

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

North East Worcestershire College

June 1997

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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FUNDING COUNCIL**

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

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GRADE DESCRIPTORS

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

The descriptors for the grades are:

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

By June 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 81/97

NORTH EAST WORCESTERSHIRE COLLEGE

WEST MIDLANDS REGION

Inspected January 1996-March 1997

Summary

North East Worcestershire College is a major provider of further education and training in Redditch and Bromsgrove and in the areas surrounding these towns. It has good links with the local community, employers, higher education institutions and the Central England TEC. Governors and senior management are strongly committed to ensuring that the college's financial and strategic planning is sound. Middle management is effective and internal communications work well. Courses provided outside the college in collaboration with other organisations are well managed and they are subject to rigorous quality control. Students receive good advice and effective guidance and counselling. Induction is well planned. Most teaching is good. In catering it is outstanding. Many buildings are not easily accessible to wheelchair users. The management information systems are ineffective. Data about students' achievements are unreliable. Achievement rates on some courses are poor. The teaching of art and design is unsatisfactory. The framework for quality assurance is sound but it is not implemented and monitored consistently. In some vocational areas, insufficient numbers of staff hold assessor and verifier awards. Some specialist equipment is out of date and there are insufficient computers. The cleaning of the college is not of a high standard.

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

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Mathematics and information technology	3	Health and community care	2
Engineering	2	Hair and beauty	2
Business administration	2	Art and design	4
Business and professional studies	2	English and languages	3
Catering	1	Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2

INTRODUCTION

1 North East Worcestershire College was inspected in four stages. The college's induction and enrolment procedures were inspected at the start of the autumn term 1996. Specialist inspections took place in January, October and November 1996 and in March 1997. These were followed by an inspection of cross-college provision which also took place in March 1997. Twenty-one inspectors spent 77 days on the inspection. They visited 178 lessons, involving some 2,000 students, and they inspected students' work. Meetings were held with members of the corporation, college senior managers and staff, students, parents, local employers and representatives from universities and local schools. Discussions also took place with representatives of the local training and enterprise council (TEC). Inspectors examined college policy statements, the strategic plan, minutes of committees, working papers and other documents.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 North East Worcestershire College is a large general further education college serving the north of the county of Hereford and Worcester. It also draws students from the south of Birmingham and the west of Warwickshire. It operates on two large campuses in Redditch and Bromsgrove, some nine miles apart. In 1995, the populations of Redditch and Bromsgrove were 77,900 and 85,100, respectively. Minority ethnic groups made up 3.7 per cent of the population of Redditch and 1.4 per cent of the population in Bromsgrove. Employment in Bromsgrove is mainly in the services sector, and in distribution and hotel and catering in particular, whereas Redditch has more manufacturing industry. The rate of unemployment in Bromsgrove at April 1996 was 5.1 per cent compared with 6.7 per cent in Redditch.

3 There are 11 high schools in the towns of Redditch and Bromsgrove and all have sixth forms. In the face of competition from these local schools, the college has broadened its range of courses to meet local needs, and increased the numbers of its part-time and adult students. The work of the college ranges from pre-foundation courses to degree courses and it covers a large number of programme areas. A variety of modes of attendance is available to students. The college makes substantial provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for students studying for professional body awards. It offers an extensive adult education programme and several higher national diploma courses.

4 In February 1997, there were 13,647 students at the college; of these 2,311 were full-time students and 11,336 were part-time students. The college anticipates that enrolments for 1996-97 will slightly exceed those for 1995-96. Of the full-time students, 57 per cent were under 19 years of age and 62 per cent were female. Of the part-time students, 12 per cent were under 19 years of age and 62 per cent were female. In 1995-96, the college enrolled 21,700 students. Student numbers by

age, by level of study and by mode of attendance and curriculum area are shown in figures 1, 2 and 3.

5 The college employs 358 full-time equivalent staff of whom 205 are teachers and 153 are support staff. A staff profile, with staff expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 4. The college is organised into three teaching faculties: business services; community services; and technical services. All the faculties operate across the two main campuses. Client services is responsible for student welfare, learning support, learning resources, guidance and counselling, marketing, adult education and training services. Support staff are grouped in the three areas of finance; human resources; and information and accommodation.

6 The college's mission is 'to develop a national reputation for excellence and to respond effectively, efficiently and flexibly to individual student, employer and community education and training needs by providing high quality, up to date and accessible services'.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 The college has an extensive range of courses. This includes vocational courses leading to: national vocational qualifications (NVQs) from levels 1 to 5; general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels; qualifications awarded by the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G), and the RSA Examinations Board (RSA); and qualifications awarded by professional bodies, such as the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, and the Institute of Legal Executives. The college offers three access to higher education courses and one access to further education course. Higher education provision includes a degree course in business administration and several BTEC higher national diploma and higher national certificate courses. Nineteen general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A level) subjects and 18 general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) subjects are offered. Courses that no longer meet a need are discontinued or replaced. There is an extensive adult education programme which includes part-time vocational, recreational and leisure courses. A small programme of curriculum enrichment includes a range of sports and other optional activities, such as photography.

8 The college is particularly careful to ensure that students are enabled to study through modes of attendance and methods of learning which suit their needs. There are full-time, part-time and evening courses and classes are also held on Saturdays. There has been growth in the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some of the college's buildings, however, are not easily accessible to students with impaired mobility. Open learning programmes which enable students to work by themselves, using materials suited to their individual needs, are run in collaboration with other providers. In addition, the college also

collaborates with these providers to offer distance learning programmes for students who wish to study at home or at their place of work. Open learning is also particularly well established within the college; over 800 students are enrolled on a wide range of open learning courses. Some courses are run on employers' premises. Students on these courses are assessed in the workplace. For example, the college provides a course leading to NVQ level 3 in customer care for a local manufacturer of weighing machines. The college has been slow to develop courses leading to NVQs in information technology.

9 Links with local employers are good. Employers interviewed during the inspection spoke positively about the college's responsiveness to requests for work related education and training. They also said that the college's reporting on their employees' attendance and achievements had improved. The college consults employers when it is developing new courses. Some employers are directly involved with the college through membership of course and industrial advisory boards. The college's provision of short courses for employers is effective. For example, the college has successfully provided programmes on the management of care services for Gloucestershire Social Services and for Birmingham City Council. Some employers felt that the college could be more active in promoting the courses it offers. No formal surveys of employers' views about the college have been carried out.

10 The college has good links with higher education institutions, including the University of Greenwich and Worcester College of Higher Education. It is an associate college of Coventry University. Higher education programmes are offered in partnership with the universities at foundation, degree and postgraduate level. Representatives from higher education who met inspectors commented favourably on the ability of students from the college. Some curriculum areas, such as performing arts and childcare, have effective links with schools. In other curriculum areas, links with schools are underdeveloped. The college has recently produced a policy statement on links with Europe. The college has, however, made few arrangements with institutions in other European countries for the exchange of students, or for its students to visit the continent.

11 There is a strong and productive relationship between the college and the local TEC. TEC representatives told inspectors that the college meets the education and training needs of the local employers well. The college is a major provider of TEC-funded training programmes and meets the educational and training targets set by them. The college received funding through the TEC for a number of initiatives, such as the establishment of an advice and guidance facility which operates on Saturdays. The college made a successful, well-researched bid to the competitiveness fund for £586,000 to establish a multimedia digital design and production training centre. The centre's purpose is to help people in the West Midlands to improve their media skills and by so doing, the centre

aims to help the country to meet the national targets for education and training.

12 The college has a high reputation among local community groups. They consider that the college plays an active part in the life of Redditch and Bromsgrove and their surrounding areas and that it responds well to the needs of the community. The college's work with its local communities includes: help for organisations which support people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; assistance to a local black women's group; and provision for the St John Ambulance Brigade and the Red Cross, which is organised in collaboration with their local branches. Art and design students helped to design logos and publicity for a local hospice.

