

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

Sir John Deane's College

March 1995

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
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 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.

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.*

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FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 20/95

SIR JOHN DEANE'S COLLEGE

NORTH WEST REGION

Inspected September - December 1994

Summary

Sir John Deane's College in Northwich is a sixth form college for students in Cheshire. It provides a wide range of GCE AS/A level and GCSE courses, which are complemented by extensive elective studies and leisure studies programmes. It has a well-deserved reputation for academic excellence and pastoral care. Each year, the college is significantly oversubscribed. Priority is given to students who attend the 11-16 partner high schools in the Vale Royal district. All students have access to well-informed, impartial pre-entry guidance. Teaching is of an impressively high standard. Staff are well qualified, caring and hard working. Students enjoy their studies and are well motivated. They achieve excellent examination results and a high proportion of them progress to higher education. Careers guidance is a particular strength of the college. Links with parents are good. The governors have a strong commitment to the college and its mission, and operate effectively. There is clear, persuasive and open leadership from the members of the senior management team. Staff display obvious commitment to the improvement of standards in every subject area, but policy and procedures for assuring quality in other aspects of college activity are in the early stages of development. The college lacks clear standards against which to evaluate its performance. Access to computer-based management information systems should be improved. The college should also develop its links with industry in preparation for the introduction of GNVQ advanced level courses, ensure that all students have the opportunity to develop their skills in information technology and improve the quantity and quality of resources in the library.

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	1
Quality assurance	2
Resources: staffing	1
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	2

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Sciences	1	Art and design	1
Mathematics and computing	2		
Business	1	English	2
		Modern languages	1
		Humanities	1

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INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of Sir John Deane's College in Northwich took place in three stages during the autumn term 1994-95. Enrolment and induction procedures were inspected in September 1994; specialist subjects and aspects of cross-college provision were inspected in the periods from 6 to 21 October and from 28 November to 2 December. Fourteen inspectors took part for a total of 62 inspector days. They visited 106 classes, examined representative samples of students' work, and held discussions with members of the governing body, senior managers, staff, and students, and with the education business partnership manager of the North and Mid-Cheshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC), members of the local business community and organisations working in partnership with the college, headteachers of partner high schools, parents, a local councillor and a member of staff from the local careers office. The inspectors also had access to a wide variety of documentation relating to the college and its courses.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

2 Sir John Deane's College was established as a voluntary-controlled sixth form college in 1978. It occupies an extensive site of 11.5 hectares close to the centre of Northwich, in the Vale Royal district of Cheshire. It has a mixture of old and new buildings: some date back to 1907 and were built to house Sir John Deane's Grammar School, founded in 1557, while others were constructed within the last two years. A major programme of building and refurbishment costing £2.5 million was completed in February 1994. The college's facilities include teaching rooms and laboratories, performing and visual arts studios, a design studio and workshop, a computing and information technology suite, a language laboratory, a library and study centre, students' social and dining areas, a swimming pool, two sports halls, three grass pitches, tennis courts, a running track, and a stretch of the river.

3 The Vale Royal district has a population of 114,000. Many of its residents commute to Liverpool, Manchester and Warrington for employment. There are two large chemical companies in the area but most of the local jobs are in small to medium-sized businesses. In 1993, 71 per cent of 16 year olds in Vale Royal remained in full-time education; 49 per cent of this year group gained five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects at grades A-C.

4 There are six 11-18 schools in the district, and several other providers of post-16 education within easy travelling distance of the college. Priestley College, in Warrington, and Widnes Sixth Form College are less than 15 miles away. Mid-Cheshire College of Further Education is a general further education college in Northwich offering a wide range of vocational courses. The other five general further education colleges in Cheshire, Warrington Collegiate Institute, Halton, Macclesfield, South Cheshire and West Cheshire Colleges, all lie within a radius of 20 miles.

5 Each year the college is significantly oversubscribed. Applications from students attending the five 11-16 partner high schools are given priority and provide about half of the annual intake. This year, the remaining students are drawn from 55 different maintained and independent schools within Cheshire. They are accepted on a 'first come, first served' basis, provided that they meet the course entry requirements. A minimum of five GCSE passes at grades A-C is usually required for entry to a General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) programme. Students wishing to study GCE A level courses in mathematics, physical sciences and modern languages are expected to have achieved at least a grade B at GCSE in those subjects.

6 In November 1994 there were 930 full-time students, all aged 16-19. Of these 918 were following GCE A level courses; the remaining 12 were following GCSE courses. Enrolments by level of study are given in figure 1. Enrolments have increased by 22 per cent since 1991. The college offers courses in the programme areas of science, business, hotel and catering, art and design, and humanities. Details of full-time enrolments by curriculum area are given in figure 2.

7 There are 61 full-time and nine part-time members of teaching staff, including the principal, three vice-principals, two assistant principals and 17 heads of department. A further 48 members of staff, seven full time and 41 part time, provide the support functions of finance and administration, teaching support and site management. The profile of full-time and part-time staff, expressed as full-time equivalents, is shown in figure 3.

8 The college's mission is to ensure excellence in its provision for post-16 learners in Cheshire, focusing upon academic achievement, but paying close attention to the wider skills and competencies required by the world of employment, and alive to the needs of the wider community. Great emphasis is placed upon a comprehensive system of student care and support to underpin academic progress and personal development. The students' time at college is seen as part of a progression from high school to higher education and employment.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

9 The college is making a carefully-considered response to national and local initiatives. It is aware of the expectations of parents and the local business community, and of the range of vocational courses available at other institutions nearby. It currently offers GCE A level and advanced supplementary (AS) courses, as routes to higher education and employment, together with a few GCSE courses. It has cautious plans to introduce the advanced level General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in business from September 1995.

10 Students are able to follow broad and balanced programmes of study. In addition to their GCE AS/A level and GCSE subjects, they are expected to choose other courses and activities from the programmes of elective

studies and leisure studies, some of which lead to RSA Examinations Board qualifications and certificates of further education. Most students are taking three GCE A level subjects, excluding general studies.

