Newham Sixth Form College

June 1996

THE
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COUNCIL

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

CONTENTS

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 72/96

NEWHAM SIXTH FORM COLLEGE
GREATER LONDON REGION
Inspected August 1995-February 1996

Summary

Newham Sixth Form College is a responsive college with an ethos which encourages participation in education and high expectations in young people. It provides a range of courses well suited to the needs of the local multicultural community and local employers, with whom it has strong links. The college is governed by an experienced and supportive corporation board. It is managed with an open and consultative leadership style which permeates the whole college. Teachers are well qualified. Good results are achieved in advanced academic and vocational courses; most advanced students proceed to higher education at universities in the London area and further afield. The college's arrangements for the recruitment, guidance and support of students are highly effective. Students benefit from high-quality accommodation, from good overall levels of specialist equipment, including ready access to up-to-date computers, and from a well-designed programme of work experience. The quality assurance system has a positive impact on quality and standards. If the college is to build on its strengths it should: ensure that all curriculum delivery teams work as effectively as the best; continue to clarify the relationships between elements of the management structure; improve attendance on some courses; implement the staff appraisal system; and rectify some deficiencies in the equipment.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	2	English, communications and languages	2
Computing	2		
Engineering	2	Government and politics, history, economics, sociology, psychology and law	2
Business studies	2		
Art and design and performing arts	2	ESOL, foundation/ pre-foundation courses and education for SLDD	2

INTRODUCTION

1   Newham Sixth Form College was inspected between August 1995 and February 1996 by 17 inspectors who spent a total of 64 days in the college. Inspectors visited 130 classes, involving 1,857 students, assessed students' work, and examined documents about the operation of the college and the delivery of its courses. Inspectors met students, teaching and support staff, college managers, parents, former students, careers advisers, members of the local community, employers, and representatives of the London Borough of Newham's education authority and the London East Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2   Newham Sixth Form College is a sixth form college in the south of the London Borough of Newham. It was established in 1992 to increase the participation rate in full-time education of young people over 16 years old in the borough, which in 1992 stood at only 46 per cent. All but three local schools closed their sixth forms and established links with the new college. There is also a large general further education college in Newham. In 1995, the percentage of young people in Newham staying on beyond 16 was 62 per cent. The college is developing courses for part-time and adult students in liaison with the London Borough of Newham's community education service which uses the college site to deliver part of its provision.

3   According to the 1991 census, Newham had a population of 212,170. Unusually for an inner city area, the borough has a predominantly young population. About a quarter of the population is employed in the service and administration sector. This is below the London average for employment in this sector. Newham exceeds the average London employment levels in the manufacturing, construction and transport sectors and in manual and personal service occupational categories, but has fewer than average employed in professional or managerial posts. Nearly one-third of Newham's working residents are in the lower-paid manual sectors.

4   There are high levels of economic, health and social deprivation among Newham's residents. According to the London Research Centre, in October 1995 the official rate of unemployment in Newham was 18.8 per cent, compared with official government unemployment statistics of 9.6 per cent for Greater London and 7.8 per cent for Great Britain. Between 1971 and 1991 the number of jobs based in Newham decreased from 109,500 to 58,000, with a decline in all sectors, particularly manufacturing. Unemployment has a disproportionate effect on the minority ethnic groups. Newham has one of the most racially diverse communities in England. According to the 1991 census, some 42 per cent of residents are of minority ethnic origin, compared with 20.2 per cent for Greater London as a whole. Twenty-three per cent of Newham's population are of Bangladeshi, Indian or Pakistani origin. There is also a significant number of African or Caribbean origin.

5   At the time of the inspection there were 1,925 students in the college, of whom 1,521 were full time. Sixty-five per cent came from the borough. Enrolments by age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Fifty-one per cent of the students identified themselves as of Bangladeshi, Indian or Pakistani origin, and 17 per cent as of Black African or Caribbean origin. The college employed over 140 full-time equivalent teaching and non-teaching staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4.

6   The college has four curriculum delivery teams: business and design, humanities, mathematics and information technology, and science and engineering. There is also a manager responsible for the learning resources centre and the adult education programme. The student services team is responsible for support, guidance and the provision of information for students.

7   The college's declared mission is to develop, deliver and promote learning opportunities of the highest quality to post-16 students from the local and wider community. The strategic objectives emphasise the commitment to: increasing access to cope with demand; maintaining excellence in all areas of provision; preparing for curriculum change; increasing efficiency in the use of college resources; and increasing business links.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

8   The college responds sensitively to the demands of its clients of whom 85 per cent are aged 16 to 19. It offers an extensive range of full-time courses which provides a broad curriculum choice for students. Almost 70 per cent of programmes are devoted to vocational subjects. Five hundred and fifty students are enrolled for intermediate and foundation level vocational qualifications and 620 for advanced level vocational qualifications such as General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) awards. There are 400 students enrolled on General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) courses across a range of 25 subjects. Students are able to combine some GCE A levels with GNVQs and those on national diplomas in media and in design take two GCE A level subjects as a part of their course. Students can also study General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects in addition to their main programme. The college is extending its range of part-time evening courses. At the time of the inspection there were 404 part-time students studying for recognised vocational qualifications.

9   Links with schools are effective. The college collaborates with the eleven secondary schools in the borough which cater for 11 to 16 year olds. The college provides staff-development activities for schools, such as training for teachers developing GNVQ programmes. Joint curriculum development activities include work in languages, leisure and tourism,

and science and technology. The college has recently completed a 'women into science and technology' project with a local school involving over 200 year 10 girls and their teachers. Students are involved in many community activities, including work for a local children's charity.

10   There are good links with local universities, including Queen Mary and Westfield College and the Universities of Greenwich, South Bank and Westminster. For example, the University of Westminster provides students studying information technology, science, languages and computing with the opportunity to spend a day with university teachers and undergraduates, to help them to prepare for higher education.

11   There are productive links with employers and with the London East TEC. The marketing manager is a vice-chair of the chamber of commerce. Cost recovery training is provided for companies in languages, information technology, and Training and Development Lead Body assessor and verifier awards. TEC-funded courses are on offer for National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) level 3 in information technology and customer services. Financial support for the production of the college prospectus is one of a number of business sponsorships. Links with employers are strengthened through an extensive range of work placements for students. The principal is a member of the TEC education advisory board and there is effective communication and collaboration between the college and TEC staff, including involvement in the college's strategic planning. The college has been successful in submitting bids for development and project funding to the TEC. Bids are very thorough, with well-defined objectives and action plans.

12   Market research is successfully used to identify potential demand and to develop new courses. Information is obtained from the London East TEC, as well as from the college's own well-organised surveys. A recent survey of business training needs resulted in a successful development day in the college with over 50 companies represented. Promotional activities, including open days, school visits, exhibitions and press releases, are varied and fruitful. Publicity material is good and produced within a well-designed corporate style. Some general information provided in the college prospectus and course leaflets is translated into several community languages. The college has productive links with the local press and makes good use of advertising to highlight new developments and celebrate students' achievements.