13 The college has an effective marketing strategy which is regularly revised. It has a clear understanding of its various markets and this is based on analysis of regional labour market data, evaluations of recruitment and induction events, surveys of local community needs, information from curriculum managers, and contacts with employers. The college recognises that these data need to be brought together in a more manageable form to inform its strategic planning. Attractive prospectuses and course leaflets provide relevant information on courses. The achievements of individual students are regularly reported by the local newspapers. The college has clear procedures to manage its relations with the media.

14 The college promotes equality of opportunity. The importance of the principles of equality of opportunity is stressed in staff-development programmes and during staff and student induction and staff recruitment. There is an equal opportunities committee that reports to the academic board. Not all curriculum areas of the college are represented on the committee. There is some monitoring of the extent to which the principles of equality of opportunities are upheld in the college, but it is unclear to what use the findings of this monitoring are put.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

15 The college corporation has 13 members. The full board has seven business members, including the nominee of the TEC; the principal; and five co-opted members including the vice-principal and a staff member. At the time of the inspection there were two vacancies, for a business member and a co-opted member, respectively. Three members of the current board are women. The members have substantial industrial and commercial experience and involvement in their local community. They use their expertise with good effect for the college. For example, they have given advice on financial and strategic planning matters and they have helped to review the college's disability statement. The corporation has discussed the qualities it will look for in new members but the search committee does not have explicit terms of reference. The corporation would like to increase the number of female members and recruit a member with some expertise in estate management. The corporation has

three committees: audit; finance and employment; and remuneration. The corporation meets at least five times a year and governors' attendance at meetings is good. Agendas are broad and they include finance, strategic planning, review of students' achievements, the work of college faculties and cross-college services. The corporation was involved in the production of the college's self-assessment report. It has made little progress in reviewing its own performance. New governors receive induction and are offered training, although little has been undertaken. Governors have a clear understanding of the distinction between governance and management. The corporation considers that its role is to provide strategic guidance, and the development and implementation of policies should be left to senior management. Governors attend awards ceremonies and other college events.

16 Corporation papers are well prepared and discussions and decisions are clearly recorded. Minutes are made available to the public. The corporation has adopted a code of conduct and members have completed a register of interests. The clerk to the corporation, who is a member of the college's senior management team, has a clear understanding of her role. The corporation should, however, review the method of the election of its staff member.

17 The academic board has clear terms of reference which emphasise its role in relation to the monitoring and enhancement of the quality of the college's provision. It has undertaken some examination of performance indicators, such as students' retention rates. It receives reports on equal opportunities and learning resources and also reports from faculties and boards of study. Minutes of the academic board are submitted to the college corporation.

18 Senior management is effective. The nine members of the college's executive are: the principal, the vice-principal, the three directors of teaching faculties, and the respective directors of client services, financial services, information and accommodation and human resources. The executive committee carries prime responsibility for strategic management and for the development of policies for approval by the corporation. It is supported by a number of subcommittees and working parties. Other management committees include the budget committee and the training and staff-development management committee. The consultative committee advises on personnel policies and has management, trades union and non-union staff representatives. Faculty and client services management groups meet monthly to discuss management issues in their area. Committees have clear terms of reference, many of which have been recently revised. Senior managers regularly hold informal and useful meetings with individual directors to discuss issues with them which are relevant to their area of responsibility.

19 The quality of middle management is good. Middle managers provide clear leadership and staff work effectively in teams. Staff are given clear job descriptions and goals. Most teams have regular meetings which are

clearly minuted. Managers make determined attempts to ensure that part-time staff as well as full-time staff are involved in teams. Some staff pay insufficient attention to performance indicators. The college does a substantial amount of collaborative work with a number of partner organisations to provide courses on premises which do not belong to the college. This collaborative work is very well managed. There are sound procedures to ensure that contracts made with partner organisations are properly fulfilled and that the quality of collaborative provision is assured. Both the corporation and the senior management keep this collaborative work under close review.

20 The college executive takes responsibility for the development of the college's strategic plan. The corporation devotes a complete meeting to its scrutiny and approval. A strategic planning calendar has been introduced. Faculties, schools and curriculum areas contribute to the planning process by developing their own plans but these vary significantly in their length and the extent to which they address key issues. The strategic plan identifies priorities and provides a realistic assessment of the college's needs. It also identifies possible threats to its implementation. Each term, the college executive carries out detailed monitoring of the college's progress towards the achievement of its objectives. Managers are determined to involve staff and students at many levels in the development of the next strategic plan. Staff have been invited to respond to a useful questionnaire on how the college should develop in the next five years. Staff welcomed the opportunity to offer their views and said that answering this questionnaire helped them to gain a clearer appreciation of the significance of strategic planning.

21 The current strategic plan has clear targets for retention rates and students' achievements. All members of staff have been given a copy of the plan. Previously, the corporation's remuneration committee had set targets for enrolments, funding units, retention of students and students' achievements. The committee also monitored the extent to which the targets had been achieved. It is unclear to what extent staff were aware of these targets. In 1996, the college achieved its full-time enrolment target and exceeded its part-time enrolment target. Curriculum managers now receive termly reports on progress towards enrolment targets.

22 Close attention is paid to financial matters throughout the college. The corporation receives up-to-date information on expenditure which enables governors to compare expenditure in the current year with that of previous years. Senior managers are closely involved in the preparation and evaluation of budgets. The budget committee scrutinises budgets in detail. Budgets for consumable items are delegated to faculties and schools. Budgets for expenditure on part-time staff and agency staff are allocated to faculties. Each month, budget holders are informed of how much of their budget they have spent. Faculty budgets are determined by the number of students in each faculty; budgets for support services are based on past patterns of expenditure. Preliminary work on calculating unit

costs has only just begun. The college exceeded its funding target in 1995-96 and is likely to do so again in 1996-97. The college's average level of funding in 1995-96 was £17.06 per unit. The median for general further education and tertiary colleges was £18.13 per unit. Estimated staffing costs account for a relatively low 64 per cent of expenditure. The college's estimated income and expenditure for the 12 months to July 1997 are shown in figures 5 and 6.

23 Since incorporation, the college's level of funding has been below the median for general further education and tertiary colleges. The college has limited reserves. It has high financial overheads and these have partly been caused by the cost of maintaining surplus accommodation at Bromsgrove. The college's new strategy on accommodation aims to redress inefficiencies in the use of the college's buildings. The corporation has agreed to sell part of the Bromsgrove site. Following the reorganisation of the college's academic structure, managers plan to secure the successful development of the college whilst maintaining the college's financial stability. The number of faculties has been reduced from four to three and a review has been undertaken of support staffing. Further reorganisation, involving the reduction of curriculum management areas from 24 to 15, was being implemented at the time of the inspection. This aims to reduce management costs further, to streamline academic management and to improve internal communications. The recently-announced staff redundancies have been sensitively handled.

24 The principal's annual report to the corporation gives a comprehensive and detailed assessment of college activities during the year. There is a college newsletter, which appears every two weeks. The principal holds a termly meeting for the staff of each faculty and meets all college staff together twice a year. Staff interviewed by inspectors commented favourably on recent improvements in communication, not only between senior and middle management and staff, but also between teaching and business support staff. Internal communications have also been improved by including on the board of each faculty staff who are drawn from outside that particular faculty.

