

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**New College,
Swindon**

February 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 01203 863000
Fax 01203 863100*

CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	3
Responsiveness and range of provision	9
Governance and management	21
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	32
Teaching and the promotion of learning	43
Students' achievements	52
Quality assurance	64
Resources	74
Conclusions and issues	88
Figures	

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 1996, some 329 college inspections had been completed. The grade profiles for aspects of cross-college provision and programme areas for the 329 colleges are shown in the following table.

College grade profiles 1993-96

Activity	Inspection grades				
	1	2	3	4	5
Programme area	9%	59%	29%	3%	<1%
Cross-college provision	14%	50%	31%	5%	<1%
Overall	12%	54%	30%	4%	<1%

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 24/97

NEW COLLEGE, SWINDON
SOUTH WEST REGION
Inspected February-October 1996

Summary

New College, Swindon is a tertiary college. It offers a wide range of GCE A level subjects to full-time students aged 16 to 19. Students may also participate in a wide range of cultural and recreational activities. The college has broadened its curriculum to include some vocational courses and provision for adults. Links with partner schools are highly effective. School-leavers are given substantial help and guidance during their transition from school to college. The governors are committed to furthering the college's success. They support the college's aim to extend the range of provision. Internal communications are good. The quality of teaching, particularly on GCE A level courses, is generally high. Some GCE A level results are very good. Staff work hard to improve the quality of the college's provision. The tutorial system for full-time students is effective. Students value the careers education and guidance available to them. The college should ensure its provision fully reflects the college mission and that there is a realistic strategy to achieve it. It should: improve its quality assurance system; strengthen market research when planning new courses; raise retention rates and levels of achievement on some courses; improve the library; extend the number of study spaces for students; and address the poor quality of equipment on many vocational courses. In addition, the college should address inconsistencies in the quality of induction for students; extend its limited provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; and ensure that all students have appropriate access to information technology equipment.

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		3
Students' recruitment, guidance and support		2
Quality assurance		3
Resources:	staffing	2
	equipment/learning resources	4
	accommodation	3

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science	1	Health and community care	3
Mathematics and computing	2	Art and design, media and performing arts	3
Business	2	English and languages	2
Leisure, tourism and sports studies	3	Other humanities	2

INTRODUCTION

1 New College, Swindon was inspected between February and October 1996. Fifteen inspectors spent a total of 49 days in the college. Business courses were inspected in February 1996. The enrolment and induction of students were inspected in September 1996. Other curriculum areas and aspects of cross-college provision were inspected in October 1996.

2 Inspectors visited 142 classes, involving 1,906 students, and looked at students' practical and written work. There were meetings with governors, college managers, teaching and support staff, students, and with representatives from industry, local schools, the community, higher education, the careers service and the Wiltshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). Inspectors examined a range of documentation relating to the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 New College, Swindon was established by Wiltshire Local Education Authority in 1984 as a further education college to provide general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) courses for full-time students, aged 16 to 18. The college was, in effect, a sixth form centre which operated under the further education regulations of the time. When the new further education sector was established in 1993, the college was incorporated as a tertiary college. Prior to 1990, there were no part-time students at the college and at the time of its incorporation in 1993, there were only a few. The college is on a single site approximately one mile from the town centre of Swindon. It is situated on the edge of a large residential estate in an area which has one of the highest unemployment rates in Wiltshire. The college is accommodated in two former schools. It has recently established information technology centres in two 11 to 16 schools in north and west Swindon.

4 The college's immediate catchment area is the town of Swindon and the surrounding Thamesdown area. It also recruits students from the rest of Wiltshire, from as far away as Cirencester in the north, Calne and Malmesbury in the west, Marlborough in the south, and from Faringdon and Shrivenham in West Oxfordshire. Full-time students are drawn from ten 11 to 16 partner schools and three schools which have sixth forms. There are three other further education colleges within a 20-mile radius of the college. These are Swindon College (two miles away), Cirencester College and Chippenham College.

5 Of the 590,610 people who live in Wiltshire, 30 per cent live in the Thamesdown area. Sixteen to eighteen year olds account for 3 per cent of the population of Thamesdown, the same percentage as for the county as a whole. In 1995, 74 per cent of 16 year olds in Wiltshire continued in full-time education, 33 per cent at school and 41 per cent in further education colleges.

6 In Swindon and the surrounding Thamesdown area employment prospects for young people are good. The unemployment rates of 4.7 per cent in Wiltshire and 5.4 per cent in Thamesdown are well below the national average of 7.4 per cent. There is good access to and from Thamesdown by road and rail, and the area is well served by the M4 and M40 motorways. A number of large firms and multinational companies have set up their headquarters in, or near, Swindon. The main sectors of employment are engineering, distribution, the public services and financial and business services. Some 40 per cent of employees in the Thamesdown area work in the service sector. Growth is expected locally in the distribution, transport and communications industries and it is projected that 33,000 extra jobs will be created in Thamesdown between 1996 and 2001.

7 At the time of the inspection, there were 2,595 students at the college of whom 2,290 were enrolled on further education courses. There were 48 students on higher education courses and 257 students on leisure and recreational courses (non-schedule 2). Student numbers by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3 respectively. There are 126 full-time equivalent employees at the college of whom 73 are teachers. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

8 The college's mission is to enable students to succeed beyond their expectations and to use their skills and knowledge to contribute to the local, national and international community.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 The college is in the process of revising its strategic plan, fully supported by the governing body, which aims to broaden and extend provision and reduce the college's heavy dependency on Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) funding. For example, in partnership with other education and training providers the college now offers general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) foundation courses, information technology training for the unemployed and assessment in the workplace for employees of major national companies. Earlier initiatives, however, were less successful. The college sometimes introduced new courses without carrying out adequate market research to find out whether there was a demand for them and low recruitment meant that some classes were too small to be economical.

10 The college offers 32 GCE A level and 17 GCE advanced supplementary (AS) subjects for full-time students and these courses form the bulk of its provision. Fifteen GCSE subjects are also available but, at the time of the inspection, some of these had been withdrawn because of the low number of applicants. The timetabling arrangements enable the great majority of students to study the combination of courses and subjects they want.

11 Whilst retaining its substantial GCE and GCSE programme, the college has steadily increased its provision of vocational courses. Approximately 30 per cent of full-time students are now on vocational courses. There are GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses in health and social care, business, information technology, leisure and tourism and art and design. The college also offers GNVQ foundation courses in business, and health and social care, in collaboration with a local training provider. Other vocational provision includes Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma courses in childhood studies, science (sports studies) and performing arts, and the diploma of vocational education in sport and recreation. At present, the number of students on GNVQ intermediate and foundation courses is low. Total enrolments on the college's five GNVQ intermediate courses and two foundation courses are 44 and 13, respectively. As a consequence, the college has had to put one GNVQ intermediate and advanced group in the same class.

12 The college runs some courses for part-time adult students. There is scope for increasing this provision and publicising it more widely. At present there are only nine GCE A level subjects and eight GCSE subjects available in the evening which recruit approximately 130 and 100 students, respectively. There are also 24 students on courses leading to national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 3 to 5. The college has made little progress in developing procedures to accredit students' prior learning and experience.

13 The college has taken steps to provide open learning facilities which enable students to study on their own, at times of their choice, using materials suited to their needs. There is an open learning centre on the college's main premises and the college has additional centres at premises in north and west Swindon. At present, the range of materials is limited and poorly co-ordinated, and the centres do not have enough study spaces for students.