13   Funding has been successfully obtained for a variety of collaborative activities across the European Union, including student exchanges and international projects to study comparative approaches to teaching and learning. Among recent activities is a project to develop teaching methods for courses in English for speakers of other languages.

14   Considerable effort is devoted to ensuring equality of opportunity for all students. There is a detailed policy on equal opportunities and students and staff are provided with all relevant information on induction.

The college charter, student and staff handbooks and the student learning contract all contain an equal opportunities statement. The implementation of the policy is thoroughly monitored by a group made up of an appropriate cross-section of staff and chaired by a member of the senior management team. This group meets regularly to identify issues and to maintain up-to-date information. Some meetings have single item agendas. For example, the recent arrival of refugees from Somalia required additional planning and organising. The college has a clear policy and commitment to ensure that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully integrated with other students for their studies. It has developed strong links with local special schools from where these students come. Activities include a variety of link courses and taster events which enable prospective students to meet tutors and see the range of support services available. The college also provides study opportunities for students with severe learning difficulties.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

15   The governing body has 16 members. Nine, including one TEC nominee, and one co-opted member, are drawn from business. One is from higher education and one co-opted from the local council. There are two elected staff governors, one parent governor, one student, and the principal. There are four women members and several from minority ethnic backgrounds. Governors have a valuable range of experience, often in senior industrial and commercial roles involving information technology, estates, marketing, auditing and the law. They are supportive of senior managers but appropriately analytical and strategic in their role. They pay considerable attention to the mission and future direction of the college. Attendance at meetings is good and governors often visit the college. They have welcomed training events to help inform their decision making.

16   Governors manage their business well. There is a clear schedule of meetings and governors receive good-quality papers and minutes, including detailed financial information. Meetings are effective and constructive and result in clear decisions. The director of resources is clerk to the governing body. Staff with specific responsibilities often attend to present particular items or to support discussion. There are regular written and oral reports by the principal, including those that focus on student achievements and strategic planning. An annual report, including information on issues affecting recruitment, admissions, progression and achievements is submitted to the board. Governors display a good understanding of curriculum developments and the consideration of quality issues is a major priority for them. At the time of the inspection they were considering an appropriate format for the registration of their interests.

17   The committees of the board are audit, finance and general purposes, and the search committee to propose new members. There is no

remuneration committee. The number of committees has been kept small in order to concentrate key discussion at the board. The finance and general purposes committee was established in October 1994 following a recommendation by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) audit service. Terms of reference are well conceived and the working relationship between committees and the board is effective, but still developing. Reports from committees are concise.

18   The senior management team has an open and consultative style of leadership. There are clearly-stated aims for the management structure which is designed to develop team approaches, to promote systematic consultation, to enhance communications and to facilitate efficient conduct of business. The college has made significant progress in achieving these aims. It reviews the effectiveness of its structures continuously and makes appropriate changes. The college is still working to clarify the relationships between all elements of the management structure. There is a clear description of individual and team responsibilities and a detailed calendar of timetabled meetings, which are published in the staff handbook. Staff understand the college structure and their responsibilities. They believe that decision making is effective and value the opportunities they have to contribute to it. Communication is enhanced by the structure and assisted by the widespread distribution of decision sheets and minutes of key meetings. Staff speak highly of the extent of consultation and the effectiveness of communication. They feel fully informed. The principal, the vice-principal and the director of resources constitute the directors' meeting. This group meets weekly and is concerned with strategy and its prioritisation. Discussions are informal, open and frank. With other senior managers it forms the senior management team, which meets monthly, primarily to discuss strategy and agree policy. It also retains an interest in operational matters.

19   The management group, chaired by the vice-principal, meets weekly to co-ordinate operational management across the college. It comprises delivery team leaders, the senior management team, other than the principal, the manager of the learning resources centre and adult programmes, the senior administration officer and the facilities manager. Curriculum delivery teams are responsible for programmes, resources and students and when, recently, they were reorganised, the management group was introduced in this form to aid their development. The deployment of staff is effectively monitored by the senior management team. This involves ensuring that teachers are timetabled to teach their contracted hours and that class sizes are regularly checked with a view to merging undersize groups.

20   Teachers have a dual role in the management structure of the college. All teachers are members of curriculum delivery teams. However, some teams are less well organised than others and there are differences in the extent to which responsibilities are devolved to staff. Teachers are also members of cross-college teams, led by co-ordinators, which cover

tutoring, quality assurance, equal opportunities, marketing and information technology. Cross-college co-ordinators are managed by members of the senior management team. Programme co-ordinators, who lead individual course or subject teams, hold regular meetings.

21 Strategic planning is well managed. Staff are given opportunities to be involved in shaping the future of the college. The plan and updates are written by the principal and are the outcome of a range of inputs. The process partly builds upon the principal's review of student achievement, retention and progression and the resultant action plans produced by curriculum delivery teams. There are parallel inputs from cross-college managers and their teams. Planning days are used by senior staff to assist the formulation of key elements of the strategic plan. Initial drafts of the plan are considered through the committee structure and staff receive a request from the principal to comment individually. This process achieves a high degree of consensus on college objectives and a commitment to their achievement. Curriculum delivery teams build on these college objectives to construct development plans, taking into account team and cross-college reviews. Their plans and operating statements vary in style and level of detail. The governors are appropriately involved in the agreement of the overall mission, in detailed consideration and approval of the plan and in its monitoring.

22 Growth targets have regularly been exceeded since the college was established. Full-time enrolments have grown from 785 in 1992 to 1,521 in November 1995. In the current year, total funded units are 237,000, representing a growth over the previous year of 5.58 per cent. The college's average level of funding for 1995-96 is £20.01 per unit of activity. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.37 per unit. The college's income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1995 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

23 Budget planning and allocation systems are efficient. Staff understand them and appreciate the openness of the process. The staffing budget is determined as an element of strategic planning. The vice-principal and the director of resources manage this process and are informed by budget estimates from delivery team leaders and support staff managers. Teaching staff are efficiently deployed. The student to staff ratio is 17:1. More sophisticated models for the allocation of resources are being considered, involving the full devolution of budgets, to secure greater efficiencies and to develop the role of curriculum delivery team leaders. The annual budget for non-pay items is already delegated to delivery team leaders and other designated budget holders. The resources manager allocates a books and consumables budget using a well-established formula based on student numbers and unit of resource. Equipment maintenance and staff-development budgets are also devolved. The resources committee, chaired by the resources manager, is a valuable forum for discussion with delivery team leaders on resource priorities.

24   External consultants have been employed to advise the college on the effectiveness of its resource utilisation. The college has recently been part of a 'best practice' benchmarking project, with other colleges, to compare the most cost effective ways of providing services. The college does not routinely calculate unit costs but is aiming to develop its capacity to do so.