25 The college has experienced considerable difficulty with its management information systems. There were long-standing problems with the 1994-95 student number returns to the FEFC. These returns, however, and the 1995-96 individualised student record data, have recently been validated. In the current year, returns to the FEFC are up to date. Staff lack confidence in the data provided by the management information system. Some managers have developed their own databases on enrolments and students' retention and attendance rates. Many calculations are done manually in order to reconcile the student numbers recorded by course teams with those held centrally. Each course team submits data to its respective board of studies and subsequently to the academic board. There is no independent check on the validity of these data. The college plans to improve its management information systems

over three years. Although cabling has been completed, the college has not yet purchased all the terminals which will give managers on-line access to student and budgetary information. The responsibility for the collection of data on students' destinations lies with course teams. In a few cases, detailed analysis of students' destinations has been taken into account when planning to influence future course provision and marketing strategies. Details on the progression of full-time students to higher or further education and to employment are collated centrally. Staff have little information on part-time students' destinations.

26 The college has an equal opportunities policy. It has not been reviewed since incorporation and no formal monitoring of its implementation has been undertaken. A working party has recently drafted an environmental policy to promote an understanding and awareness of conservation and environmental issues. Health and safety regulations are scrupulously observed in the college. The college's policy on health and safety has been reviewed and updated to reflect current legal requirements. The director of technical services, supported by a safety adviser, is responsible for health and safety and he chairs the termly meeting of the health and safety committee.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

27 The college has clear and concise policy statements on students' support. Information sheets on key services are published. When responding to enquiries, staff refer to these sheets to check that they are giving people the right information. There is a director of client services. The client services section is efficiently organised and it covers all aspects of students' needs. Staff are highly motivated and work closely as a team. Some policies and procedures are at an early stage of implementation.

28 Prospective students' first contact with the college is usually with trained information officers who deal with enquiries helpfully and efficiently over the telephone, or at the main reception desks on each campus. Prospective students are given an interview at which they receive clear and impartial guidance and advice, according to a code of practice. At present, there is no procedure for recording students' enquiries systematically. The college has regular open days when prospective students can find out about its provision. Staff represent the college at local careers events. In 1996, a summer school programme provided 'taster' courses for pupils aged between 7 and 16. The programme is being extended in 1997 to include vocational 'taster' courses for 16 to 18 year olds. Staff have established links with careers officers who are attached to local schools, with a view to improving channels of communication between the college and the schools. Applications for full-time courses are processed effectively. Summaries of applications are produced each week. Admissions staff in the faculties monitor the progress of applications. Students said their applications had been dealt with courteously and speedily.

29 Enrolment is carried out according to set procedures on both campuses. Prospective students are made welcome and they are provided with impartial guidance on career routes and course options. At Redditch, some prospective students were uncertain of the starting time for enrolling; they had to queue up and they experienced some delay in being enrolled. The induction process is well planned and students find it informative. The induction of full-time students usually takes place during the first or second week of their course. Staff who carry out induction are given a checklist of topics to be covered, and activities to be carried out, during the induction process; staff are free to add course-specific items to this list. Staff explain the scope and purpose of the useful pocket-sized students' handbook and of the students' charter contained within it. Some full-time students had not received a handbook but most are aware of the students' charter. Induction materials and booklets are sensitively modified in order that they may be understood by some students with learning difficulties who have poor reading skills.

30 Students' attendance is monitored through class registers, which are regularly checked by course tutors. Clear procedures are in place for dealing with absenteeism. Students are able to transfer between courses without undue difficulty; the students' handbook includes a summary of the procedures for transfer.

31 Most students receive good advice and support. Records of students' performance are maintained. Most students have programmes of study which broadly match their needs. Staff give insufficient attention, however, to the identification of individual students' learning goals and to ways of helping students to realise their full potential. Additional support for their learning is available to all students. Prior to 1996, the reading, writing and numeracy skills of new students were not systematically tested. During 1996-97, the basic skills of all new full-time students were assessed by trained staff and the number of students who received additional support for their learning increased. There are clear arrangements for referring students for this support, and for agreeing action to help individual students to improve their performance. Staff have agreed plans for improving the learning of about 170 of the 300 students who have been identified as needing additional help. Only 86 of these students, however, are following the programmes devised for them on the basis of these plans. Some students are unclear about the purpose of assessment and some have not received any feedback following their assessment. Under a service level agreement with the local authority, a sensory support team works in the college. The team provides effective support for students with varying levels of hearing impairment. The college is also able to support a small number of students with visual impairments, following the purchase of relevant equipment. The adequacy of this support is carefully monitored. The college liaises with schools about pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who wish to progress to the college; it provides a helpful year-long link programme for pupils.

32 The college's curriculum entitlement policy allows students who do not have the entry qualifications for a course to qualify for it through the accreditation of their prior learning. The implementation of the policy varies. The requirements in respect of students' records of achievement are imprecise, and practices are variable. Some GCE A level students are taking the skills-based diploma of achievement. Good records of students' achievement are maintained in many curriculum areas. Under the college's curriculum entitlement policy, students who do not have the requisite entry qualifications for a particular course, may qualify for it through the satisfactory accreditation of their prior learning and experience. The use of such accreditation is more prevalent in some areas of the college's work than in others. The college's requirements for the maintenance of students' records of achievement are imprecise. The extent to which these records are used and kept up to date, varies across the college.

33 All full-time students are allocated a personal tutor and it is college policy that they should have one. Most students value their tutorials. Within the allocated timetabled hours, the time given to group and individual tutorials, respectively, varies between curriculum areas according to the nature of the course and students' needs. There is scope for more consistent practice in keeping records of tutorials. Most of the parents met during the inspection were content with the information they received from the college. Most felt able to approach the college should the need to do so arise.

34 Students are well informed about the counselling and careers services. The college has one full-time qualified counsellor, who spends time on both campuses. Though the level of provision of counselling services is small for the size of college, all requests for counselling appear to be met and students speak warmly of the sensitive and effective handling of their problems. Students are referred to external support agencies where this is felt appropriate. The counselling room on the Redditch campus is difficult to find; it is in a noisy part of the college, and it has no waiting area. Students have access to a good range of careers information through the learning resource centre on each campus. A specialist careers officer is available for 2.5 days each week through a service level agreement with the Hereford and Worcester Careers Service. During 1995-96, about 275 students attended careers interviews and agreed action plans. Group sessions are organised with students on many courses but careers officers have limited contacts with some curriculum areas. The additional careers-related work undertaken by teaching staff at course level is unco-ordinated.

35 There are nurseries on both college campuses. They are open during term times and they have 54 places for the children of students. They offer an attractive environment for the children. The provision of childcare facilities at the college is an important factor in making many students who are parents decide to return to study. Around 70 per cent of students who are parents qualify for FEFC-funded places, and virtually all the rest receive support from access funds. Clear information about the financial

support which may be available is given to all students. An access fund of £25,000 per year is complemented by a substantial Central England TEC scholarship scheme, which allows the college to offer financial support to many part-time students and full-time students under 19 who are experiencing financial hardship. There are clear criteria for the allocation of money from the access fund and for the operation of the scholarship scheme. In 1995-96, over 300 students received financial support, most frequently for equipment, childcare, transport costs and books.

36 The quality of social facilities for students varies between campuses. The refectories offer a good service, which is appreciated by students. On the Redditch campus, the sports and recreational facilities are inferior to those at Bromsgrove. No-smoking regulations are not rigorously enforced. The students' guild is open to all students. It aims to promote the welfare of students and to encourage the development of societies, sports and social activities. At Bromsgrove, the guild has spacious accommodation and various recreational facilities. At Redditch, the guild uses an unwelcoming demountable hut. A free bus service is provided for students to travel between the two main college campuses; the early morning service is not always able to meet demand, with the result that some students arrive late for their classes.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

37 There is a good standard of teaching in most subjects. Strengths outweighed weaknesses in 72 per cent of the 178 lessons that were observed. Weaknesses outweighed the strengths in 6 per cent of the lessons observed. These percentages compare with 63 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, for all colleges inspected in 1995-96, according to figures published in the *Chief Inspector's Annual Report 1995-96*. An average of 11 students were present in the lessons observed. The average attendance was 77 per cent of those on the register. The following table shows the grades given to the sessions inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE AS/A level	2	7	5	0	0	14
GCSE	1	4	3	0	0	8
GNVQ	3	16	7	4	0	30
NVQ	11	17	3	1	0	32
Higher education	0	4	1	0	0	5
Basic education	4	3	5	1	0	13
Other vocational	4	8	6	3	0	21
Other*	16	28	10	1	0	55
Total	41	87	40	10	0	178

*includes BTEC, C&G and Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education courses.