14 Full-time students have weekly timetabled periods for enrichment activities, many of which are directly related to their programmes of study. For example, students on vocational courses can study GCE A level subjects, GCSE subjects or a range of studies accredited through the Open College Network. Enrichment courses include desktop publishing, photography, law, computing, self-defence, theatre, art, youth leadership, music technology and sports. Recreational activities for students include team games and drama productions.

15 The college has some involvement with the local community. It offers part-time courses at centres in north and west Swindon and at the local community centre which, together, have recruited 55 students. Representatives of a small number of community groups, with which the college has links, met inspectors and expressed a positive view of the college's responsiveness to their needs. The college is committed to developing these links further. The college's facilities are not widely used by the members of the local community.

16 The college has well-developed and productive links with schools. An effective schools' liaison team works closely with the college's 10 partner schools. The team takes pains to work closely with, and meet the requirements of, individual schools and its activities provide valuable information on the demand for college courses from school-leavers. Approximately 35 per cent of school-leavers from partner schools progress to the college.

17 There are close relations with the University of the West of England which validates the college's diploma in higher education. The college has developed an access course which has proved an effective route to higher education for those students who successfully complete the course.

18 The college offers short courses and other services for local industry and commerce, some of which are offered jointly with the Wiltshire TEC. Currently, the college has no contracts with the TEC to provide training programmes. Industrial and commercial clients found the college generally responsive to their requests for education and training. For example, GCSE mathematics courses have been provided on demand for a number of local firms. The college is keen to strengthen its links with employers and to provide courses which are designed to meet their needs. A marketing consultant has been used to help identify local needs and a business development manager has been appointed to co-ordinate the college's commercial activities. The college successfully bid for TEC funding to develop centres on school premises in the north and west of Swindon. With the TEC and a local employer, the college took part in a broadcast on local radio about education and training opportunities in the area.

19 Staff have acquired a good knowledge of local schools and businesses through the college's market research and the college has effective strategies for promoting its courses among school-leavers. However, there has been little research into other potential markets or assessment of the perceptions which local people have of the college. Publicity materials contain few photographs and illustrations, and their content is more suited to school-leavers than to the adults the college is attempting to attract.

20 The college does not actively encourage applications from students with physical disabilities. There are few students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on courses. Much of the college is inaccessible to students with restricted mobility and there is little equipment designed to help students with visual or hearing impairments.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

21 Members of the corporation board are fully committed to strategic planning and development. They want the college to build upon its successful provision of general education for students aged 16 to 19, by offering more vocational and adult education courses. Collectively, the governors have expertise and experience in further and higher education, accountancy, retailing, marketing, personnel management, publishing,

insurance and local government. There are 20 governors including the principal, two staff members and one student member. Ten have joined the board since October 1995. At the time of the inspection, there were three vacancies. There are five subcommittees of the governing body: finance and general purposes; audit; personnel; remuneration; and search. In response to recommendations from the FEFC's audit division, the quality of the financial information presented to the board is being improved.

22 Governors have a responsible approach to their own training. In October 1995, they conducted an audit of their skills and analysed the results of this thoroughly. Training takes the form of briefing sessions immediately before meetings. Members of the academic board, for example, regularly address meetings on selected topics. Governors have recently established a register of members' interests and a code of conduct. They have used performance indicators to review their own effectiveness, including the number of occasions on which they have discussed curricular matters and the number of visits they have made to see the work of the college. The governors have a clear view of the distinction between executive decision making by college managers and the role of board members.

23 The principal, who has been in post since September 1996, sees a reduction in the size and complexity of the senior management structure as a priority. At present, there is a senior management team of eight including the principal. There are two assistant principals, one for academic standards and one for academic services; a director of information services; a director of corporate services; and a dean of admissions. All these managers report to the principal. Two other deans, one for student services and one for curriculum services, report to an assistant principal. Teaching staff are organised in seven curriculum teams managed by team leaders.

24 The strategic planning process is highly consultative. The plan was drawn up after meetings with all staff and discussion with the corporation. The mission statement is supported by six strategic objectives. Difficulties are being encountered with the realisation of two of these objectives. Progress in making the college a centre of excellence in selected vocational areas is slow. There is a lack of consensus amongst staff on which areas these should be. Despite the college's attempts to diversify its sources of revenue, the institution remains heavily dependent upon funding from the FEFC. Over the last year, the college's income from the FEFC has increased from 93 per cent to 94 per cent.

25 Curriculum team leaders have regular, minuted meetings with an assistant principal. Curriculum teams and subject sections also meet regularly. Some curriculum teams work collaboratively and are well managed. In science, for example, subject sections hold minuted meetings every two or three weeks, and much of their discussion is about curriculum development and the planning of teaching and learning. Retention rates

are closely examined and action has been taken, in the light of these, to effect improvements in induction and introductory modules. In other curriculum areas, management is less effective. Some curriculum team leaders do not devote enough time to curriculum development.

26 There are good communications within the college. A weekly bulletin issued to all full-time and part-time staff, includes a detailed diary of events, which reception staff find particularly helpful. All staff are expected to attend a weekly informal briefing from college managers and records of the briefing are displayed on notice boards. There is a voice mail system which staff find useful. Part-time staff are invited to the meeting for all staff which is held once a term. The staff handbook provides information about the role of managers and gives the dates of meetings. Staff at various levels in the organisation are well informed about developments in the college.

27 The academic board is effective in carrying out its role of advising the principal. All proposals for new courses and withdrawal of existing courses are submitted to the board. The board also discusses the strategic plan, developmental plans from curriculum areas and general curricular matters. The academic board has two subcommittees, one for staff development, and another for curriculum development. Seven other committees which have executive authority and report to the senior management team, cover schools liaison, student services, learning technology, appraisal monitoring, GNVQ management, health and safety, and the college fund. According to the staff handbook there is also a BTEC committee, which in practice has developed into a committee which manages the internal verification of courses. The college is reviewing the operation of these cross-college committees.

28 There are two computerised management information systems; one provides information on students, the other covers financial planning and allocation. The system which relates to students provides detailed information on their enrolment, induction and timetabling but it does not consistently produce data on attendance and retention. In April 1996 the college introduced an electronic attendance registration system which can generate information on individual students, and students collectively. The management information system relating to finance provides cost centre managers with detailed estimates of monthly expenditure which they find clear and accurate.

29 Retention rates are used for management purposes as a performance indicator and senior managers discuss them with course team leaders. However, statistics for the retention of students on one-year programmes which the college presented to the inspection team did not disaggregate full-time and part-time GCE A level students and were inaccurate. The college makes every effort to discover the destinations of its full-time students but the destinations of some students on vocational courses and of part-time students on GCE A level courses are unknown.

30 There have been some useful initiatives to raise awareness across the college of issues related to equal opportunities. For example, library materials have been checked to ensure that they do not contain stereotypical images of race or gender. However, the college does not systematically monitor its equal opportunities policy to ensure that it is being applied in all aspects of its provision. The college provides students of the Islamic faith with a room where they may pray.

31 The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1996 are shown in figures 5 and 6, respectively. The college's average level of funding for 1996-97 is £17.69 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges is £17.97 per unit. The college has met, or very nearly met, its targets over the last two years and, at the time of the inspection, it appeared on track to exceed its growth target for 1996-97. Enrolment targets are not disaggregated for individual courses. Course team leaders make predictions about enrolments but do not set specific targets.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

32 The college offers good guidance and support services for prospective full-time students. The centrally located students' services unit provides careers education and guidance, counselling and welfare services and advice on admissions. There is a pleasant seating area where students can meet or browse through materials offering information and advice. Students make good use of the services offered and speak warmly of the support they receive. Staff within the unit liaise effectively with teachers and learning support staff. The counselling service is well advertised and valued by students and staff. Counsellors liaise effectively with external agencies such as social services and health agencies. A chaplain is available to students and staff on a voluntary basis.