25   Established commercial management information systems are used. The financial management element of the system enables sound management of the budget and the provision of accurate and timely accounts to budget holders and governors. Complementary software packages for information on students, personnel and assets are used. Sometimes, overall pressures on the system and software inadequacies lead to delays in the provision of key data. Two computer networks provide administrative and teaching staff with appropriate access to centrally held data. These and some software applications have recently been upgraded and college managers now feel more confident about extending their use. The system enables students' destinations to be recorded and analysed. This analysis by course teams is integrated with the review of student achievement and the planning cycle. Similarly, achievement reviews by the principal with delivery team leaders include a review of retention rates.

26   The college does not comply with the requirements of *The Further and Higher Education Act 1992* to provide collective worship and religious education for those who wish to receive it. However, there is a dedicated prayer room which is frequently used.

27   There is a general policy statement on health and safety, recently revised, but at the time of the inspection there was no specific policy for the key area of science. Governors receive appropriate reports on matters affecting health and safety and other policy areas, such as equal opportunities.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

28   The college's provision for the recruitment, guidance and support of students is highly effective. The procedures for recruitment and admission are well organised and benefit from close collaboration between the staff of the student services unit and teachers. Prospective students and their parents are invited to visit the college. Open evenings and other events, such as taster days for prospective students, are well attended. Applications, accepted from January, are acknowledged and monitored by student services, who arrange interviews between prospective students and teachers. These are thorough; discussions are held to determine the most suitable course of study for the student to follow, conditional offers of a place are made, and an initial learning agreement is signed. The college has slightly increased the entry requirement for full-time GCE A level courses in 1996 to four GCSE passes of which three must be at least grade C and one higher than grade C. This measure has been taken to improve

retention and to achieve higher pass rates, based on an analysis of results against entry qualifications of students in previous years.

29   The enrolment of full-time students follows clear procedures. Students' GCSE results and the letters offering places on particular courses are checked to ensure that entry requirements have been met. Students are then directed to the appropriate teachers who either confirm the original choice or provide guidance on alternatives. The guidance provided is generally balanced and supportive. Leaflets on the study of English for speakers of other languages are available in the seven main languages spoken in the local community. The process runs smoothly for most applicants, although some late applicants and those with marginal entry qualifications may experience delays. The college is modifying the procedures for next year.

30   Full-time students follow a coherent and balanced six-week induction programme which emphasises the high expectations staff have of students' work and behaviour and the challenging demands that college courses make. Students receive a detailed handbook in which aspects of the college are explained and expectations reiterated. The programme includes diagnostic assessment of literacy and numeracy needs for all students. Course choices may be adjusted during the induction period and, at the end of it, students sign a firm learning agreement. A progress report is provided which forms the basis of individual tutorials where students plan their learning programme and set personal targets.

31   Full-time students receive good support from their personal tutors. GCE A level tutors have a timetabled session with their groups for two-and-a-half hours each week, following a well-planned tutorial programme with clearly-defined aims. The programme includes weekly information technology sessions at which students work at their own pace towards City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) accreditation, helped by the staff of the resources centre. Students on vocational programmes receive at least one-and-a-quarter hours tutorial support each week and follow a similar tutorial programme. Most students appreciate the tutorial sessions, but a few believe that the sessions are not always well managed and felt they did not receive sufficient attention while the tutor was working with other students.

32   Tutors help their students to plan systematically for careers and higher education and liaise with subject staff on academic progress, attendance and causes for concern. Parents are kept informed through detailed reports and consultation evenings. There are set procedures for dealing with absences and other misdemeanours, and college staff respond rapidly as the need arises. The college takes the need for regular attendance very seriously and has recently implemented weekly register checks which are already having a beneficial effect on attendance rates. During the inspection, it was found that students on some early evening lessons were less well monitored and that attendance at these was poor.

Problems are worked through in a spirit of openness, often in partnership with the student, the tutor, the parents, and a tutor co-ordinator.

33   There are well-established arrangements for the recruitment, induction and support of part-time adult students. They are managed by a member of staff who acts as the point of contact for students needing assistance. Part-time students receive the same documents as full-time students, such as the students' handbook, and have access to most facilities. Careers advice is available at certain times. The college intends to increase the tutorial support provided for adult students, as well as providing them with opportunities to have their previous work experience accredited for NVQ awards.

34   The college ensures that full-time students keep comprehensive records of achievement which form a basis for job applications and references. The college is successful in promoting these records but students express disappointment that their folders are seldom considered during interviews at higher education institutions.

35   All students are entitled to learning support. Those whose needs are identified through the initial diagnostic tests receive help from qualified staff in both timetabled workshop sessions and in mainstream classes. Teachers may refer students to literacy and numeracy workshops during the year as needs are identified, or students may use the workshops on their own initiative. This flexible pattern of support helps students to achieve success in their main courses of study. The support individual students receive is monitored.

36   The college is particularly responsive to the individual needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are integrated with mainstream courses. Appropriate, additional support is provided during lessons by specialist teachers and assistants. There is a well-developed infrastructure of support for these students at all stages of their college career. Transition from school is assisted by link courses which enable students to sample a variety of subjects. Tutors meet students weekly to plan their learning, set targets and monitor progress. Parents are kept informed. On targeted mainstream courses, students with learning difficulties receive six hours a week of support from the literacy co-ordinator, while collaborative planning between a communications teacher and an extra support teacher helps these students with their studies on the intermediate GNVQ course in art and design. Students with severe learning difficulties taking the preliminary access certificate courses receive appropriate attention from the time of their initial application onwards. Students praise the help they receive in class where support assistants work with teachers, in individually arranged tutorials, and in group workshops. There is also a friendship scheme in which students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are accompanied in lessons and leisure time by other students. The scheme benefits all concerned.

37   The college provides financial and other assistance to help students complete their courses. A professional counsellor provides valuable personal, welfare and financial counselling for students three days a week and administers the hardship and access funds. About 500 meals weekly are provided free of charge to those whose parents are in receipt of income support. The college's hardship fund of £15,000 a year is used to meet emergency needs such as temporary homelessness. Students say they feel secure in the college. The site supervisors, who are responsible for security, play a supportive role in the college community.

38   Advice on higher education and careers is readily available, widely publicised and valued by those students who receive it. A four-termly cycle of guidance on higher education for students on two-year courses is effectively delivered within the tutorial programme. Advice on careers is given by the college's careers co-ordinator, assisted by advisers from the borough. All students intending to enter employment are entitled to a careers interview, but the monitoring of this service does not provide information on the extent to which this target is met.

39   A good range of activities is offered to supplement students' programmes of study. These include work in the local community, foreign language study and dramatic and musical activities. The varied sports programme, organised by a full-time leisure services officer, is a particular strength. Indoor cricket is popular, and students have reached national finals in badminton and table tennis competitions.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

40   Overall, the work inspected had more strengths than weaknesses. In 71 per cent of the lessons observed the strengths outweighed the weaknesses. In 3 per cent of lessons the weaknesses outweighed the strengths.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	15	23	10	1	0	49
GCSE	2	4	3	0	0	9
GNVQ/NVQ	8	15	12	2	0	37
Basic education	3	3	2	0	0	8
Other*	6	13	7	1	0	27
Total	**34**	**58**	**34**	**4**	**0**	**130**

includes C&G, BTEC and Association of Accounting Technicians.