38 Information technology courses had appropriate aims and objectives. Schemes of work were clear. Learning materials were well designed, practical, interesting to the students and relevant to the world of work. Teachers took account of students' differing abilities by allowing some students to work at a faster pace than others. Teachers made limited use of overhead projectors; transparencies were untidy, handwritten and difficult to read. The pace of some lessons was too slow. Inappropriate use was made of computer rooms for theoretical classes.

39 Mathematics lessons were thoroughly prepared. Most had clear aims and objectives. Teachers began each lesson by sharing its aims and objectives with the students, and by relating the lesson to what had already been learnt. Students were encouraged to develop their mathematical ideas and reasoning. The teaching was planned to suit students' differing abilities. In a well-planned introduction to algebra, the teacher explained concepts in everyday language and through clear examples. In an access to nursing lesson, questions on statistical techniques were set in vocational contexts, with the result that learning took place in a purposeful and productive working atmosphere. In the best lessons, the students' learning of basic principles were strengthened and there was a rigorous approach to advanced work. In some lessons, however, the work was insufficiently demanding for some students, and teaching aids were not used to best advantage.

40 The teaching of engineering included appropriate demonstrations and practicals. Students were aware of health and safety issues in the workshops and they complied with relevant safety procedures. The majority of the full-time students undertook work placements to supplement their academic studies. Assessments were set at an appropriate standard. Most schemes of work consisted of no more than lists of topics and they failed to refer to teaching strategies. On occasions, the teacher failed to provide sufficient opportunities for students to discover information for themselves, and students were required to copy notes from the board, or overhead projector transparencies, for long periods. The amount and quality of feedback which teachers gave to students on their assignments varied.

41 In business administration, business studies, and professional management, the teaching was well managed. Schemes of work allowed students to learn at their own pace. The teaching developed students' business skills effectively. Learning materials were of good quality. Realistic business examples were used to illustrate points in lessons. The business centre was effectively used as a learning environment. In NVQ programmes, there was extensive use of work-based projects and students were given support by mentors in the workplace. Systems for checking students' progress were well developed. Some of the teaching in business studies was not well matched to the ability of the students. Information technology was not used sufficiently in teaching and assessment on the professional and management programmes.

42 Teaching on hospitality and catering courses was good and it related well to the needs of industry. There was effective use of schemes of work and lesson plans. Students produced work of a high quality, particularly in the college restaurants. There was a clear understanding of the role and purpose of the realistic work environments provided by the college restaurants and these were efficiently managed by students and support staff. Some catering equipment was out of date and it was unsuitable for the teaching and learning of some current catering practices.

43 In first aid courses provided in collaboration with the St John Ambulance Brigade and the Red Cross, the standard of teaching was very high. It included regular checking of students' understanding; teachers were prompt in giving students feedback on the quality of their work. Health and social care courses were well planned. Many childcare and early years education courses included work experience placements which were used effectively to strengthen the students' learning. The majority of lesson plans specified class activities clearly, although a few lacked detail. Teaching was well matched to students' abilities. Teaching approaches were appropriately varied. Teachers delivered stimulating lessons and they retained students' attention, even though the timetabled periods were long. Some did not give students sufficient encouragement to study on their own.

44 Teaching schemes in hairdressing and beauty therapy were clear and well planned. They offered teachers scope to exercise initiative and flexibility when implementing them. A variety of appropriate teaching styles and visual aids was used. Learning activities included practical lessons, demonstrations, work with clients from the local community, theory lessons, tutorials and work placements. All full-time students were expected to undertake work experience as part of their courses. Teachers emphasised the commercial aspects of salon operation. Students' prior learning was regularly strengthened. Practical work was carried out in a safe and competent manner. Project work was set at an appropriate standard. Clear records were kept of students' achievements. In some classes there was poor attendance. On a few occasions, students spent too much time copying notes from overhead projector transparencies.

45 In English and geography, most schemes of work were well developed. A wide range of appropriate teaching techniques was used. There was good rapport between staff and students. Handouts were of a good quality. The teaching of GCSE subjects was not always effective in meeting the needs of students from a wide and varied range of backgrounds; students were not always willing or able to participate in some classroom activities. Some geography students had difficulties in understanding theoretical concepts. Some teaching on the sports-related coaching courses was poor.

46 In modern foreign languages, there was often a good balance of activities between those which were led by the teacher and those which involved students working on their own. There were thorough and detailed

schemes of work. Lessons were carefully planned and evaluated. They were closely related to the examination syllabus. A clear marking policy was consistently applied by all staff for all languages, at all levels. In GCE A level and Institute of Languages classes, teachers made appropriate use of the language being learned. The foreign language was not sufficiently used in GCSE and GNVQ classes. In some classes, there was too much talking about the foreign language in English, and there were insufficient opportunities for students to practise speaking it. In some English as a foreign language (EFL) lessons, students had insufficient opportunities to develop their oral skills.

47 The art and design staff were enthusiastic about their subjects. On the C&G courses, there was a very wide range of ability amongst the students. Teachers ensured that all students received appropriate attention. They monitored students' progress carefully. Much of the other teaching in art and design was too directive and over prescriptive; students were told what to think and they were not given sufficient opportunities to work out ideas, or discover information, for themselves. Some projects involved tasks which were appropriate for the students' abilities, but many of these tasks were too complex. Teachers did not encourage students to talk about their work. There was little evidence of careful lesson planning. Learning objectives were not clear.

48 The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was planned thoroughly. Schemes of work took account of the requirements of accreditation bodies. In many cases, teachers recorded their thoughts about the effectiveness of their teaching sessions on their lesson plans; in addition, they wrote comments about the progress of individual students. Activities and resources were appropriate and well managed. Teachers gave students varied and realistic tasks which required them to use and apply the knowledge they had gained. Most teaching was carried out at an appropriate pace in a calm and effective manner. Support for individual students was good in the majority of lessons, and they were helped to develop their personal and social skills. However, in lessons in the general education courses, activities usually involved the whole class and the teacher did not give sufficient attention to meeting the needs of individual students. Information technology was not used in teaching and learning. Few students were encouraged to evaluate their own progress.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

49 The college is not effective at collecting data about its students' achievements. Agreed data from the college were not available by the deadline required for the FEFC's publication *Measuring Achievement 1994-95*, which contains performance indicators for individual colleges. Evidence produced for inspectors indicated that examination results are better than those the college is required to publish by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE). The college subscribes to an

independent, external service for analysing students' performance. The service provides an analysis of the value added to students' achievements by comparing their actual performance at GCE A level with their predicted performance based on GCSE achievements. The data have been used to identify subjects where examination results have been poor, and to set targets for improvement. The data for 1996 were not available at the time of the inspection, because of the college's inability to prepare the required computer disk.

50 The 134 students, aged 16 to 18, who entered for GCE AS/A level examinations in 1995-96 scored, on average, 3.2 points per entry, according to the 1996 performance tables published by the DfEE. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. The average points score per entry has improved from 2.8 in 1994-95. Students aged 19 years and over taking two or more GCE AS/A level examinations in 1996 scored, on average, 3.0 points per entry compared with an average score for England and Wales of 8.2 points. There were 623 GCE examination entries. Fifty-eight per cent of candidates achieved grade C or above and this proportion compares with an average of 53 per cent for England and Wales. The proportions of students aged 16 to 18, and aged 19 and over, who gained grade C or above were 44 per cent and 72 per cent, respectively.