11 There is an extensive choice of subjects within the GCE AS/A level and GCSE programmes. Altogether there are 33 GCE A level subjects, 16 GCE AS and 12 GCSE subjects. Almost without exception students are able to study the subjects of their choice; the structure of the timetable allows most combinations to be accommodated. There is an increasing number of courses with different types of assessment: modular courses in business studies and mathematics are now in their fourth and second years respectively, and those in science and performing arts are in their first year. The introduction of new subjects such as sociology and psychology has proved to be popular with students.

12 The elective studies programme is wide ranging; students have over 30 options to choose from. There are opportunities for students to develop communication, mathematical, information technology and study skills, and to improve their knowledge of the visual and performing arts, and of economic and social issues. There are comparatively few elective courses in science and technology. Students usually take three options in their first year and two in their second. They are expected to complete a piece of written work for each course they take; over half the courses have been accredited by the Northern Partnership for Records of Achievement. Although students are able to gain accreditation, there is no formal system to identify the skills gained from these courses and to relate them to the students' main course of study. Regular attendance at elective studies courses and a conscientious attitude to written work are conditions of entry to the GCE A level general studies examination.

13 A well-structured programme of leisure studies allows students to broaden their interests and develop new skills. Over 40 activities are provided, mainly in sport, although some focus on drama and music. Most students follow at least one course each term. The courses are timetabled during the college day, but some are linked to extra-curricular activities. For example, there are regular fixtures for hockey, netball, football and rowing, and opportunities for practising team sports, on Wednesday afternoons. At the time of the inspection students were using their lunch-times to rehearse for a production of Macbeth, sing in the choir or play in musical ensembles. Students spoke appreciatively of their opportunities to take part in these activities.

14 The college meets the requirements of sections 44 and 45 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Religious studies is available as an examination course at GCE A level: 39 students were following the course at the time of the inspection. One of the courses within the elective studies programme allows students to explore the range of religions in Britain, including Christianity; another focuses on moral and ethical issues. About 100 students follow one of these courses during an academic year. There is a weekly act of collective worship, which is of a Christian character.

A small group of staff and students attend regularly and take it in turns to lead the sessions. There is also a Christian union group which holds weekly meetings.

15 The college has made sound progress in raising students' awareness of industrial, economic and social issues. At the end of their first year, all students participate in a two-day Challenge of Industry event organised in association with The Industrial Society. A few students engage in mini-enterprise activities with local industry and commerce; for example they run a college shop and a college bank. Students from a variety of courses participate in local and national problem-solving events. For example, science students take part in a national project supported by a local chemical company. Work experience and community service provide further opportunities for enrichment. Last year, 100 students took part in work experience and 40 undertook community service. Students are not always aware of the range or level of skills they acquire through these experiences and do not record them adequately in their records of achievement.

16 There are productive links with two schools in Germany for students studying modern languages. Twenty students took part in exchanges last year; they gained work experience, undertook a comparative analysis of living conditions, and produced bilingual guidebooks. Students gain accreditation for these achievements through the Northern Partnership for Records of Achievement. The scheme is being extended in the current year to include exchanges with Switzerland and France. Other cultural visits to France, Austria and Spain take place regularly and are open to all students of the college.

17 Links between the college and higher education institutions focus mainly on providing students with more information about degree courses. For example, students attend short courses in a variety of subjects at Nottingham University; 25 students are planning to attend this year. The universities of Manchester and Liverpool participate in a mock admissions interview scheme, and students attend study days at universities, but curricular links with higher education institutions are generally underdeveloped

18 To ease transition from school to college there are well-established links with the five partner 11-16 high schools and, to a lesser extent, with other secondary schools. The principal, vice-principals and assistant principals regularly visit each of the partner high schools to meet potential students. Open evenings enable all students and their parents to visit the college before applying for places. The college is an active member of the technical and vocational education initiative consortium, which consists of all schools and colleges in the Vale Royal district. The principal, along with other Cheshire principals, is also a member of the forum of headteachers. Curricular links with schools are more variable. Those which do exist rely heavily on informal contacts between the college and schools rather than a more systematic approach. The college has

recognised this and departments are now giving higher priority to curricular liaison.

19 Parents are kept well informed about students' progress and about the life of the college. Three parents' evenings are held for students in their first year and one for those in their second year, to complement written communications. Social and information-giving events for parents are organised through a thriving association linking the home with the college.

20 Relationships with the local TEC are progressing well through the principal's active membership of the local TEC strategic forum. A recent, modest bid for development funding to improve the careers library and interviewing rooms was successful. The local TEC has also funded a teacher-placement scheme to give staff some assessor training.

21 The college is developing its approach to marketing. A good start has been made by one of the assistant principals in researching and producing a college-wide marketing strategy. A survey of current students, an audit of the college's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, and an analysis of information provided by the local TEC have contributed to the formulation of a marketing plan. The plan sets realistic objectives and proposes pragmatic strategies to meet them. The college has good relationships with the local media and there is regular coverage of students' achievements in the local press.

22 A comprehensive prospectus is written for both parents and prospective students, but the level of its language is demanding for readers who may be as young as 14 or 15 when they start to make decisions about their post-16 education. Course leaflets are much more attractive and written in simpler language.

23 The equal opportunities policy covers all aspects of college life. The rationale, guidelines, procedures and strategies for implementation are clearly stated, but implementation is not systematically monitored. There are encouraging examples of male and female students choosing subjects in a way which indicates that they are free from the notion that some subjects are for men and others for women. However, there are still traditional gender imbalances in some subjects, which are perpetuated in students' choices of higher education courses. The college is willing to make individual arrangements for students with physical disabilities; it has successfully integrated small numbers of students with hearing impairments or dyslexia.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

24 The governors have a firm commitment to the college and its mission. They have a clear perception of their role and a good understanding of their statutory responsibilities. Their wide collective experience and expertise ensure a well-balanced and effective governing body. There are 14 members, two of them women. Four are foundation governors, four

are independent, two are co-opted, one is a board member from the local TEC. The principal and two members of staff are also governors. The foundation and independent governors consist of the headteacher of one of the partner high schools, a bank manager, a solicitor, a clergyman, and four people with experience of industry and commerce. One of the co-opted members is a county councillor, the other developed strong links with the college whilst her children were students. The majority of governors have children who attend or have attended the college. One of the vice-principals is clerk to the governors.

