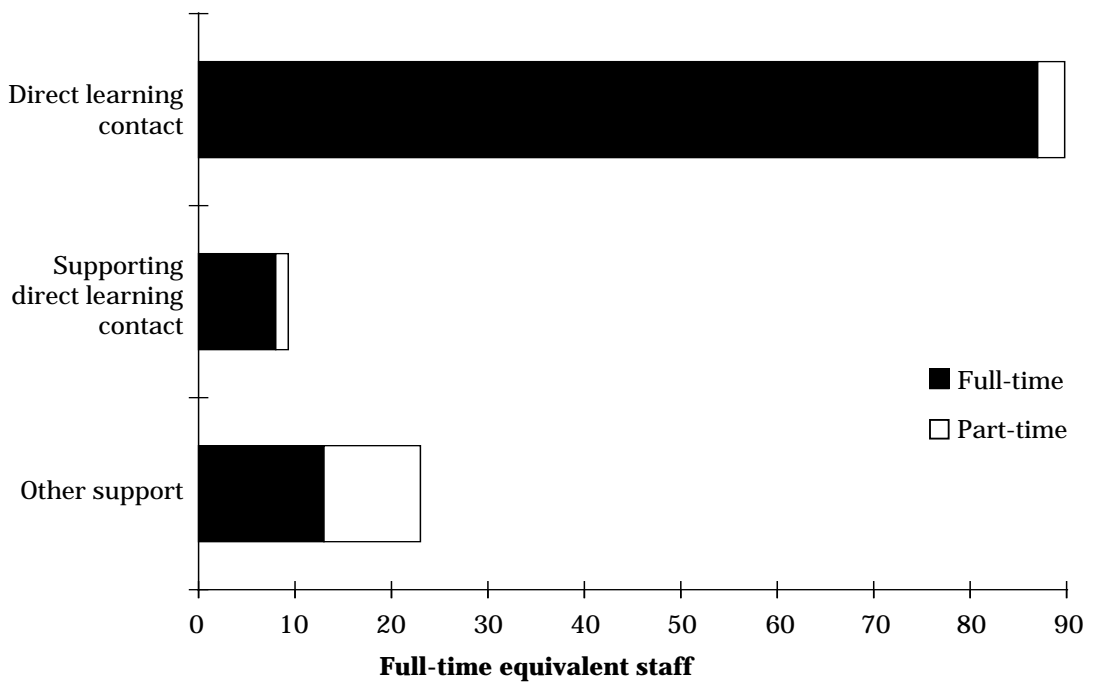
Xaverian College: full-time enrolments by curriculum area (as at August 1995)



Full-time enrolments: 1,210

Figure 4

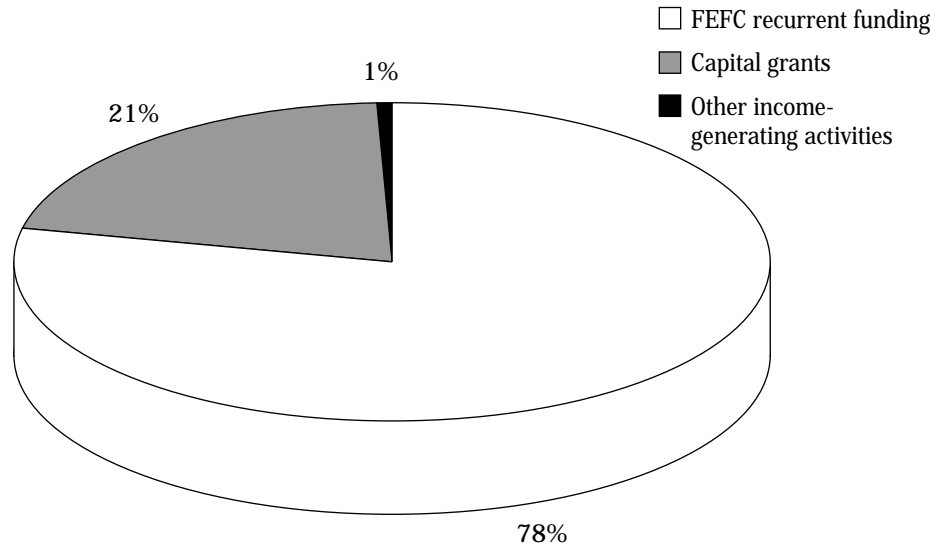
Xaverian College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at August 1995)



Full-time equivalent staff: 122

Figure 5

Xaverian College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1996)

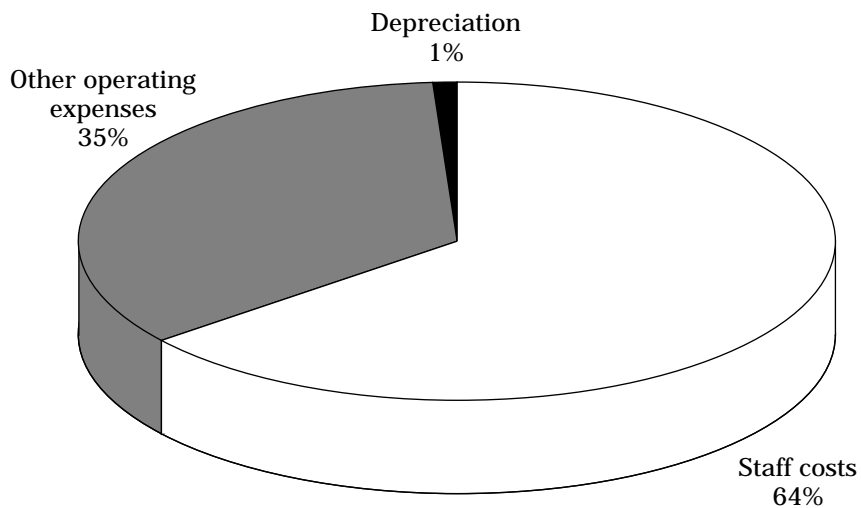


Estimated income: £4,355,704

Note: this chart excludes £4,370 education contracts and £10,589 other operating income.

Figure 6

Xaverian College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Estimated expenditure: £4,340,768

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