51 In 1996, 61 per cent of students in their final year of study on the advanced vocational courses included in the DfEE's 1996 performance tables were successful in gaining the qualification for which they were aiming. This places the college among the bottom third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. However, during the inspection evidence was found of incorrect data on students' achievements; in some instances, students' achievements were better than the data suggested. Sixty-two per cent of students in their final year of study on the intermediate vocational courses included in the DfEE's 1996 performance tables were successful in gaining the qualification for which they were aiming. This places the college among the middle third of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure. As is shown in the following table, in 1996, the percentage of students at foundation level achieving their precursor awards was significantly above the national average.

Pass rates for GVNQ and precursor awards

Level	College pass rate (%)	National pass rate (%)
Foundation	82	67
Intermediate	64	79
Advanced	78	79

On courses leading to NVQ awards, the pass rate was 96 per cent at level 1, 60 per cent at level 2, 56 per cent at level 3 and 72 per cent at level 4. Two hundred and ninety-four students achieved NVQ awards at levels 1 to

4. On courses leading to 3,226 other awards, the achievement rate was 85 per cent.

52 In mathematics, students' achievements at GCSE have been consistently above the national average and retention rates have reached 80 per cent. Full-time GCE A level results have been at or close to the national average. Value-added analysis for the years 1993-95 shows that results have been better than those predicted for students on the basis of their attainment at GCSE. Retention rates are unsatisfactory on the first year of the part-time GCE A level course. In computing, many full-time students in computing had to use out-of-date equipment; some left the course early and did not take the examination.

53 In engineering, results on technician courses have been good; they have ranged from about 75 per cent to 100 per cent. Results on craft courses have been much poorer. Staff analyse all the results, investigate why some are poor, and take action to improve students' performance in future examinations. In some cases, the poor results have been due to students' failure to complete a small part of their course. Retention rates overall are good. Staff record the destinations of full-time students.

54 Pass rates are high on most business studies and administration and professional management courses. Few students were successful in the Association of Accounting Technician's examinations. Students' project work was good on the NVQ management courses. Most students' achievements on GNVQ courses were below the national average. Students' results in GCE A level business studies have been consistently good. In secretarial studies, most students' results have been good and on some courses, they have improved; there has been a decline, however, in students' achievements on typing courses.

55 In catering, the students' learning and achievement and their enjoyment in their practical work were evident. Most of the students' examination results were very good. The culinary standards are high in the two public restaurants, which are mainly run by the students. Assignments and portfolios of work showed that students had made significant achievements in acquiring knowledge and developing their skills. Students demonstrate high levels of catering and marketing skills in evening events which they organise in the public restaurant. Each event has a theme; for example, the students organised a 'James Bond 007' evening.

56 The attendance, achievement and withdrawal rates of students on health and social care courses are closely monitored. Overall, students' examination results have been good. Students on hair and beauty courses enjoy their studies and those present at the time of the inspection were making good progress. Students who completed courses last year achieved good results in their examinations. The drop-out rate on many courses, however, was high. There is little evidence that students are developing key skills.

57 Students' achievements in art and design varied but most were poor. In 1995-96, the pass rate on the foundation course was high and 90 per cent of students gained places on higher education courses. Some of the mature students on the ceramics and fashion courses achieved a high level of technical skill and, in one or two cases, their work displayed some originality in design. In other areas, the results in public examinations were consistently below national averages. In 1995-96, 47 per cent of students obtained passes at grade C or above on GCE A level in art and design (fine art). Although this proportion is higher than the proportion of students who gained passes at grade C or above in previous years, it is well below the national average of 63 per cent. Value-added analysis for the years 1993-95 shows that results have been lower than those predicted for students on the basis of their previous attainment. The pass rates on the national diploma courses in graphic design have been consistently low. The pass rate on the GNVQ intermediate programme has been between 33 and 35 per cent over the last three years. The presentation of students' work and the quality of finish in graphic design were often poor.

58 Students' achievements in humanities varied. In languages, the results of students over 19 were particularly variable. GCSE results have been above average, and a significant number of students have achieved A* and A grades. Results on the Institute of Linguists diploma courses have been good. Some EFL examination results have been poor with pass rates of under 50 per cent in the past two years. Value-added analysis shows that, between 1993 and 1995, students' achievements in English improved, and that they declined in geography. Examination results in history have been consistently poor; in English, most results were good but retention rates on English courses have been low. Many students, and particularly those on GCSE courses, made spelling mistakes and they had a weak grasp of syntax. In sociology and psychology, value-added analysis shows that the results of GCE A level students were below those predicted for them on the basis of their previous attainment.

59 On courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, retention rates have been high and most of those students who aimed for certification of their achievements were successful. However, there were not sufficient opportunities for students to achieve accreditation in one year and there has been a low success rate on vocationally orientated and basic skills options. Students enjoyed their work. They were attentive and eager. They supported each other and many were able to describe what they were learning effectively and accurately. Many progress to mainstream courses.

60 Full-time students were asked about their proposed destinations on completion of their courses. Their responses are shown in the following table. There are no reliable cross-college data on the actual destinations of students.

Proposed destinations of full-time students completing their course in 1995-96

Level of award	Number of students	Percentage of students gaining awards in 1995-96 proceeding to:				
		Higher education	Further education	Employment	Other	Not known
Foundation	512	5	25	54	4	12
Intermediate	571	9	27	41	3	20
Advanced	580	34	13	37	1	15
Level 4	117	19	3	60	5	13
Level 5	143	29	17	29	1	24

QUALITY ASSURANCE

61 In its mission statement, its strategic plan and a policy statement on quality, the college gives a commitment to assure the quality of its provision. Overall responsibility for the review and evaluation of the curriculum is vested in the academic board. A manual on quality contains a series of concise policy statements on the standards of service which the college intends to provide for its students. These policy statements cover advice and guidance, curriculum entitlement, learning support, and the tutorial system. The manual also sets out the procedures by which these policies should be implemented and monitored. There is a framework of committees, including faculty and client service boards, school boards of study, and course teams, with clearly specified responsibilities for quality assurance. The college achieved Investor in People status in December 1996 and, since 1992, its short course unit has been accredited under International Standards Organisation (ISO) 9002. Despite this wide range of policies, manuals, procedures and committees some staff have insufficient understanding of, and pay insufficient attention to, quality assurance.

62 The college published a students' charter in 1993 and it has been reviewed once since then. The charter specifies most of the services to which students are entitled under the *Charter for Further Education* published by the DfEE. The college's commitment to provide these services is underpinned by the policy statements in the manual on quality. There is no evaluation of the extent to which the college meets the commitments it gives in its charter.

63 The main element in the quality assurance arrangements are the course teams which meet formally at least once a term. The college's manual on quality assurance sets out the procedures by which the teams should operate. Teams use a variety of sources of evidence in the reviewing of their work. Student representatives attend most team meetings. For the most part, the minutes of these meetings indicate that the review

procedures are effective, but they pay insufficient attention to the extent to which the college's curriculum entitlement statement is put into practice. Some minutes of course team meetings do not include action points. In some cases, they indicate that teams do not place sufficient emphasis on the evaluation of their own performance.

64 A system of boards operates at school level. These boards meet regularly. They provide a useful forum where staff can monitor progress towards achieving the targets set by individual course teams and evaluate the quality of provision across the school. Schools produce an annual development plan which refers in part to issues about quality. Faculty boards meet termly to monitor the performance of boards of study. The academic board also meets at least once a term and is charged with monitoring and evaluating the quality, relevance and effectiveness of the academic work of the whole college. It undertakes this task largely by receiving and considering the minutes of the faculty boards and the client services board which has responsibility for student services. The academic board also considers a termly report on the college's progress towards meeting its strategic objectives. Discussion of issues about quality and about progress towards reaching targets takes place at meetings of boards of study, faculty boards and the academic board. There is, however, no evaluation of the appropriateness of the standards of services specified in the curriculum entitlement policy, and there is no procedure for ensuring that these standards are attained throughout the college.