25 The governing body and its subcommittees operate effectively. Meetings of the full governing body are held once a term and are well attended; two students attend as observers. The policy and resources subcommittee meets more frequently and does much of the detailed work of shaping, monitoring and reviewing policies and procedures for consideration by the governing body. There are also subcommittees for remuneration and audit. Governors are well briefed on all issues and speak highly of the level of support they receive from college managers.

26 The management structure is straightforward and effectively brings together the academic and pastoral work of the college. The senior management team consists of the principal, three vice-principals and two assistant principals; one vice-principal and one assistant principal are women. One vice-principal has responsibility for the curriculum and manages 17 heads of academic departments. Each of the other two vice-principals is paired with an assistant principal. One pair has responsibility for student services, which include the tutorial system, careers and higher education, and liaison with the student body; the other pair is responsible for college services, which include personnel, staff development, the management of the site, and marketing. Each vice-principal and assistant principal is also a senior tutor, with responsibility for 150-250 students organised through teams of personal tutors. All members of the senior management team except the principal have a significant teaching commitment.

27 The senior management team works effectively with the governors to plan future policy. The strategic plan for the period 1994-97 draws upon a well-researched analysis of the local and national contexts in which the college operates. The plan itself has two main themes. Firstly, it emphasises the need for the college to continue to develop its proven strengths in academic achievement and support for students. Secondly, it stresses that relevant staff training has to precede the modest growth of a vocational curriculum from 1995. The strategic aims and objectives are shared and supported by the staff, who take a positive, if cautious, approach to change.

28 The operating statement 1994-95 develops logically from the strategic plan. It is in full use as a working document, frequently referred to, regularly reviewed, and modified when necessary. Responsibilities for

action are clearly allocated and expected outcomes are defined. The criteria for judging success are often not specific or sharp enough to be effective for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation. Departmental operating statements vary in standard and style.

29 There is clear, persuasive and open leadership from the principal and his senior colleagues. They work together effectively as a team, and earn the respect and co-operation of the staff. The responsibilities of the vice-principals and assistant principals interlock, and lines of accountability are clear. The principal is aware that members of the senior management team carry a heavy workload and that their wide-ranging operational and teaching responsibilities could hamper their strategic roles. He is addressing this issue.

30 Communication between the senior management team and staff, within departments and across departments, is generally effective. There is a well-structured cycle of meetings which keeps staff up to date with college developments and allows them to participate in decision making. Good use is made of working groups for detailed consideration of particular issues. Departments are well managed; the introduction of formalised systems, for example, for planning and reviewing courses, complements strong informal networks which have existed for some time.

31 The principal and the finance manager monitor carefully the college's income and expenditure. Regular monthly financial reports are provided for the senior management team, members of the audit subcommittee, and the chairman of the policy and resources subcommittee. The college's average level of funding for 1994-95 is £19.46 per unit. The median for sixth form colleges is £19.81. Summaries of the college's income and expenditure for the 16 months to July 1994 are shown in figures 4 and 5.

32 There is an equitable system for allocating money to departments. The money covers consumables, furniture, items of capital equipment and professional development activities. Heads of department receive details of expenditure every month. The computer-based management information systems provide senior managers with limited information. There is a need to expand the system and to improve teachers' access to it.

33 Data relating to enrolment targets, retention rates and student destinations are collected systematically and used by senior management to inform planning. The college has already met its growth target for 1995 by recruiting 30 more students than it expected in September 1994.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

34 College systems ensure that prospective students receive impartial and well-informed guidance before entry. All potential students are interviewed individually by a member of the senior management team either in the partner high school or, in the case of students who attend other schools, in the college. At enrolment, all students are interviewed again by a member of the senior management team to confirm their

programmes of study. At least half the students are interviewed by the same person who saw them earlier in the year. Students speak appreciatively of these interviews and of the interest in their applications taken by the senior management team. Details of individual programmes of study are recorded, and these records are reviewed by one of the vice-principals to ensure that the senior managers are acting consistently.

35 Induction is well structured. A comprehensive one-day induction programme introduces students to their personal tutors, informs them of general issues and raises their awareness of the library and other resources. During this day, a number of strategies are used to make sure all students feel welcome. For example, students from the wide range of schools outside the Vale Royal district are integrated with those from the partner high schools. There are opportunities for students who arrive knowing no one to spend their breaks and lunch time with others in the same situation. All students receive copies of the charter and the college handbook, which contains detailed information about important issues including health and safety. Students are also given an attractive and useful student yearbook, which includes a calendar of events and encourages work planning and the recording of achievement.

36 Induction into individual subjects generally prepares students well for their studies, although, in GCSE English and mathematics, more could be done initially to diagnose individual strengths and weaknesses. Systems are in place to enable students who wish to transfer from one subject to another to do so after a reasonable period of time, and after careful consultation with members of staff. At the time of the inspection 26 students had changed one of their subjects since enrolment.

37 Each senior tutor works with a group of personal tutors who have responsibility for monitoring the academic and pastoral needs of their student groups. Senior tutors meet their personal tutors formally once a term, but informal meetings occur more frequently.

38 Relationships between students and their personal tutors are excellent. Wherever possible the personal tutor also teaches the students who form their tutorial group, an arrangement which is valued highly by staff and students. There is a well-structured and comprehensive tutorial programme. Tutor groups meet briefly every day, and in most weeks there are longer sessions. These meetings provide the time for students and tutors to share experiences, discuss progress, and plan learning programmes. Students report that this time is used well by personal tutors for administrative purposes and for group and individual tutorials.