33 The college helps students from local 11 to 16 partner schools to make a smooth transfer from school to college. The schools liaison team participates in careers sessions in schools which aim to give pupils a general understanding of further education and of the entrance requirements for particular courses and programmes. There are a variety of arrangements which enable prospective students to sample courses before making an application to the college or coming for an interview. Of particular note is the annual college experience programme. In June 1996 it provided 'taster' days for over 1,000 pupils in year 10. Information and guidance services are provided during the summer period, including the time at which GCE and GCSE results are published. There are regular meetings between careers teachers from the partner schools and college staff, to share information about students and agree arrangements for their progression. The college also has strong contacts with schools other than partner schools and with neighbouring careers services. All school-leavers in the area receive well-informed advice about the college.

School staff, careers service staff and parents all expressed satisfaction with the quality of the guidance and advice offered by the college.

34 The admissions process for full-time students is well organised. Applications are well documented and efficiently administered. Responsibilities of the college's admissions team include the receipt and processing of all enquiries and the tracking of potential students through the application and interview procedures. The admissions process for part-time students is less well developed. Part-time students attend an enrolment session at the college and often have to wait in turn to take advice from tutors about their choices of subjects and courses.

35 Staff make considerable effort to provide students with impartial guidance and to help both full-time and part-time students choose appropriate courses. The interview process is well organised. Interviewers work to detailed guidelines and have a checklist of the matters to be covered. Most full-time students are interviewed twice; when they are recruited and again at enrolment. The second interview can be extended for those who wish to change their original choice of programme of study, or who have failed to achieve the entry requirements for the course for which they originally applied. Part-time and full-time students who are unsure which subjects or course they should take are offered an interview with a qualified careers adviser. The guidance given by staff is generally of a high standard. Students are directed elsewhere if the college does not provide an appropriate course. Advisers specialising in welfare attend the enrolment sessions.

36 A two-week induction programme was introduced for all full-time students in September 1996. It was designed to introduce students to their courses, provide information on college services, identify those who need additional assistance with their learning and provide information on the qualifications for which students are aiming. Staff in curriculum areas modified the induction programme to meet the particular requirements of their own students. While this produced much good practice it also led to considerable variations in the quality of the induction programmes offered. Some tutors provided students with a cursory introduction to college's services in order to begin their teaching programmes as quickly as possible. Students' comments after their first days at the college showed that while most GCE A level students valued the opportunity to think about their choice of subjects, students on vocational programmes would have preferred to start work on their courses sooner. Induction for part-time students is less formal. The college has been slow in evaluating the induction process.

37 Tutorial arrangements for full-time students are well developed. All full-time students have a personal tutor who is responsible for providing support and guidance throughout their time at the college. There are weekly tutorials for groups of students and regular opportunities for tutors to meet their students individually. Tutors have training sessions and

receive a handbook which provides useful guidance on the planning of tutorials, record keeping and students' entitlements. The progress of all students is reviewed regularly. Many full-time students said that they found tutorials well structured and helpful.

38 Part-time students have access to the full range of students' services. Adults wishing to return to learning are referred to a qualified adult guidance tutor. Students following access to higher education courses have regular group tutorials. Staff have been allocated extra time for tutoring in subjects taken by significant numbers of part-time students, such as GCSE mathematics. Staff give generously of their time for individual tutoring at lunchtime and outside timetabled periods. Evening students are given 'register wallets' containing information about the services to which they are entitled. Access students commented that the students' services unit holds no information on the availability of childcare facilities. They had no knowledge of the college's enrichment programme.

39 Teachers encourage students to work hard and develop a responsible attitude towards their studies. Each full-time student has a personal development file which is maintained by the tutor. Tutors discuss with students the progress they are making, but students are not encouraged, or given the opportunity to maintain their own record of achievement and progress.

40 There is an initial assessment of the literacy and numeracy skills of all full-time students aged 16 to 19 in September of each year. A well-qualified learning support team provides extra help with key skills for students who require it. The provision is effectively monitored. At the time of the inspection, 19 students were seeing a learning support tutor individually for help with written work or mathematics, or with problems caused by dyslexia. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is at a very early stage of development. There is no agreement among staff about the best methods to help these students learn successfully.

41 Full-time students receive appropriate careers guidance. Careers education is delivered as part of the tutorial programme by staff from the local careers service, Lifetime Careers Wiltshire. The careers adviser works closely with tutors to plan how careers guidance can help students most effectively. Students can also obtain specialist advice by making appointments with the advisers. Up-to-date information on job vacancies is posted on boards in students' services and the library. Students who seek employment are invited to attend weekly meetings about the availability of jobs locally. There are effective and well co-ordinated procedures for helping students who are applying to higher education establishments. Students receive individual assistance when making their applications. Staff take great care in writing students' references. Students' personal statements, which accompany their applications, are carefully checked.

42 Students' attendance and retention rates are unsatisfactory on some courses. Although there are procedures under which tutors monitor students' attendance and take action, where necessary, to track absentees, managers recognise that these procedures are too slow to be fully effective. They do not enable staff to follow up an individual's absenteeism in time to prevent it from becoming persistent. The college is reviewing its procedures for monitoring students' attendance.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

43 Of the 142 teaching sessions inspected, 65 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. Six per cent of teaching sessions had weaknesses which outweighed strengths. The grades awarded as a result of the inspection are shown in the following table.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCSE		2	6	3	1	0	12
GCE AS/A level		23	31	17	1	1	73
GNVQ		4	10	11	2	0	27
Other vocational		1	9	8	1	0	19
Access to higher education		0	1	2	0	0	3
Other		2	3	1	2	0	8
Total		32	60	42	7	1	142

44 Teaching in science was of a consistently high quality. In chemistry it was outstanding. There were detailed schemes of work which were shared with the students. Theoretical and practical activities were effectively integrated. Teachers set high standards for students to achieve, gave students a great deal of positive encouragement and made good use of question and answer sessions. They were very skilled at explaining scientific concepts to their students. Students' written work was carefully and fairly marked and students received detailed feedback on what they had done. Most lessons contained a range of appropriate activities. Practical work was well planned and executed. As part of their environmental chemistry module, a GCE A level class was studying the effect of atmospheric pollution. Students were involved in a variety of complex activities, skilfully managed by the teacher. Some students were making notes and visual aids in preparation for a presentation on pollutants to the class; others were undertaking one of three experiments involving comparisons of the gaseous composition of exhaust fumes produced by diesel as opposed to petrol engines. These students understood the chemistry behind the experiment and made good use of the equipment they had. They worked hard at their tasks and the atmosphere in the class was one of enjoyment and productivity.

45 Detailed schemes of work have been developed for all mathematics and computing courses. Teachers planned their lessons carefully. Students responded well in a friendly but disciplined classroom environment. In computing lessons, teachers held group discussions and provided clear explanations of particular concepts. They checked students' understanding and helped to develop students' confidence through well-managed, lively question and answer sessions. In mathematics lessons, teachers encouraged students to develop their oral skills in analysing mathematical problems. Students responded well to group work, particularly when tasks had been presented to them in new ways which they found interesting. Students' work was assessed regularly. Standards of assessment were fair and appropriate. In some lessons, teachers employed too limited a range of learning activities. In particular, they failed to make enough use of visual aids. Some practical lessons failed to engage students' interest. In some lessons, teachers failed to ensure that all students were paying attention and in others, students were required to repeat work unnecessarily.