65 The serious weaknesses in the college's management information system make it difficult for middle and senior managers to collate and present data on key performance indicators effectively. Monitoring of the college's performance against these indicators is carried out regularly. The data used in this monitoring are supplied by course teams rather than the college's management information system. Retention rates and, to a lesser extent, attendance rates, are monitored, but there are no strategies for improving them. The college has recently set up systems and procedures for the internal verification of courses but it was too early for inspectors to judge their effectiveness. There is no system for evaluating the quality of teaching across the college. Some teachers have established the practice of observing some of each other's lessons. Line managers also carry out some observation of the lessons of staff for whom they are responsible; in particular, they observe the lessons of probationary lecturers. At the end of each year, all teaching staff are subject to an annual review of their work by their line manager and they receive a written evaluation of their performance. As part of this review process, staff agree targets against which their future performance may be measured. The annual reviews of staff vary in rigour, and in some instances, staff take little or no action to meet their individual targets. The annual reviews of the work of art and design teachers are not carried out effectively. Art and design teachers have failed to address the poor achievements of students on a range of courses. The college is taking

steps to ensure that the course teams continue to implement quality assurance systems with rigour and consistency.

66 Two questionnaires are given to all students during their first term. Whilst responses from these provide some useful feedback on general college facilities, they are of limited value to course teams in evaluating and improving the curriculum. Some course teams devise their own questionnaires to gather evidence on particular aspects of their provision, such as work experience placements or the teaching of particular subjects. Other course teams find discussions with students useful as a way of finding out how courses need to be improved.

67 The quality of cross-college services is monitored in a variety of ways. The client services board has responsibility for monitoring and evaluating student services. A number of policy statements identifies the standards of service to be provided and these statements are monitored through three client services 'focus groups'. There are systems for monitoring the quality of other cross-college services, such as examination administration and the refectory. However, most cross-college services have no systematic procedures for setting standards for their work, for establishing targets for their performance, or for gathering evidence to measure their progress towards meeting these targets.

68 The procedures for assuring the quality of the provision made in collaboration with other providers, away from the main college sites, are clear and effective.

69 There is an effective staff-development programme. This is underpinned by a policy statement and by an annual training and development plan which identifies staff-development priorities in the context of the college's strategic plan. Staff-development activities are managed by a full-time, staff-development officer and they are overseen by a training and development committee. The staff-development budget for 1996-97, of £65,000, is adequate. Staff-development needs are identified principally through annual staff-development reviews conducted by line managers. Most needs are met effectively in this way. Other needs are identified through school and faculty development plans. A significant proportion of staff training is provided within the college. It is well advertised through attractively presented leaflets and brochures. There are appropriate systems to evaluate the effectiveness of staff development. The induction programme for new members of staff is effective.

70 The college prepared a self-assessment report in advance of the inspection. The report was prepared in consultation with teams of staff and it was reviewed by the academic board and the governing body. It is clearly presented and based on the format of Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*. Strengths, areas for development and priorities for action are concisely stated. The report provides cross-references to sources of evidence but it lacks supporting statistics. The college has graded its performance using the same five-point scale used by the FEFC's

inspectorate. The self-assessment underestimated, or failed to recognise, some weaknesses identified by inspectors and, claimed some normal and unexceptional practices as particular strengths.

RESOURCES

Staffing

71 Most of the teachers hold appropriate qualifications. Twenty-three per cent of the college's full-time teaching staff have higher degrees, 55 per cent have first degrees, 74 per cent have professional qualifications and 88 per cent have a teaching qualification. Among the 128 part-time and term-time teachers, 24 per cent have degrees, 51 per cent have professional awards and 41 per cent have teaching qualifications. In addition, there are 43 staff who teach on recreational courses. In some areas such as health and social care, a high proportion of staff have higher degrees. In English, nearly all the staff have a teaching qualification but in art and design a significant proportion of staff does not. Most staff have appropriate qualifications and experience for their teaching responsibilities. Well over half the staff who teach students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, do not have specialist qualifications for teaching in this area. This weakness is being addressed through staff development.

72 The proportion of staff holding assessor awards needs to be increased. One hundred and forty-three out of 162 members of the full-time teaching staff hold assessor awards. Seven are qualified to accredit students' prior learning. Many staff are working towards assessor qualifications. In catering, all teachers hold at least one such award. In business studies, there is a shortage of staff who hold the training and development lead body internal verifier award. In most curriculum areas teachers have appropriate professional or industrial experience. In health and social care, most staff have recent experience of local authority or voluntary social services. In mathematics and business administration, few full-time teachers have recent relevant industrial or commercial experience.

73 The numbers of male and female full-time teachers in the college are roughly equal. There are twice as many female part-time teachers as male part-time teachers. There is an equal balance of males and females among the senior and middle managers of the college. Less than 1 per cent of the staff, compared with 6 per cent of students, are from minority ethnic backgrounds.

74 The technicians and other support staff are well qualified. In most curriculum areas, apart from art and design, there are sufficient support staff and technicians. The college has undertaken reviews of the deployment of technician and other support staff. Steps have been taken to harmonise the conditions of employment for all staff.

Equipment/learning resources

75 Most curriculum areas have an adequate range of specialist equipment. The college has been unable to afford the replacement of some old equipment because it has devoted considerable expenditure on information technology resources. A programme to replace substandard furniture has been operational for the last three years. Better furniture has been provided in the reception area, the learning resource centres and in the accommodation used for courses in health and social care, engineering, hospitality and catering, and computing. The furniture is yet to be replaced in accommodation used for courses in art and design, some areas of management and professional studies, science and mathematics. The amount of audio-visual equipment varies in different parts of the college. There are some particularly well-equipped classrooms on the Bromsgrove site which have new video machines, flip charts and overhead projectors. The facilities in an old health and social care laboratory at Redditch are adequate. The centres used for the collaborative work are well equipped.

76 The specialist equipment for art and design is good, and it is particularly good in ceramics and graphic design. In engineering, there are appropriate computer-aided design and manufacturing and computer numerical control facilities for higher level courses. Electrical and electronic engineering has a good range of testing equipment. The welding workshop has sufficient equipment for fusion and arc welding. Some of the older general engineering equipment needs upgrading. Some motor vehicle equipment, for example the wheel alignment and electrical diagnostic machines, also needs to be improved. The hair and beauty section is adequately equipped, although some equipment needs updating. Most resources used in classes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are of good quality. In catering, although the equipment is well maintained, some is out of date and is no longer suitable. Equipment used in the teaching of languages is being updated and it is being brought together in one area.

77 There is a ratio of one computer workstation to every 12 full-time equivalent students which is lower than in many similar colleges. This ratio is lower than the average for further education colleges. Fifty-five per cent of the machines are modern and can run appropriate software but few are networked. The college has access to the Internet and to multimedia software. In the college as a whole, 50 machines are available for students to use on their own, and there are a further 31 machines in the libraries. In a survey carried out in 1996, 30 per cent of students stated they had difficulty in gaining access to computers or to software of their choice. However, over 90 per cent of students reported that they had received good help and support from staff when using computers. Business studies lessons are held in a well-equipped computing suite where a good range of modern software is available. In the secretarial studies area, new equipment has been installed recently and most students commented

positively on it. In a new design studio, there is a networked computer system with 24 workstations, good software and colour printing. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and students on courses in health and social care, hairdressing and beauty therapy and catering, all have insufficient access to computing facilities.