39 Careers guidance is a particular strength of the college. All students receive a copy of an excellent careers' guide produced by staff. It is well written, in appropriate language, and calculated to appeal to students and help them organise their thinking about the future: not just about higher education but also the world of work. There are productive links with the local careers office. Students are aware of their entitlement to a careers

interview with a member of staff from the careers office, and the college monitors the take-up systematically. Some 520 interviews took place in 1993-94.

40 There is effective support for students applying for higher education courses. Good resource material is available for personal tutors to use in tutorial sessions. Tutors are also on hand in the careers room every lunch-time to provide specialist advice on progression routes and applications. Each year, almost 400 application forms are processed by the college. In 1993-94, 95 per cent of applicants received offers of places.

41 Students are encouraged to review their personal progress and achievements in individual tutorial sessions. There are opportunities to maintain and develop records of achievement, but there is no system to ensure that all of a student's relevant experience, both in and outside college is incorporated in the summative document. In 1993-94, only 25 per cent of students left college with a completed record of achievement.

42 Student attendance is excellent. It is carefully monitored and tutors take appropriate action in the case of unauthorised absences. There is no centralised system for recording absences, but this is under consideration.

43 There is a strong community spirit in the college. A thriving student council, with elected representatives from each tutor group, organises activities, generates funds and offers suggestions for college improvements. Significant contributions are made to charities. There is also a student executive committee of 20 students selected by the principal and staff. The committee works in collaboration with staff to organise and help with college events such as enrolment and parents' evenings. These students take considerable pride in their role and are excellent ambassadors for the college.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

44 The following table summarises the grades given to the 106 teaching sessions which were inspected.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade 1	2	3	4	5	Number of sessions
GCE AS/A level	42	34	14	1	0	91
GCSE	1	5	2	0	0	8
Other	4	3	0	0	0	7
Total	47	42	16	1	0	106

45 The teaching observed was of an impressively high standard. Of the 106 classes observed, 44 per cent were judged to have many strengths and very few weaknesses; a further 40 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed the weaknesses. Generally, the teaching allowed students to develop personally and intellectually, and prepared them well for higher education and employment. The work in science, business studies, art and design, theatre studies, history, government and politics, languages,

psychology and sociology was particularly good. However, some weaker sessions were to be found in almost all subjects.

46 The best teaching provided a variety of well-paced activities, which were challenging to students and engaged their interest. The most effective question-and-answer sessions allowed students to think for themselves and develop a problem-solving approach to learning. For example, in a history class, through a series of probing questions from the teacher, students were able to identify for themselves the key skills of essay writing. A well-structured class in government and politics gave students the opportunity to debate issues in a mature and well-informed way, and the key points to emerge from the debate were summarised succinctly by the teacher at the end of the session. Interactive teaching in art, performing arts and theatre studies produced some thought-provoking and imaginative activities.

47 Good use was made of group and paired working to initiate a topic and to plan follow-up tasks. For example, in English language and literature, students initially worked in pairs to identify the conventions of revenge tragedy, and later, formed small groups to plan a front-page newspaper article based on their findings. These activities were effective in linking the language and literature aspects of the course.

48 In many of the sessions, teaching methods took account of the different learning needs of students. For example, in languages students were able to build upon their prior knowledge and to develop more complex responses to questions in the language they were studying when they reached the appropriate stage. In science, the weaker students were encouraged and well supported by their teachers.

49 In weaker sessions, teachers were apt to rely too heavily on a single teaching strategy. For example, mathematics teachers, for much of the time, used the board to develop theory and record solutions to questions to be copied down by students. This way of working inhibited discussion and did not develop the confidence which students needed to tackle questions by themselves. In science and geography, students also copied mechanically from the board instead of developing their own note-taking skills. Opportunities were sometimes missed to reinforce key points and consolidate learning at the ends of lessons.

50 In several subjects, students were provided with a variety of well-produced and interesting materials, worksheets and other resources to promote learning. In history, and in government and politics, each topic was supported by well-designed resource packs. Psychology and sociology students benefited from specially-produced materials which provided additional factual information and initiated individual or group work. The printed materials used in the GCE A level English language course were relevant, authentic, and up to date. In languages, teachers made good use of audio and video resources to develop students' communication skills.

51 Relationships between teachers and students were excellent. Teachers were enthusiastic, well motivated and knowledgeable about their subjects, and had high expectations of their students. They created stimulating learning environments which encouraged students to work purposefully. For example, in business studies, teachers alerted their students to the need for inter-dependence and social awareness; they promoted a culture in which good technical, professional and practical knowledge was advanced and disseminated. In mathematics, languages, psychology and sociology, students were given well-designed course guidelines as a framework for learning.

52 Almost all subjects had detailed schemes of work. In languages, history, government and politics, and geography they covered relevant learning styles, assessment schedules, procedures for monitoring and recording progress, and descriptions of appropriate learning environments. By contrast, the schemes of work in mathematics were too superficial to ensure consistency of teaching. The content of the business studies course included useful references to the world of work, authenticated through discussion with local employers. In science and computing, practical activities were effectively integrated with theory and designed to develop students' investigative skills. However, in English, languages, humanities, mathematics and science, there was insufficient planning for the integration and development of information technology skills.

53 Students' progress is regularly monitored, recorded and evaluated through informal and formal assessments. There are good examples of well-structured assignments, tasks and essays which offer students the right degree of challenge; for example, the comprehension and literary assignments in languages demand analytical skills of a high order. Teachers are familiar with the criteria used by awarding bodies to assess examination work. The college has developed a number of well-defined policies on marking which reflect these requirements and ensure consistency of standards. Work is marked carefully, with an appropriate level of feedback to encourage students and highlight areas for improvement. Record keeping is good.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

54 Students enjoy their studies and are well motivated. Some show considerable stamina and perseverance. Most are prepared to take some responsibility for organising their own learning and are able to work effectively on their own. In small groups or pairs, they support and learn from each other.