46 Business studies students can follow vocational programmes as well as GCE A level courses. In most lessons the content of the work was appropriate, the learning activities suitably varied, and teachers took good account of students' varying needs and abilities. Key skills were taught as an integral part of the vocational context of the courses. Teachers clearly conveyed the aims of most lessons. Students worked well together and on their own. All students were encouraged to answer questions and take part in discussions. Teachers set work regularly and kept careful records of students' progress and achievement. Assignments and homework were conscientiously marked and returned to students promptly. Work was assessed fairly. In a few lessons, teachers did not explain the structure and purpose of the lesson at the outset and failed to check with sufficient thoroughness that students understood what was being taught.

47 In leisure and tourism, most teachers used a range of appropriate teaching methods, including questioning, exercises and project work, to sustain students' interest and help them to learn effectively. Students displayed enthusiasm for their subject and a will to learn. Most GNVQ assignments were carefully planned to ensure that students exercised a range of practical and analytical skills. Students benefited from a programme of day and residential visits. In a few sessions, teachers did not manage their classes well. They failed to make the aims and objectives of lessons clear to students and the work lacked focus. Lessons for the combined GNVQ advanced and GNVQ intermediate course were generally of poor quality. Many had been inadequately planned. Students on GNVQ programmes do not always have adequate opportunities for work experience. Sports studies teachers supported and guided their students well. They produced clear and concise documents to help students understand the requirements of their course. During a sports studies lesson in the gym, students were using a wide range of fitness testing

equipment, some of which was electronic. The work with the fitness testing equipment was helping them to use and develop their numeracy skills.

48 On health and community care courses, most teaching and assessment were well planned. Assignments had clear objectives. Lesson plans were well prepared and clearly linked to schemes of work. Theory was linked effectively to practice and the experience students gain in work placements was drawn on effectively. Tutorials are used to monitor and strengthen learning. Teachers used their commercial experience to good effect in providing practical illustrations and students responded well to this. The needs of students with differing abilities were identified and met. Visits and work placements are a valuable feature of courses. Weaknesses included teachers' failure, in some cases, to explain the aims of their lessons. Occasionally, teachers used inappropriate teaching methods, did not give students sufficient guidance on how to identify key concepts or were unable to engage the interest of students. In practical lessons, the range of learning activities was restricted by the inadequate amount of specialist health and care equipment available.

49 In art and design, media and the performing arts, the quality of teaching varied. Art and design teachers employed a suitable range of methods of working, including formal lectures, demonstrations, work with individual students, studio practice and visits to museums and art galleries. In the best lessons, students were involved in tasks that were suitably challenging. A key objective of the work was to develop students' confidence in their own ability. Part-time teachers who have current experience of industry make a valuable contribution to courses. The expertise and experience of some teachers, however, did not match the subject they were teaching. The small size of some rooms restricted opportunities for students to work on their own and the limited amount of equipment restricted the scope of some specialist activities. In media, teachers had well-planned schemes of work. Students were provided with a careful balance of theory and practice. In lessons, students were given assignments that excited their interest and encouraged them to learn. Varied activities included role play and the production of videos and case studies. Students understood the aims of each lesson. They showed enthusiasm for their studies and an ability to work on their own initiative. Homework was set regularly and marked carefully. Teachers provided students with detailed feedback on the quality of completed work and helped them to identify ways to improve. In the performing arts, the standard of work was generally appropriate. Some lessons were well planned. Others lacked a sense of purpose and direction, the pace of work was too slow, or students had too little to do.

50 The teaching of English and communication studies was generally lively and effective. Teachers had high expectations of their students and provided them with a good range of suitable learning activities. Students working in small groups debated issues well. They were able to back up their arguments with appropriate evidence, and speak with confidence.

Students were also encouraged and helped to work on their own. Teachers marked work thoroughly and carefully, provided students with constructive comments and indicated the areas in which they could improve. Printed resources devised by staff were of a high quality. Students were provided with informative handbooks which included detailed description of assessment criteria. Although course planning was generally good, individual lesson plans varied in quality. Many teachers failed to identify specific aims and objectives. There was little use of information technology in the teaching and learning of English. In GCSE English lessons, some of the tasks were inappropriate for the less able students and students' knowledge and understanding was not checked with sufficient thoroughness. Modern foreign language teachers and foreign language assistants work effectively as a team. Students following a foreign language course work together as a whole class, in groups and in pairs. The most effective lessons were conducted entirely in the language being taught and activities were constructed around a central theme to ensure coverage of oral skills as well as grammatical knowledge. In a well-structured GCE A level French class, the teacher made good use of the language laboratory. Students listened to a short tape, then worked together to prepare a brief presentation on French cuisine. Vocabulary was explained without recourse to English. In lessons where teachers often lapsed into English, students were less confident in speaking the language they were learning.

51 Humanities teaching was generally effective and some of the work was imaginative. Detailed schemes of work provided a plan for courses throughout the year and lessons were generally well prepared. Teachers maintained students' interest by using an appropriate range of methods of working which included taking notes from text books, group work and classroom discussion to consolidate learning. In the best lessons, there was a spirit of unbiased enquiry. Staff made considerable efforts to produce effective learning materials. Good-quality printed handouts helped to strengthen students' knowledge and understanding. Where appropriate, learning was enriched by activities outside the classroom. Clear assessment criteria ensured consistency in marking and grading, and these criteria were shared with the students. Teachers' marking of students' essays and projects was detailed providing students with critical and supportive comments on their performance. In a few lessons, the aims and instructions for specific tasks were not made sufficiently clear to the students. In other lessons, teachers talked for too long a period of time. Sometimes, teachers failed to question students sufficiently or to check that they understood what was being taught. Little use was made of audio-visual aids.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

52 Most students speak enthusiastically about the college. They value their courses and see them as a preparation for their chosen career or for

entry to higher education. They express confidence in the staff and appreciate the support they receive from them. Most students study in a purposeful manner. Many GCE A level and GCSE results are good. However, students' achievements on vocational courses are less satisfactory, particularly courses for which there is an inadequate amount of specialist equipment.

53 GCE A level and GCSE students who attend regularly and complete their programmes of study achieve well. In mathematics, students were able to discuss complex mathematical arguments. Film and photography students carried out practical work with enthusiasm and understanding. Students' achievements in science were often outstanding and most science students had a thorough knowledge of scientific concepts. In chemistry, students confidently employed theoretical concepts in their experimental work and were acquiring appropriate laboratory skills. Most history and geography students were producing competent written work. In English, students demonstrated creative writing skills and a good grasp of the literary concepts and techniques they had been taught. Almost all students in law wrote clearly and made good use of evidence to support their arguments. In psychology and sociology, many students demonstrate high levels of oral and written skills. Students of modern languages were acquiring the core skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, few used the language they were studying for normal communication purposes in the classroom and often reverted to English for quite simple speech.

54 A wider range of standards of attainment was evident on vocational courses. Much of the work was well structured and presented but there were weaknesses in students' writing and spelling and in the analytical skills which they brought to their assignments. Most students displayed good communication skills but the listening skills of some were less well developed. Key skills were not always consistently integrated with other aspects of vocational courses. Generally, students worked well in groups. Most made effective contributions to class discussions. In business, the oral and written work of students was of an appropriate standard. In media, students produced good-quality work. Students on health and social care courses produced good written work but many were heavily reliant upon the help and support of staff, and their ability to work successfully on their own was inadequately developed. On leisure and tourism courses, students' portfolios of work were sometimes poorly organised and presented. Some students failed to plan and record their work effectively.