78 Learning resource centres were developed two years ago on both main sites. They each include an information centre, learning support facilities and areas where students can develop key skills including skills in information technology. Staffing in the centres is adequate. The centres are well used and there are 4,400 registered borrowers of learning materials in them. The centres are open to all students but the amount of space and the number of computers are insufficient to meet demand at busy times. In 1995-96, the college spent £61,500 on materials and equipment for the centres, including £41,000 on books. The bookstock, together with items such as videos and compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) databases, is generally sufficient in quantity and quality. It is college policy to weed out old material but some outdated books remain on the shelves.

Accommodation

79 The college occupies two sites of approximately equal size in the towns of Bromsgrove and Redditch. The Redditch site is compact and is in the town centre, whereas the Bromsgrove site is more spacious and has playing fields. Most buildings are multi-storey and were purpose built for education from the 1950s onwards. Surveys on the use of space at Bromsgrove have helped to identify surplus accommodation there. The findings of these surveys were taken into account by the governing body when it recently decided that part of the Bromsgrove site should be vacated and sold.

80 There is a good range of general and specialist accommodation. Some classrooms are bright, carpeted and furnished to a good standard. Others, such as those in the Redditch tower block, are shabby. The college has redecorated and refurbished some accommodation, such as the reception areas on both campuses which now provide a welcoming atmosphere. Most teaching accommodation is well maintained. Corridors and circulation areas are spacious but in need of redecoration. Some adaptations are being carried out. For example, the main hall at Bromsgrove is being converted into an area where students can study on their own. In art and design, there are good displays of students' work which reinforce the sense of subject identity; in most other areas, however, little use is made of students' work to brighten corridors and classrooms. The standard of cleaning throughout the college is poor.

81 Wheelchair users are unable to gain access to many parts of the college. Access for such students is restricted to the ground floor at the Bromsgrove site. The learning resource centre is inaccessible to them. At Redditch, students in wheelchairs have difficulties gaining access to the

gymnasium, the Church Green annexe, the art and design faculty, the media suite and parts of the main hall. Overall, approximately half the accommodation presents problems of access to wheelchair users. Where feasible, classes with students who have restricted mobility are timetabled to use ground-floor accommodation.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

82 The main strengths of the college are:

- its wide range of courses
- its good links with the community, employers, higher education and the TEC
- its governors and senior managers who give careful attention to financial and strategic planning
- the effective management of the curriculum
- the effective counselling and careers guidance services
- the good standards of teaching in most curriculum areas
- its effective collaboration with external organisations to provide courses outside the college
- its outstanding provision in catering.

83 If the college is to improve its quality further it should:

- improve the quality of provision in art and design
- greatly improve the management information systems
- improve students' examination achievements and the accuracy with which they are reported
- improve the consistency and rigour of the quality assurance arrangements
- increase the proportion of staff with training and development lead body awards
- improve the quality of some specialist equipment, and increase the number of computers
- improve the accessibility of the college's buildings for wheelchair users.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage student numbers by age (as at February 1997)

 - 2 Percentage student numbers by level of study (as at February 1997)

 - 3 Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at February 1997)

 - 4 Staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at January 1997)

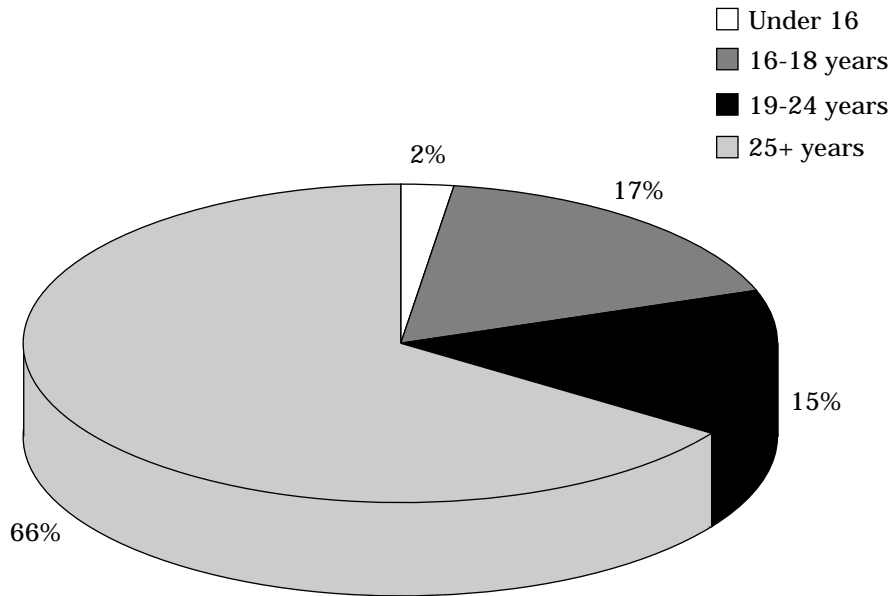
 - 5 Estimated income (for 12 months to July 1997)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1997)

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

Figure 1

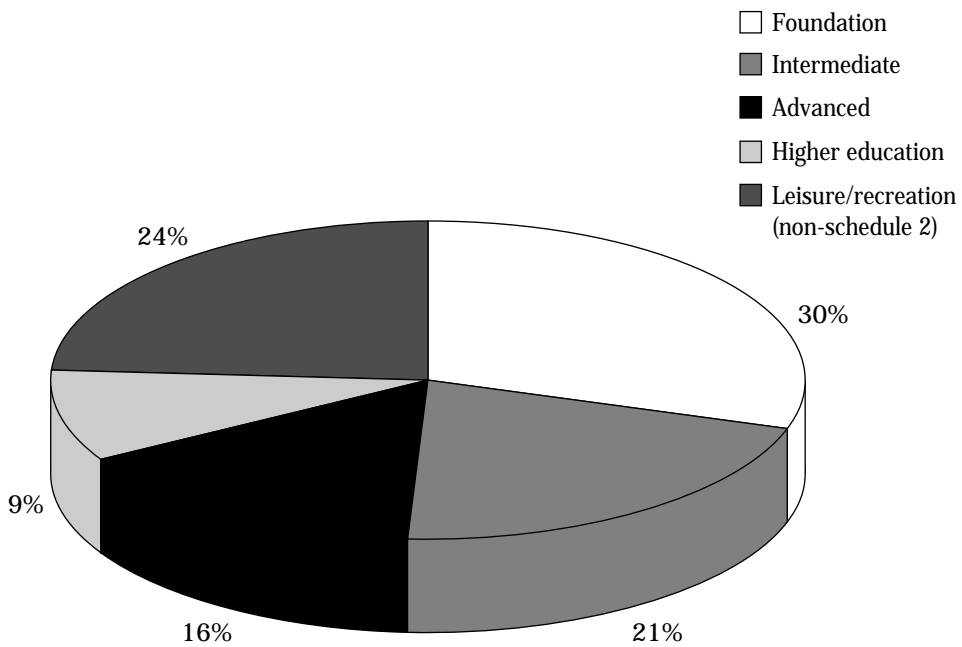
North East Worcestershire College: percentage student numbers by age (as at February 1997)