41   Detailed, well-designed schemes of work which include lists of topics, details of assessment and teaching methods are a feature of teaching in the college; students are told what to expect and what, in turn, will be expected of them. Planning in French and German, where schemes include

induction units, and in history and engineering is particularly accomplished. Plans are shared with students in many classes, notably in psychology, sociology, art and design and most language classes. Care is taken to ensure that course materials and assignments use examples which reflect the ethnic make-up of the college. The quality of planning in community languages and science subjects is more variable. Science schemes of work and course documentation are incomplete and some lack sufficient detail.

42   Teachers use their breadth of experience beyond education, for example, in the media industry to enrich the students' learning experience. A range of teaching methods, including small group and paired activities, is effectively deployed on courses and tasks set are generally challenging and engaging. In a GCE A level class, literature students contributed intelligently and with insight to the discussion of a text they were studying. The teacher led the discussion sensitively and also challenged the students to extend their understanding and self-expression. Well-informed independence of judgement and opinion is particularly encouraged in history, government and politics, economics, sociology, media, performing arts and English. In one sociology class a teacher was observed skilfully using the students' own knowledge and experience to explore different methods of sampling in social surveys. Good class management is a feature of most classes. There were, however, examples where group work was ineffective and where a minority of male students were allowed to dominate discussion.

43   There is generally a good balance between theory and practice in the lessons. In engineering, for example, computer simulation techniques are effectively used in the teaching of electronics. In performing arts and media, a good range of different approaches is employed and students have ready access to television and theatre technology. In information technology, there is a suitable emphasis on practical tasks, although in a few sessions large class sizes inhibit learning in practical work because it is not possible to provide sufficient individual attention. In science, activities enable work to be geared to the needs of students of varying abilities. Some science students were seen engaged in practical activity without adequate preparation in the use of electrical equipment.

44   Audio-visual aids are generally used effectively. Technical resources are particularly well deployed in media studies, theatre technology, engineering and in foreign languages, where work regularly involves the use of video or audio cassettes. Performing arts students are able to draw upon a growing library of videotaped exemplars, including past students' work. Engineering students use a mathematical modelling spreadsheet devised by five local colleges with sponsorship from the Nuffield Foundation. There are examples of carefully targeted handouts, notably in foreign languages, science, mathematics and information technology. In information technology, overhead-projection transparencies are used

with related handouts to enhance learning and promote understanding. In contrast, although there is frequent use of worksheets and textbooks in humanities lessons, there is insufficient use of audio-visual material in some subjects.

45   Work experience effectively complements other learning methods in some subjects, such as information technology and business. Many students spend at least two weeks working within a related industrial or professional environment. Clear and effective operational guidelines and procedures have been established. Students on their placements are monitored and there is a review of their progress by employers, the students themselves and the college. Visits to galleries and theatres enhance the experience of art and design, and performing arts students. Many of those studying foreign languages benefit from exchanges with European Union countries.

46   Most teachers use questions to check learning during classes and are able to ensure that even reluctant students play a full role in class. Performing arts teachers are particularly successful in involving students who can offer a wide range of prior experience. Teaching and learning methods used in English classes for adults skilfully draw upon students' experiences. Foreign language sessions involve extension activities for those making rapid progress, and students with limited literacy in French are given extra classes to prepare them for entry to the GCE A level course. Different tasks for students of differing ability are included in the schemes of work for many classes, for example in mathematics. However, there is insufficient emphasis on this aspect in some areas. Some lessons observed were clearly failing to challenge the more able students, while in others the use of undirected open-ended questions failed to engage slower learners.

47   The basic education provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well designed, managed and documented. Students are strongly encouraged to be independent, develop self-confidence and support one another in their studies. Most teaching is delivered at an appropriate pace that takes account of the different ability levels of students. A good range of optional subjects is available. The college takes a leading role regionally in the development of work for the preliminary access course for those with severe learning difficulties. Students on the course generally benefit from carefully structured and imaginative teaching which integrates basic numeracy and literacy skills with activities such as cookery. In one lesson, for example, some students were photographed during a practical measuring exercise which provided documentary evidence for their acquisition of NVQ units. Drama options for those basic education students who speak English as a second language are a particular strength. In foundation and pre-foundation classes there is sometimes an over-reliance on handouts and some activities go on for too long without regard for the students' attention span.

48   GCE A level courses include supported studies and attention is given in a number of subjects to the development of core skills such as information technology, oral competency, reading and problem solving. Although students' final assignments are commonly wordprocessed in some humanities subjects, information technology is not as widely used as it might be. The failure to make numeracy and communications an integral part of some courses, notably, the BTEC national programmes, may be contributing to poor attendance; since some students do not see the relevance of these classes in core skills.

49   On average, 78 per cent of those registered attended the classes observed by inspectors. In basic education classes, where the average attendance in classes inspected was 72 per cent, attendance was carefully monitored and reasons for absence often known. Numbers in some psychology, sociology and business classes were low but the poorest attendance was in some GCSE classes. Observations of GCSE classes in community languages and mathematics, for example, recorded 50 and 60 per cent attendance, respectively. Punctuality was also an issue in a number of lessons. The college is aware of these problems and is addressing them.

50   Almost all homework is set and marked within the three-week period guaranteed by the college. Comments on written work are generally detailed and constructive in accordance with the college's marking policy. English essays are returned promptly with supportive comments. Art and design students receive regular feedback after each BTEC assignment, while languages students can expect work returned within one week with each error identified by type for the student to make corrections. Assessment schemes for the foreign languages elements of vocational courses reflect course content. In GNVQ leisure and tourism, for example, students work on ticket prices for concerts and theatres based on a listings publication for Paris. GCE A level and GCSE mathematics programmes have well-structured assessment schemes. Business assignments are often double marked as an aspect of quality assurance. By contrast, variations in the setting and marking of work in science subjects reflect a lack of co-ordination across and within courses. In some areas of the college, insufficient attention is paid to spelling and grammatical errors in students' written work.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

51   Almost all students are well motivated and find their studies rewarding. In foreign languages, for example, students respond well to challenges and less able students persevere despite difficulties. Students on most courses participate in discussions and can articulate what they have learned; this is particularly evident on GCE A level programmes. Many students produce very good written work and take great care over its presentation, using illustrations and other forms of imaginative display.

High levels of maturity are evident in English where students display an insight into texts and can handle the language of critical analysis confidently.

52   In practical subjects, the quality of work is often high and there are some notable individual achievements. For example, in media, one student became the 1995 BTEC arts student of the year. Standards of acting and singing are good among performing arts students, as the recent production of *'Our Country's Good'* showed. Students with learning difficulties demonstrate significant achievements in both practical work and communication skills. Foreign language students use their chosen language confidently in class and vocal fluency is particularly impressive in GCE A level German. At the same time, reading standards are poor among some performing arts students and those with little prior experience are not progressing at an appropriate rate in music or stagecraft. There is little permanent display of students' art work in the circulation areas of the college.