55 In all subjects, students develop the knowledge, skills and understanding appropriate to their courses. Written work is of a high standard, and there are flashes of flair and originality. Students participate willingly in discussion and respond well to questions. They are able to make extended and articulate contributions, and to argue points cogently.

For most of their classwork, language students speak fluently in the language they are studying. Practical skills are well developed in some subjects. For example, in art and design students are able to use a range of media and materials effectively and with confidence; sketch books are exciting and full of personalised visual statements. In science and design technology, practical work is carried out professionally and safely. In business studies, students develop organisational skills such as time management and objective setting. Interpersonal skills, such as the ability to listen to other people, to negotiate and persuade, also receive attention. The monitoring of individual students' programmes is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that all are able to develop their skills in information technology.

56 The college's GCE A level examination results are excellent. In 1993-94, the overall pass rate, including general studies, was 89 per cent, compared with a provisional average of 83 per cent for all 18 year olds in sixth form colleges. In all but two subjects (further mathematics and religious studies) the percentages of students achieving grades A-E were at or above the corresponding national averages. In several subjects all students entered for the examination passed: these included art (45 students), English language and literature (44 students), and government and politics (40 students). The results in art were outstanding: 36 of the 45 students achieved grade A, eight grade B and one grade C. Pass rates of over 90 per cent were achieved in business studies, chemistry, economics, English language, English literature, French, pure and applied mathematics and theatre studies. The pass rate for the 355 students who entered the general studies examination was 86 per cent, compared with a provisional national average of 77 per cent for 18 year olds in sixth form colleges. Fifty per cent of students in economics, French, Spanish, and pure and applied mathematics, achieved grades A or B. Fewer than 20 per cent of entries achieved grades A or B in social biology, computing, design and technology, English language and literature, home economics, pure mathematics with mechanics, religious studies and general studies.

57 A total of 72 students were entered for 10 subjects in the GCE AS level examinations; they achieved a pass rate of 82 per cent, compared with a provisional average of 73 per cent for all 18 year olds in sixth form colleges. Students aged 16-18 entered for the GCE AS and A level examinations in 1993-94 scored on average 5.1 points per entry. This places the college among the top 10 per cent of colleges in the further education sector on this performance measure, based on the data in the 1994 performance tables published by the Department for Education.

58 In 1993-94, there were 184 entries for GCSE examinations in 10 subjects. Seventy-eight per cent of entries achieved grades A-C, compared with a 1993 average of 50 per cent for sixth form colleges nationally. There were some particularly good results in subjects which were new to students when they arrived at the college. In Italian (10 students) all achieved grades A-C, in Spanish (23 students) 96 per cent, and in psychology

(17 students) 82 per cent. The entries for mathematics and English were from students who were retaking the examination to improve their grades. In mathematics, 91 per cent of the 46 entries achieved grades A-C, but in English only 50 per cent of the 12 entries were similarly successful. The results in the RSA Examinations Board examinations in wordprocessing were above national standards in terms of pass rates and levels of distinction.

59 The proportion of students completing their two-year GCE A level course is over 90 per cent. Some students begin a course of four GCE A level subjects, excluding general studies, and drop one of these. Few leave the college altogether. The average retention rate per GCE A level subject is 88 per cent.

60 Destination data are collected systematically and analysed. At the time of the inspection, 80 per cent of the 399 students who completed their GCE A level courses in June 1994 went on to higher education, 4 per cent to art foundation courses, 5 per cent to further education and 8 per cent to employment. The destinations of 3 per cent were not known. Of the 15 students who completed the one-year GCSE course, seven continued in further education and six gained employment. The destinations of the other two were not known.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

61 The college makes a public commitment to ensure excellence in its provision for students. It operates an effective system to evaluate the quality of provision in every subject area and to determine subsequent action. Each head of department meets the principal and one of the vice-principals to review the previous year's performance and to propose new targets for the following year. Staff have the opportunity to discuss these targets before the whole department meets the principal and vice-principal in the annual team review meeting. The departmental operating statement is derived from the outcomes of this meeting.

62 Good use is made of a limited range of performance indicators in the annual reviewing process. Enrolments, completion rates, examination results and analyses of student questionnaires are scrutinised carefully. Since 1985 the college has analysed its GCE A level examination results in individual subjects in relation to students' average GCSE scores at entry to the course. This information has influenced approaches to teaching and learning and the structure of courses. This year, for the first time, the college has also compared the overall achievement of every individual student in the 1994 GCE A level examinations with their overall performance at GCSE. The analysis has confirmed the achievements of many students and alerted the college to the under-achievement of others. There is scope for extending the number of performance indicators so that progress towards all targets in departmental operating statements can be measured.

63 The policy and procedures for assuring quality in other aspects of college life are in the early stages of development. A quality assessment committee chaired by the principal brings together senior and middle managers, teaching and support staff. Its terms of reference are to set the parameters for quality control, define areas of activity, recommend a range of performance indicators and issue guidelines for monitoring and review procedures. The committee began to meet in the summer term 1994 and has already made a contribution to the evaluation and improvement of services. For example, a small group observed and investigated enrolment procedures and produced a report highlighting strengths and areas for improvement; and changes to the reprographic service have been brought about through the work of another subgroup of the committee. The college should build on this early work to identify quality characteristics, standards and measures for other cross-college services.

64 There is a comprehensive college charter which includes a learner agreement, sections on commitments to parents and employers, and details of the complaints procedure for students. There are clear statements of intent for each section. However, almost all are descriptions of what the college will provide for its students and what it expects from them; only one contains a specific quantitative target. The college should identify more targets and measures so that it can evaluate its performance rigorously against charter objectives.

65 The college's self-assessment report was structured in the same way as the Council's inspection reports. It identified strengths and weaknesses, and actions to promote improvements. Evidence to support the judgements did not form part of the report and there were no specific cross-references to other supporting documents.