55 Students' information technology skills were not being developed consistently. Whilst some students showed a good appreciation of the role of computers in storing, presenting and analysing data, others had limited skill in the use of information technology. Business and computing students had good access to computers and demonstrated appropriate skills and knowledge of programming. Students on other courses, however, lacked

easy access to computers and did not use them in connection with their written work. In mathematics, students are not developing an appropriate level of wordprocessing or spreadsheet skills. Science, humanities and English students make insufficient use of information technology. Students on vocational art and design had little experience of using computers to aid their writing or design work.

56 In 1995, the college's overall GCE A level pass rate was 89 per cent. This was significantly above the national average of 69 per cent for students in general further education and tertiary colleges. Students aged 16 to 18 scored, on average, 5.3 points per entry (where grade A=10 points, E=2) compared with a national average of 5.0 points. This placed the college in the top 10 per cent of all further education colleges on this performance measure, according to 1995 data published by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). Students aged 19 or over scored, on average, 5.1 points per entry compared with a national average of 3.7 points. Two hundred and eight entries, over 50 per cent of the total, were awarded grade A and two students received certificates of excellence for achieving passes that placed them in the top five candidates for their respective examinations board.

57 In 1996, there were 466 entries in GCE A level subjects compared with 390 in 1995. The college's GCE A level pass rate was 87 per cent and 56 per cent achieved grades A to C. These rates compare favourably with the provisional national average pass rate for all students of 86 per cent, and the average of 54 per cent who achieved grades A to C. In 1996, the results achieved by students aged 16 to 18 were above the provisional national averages for all students in England achieving grades A to C in art, chemistry, biology, social biology, physics, computing, economics, English literature, geography, mathematics, psychology, sociology and sports studies. Results achieved by students aged 19 and over were above the provisional national average for those achieving grades A to C in business, psychology and mathematics. Thirty-nine per cent of GCE A level entries from the college were in science subjects. Students achieved good pass rates in biology (98 per cent), chemistry (91 per cent), and physics (82 per cent). There has been a significant improvement in students' GCE A level results in biology and social biology over the last two years. A small number of students are entered for further mathematics and all, since 1993, have passed. Over the past three years, pass rates in English language and literature, English literature and communication studies have been consistently over 90 per cent and pass rates in geography, history, sociology, economics, psychology and government and politics have been consistently above the national average for further education colleges. By contrast, pass rates on GCE A level computing (64 per cent), and philosophy (50 per cent) and history (50 per cent) have been below the national average for general further education and tertiary colleges.

58 The proportion of GCSE entries achieving grades A to C is well above the national averages for general further education and tertiary colleges, for all students aged 16 to 18 and for students aged 19 and over. In 1996, the college's success rate for all students was 73 per cent which is well above the 1995 national average of 37 per cent for students aged 16 to 18 and 60 per cent for students aged 19 and over in further education colleges. There were 148 entries from students aged 16 to 18 and 82 entries from students aged 19 and over. Eighty-three per cent of those aged 19 or over achieved grade C or above, which compares favourably with the provisional 1996 national average of 54 per cent. All students aged 19 or over who entered for English language and sociology gained grade C or above. Students also obtained good results in German and French. The proportion of students aged 19 or over who gained grade C or above in GCSE subjects has doubled over the past three years from 20 per cent to 40 per cent, which is well above the national average. The proportion of students who gained grade C or above was higher than the national average in nine out of 11 subjects.

59 On vocational courses, students' achievements vary widely from subject to subject. In 1995, 83 per cent of students in their final year of vocational courses included in the DfEE's performance tables were successful. This placed the college in the middle third of all further education colleges. In 1996, the pass rate was lower with an overall decline in the number of students obtaining a full qualification. At the time of the inspection, only 57 per cent of GNVQ intermediate students and 51 per cent of GNVQ advanced students had achieved a full GNVQ qualification. Pass rates at intermediate GNVQ level ranged from 77 per cent in art and design to 33 per cent in leisure and tourism. At advanced GNVQ level, they ranged from 50 per cent in health and social care to 42 per cent in art and design. Levels of achievement were good on the BTEC national diploma in sports studies and on the diploma of vocational education sport and recreation, with 75 and 73 per cent of students, respectively, achieving a full qualification.

60 At present, approximately 40 per cent of students on further education courses are aged 19 or over. These are mainly students on one-year GCE A level courses, many of whom are attempting to improve the grade they received after following a two-year course at school. In 1996, 165 students enrolled on courses in business, art, photography, philosophy, psychology, law, English language and literature and mathematics. There are 21 students on the access to higher education course. Most older students study part-time courses in the evening, many of them following GCSE courses in mathematics and English language. A few take GCSE courses in French, Spanish, Japanese and accounting, human biology and communications. Retention rates on some of these courses are poor, although students who do complete their course achieve good results. Adult students praised teachers for the help and support they received but complained about the college's lack of space for private study and social facilities for adult students.

61 Retention rates on courses vary widely. Many of the students who failed to complete their studies had enrolled on GNVQ, one-year GCE A level and GCSE courses. Most of those who leave do so in the early part of their course. There were retention rates of over 85 per cent on the majority of two-year GCE A level subject courses. Vocational courses with retention rates of over 84 per cent included GNVQ advanced leisure and tourism, GNVQ advanced art and design, GNVQ intermediate health and social care and the diploma of vocational education in sport and recreation. In contrast, there were low retention rates on one-year GCE AS/A level courses in ancient history (60 per cent), psychology (65 per cent), philosophy (38 per cent); and on GCSE course in environmental studies (46 per cent), sociology (57 per cent), psychology (47 per cent), English language (34 per cent for students aged 19 or over and 27 per cent for students aged 16 to 18), and GNVQ advanced health and social care (37 per cent).

62 During their time at the college, students have opportunities to broaden their range of experiences beyond the courses they are following. Students' achievements in sports are impressive, with individual and team successes in national events in athletics, hockey and netball. Students from the college regularly achieve the highest number of Royal Life Saving Society awards in the north Wiltshire region. Others have been successful in gaining the Football Association's preliminary coaching award. Many students take part in a lively programme of theatrical performances and concerts held at the college and elsewhere.

63 There are good rates of progression to further education, higher education and employment from many curriculum areas. In 1995, 62 per cent of students went on to higher education; 4 per cent took a year away from study before taking up a place in higher education; 9 per cent continued in further education and 25 per cent gained employment. Sixty-two per cent of two-year GCE A level students progressed to higher education in 1996. The college does not systematically record destinations in terms of the subjects and courses which students have pursued. However, information provided by subject tutors shows that in humanities, 77 per cent of history students, 69 per cent of geography students and 52 per cent of sociology students progressed to related courses of study at university. In science, 79 per cent of science students went on to science and engineering courses at various universities. In biology, 89 per cent of the students who completed their course progressed to higher education. Students who took English also achieved good levels of progression to degree courses. Figures are not yet available on the destinations of students who completed vocational courses of study in 1996.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

64 Staff have a clear commitment to improving the quality of provision. The college's policy on quality assurance is implemented through a range

of initiatives, many of which are effective, but which have not yet been drawn together to form a coherent system. The 'quality circles' developed at curriculum team level, have been adopted as good practice by staff across the college. This initiative involves course teams working with students to review courses and to implement improvements promptly, where required. Quality circles will become part of the college's quality assurance system from September 1997. All staff now appreciate the importance of establishing standards and targets for quality assurance. Standards and targets have been set by staff in the finance department, office services, students' admissions and students' services and those included in services relating to premises and reprographics. However, some standards have been set without sufficient consultation on what these should be and, as yet, there is no system for monitoring progress in meeting these standards.