53   Students are acquiring sound study habits and are able to work confidently by themselves or in small groups. While English and media students use a range of programmes and compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases, students' ability to use information technology varies from course to course. Opportunities for self-assessment by students exist on most courses. They are not always taken but, when they are, it is clear that students can make realistic judgements about the quality of their work. Pre-foundation students whose first language is not English are achieving accreditation in computer literacy and information technology and wordpower.

54   In 1995, 81 per cent of students aged 16 to 18 in their final year of study on the vocational courses included in the Department for Education and Employment's performance tables were successful. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. All 16 to 18 year olds completing BTEC national diplomas in information technology applications, computing and engineering, passed. In performing arts and design, high pass rates of 80 per cent and 77 per cent, respectively were achieved. In advanced GNVQ, where 96 students completed courses in business and leisure and tourism, 74 per cent gained full awards. Of the 91 GNVQ intermediate level business students, 80 per cent achieved full awards and 44 per cent gained a merit or distinction. Intermediate GNVQ results in 1995 for leisure and tourism were worse than in 1994. Significant numbers of students on the GNVQ foundation course in business for students whose first language is not English failed the external tests, contributing to a 63 per cent overall pass rate.

55   Retention rates are low on some vocational courses and, as a result, pass rates of courses slip badly when the number of students achieving an award is compared with the number originally enrolled. For example,

one-third of BTEC national course engineering students left after their first year, and only 63 per cent of those originally enrolled in the first year of the BTEC national course in performing arts achieved their primary learning goal. At intermediate level, fewer than half of those enrolled in leisure and tourism, science, and engineering, achieved their qualification.

56   The 199 students at the college aged 16 to 18 entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1995 scored, on average, 4.5 points per entry (where A=10, E=2). This places the college among the top third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1995 performance tables published by the Department for Education and Employment. This was a significant improvement in performance over 1994 when the comparable score was 3.3, and placed the college in the middle third of the sector.

57   The college carries out an analysis of GCE A level results by comparing actual results with those projected for students on the basis of their previous achievements on GCSE courses. This gives a 'value-added' score for the college. Analysis by the college shows an overall improvement in GCE A level students' value-added scores since 1994, with well over half achieving better than was projected nationally on the basis of GCSE results in 1995. Art and design, sociology and English language students performed particularly well with, on average, candidates achieving more than a grade better than projected.

58   The small number of GCE A level candidates studying Urdu and Bengali all achieved A to D grades. Results in economics, English language, history and sociology were significantly above the national averages for sixth form colleges. Pass rates of 80 per cent and above were recorded for French, English literature, government and politics, mathematics and psychology. GCE A level results were also sound in media studies, particularly so for vocational students taking additional qualifications. In sciences, the figures for 1995 show a marked rise in performance over previous years. However, results were still below national averages in biology, chemistry and physics. In business studies and geography, results were significantly below national averages, although, overall, students improved on their individual projected grades. Twenty-eight students took GCE advanced supplementary (AS) examinations. Results in general studies were commensurate with a low national pass rate but those in mathematics were 30 per cent below national averages. At present, retention is at or above the college's target of 80 per cent in most GCE AS/A level subjects, with psychology, English and physics showing marked improvements since 1994.

59   Full-time students may only take GCSE subjects in addition to their main programme of study. GCSE results were below average in Bengali and well below average in mathematics, English and French. Only 29 per cent of the 375 students who entered achieved A to C grades in mathematics. Sixty per cent of those who enrolled for GCSE English were entered for the examination. Of 186 entries, 26 per cent achieved A to C grades.

60   Most students progress to higher education; former students are currently studying at over 40 universities and other institutions of higher education. Data on the destinations of students indicate that 80 per cent of GCE A level students who completed their course in 1995 proceeded to higher education, 7 per cent continued in further education and 3 per cent gained employment. The destinations of the remaining 10 per cent were unknown. Of those completing vocational courses at advanced level, 68 per cent progressed to higher education and 26 per cent went into employment. The destinations of the remaining 6 per cent were unknown. Engineering students were among those most successful in gaining places in higher education. Eighty-five per cent of students completing vocational courses at intermediate level continued in further education, many at Newham Sixth Form College.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

61   The college's comprehensive quality assurance system includes review and evaluation of curriculum and cross-college areas, a staff-development policy, target setting for individuals and teams, and opportunities for students and other customers, such as local employers, to register their views on quality. The senior management team encourages an approach to quality which is linked to strategic planning and which strives for constant improvement. A quality audit committee, set up in April 1995, reviews and monitors quality assurance procedures and outcomes and advises the senior management team on those areas where improvements are required. The committee, chaired by the vice-principal, comprises a cross section of college staff. Since its inception, it has considered the college charter, publicity material, the equal opportunities policy and the handling of student enquiries.

62   There is an annual cycle of course review and evaluation, linked to strategic planning. Each area is reviewed by the senior management team with the relevant team leader. Course review reports and those for cross-college areas are generally comprehensive and carefully evaluate performance. Most reports identify strengths and weaknesses in provision. The GCE A level programme is reviewed as a whole and by individual subjects.   Following the publication of examination results, the achievements of students taught by each team are rigorously reviewed in a formal meeting between the team and the principal, where reasons are sought for performance which is significantly better or poorer than expected. In the light of this meeting, teams revise their plans for the forthcoming year.

63   There are three opportunities for students to complete evaluative questionnaires on their course during each year. They can comment on course design, accommodation, and the effectiveness of the teaching of individual teachers. Students report that action results from their comments. For example, in chemistry, the order of course units was changed to ease progression through the syllabus, and more clearly-

defined homework tasks were introduced to supplement the open-ended research project. In another programme area students had commented upon the regular late start of their classes. The teacher concerned and the students made a contract to monitor punctuality and the situation improved. Comments made by employers who offer work experience are incorporated in reviews where appropriate. Students' achievements are the key indicator by which improvements are measured. The achievement of students taking GCE A level programmes is analysed rigorously against their anticipated performance based on GCSE results. The value-added system used by the college is the system based on the Audit Commission's report *Unfinished Business*. Progress on the achievement of targets previously set is reviewed. Actions required for improvement are linked to new targets and performance indicators in most cases. Recent reports are now considerably more detailed and more evaluative than they were in the first two years of operation of the review scheme.

64   A cycle of observation of classroom practice has been established to promote improvements in quality. In most cases, the observation is undertaken by a member of the management group, but increasingly, as the system becomes established, peer observation is taking over. Teachers are given notes of guidance on what to look for in classroom observation and a standard form is used to record observations. Extensive feedback is given to the teachers observed to enable them to improve their performance. This process has been welcomed by teachers who see it as a positive aid to improving their effectiveness.