66 The report was clear and concise and provided a realistic evaluation of the college's strengths and weaknesses. The sections on teaching and the promotion of learning, and on students' achievements, were derived from the college's annual team review process. Other sections relied mainly on information provided by the senior management team.

67 The induction of new members of staff is managed well. There is good communication between the senior management team and new staff before they take up their appointments. Each new member of staff is allocated a mentor who belongs to a different department. This effectively augments the support provided by the head of department and colleagues. An evaluation by new teachers and support staff of the whole induction process indicates a high level of satisfaction.

68 Staff-development activities are effectively linked to the outcomes of the annual team reviews. This process identifies individual needs for professional updating in subject-specific skills, and the requirements of the teaching team as a whole. Heads of department manage budgets to fund professional development activities which meet those needs. Areas of need which are identified by more than one team are dealt with

effectively at a college level. For example, the first phase of a management training course for heads of department, which is about to begin, has come about as a result of the last cycle of team reviews.

69 A system of voluntary individual staff review complements the team review process. Each member of the senior management team acts as an adviser to a number of staff normally drawn from departments and tutor groups other than those with which the vice-principals and assistant principals are in regular contact. A formal meeting between the senior manager and member of staff is held annually, but informal meetings may be held more frequently. Self-review encourages individuals to prepare for the meeting, which is confidential to the member of staff and the senior manager except where it is jointly agreed otherwise. All staff participate, even though the scheme is voluntary. There are no plans to link the scheme to appraisal.

70 The senior management team is strongly committed to the achievement of Investors in People status, a national award given to organisations who satisfy independent assessors that they have achieved certain standards in staff development. The target date set by the college for achieving the award is December 1995. Plans are in place to meet this objective.

RESOURCES

Staffing

71 Staff are well qualified, caring and hard working. Ninety-six per cent of teachers have first degrees and 90 per cent have a teaching qualification. The support staff include a chartered librarian and a chartered accountant. Teachers have a range of experience, mainly in the schools sector, but some have also worked in industry. There are native speakers of French, German and Spanish in the languages department.

72 Teachers are appropriately deployed to cover the present range of courses. The increase in enrolments has been well managed to achieve gains in efficiency. However, there are not enough support staff in particular areas; for example there is insufficient technical support in computing and none at all in languages. Clerical support is stretched, particularly in periods when students are not in the college but administrative work continues. Additional appointments are being made. A detailed analysis of the support functions of clerical staff has been completed and should provide a basis for further improvements.

Equipment/learning resources

73 There are sufficient resources in classrooms, workshops and laboratories. Language students are supported by video and audio cassettes and satellite television. Science laboratories are well stocked and there is appropriate equipment to support art and design and

performing arts courses. There are enough computers for the number of students in the college: the ratio of computers to the number of students is one to nine. Hardware and software are of appropriate standards. Students have access to appropriate careers databases and a wide range of up-to-date written information about higher education courses. Most rooms have black or white boards, overhead projectors and screens. Many classrooms also have television and video-recorder facilities. The college is undergoing a refurbishment programme to bring all classroom furniture up to the high standard found in some of the rooms.

74 The resources in the library are inadequate to meet the needs of students. Stock levels are low; some books are out-of-date and others are worn. The budget allocation is insufficient to cover an annual replacement of 10 per cent of the stock. Some books are held by departments. They are not linked to the central database in the library, so they are not available to students from other departments. Not all departments give a high enough priority to working with the librarian to ensure that the stock of books in the library adequately supports courses. There is a reasonable range of audio and visual tapes, but again some are held in departments. A central catalogue would avoid duplication and improve usage. There are insufficient quantities of listening and viewing equipment. Students have access to computers and appropriate software, and there is a good supply of periodicals and newspapers, including an effective newspaper cuttings service.

Accommodation

75 The quality of accommodation generally reflects the age of the buildings and the extent of refurbishment. The swimming pool and sports hall, the accommodation for music, mathematics, science, computing, art and design, and the library, are of a particularly high standard. Most temporary classrooms and the building used for language teaching are fit for their purpose. A poorer environment is provided by the sports dome, and by the rooms and corridors in the older building, which have not yet been refurbished. Most of the college is clean and tidy. Students respect their environment. A few areas, such as the accommodation for performing arts, are untidy but this is due to lack of storage rather than students' carelessness. Poor physical access to parts of the college, uneven paving, and unmarked steps, cause some difficulties for students with mobility problems or visual impairments.

76 The college has sufficient accommodation overall. The average space per student is 12 square metres, compared with the average for all sixth form colleges of 8.5 square metres. Most departments have all their accommodation located together, providing a good, physical focus for the subject. The good use of display, particularly in art and design, geography, science and languages, reinforces the sense of subject identity. There is the occasional mismatch of class size to room size; this occurs in some

history, geography, business and languages classes, where the groups are too large for the space available. The art and design area is cramped and could cause safety hazards when students are working on large projects. The college has addressed this. There is not enough office space for administrative staff.

77 Some communal accommodation is too small for the numbers of students in the college. The library can offer only 60 study places, but the problem is alleviated by 90 places in the study centre and other study spaces in the entrance areas to classrooms. Social areas for students are limited. The students' common room is housed in a temporary classroom which is uninviting and too small. The students' cafeteria is attractive, but unable to accommodate many students at the same time. Students gather to meet their friends in the hall, but it is neither furnished nor organised for the purpose.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

78 Sir John Deane's College promotes the academic and personal development of its students and is making very good progress towards the achievement of its strategic objectives. Particular strengths of the college are:

- the wide choice of GCE AS/A level and GCSE subjects
- the breadth and choice of courses within the elective studies and leisure studies programmes
- the commitment and effectiveness of the governing body
- the clear, persuasive and open leadership of the senior management team
- excellent relationships between students and staff
- an effective tutorial system, with tutors providing students with careers guidance, academic and pastoral support of high quality
- teaching of a high standard
- excellent examination results
- the high percentage of students progressing to higher education
- well-qualified, caring and hard-working staff committed to the college and its students
- effective systems for identifying staff-development needs
- the quality of accommodation in the new building.