65 Governors receive reports on the quality of the college's provision. They have not approved the college's policy on, or its system for, quality assurance, and they are not involved in setting and approving standards and targets. The academic board holds discussions about, reports on, and draws up proposals for the improvement of quality but these activities are not minuted. A college policy for internal verification on GNVQ and NVQ programmes has been submitted to academic board for approval. It specifies uniform procedures to be used by all internal verifiers, and proposes that internal verifiers meet monthly to share good practice, identify training requirements and support course teams. The policy aims to ensure more effective and consistent assessment and verification across the college. A quality committee has recently been established with a remit to co-ordinate quality assurance across the college.

66 The college's course review procedures are well established although there are significant variations in the rigour with which they are carried out. Curriculum teams review students' performance and other aspects of course provision and produce targets for course development. Some targets are not sufficiently well defined to enable progress and achievement to be measured. Senior managers and curriculum teams have agreed performance targets for retention, success rates, progression, enrolments and the percentage of students who would recommend the college to others. Curriculum team leaders prepare course reports which include data associated with these performance targets. Reporting is mainly factual with few evaluative comments about performance. In one report, for example, very low retention rates were not analysed or even commented upon. The reports contribute to the college's annual report. Senior managers do not formally require curriculum team leaders to include, in course reviews, a full and critical analysis of aspects of performance, such as attendance and retention rates and examination results.

67 The college's quality assurance system is interpreted and used in different ways by different groups of staff. In GCE A level and GCSE

subjects, targets have been set for students' achievements as measured by the value added to their qualifications since entering college. Few staff understand these targets, however, and they have had little impact on the planning of teaching and learning activities. In the event of particularly poor examination results, the senior management team asks the relevant curriculum team to prepare an additional review of the subject area in question and to produce an action plan for improving students' performance. There are, however, several instances of a long delay between the commissioning of such a review and the implementation of improvements.

68 There are no formal arrangements for monitoring whether the college honours the commitments it makes in its charter. The charter document, which includes the students' diary, course and subject guidelines, the 'student agreement' and admission policies is confusing to students. They have no clear understanding of the function of the charter. The students' complaints procedure is included in the students' diary but the charter gives no information about the external bodies to whom students could refer any complaint. The college recognises its procedure for handling complaints is not effective and is in the process of reviewing it.

69 Students' views are obtained through questionnaires and surveys as part of the annual review process. Surveys focus on pre-entry guidance, admissions and enrolment; the views of those who fail to complete their course; and students' overall perception of their course measured during the penultimate term of the course. Some staff believe that the surveys are undertaken at the wrong time of the year, that they do not provide information which is of use to course teams and that there is too long a delay before the results of the survey are made known. Although surveys have provided some useful information on students' perceptions of cross-college services, there is scope for improving their design and administration.

70 The college achieved the Investor in People award in 1993 and is due to be reassessed for this award in 1997. There is a well-managed appraisal scheme for all full-time teaching and support staff which provides good opportunities for individual members of staff to reflect upon and review their skills, experiences, strengths and weaknesses, and their current roles and responsibilities within the college. The scheme is clearly focused on the professional development of the individual and helps to identify staff-development needs. Observation of teaching is part of the scheme. Part-time teaching staff have an entitlement to appraisal but few take advantage of it.

71 Staff development is well organised. There is a staff-development policy and operating plan which relate to the operating statements arising from course and staff-development reviews and the staff appraisal system. Teachers and support staff have participated in a broad range of staff-development events and are required to report back on these for the

benefit of colleagues. Such reports tend to be factual and lacking in critical evaluation. The mentoring system for new staff is highly valued. New teachers receive careful and professional induction to the college which includes briefing on cross-college issues. Induction programmes for new support staff are designed around their particular job function.

72 The college has contracts for off-site collaborative provision with a local training provider in Swindon, a training agency in Bristol and a national training company with students in 10 centres across the country. The college has followed the guidelines set out in Council Circular 96/06, *Franchising*, and has used the model contract. It is a requirement of the contract that training providers use the college's quality assurance arrangements. Designated college staff have been given specific responsibility to manage the various collaborative programmes. The college has been slow to start implementing quality assurance arrangements for these programmes and it is too soon to judge their effectiveness.

73 The college has produced a self-assessment report which addresses aspects of its operation using the headings in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Although the report identifies some strengths and weaknesses most of which were subsequently agreed by inspectors, it is insufficiently evaluative. Self-assessment is at an early stage of development in the college.

RESOURCES

Staffing

74 The majority of teaching staff are well qualified. Most operate as both subject specialists and personal tutors. They are committed to helping their students to succeed. Approximately 90 per cent of full-time teachers have a degree or equivalent professional qualification and 90 per cent hold a teaching qualification. Teachers working on vocational programmes generally have industrial experience relating to their specialist areas, although in some instances this is out of date.

75 Approximately 10 per cent of teachers are part time; 73 per cent have a degree or equivalent professional qualification, and 47 per cent hold a teaching qualification. It is a priority of the staff-development plan to assist teachers without a teaching qualification to obtain one.

76 The college is making good progress in training assessors and internal verifiers for its expanding GNVQ provision. Fifty per cent of teachers have training and development lead body vocational assessor and verifier qualifications and others are in the process of obtaining them. Two have external verifiers qualifications, but only one is qualified to accredit students' prior learning.

77 Qualified technical, administrative and support staff provide a good level of support. Administrative and support staff work flexibly together

as a team. Technicians are suitably qualified and efficiently deployed. They provide audio-visual services, information technology support, reprographics, some general technician support and general maintenance services. There is a close working relationship between teachers and student services staff.

78 The college has not developed any policy or strategy for personnel management. The current procedures for maintaining staff records do not work well.

Equipment/learning resources

79 There are satisfactory levels of basic classroom equipment. Most classrooms have an adequate selection of overhead projectors, screens and boards. General purpose classrooms are suitably furnished. Audio-visual equipment, including television and videotape playback facilities, is shared between several classrooms. Although a significant amount of audio-visual equipment is old, it is serviceable and well maintained. There is a good reprographic service.

80 The level and adequacy of specialist equipment vary from subject to subject. Science laboratories have adequate equipment and good learning materials for specific courses. There are two good modern language laboratories. The dance and theatre work area is well equipped. Media and art and design equipment is appropriate for GCE courses but there is insufficient equipment for graphic design, print making, general three-dimensional design and textiles on vocational courses. Sports, and leisure and tourism students as well as others have access to sports equipment on the main premises for both indoor and outdoor sports. In health and care, and travel the quality of equipment is not up to industrial standards. There is small-scale equipment for practical activities in health and care, but no larger or specialist equipment. The travel centre has no industry-standard equipment or software.

81 The library is unsatisfactory. It is small and heavily used. It provides a poor environment for study and fails to meet the needs of many students. There are insufficient private study spaces in the library for the number of students. The bookstock is in need of improvement and expansion. Curriculum teams have developed their own collections of books and learning materials and these are stored in subject bases across the college and are, therefore, not available to all students. The library does not hold a central record of the location and titles of the books and learning materials held by the curriculum teams. The librarian is dependent on informal contact with teachers in order to find out what stock the library should have. Some course teams do not work closely enough with the librarian. The library has short opening hours. It is open until mid-evening on two days of the week.