65   Members of the senior management team review all moderators' and external verifiers' reports. The reports are discussed with delivery team leaders and appear as agenda items on delivery team meetings. A good system of internal verification has been developed throughout the college. Approximately 55 per cent of teachers have completed training as assessors or verifiers. Much of this training is delivered in-house. Internal verification is not restricted to GNVQ and NVQ programmes, but extends to all vocational programmes. A verification cycle has been established which includes cross verification of marking standards between different subject areas. This has improved links between programme areas and has resulted in some examples of the sharing of good practice in assessment.

66   There is an induction programme for all new staff to familiarise them with the college. For teachers new to the profession this includes a reduced teaching timetable and regular meetings with a mentor to review progress. The college has a development policy for all of its staff. Much work in the last two years has focused on the needs of teachers contributing to the widening range of vocational programmes. In addition, all staff have five days of development activities in the college each year. Many development activities take place during the two hours a week of timetabled meeting times for teams. Just over 1 per cent of the college's budget is committed to staff development. The funds are spread evenly across the college. The

college plans to match staff development more closely to identified corporate needs but it has not yet started to implement a formal procedure for staff appraisal.

67 The college charter was produced in October 1994, after consultation with students, teachers and support staff, and approved by the board of the corporation. The charter is an attractive document which uses plain language to set out the commitments made by the college to students, employers and other clients. It is available in a number of community languages. The charter is on display in the college and is included in the student handbook.

68 The college has produced a self-assessment report which follows the headings of Council Circular, 93/28 *Assessing Achievement*. The report was produced after extensive consultation with managers and staff. It contains much useful descriptive material, is clearly written and links to supporting documentation are made. Areas for development have been identified under each heading and these often coincide with the judgements made by inspectors. Target dates and the personnel responsible for taking action are not identified in the report. The report does not mention a number of strengths of the college identified by inspectors.

RESOURCES

Staffing

69 The college employs 86 full-time equivalent teachers, of whom over 85 per cent are full time. Most were newly recruited on the foundation of the college. Fifty-two per cent of staff are women and approximately 30 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Half of the senior management team are women and 25 per cent are from minority ethnic groups. Teachers are well qualified academically; 95 per cent have degrees, 36 per cent higher degrees, and 94 per cent teaching qualifications. Science staff should be encouraged to pursue professional development in teaching and learning activities in science. Many teachers have recent and relevant industrial, commercial and professional experience. In art and design, all staff are practising artists and designers and are up to date with current working methods and developments. Amongst staff teaching performing arts there is an appropriate range of industrial experience. Many of those teaching business have worked outside education and use their business experience to good effect. Staff teaching information technology have commercial experience though this is not necessarily directly related to computing.

70 In addition to teachers, there are a further 24 full-time equivalent staff who support learning directly and 32 other staff; the great majority of these are full-time or fractional postholders. The level of technical support varies: art and design and the sciences are amply supported by technicians, but in engineering there is sometimes insufficient support during laboratory and workshop sessions.

Equipment/learning resources

71   The equipment available for teaching is generally of a high standard and classrooms are well equipped. In engineering, there is a suitable range of equipment for the courses provided. Languages have good access to technical equipment, including a 24-booth language laboratory and satellite television. In the performing arts, the media equipment is of high quality, and the theatre sound and lighting equipment offers students good learning opportunities in theatre technology.   However, there are insufficient musical resources for intermediate and advanced students and there are insufficient materials, including costumes and stage properties, available for stagecraft. In art and design the workshops are well equipped for screen printing, and for two-dimensional and three-dimensional activities, but there are no blackout facilities in the art and design studios, and there are only limited learning resources for studies in art criticism. The sciences are generally well equipped, although there is insufficient physics equipment to support whole class practical work.

72   The learning resource centre comprises the library and an adjacent area equipped with 56 computers and a range of computer-based and other learning materials. Information technology equipment includes the web system, an easily updateable electronic handbook of information designed to support curriculum activities. The facilities, though modest in size, are of a good standard. There are 97 study spaces in the library: a ratio of one study space to every 16.5 full-time equivalent students. The library stock, which is modern and growing, includes almost 10,000 books and a wide range of periodicals, newspapers, CD-ROM disks, video and audio cassettes, and files of press clippings. The use of stock has been closely monitored since the library opened. The range of independent learning materials and specialist textbooks is generally adequate but it varies from curriculum area to curriculum area. For example, there are few art reference books available and, given the high degree of use, there are insufficient mathematics and science texts, in particular for those GNVQ students needing to carry out research for assignments. The budget for the current year is £42,400, of which £27,000 is for books and periodicals; last year the figures were £40,000 and £24,200, respectively.

73   There is an excellent range of computer hardware and software. There are 378 terminals available for student use: a ratio of one workstation to every 4.1 full-time equivalent students. Software to monitor workstation use has recently been installed with a view to informing decision making on the number of workstations required to meet student demand. Most computers are up-to-date models, including the 56 in the learning resource centre. In addition, a further 20 are available as a drop-in facility for two days a week. All have up-to-date software, and commercial software is available across the network. Access to computers across the curriculum is good; all full-time students are guaranteed a minimum of 1.25 hours of core skills teaching in information technology

each week. Design students have the use of workstations running commercial software used in industry and the mathematics area has an up-to-date computer network. The college's budget for the purchase of equipment for the current year is £102,000 compared with £132,000 last year. The major capital purchases planned for this year are additional items of computing equipment.

Accommodation

74   Much of the accommodation was erected just before the opening of the college in 1992, and the older former school buildings have been sympathetically refurbished. Old and new blend together well in a unique design and provide a secure and welcoming environment which is clean and well maintained. The four main buildings have a floor area of approximately 12,500 square metres and are linked by a glazed atrium which, though unheated, provides a useful social area for students, and is attractively planted with species of palm, yucca and bamboo. The college has plans to extend its accommodation.

75   The quality of the teaching accommodation is high. Rooms are bright and well decorated. Most of the rooms are sufficiently spacious to allow alternate seating arrangements to suit the needs of the lesson, providing the opportunity for both group and individual work. The accommodation for media students is of a high standard, as is the drama studio. However, there is a lack of storage space for performing arts equipment. Art and design students have access to large, well-lit studios, but there are only limited facilities for the exhibition of students' work. Science laboratories are well furnished and their design allows for both practical work and other teaching and learning activities to occur simultaneously. There is a spacious greenhouse and outdoor environmental area to support project work, plant studies and ecology, but this has yet to be fully developed. Engineering accommodation is well designed and allows for flexible use of laboratories and workshops.

76   There is access for wheelchair users throughout the college, with the exception of the staff changing area above the sports hall. Access for those with restricted mobility to the principal's office is by stair lift. All entrances are ramped and all internal doors are wide enough for wheelchairs. There are other facilities for disabled people throughout the building, including the sports area and showers.