79 In order to maintain and improve the quality of its provision and the standards achieved by its students, the college should:

- develop its links with industry in preparation for the introduction of GNVQ advanced level courses
- determine specific success criteria to allow for a fuller assessment of progress towards strategic objectives

-
- develop detailed policies and plans to expand and improve access to computer-based management information systems
 - ensure that all students have the opportunity to develop their skills in information technology through their programmes of study
 - develop a comprehensive quality assurance system, including procedures which incorporate standards and measures for evaluating performance
 - improve the quantity and quality of resources in the library.

FIGURES

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- 1 Percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)

 - 2 Enrolments by curriculum area (1994-95)

 - 3 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)

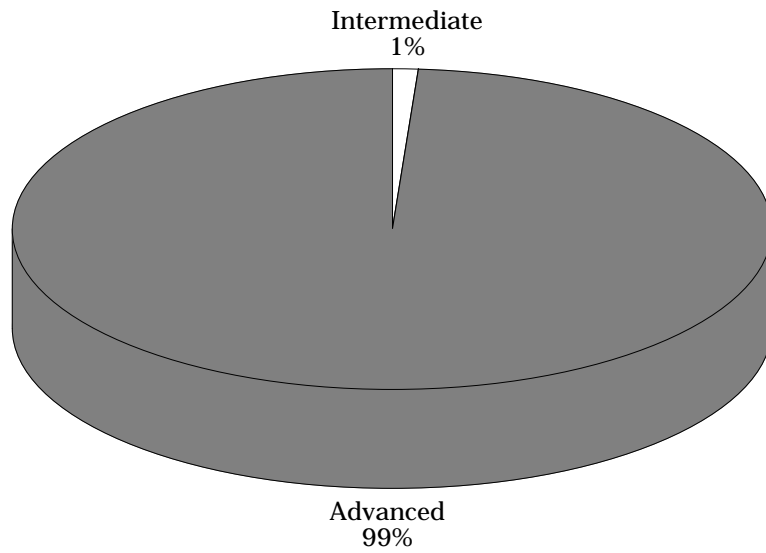
 - 4 Income (for 16 months to July 1994)

 - 5 Expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

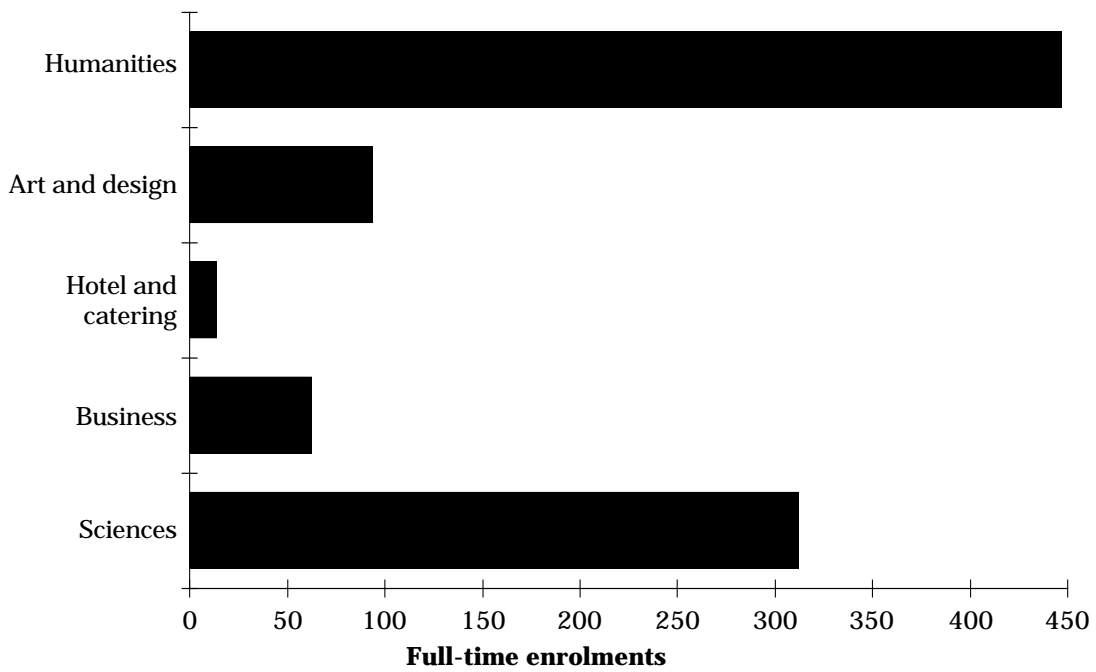
Sir John Deane's College: percentage enrolments by level of study (1994-95)



Enrolments: 930

Figure 2

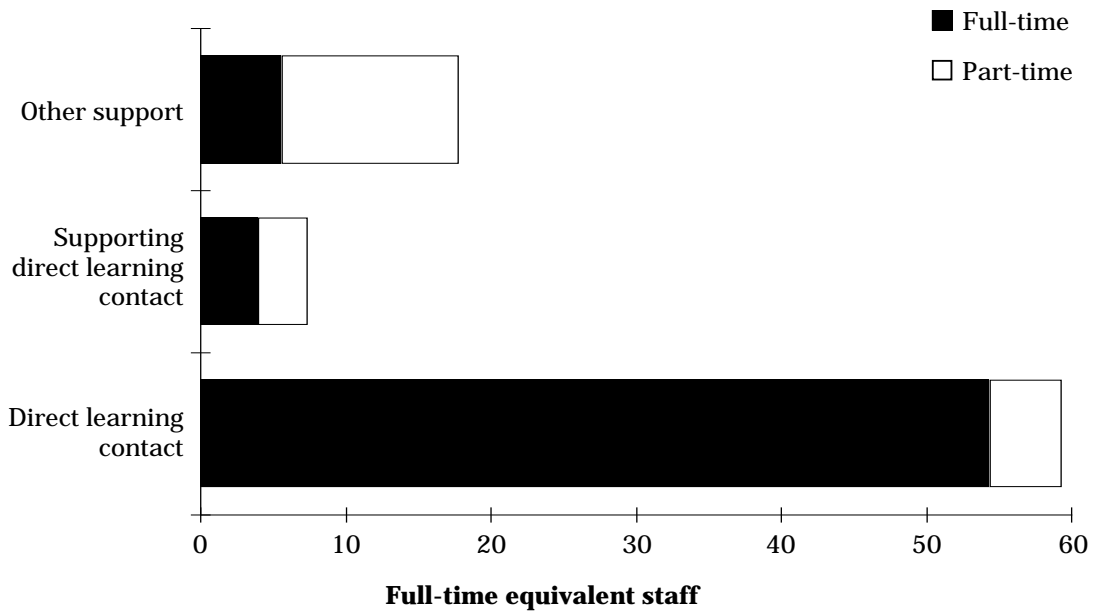
Sir John Deane's College: enrolments by curriculum area (1994-95)