82 Although the college has improved the number and quality of computers in recent years, there are not enough computers on the main

site to cater for the number of students who wish to use them. There are 176 computers for students' use, of which 159 are networked. This gives a ratio of one networked machine to every 12.5 students. Students who wish to work on their own have limited access to machines. Only the 12 computers in the learning centre, which has been set up specifically to provide opportunities for private study, are always available to students. The five computer rooms are heavily used for classes. In theory, they are open to individual students outside formal lessons and during lessons if vacant workstations are available. In practice, they are not easily accessible. There are good facilities at the college's centres in north and west Swindon where 48 networked computers have been installed to provide training in information technology. Students based on the main site have to travel some distance to use these centres. There are no specially adapted computers for students with impaired vision or hearing. A detailed report on information technology resources in the college, and a plan for the purchase of equipment, has been prepared by the information technology co-ordinator.

Accommodation

83 The college is located on a single, open, grassy site of eight hectares on the outskirts of a residential estate, a mile from the town centre of Swindon. Two post-war buildings, which were previously secondary schools, occupy either side of the site and provide a total floor area of 9,580 square metres.

84 Much of the accommodation provides a clean, well-maintained learning environment. The college's buildings are tidy and generally in good decorative order. Many staff have taken the trouble to make classrooms and corridors attractive through the good use of display materials. Many teaching rooms, in humanities, business studies, mathematics and health and care, for example, are well appointed and well maintained. There is a spacious performance area for dance and theatre. The college regularly monitors the use of its accommodation. The range of general purpose and specialist accommodation does not fully match current needs of students. The art and design studios are generally unsuitable for vocational work. Music practice rooms are inadequately soundproofed. Some classes use rooms that are too small for them. The learning centres, accommodated in two 11 to 16 schools, are decorated to a good standard.

85 Students have the benefit of good recreational facilities. There are several playing fields, a gymnasium and a swimming pool. There are refectories in both buildings, but these are not open continuously. There are insufficient study and social areas, particularly for adult students.

86 The college has succeeded in providing an attractive educational environment from two disparate clusters of buildings. In response to questionnaires, 82 per cent of students stated that the internal appearance

of the college was of a good standard. However, the college recognises that further improvements are needed. A planned maintenance programme for the progressive refurbishment of the buildings is being reviewed with the college's architects.

87 Students with restricted mobility only have comparatively easy access to the ground floors of the two buildings on the college's main site. Access to the library is difficult, and access to the careers section is virtually impossible. Those who drive to college are not allocated special spaces in the car park.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

88 The strengths of the college are:

- students' achievements at GCE A level
- the range of subjects at GCE AS/A level and GCSE
- good teaching in many areas
- effective links with partner schools
- a comprehensive pre-entry guidance programme for prospective students
- the high priority given to pastoral care
- the wide choice of enrichment activities
- the commitment and support of governors
- the commitment of all staff to improving the quality of provision
- good communications
- comprehensive careers education and guidance.

89 If the college is to build upon its strengths, it should:

- ensure its provision fully reflects the college's mission and that there is a realistic strategy to achieve it
- improve the quality assurance system
- improve market research when planning new courses
- improve retention rates and levels of achievement on some courses
- address inconsistencies in induction procedures for students
- extend the limited provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- improve the library and increase the number of study spaces for students
- improve the poor quality of equipment on many vocational courses
- ensure that all students have access to information technology equipment.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)

 - 4 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1996)

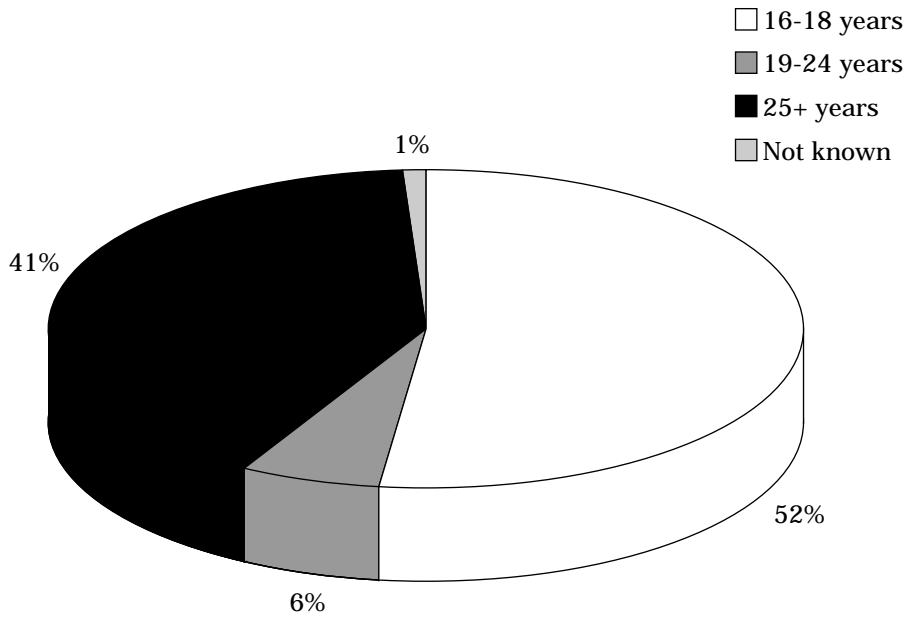
 - 5 Income (for 12 months to July 1996)

 - 6 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

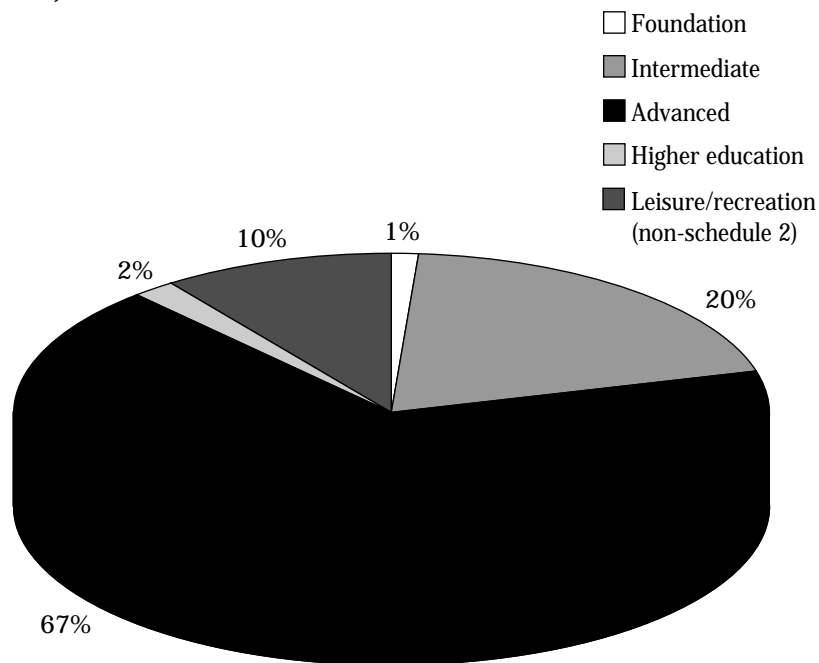
New College, Swindon: percentage student numbers by age (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 2,595