77   The social facilities for students are limited, but of a good standard. There is a canteen which seats 50; the hall is used as a dining area and is also available as a general seating area. There is a women's common room. Sports facilities comprise outdoor tennis courts, a multi-gym and a large sports hall; these are available for use six days a week, including evenings.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

78 Newham Sixth Form College is making good progress towards the achievement of its mission. The particular strengths of the college are:

- an ethos which encourages participation in education and high expectations in young people

- an extensive range of programmes at appropriate levels which have resulted from effective research and marketing

- well-developed links with local schools, parents, the community and higher education

- productive links with employers and the TEC, which result in sponsorship and funding

- an experienced and supportive corporation board, committed to quality assurance

- good leadership, with an open and consultative style of management which permeates the whole college

- well-managed strategic planning, integral to the operations of the college

- well-designed and implemented induction and tutorial programmes

- much good teaching and promotion of learning resulting in steady improvement in students' achievements

- accommodation of a high standard which contributes to a secure and welcoming environment.

79 If the college is to build on its existing strengths it should:

- continue to clarify the relationships between elements of the management structure

- ensure that all curriculum delivery teams work as effectively as the best

- improve attendance and punctuality on some courses

- collect more reliable information on the take-up of career interviews

- implement the staff-appraisal system and formalise links between staff development and strategic planning

- rectify deficiencies in the equipment available for art and design and the performing arts.

FIGURES

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

Figure 1

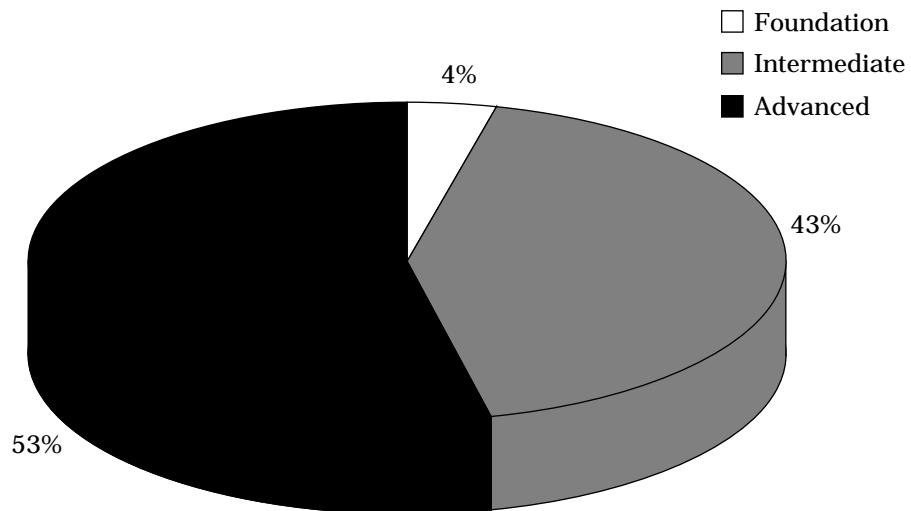**Newham Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments by age (1995-96)**

Legend:
- 16-18 years
- 19-24 years
- 25+ years
- Not known

11% 1%

12%

76%
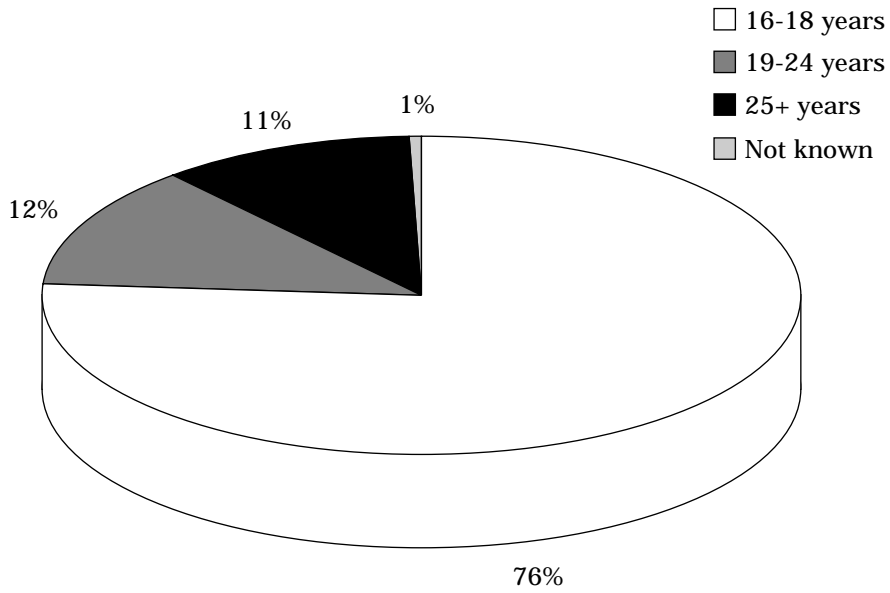
Enrolments: 1,925

Figure 2

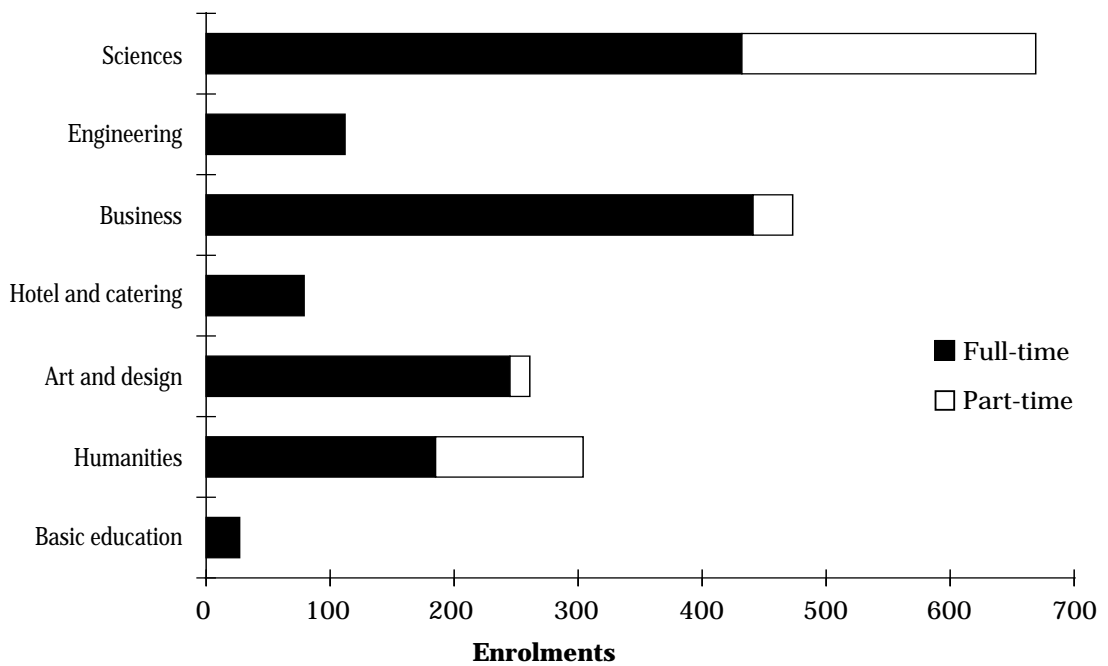**Newham Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1995-96)**