Enrolments: 930

Figure 3

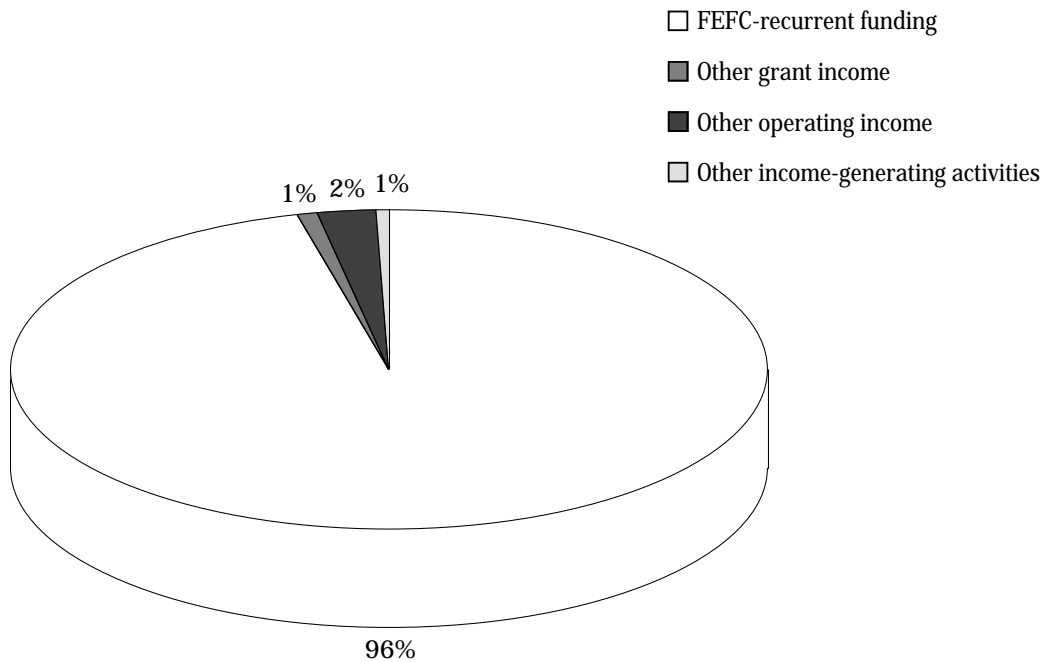
Sir John Deane's College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1994-95)



Full-time equivalent staff: 84

Figure 4

Sir John Deane's College: income (for 16 months to July 1994)

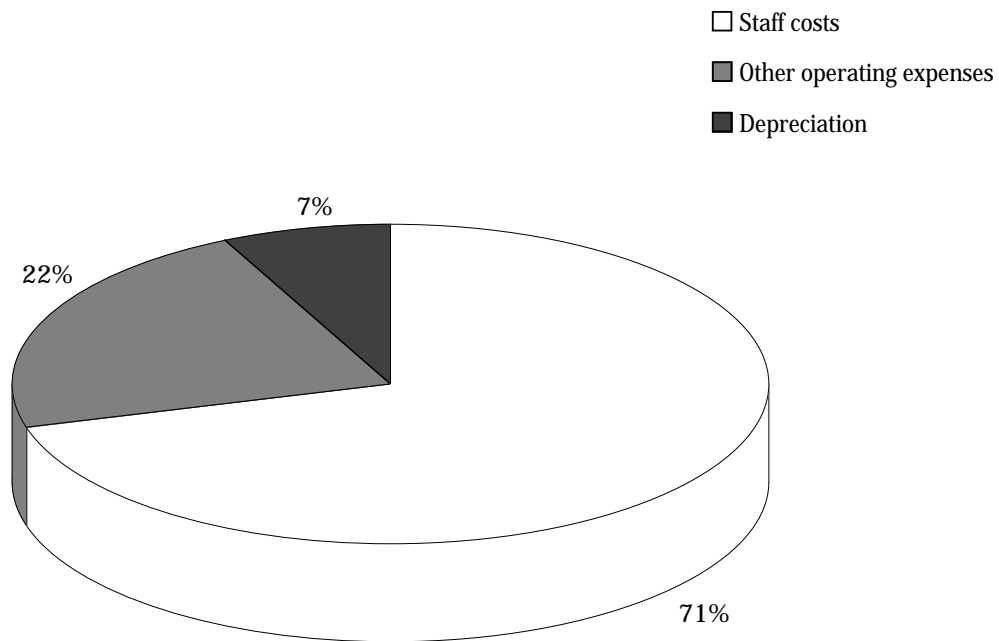


Income: £3,546,864

*Note: this chart excludes £6,620 capital grants.
An additional £246,000 relates to the release of revaluation reserve*

Figure 5

Sir John Deane's College: expenditure (for 16 months to July 1994)



Expenditure: £3,555,195

Note: this chart excludes £8,098 interest payable.

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