Figure 2

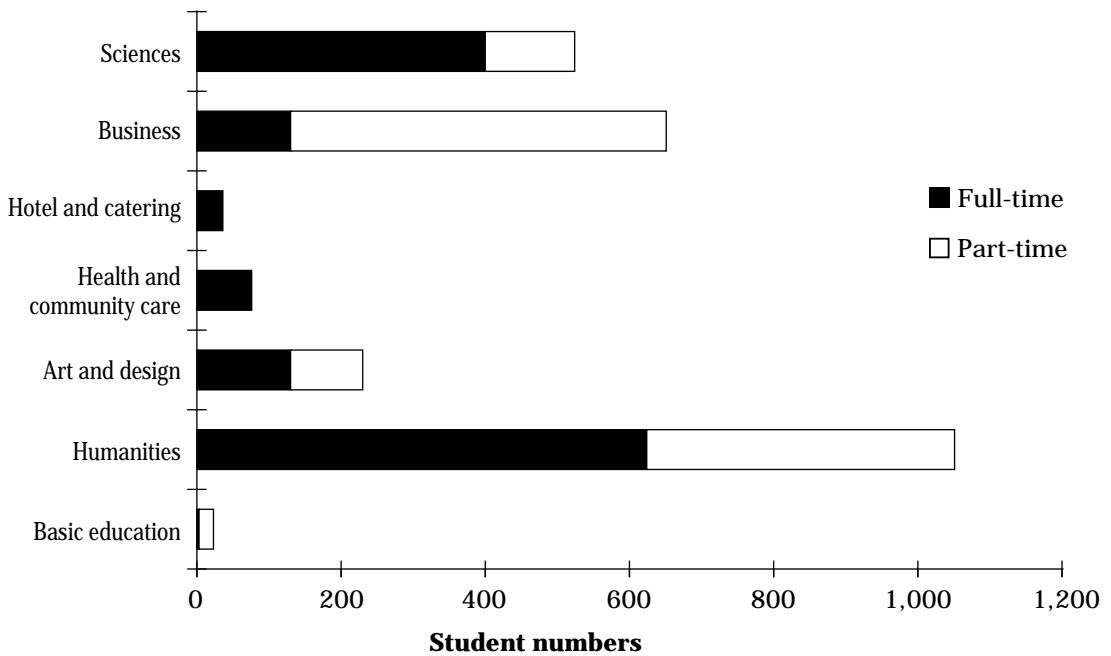
New College, Swindon: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 2,595

Figure 3

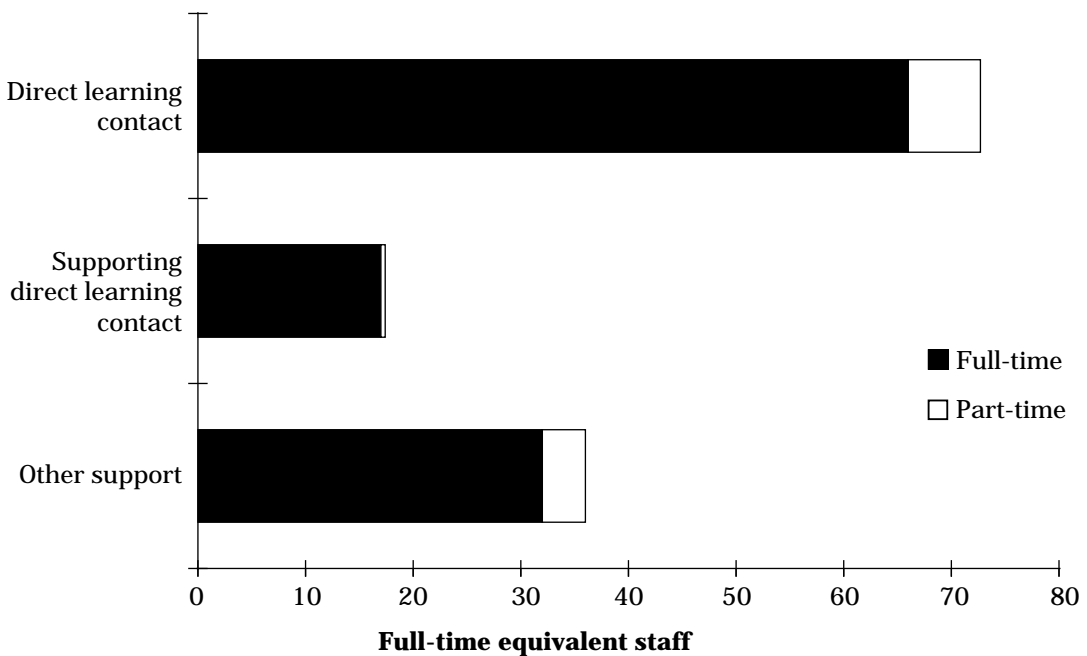
New College, Swindon: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at November 1996)



Student numbers: 2,595

Figure 4

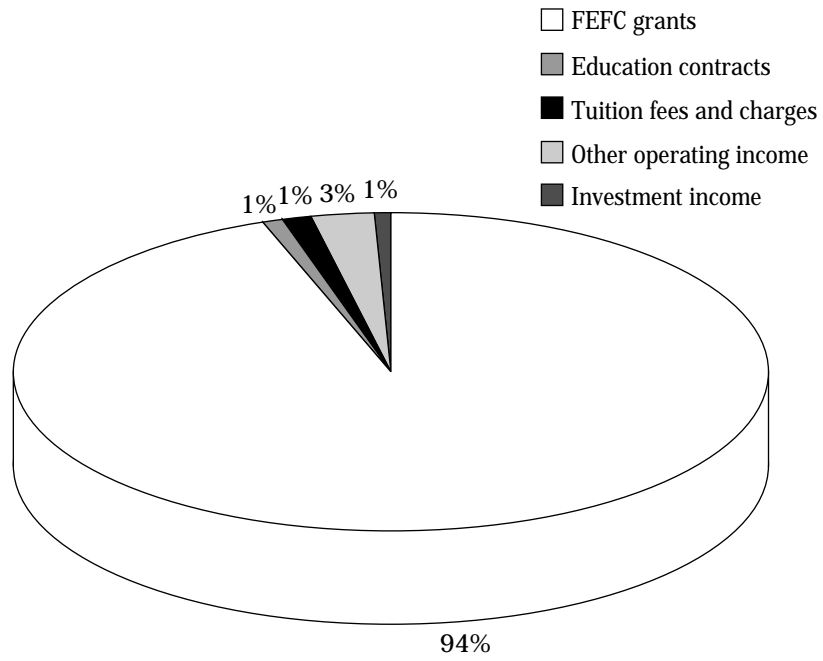
New College, Swindon: staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at July 1996)



Full-time equivalent staff: 126

Figure 5

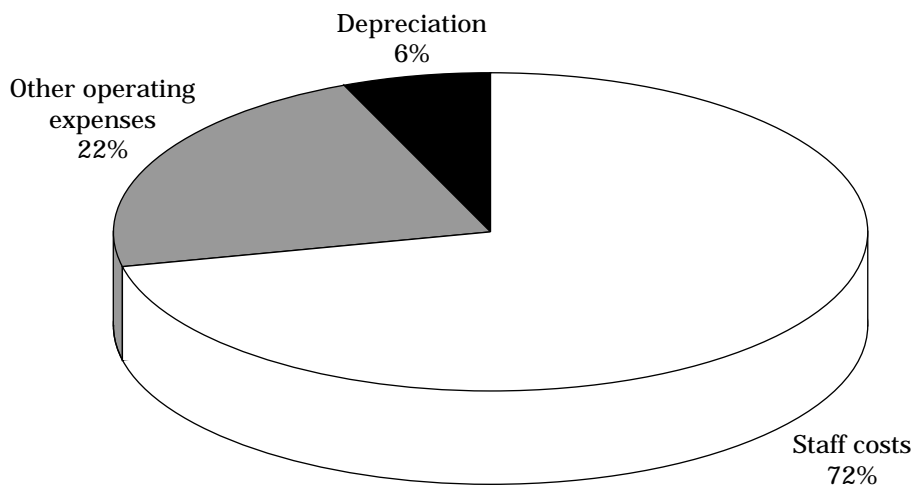
New College, Swindon: income (for 12 months to July 1996)



Income: £3,569,000

Figure 6

New College, Swindon: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1996)



Expenditure: £3,924,000

Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
February 1997