Legend:
- Foundation
- Intermediate
- Advanced

4%

43%

53%

Enrolments: 1,925

Figure 3

Newham Sixth Form College: enrolments by mode of attendance and curriculum area (1995-96)
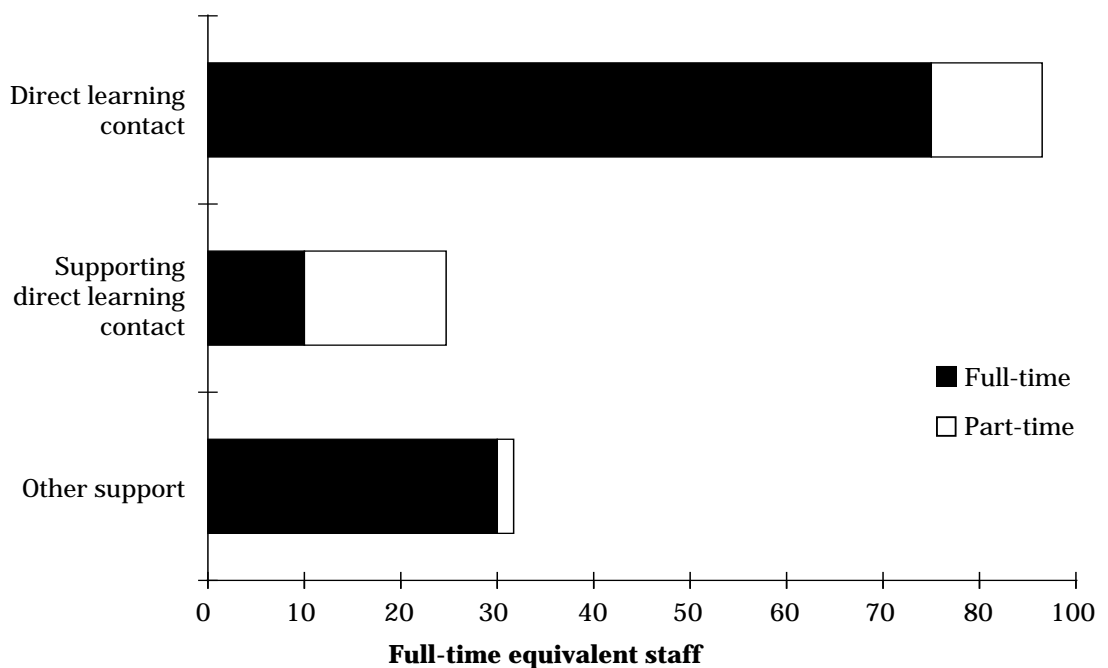

Enrolments: 1,925

Figure 4

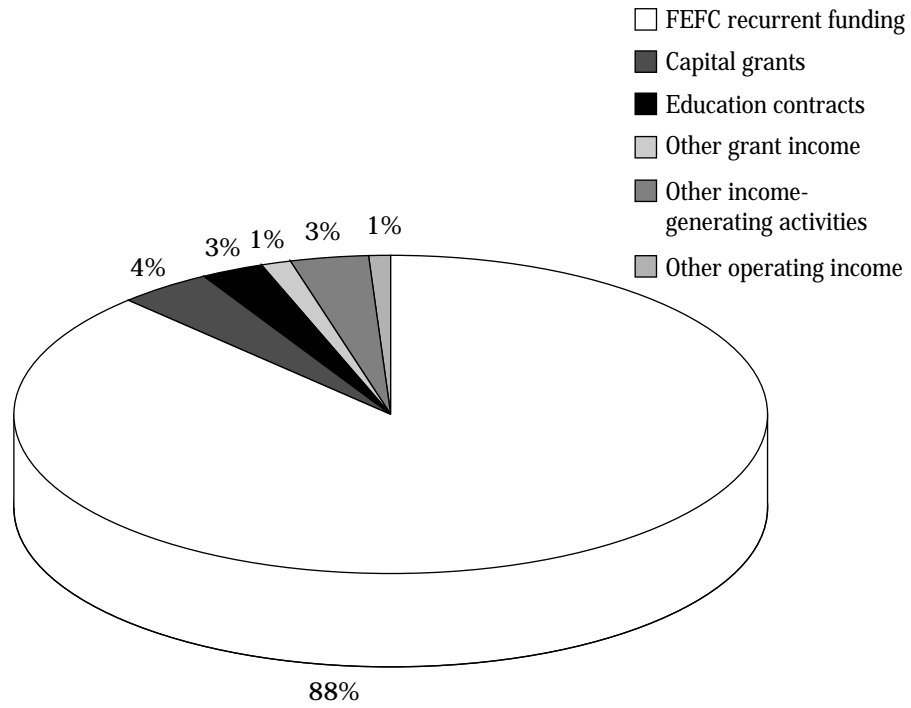**Newham Sixth Form College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1995-96)**

Full-time equivalent staff: 143

Figure 5

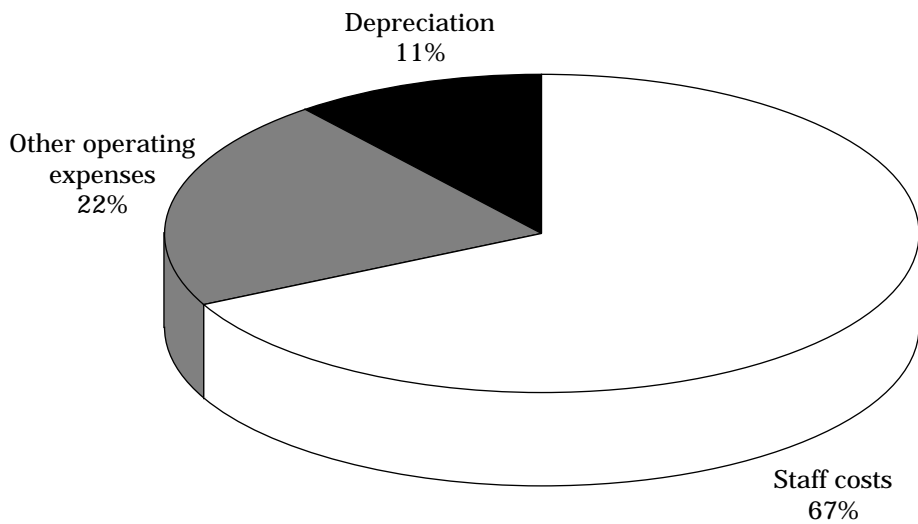**Newham Sixth Form College: income (for 12 months to July 1995)**

Legend:
- ☐ FEFC recurrent funding
- ◼ Capital grants
- ◼ Education contracts
- ☐ Other grant income
- ◼ Other income-generating activities
- ☐ Other operating income

4% 3% 1% 3% 1%

88%

Income: £5,451,941

Figure 6

Newham Sixth Form College: expenditure (for 12 months to July 1995)

Depreciation
11%

Other operating
expenses
22%

Staff costs
67%

Expenditure: £4,605,738