Student numbers: 13,647

Figure 2

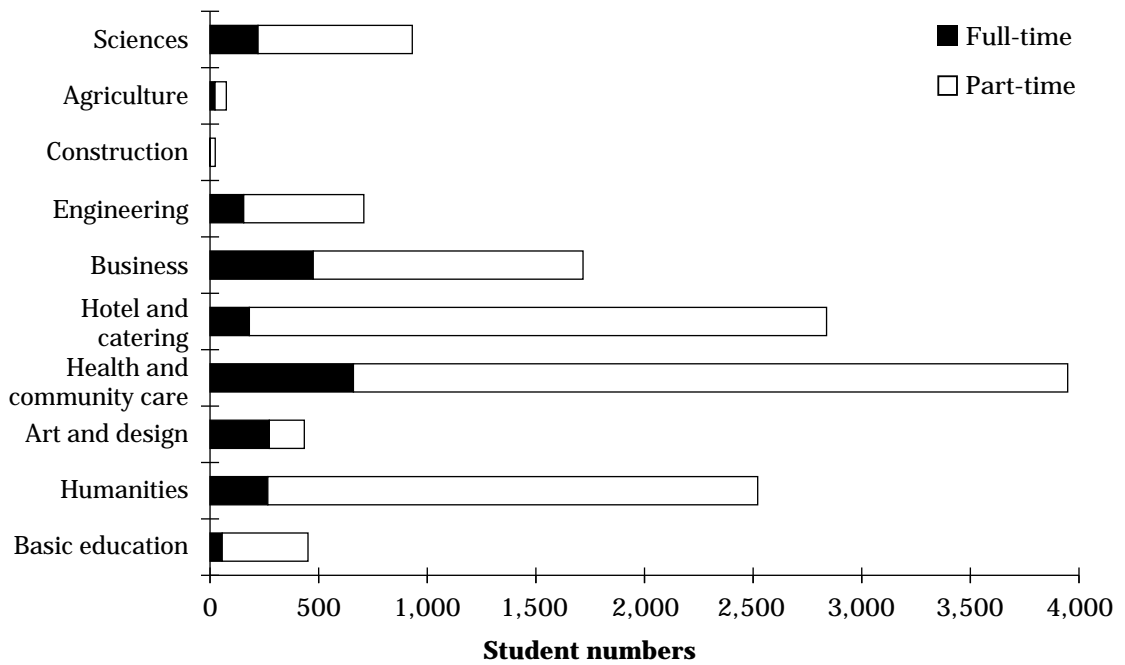
North East Worcestershire College: percentage student numbers by level of study (as at February 1997)



Student numbers: 13,647

Figure 3

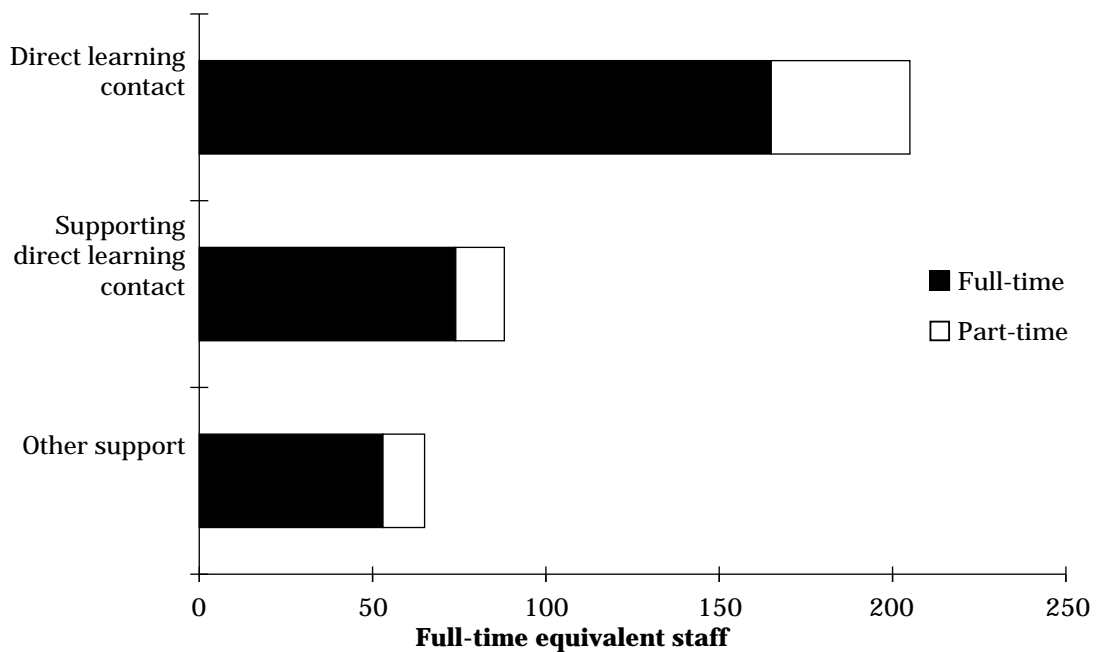
North East Worcestershire College: student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (as at February 1997)



Student numbers: 13,647

Figure 4

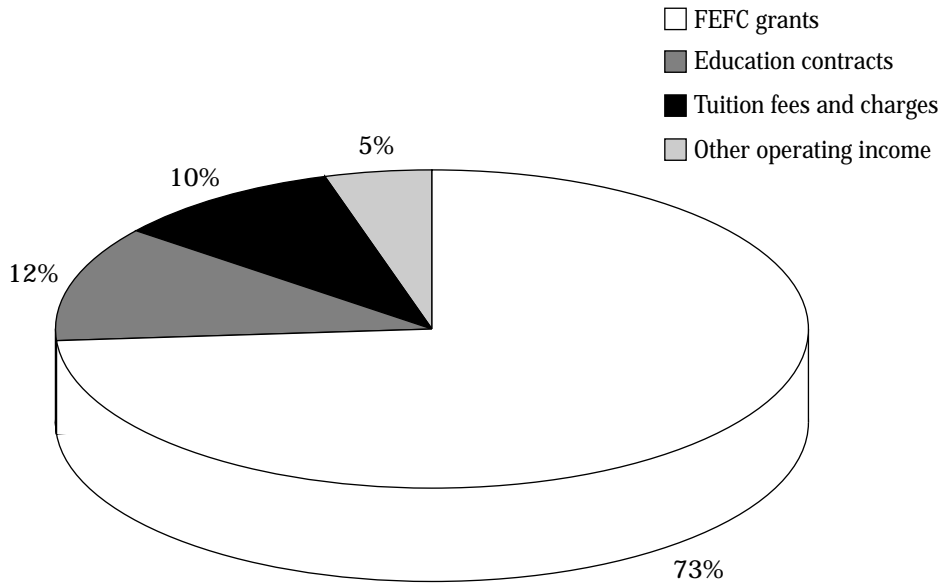
North East Worcestershire College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (as at January 1997)



Full-time equivalent staff: 358

Figure 5

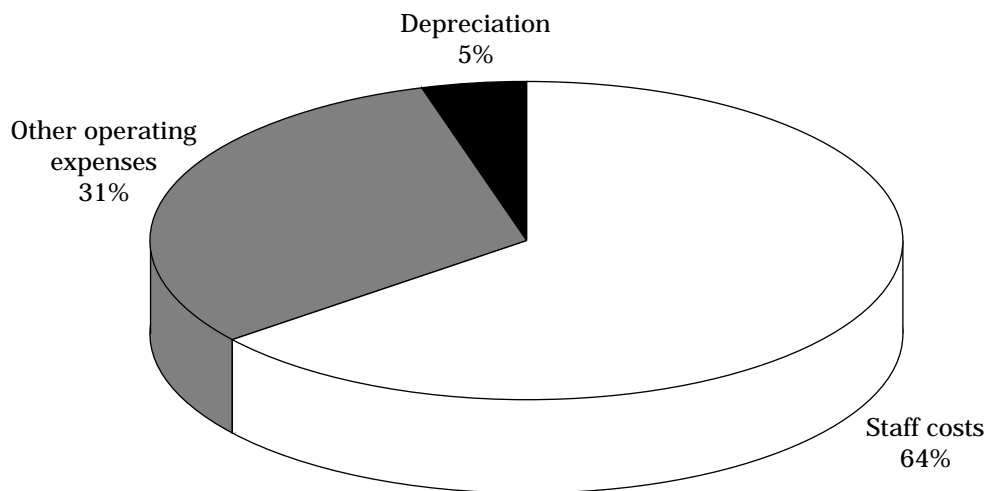
North East Worcestershire College: estimated income (for 12 months to July 1997)



Estimated income: £11,900,000

Figure 6

North East Worcestershire College: estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1997)



Estimated expenditure: £11,970,000

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