

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

South Bolton Sixth Form College

**September
1994**

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

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The Further Education Funding Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements to assess the quality of provision in the further education sector in England. It discharges the duty in part through its inspectorate, which inspects and reports on each college in the sector every four years. The Council's inspectorate also assesses and reports on a national basis on specific curriculum areas and advises the Council's quality assessment committee.

College inspections involve both full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have specialist knowledge and experience in the areas they inspect. Inspection teams normally include at least one member from outside the world of education and a nominated member of staff from the college being inspected.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

The procedures for assessing quality are described in the Council Circular 93/28. In the course of inspecting colleges, inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the reports. They also summarise their judgements on the balance between strengths and weaknesses using a five-point scale. 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 64/94

SOUTH BOLTON SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

NORTH WEST REGION

Inspected April 1994

Summary

South Bolton Sixth Form College, Lancashire, has maintained, through a period of rapid change, its core mission to provide diverse and high-quality courses for 16-19 year olds. Students receive excellent pastoral support. Curriculum enhancement and tutorial programmes broaden the experiences of students. Good links with local schools encourage a smooth transition from school to college, but the college should improve its links with industry to extend the impact of the world of work on classroom teaching and students' learning experiences. Although the college has good course completion rates in all areas of its work some examination results in non-vocational courses are poor and some of the most able students do not always fulfil their potential. Most students entering the college aim to progress to higher education and many are successful in achieving this, either through the traditional GCE A level route or the newer vocational route. Relationships between members of the college community are good. In general, the college offers a pleasant and effective environment for learning, but the science laboratories, the library and private study facilities are inadequate to meet present requirements. The college should also address the inconsistencies in the implementation of college policies and the delivery of the curriculum; the variable quality of monitoring and evaluation within the developing quality assurance system; and the uncertainty which exists among some senior post holders of their roles and responsibilities.

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

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science and mathematics	3	Art and design	3
Business and administration	2	Humanities	2

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INTRODUCTION

1 The inspection of South Bolton Sixth Form College, Lancashire, took place in three stages during the academic year 1993-94. The arrangements for enrolment and induction were inspected at the beginning of the college year; specialist subjects were inspected in the autumn and spring terms, and aspects of cross-college provision in the period 25 April-29 April 1994. Twenty inspectors took part for a total of 64 inspector days. They visited 96 classes and examined a representative sample of students' work. Discussions took place with members of the corporation, the senior management team, heads of department, teachers, support staff and students and parents. Meetings were also held with representatives from local schools, Bolton careers service and Bolton and Bury Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

2 The inspection was carried out according to the framework and guidelines described in Council Circular 93/28. The framework describes a four-year inspection cycle. When this cycle becomes fully established, colleges will have the opportunity to respond to the findings of earlier inspection visits before their quadrennial inspection and the subsequent published report. As the inspection of South Bolton Sixth Form College occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response was not available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

3 South Bolton Sixth Form College was opened in 1982 following the re-organisation of secondary school provision by the local education authority. Situated about two kilometres south of the town centre, on the edge of the built-up area, it is one of a number of institutions providing post-16 education in the borough. These include another sixth form college, a general further education college, and four 11-18 schools. Students are drawn from across the borough of Bolton and beyond, but primarily from the south of the borough. Originally planned to accommodate 400 students, the college has grown rapidly in recent years. There is a full-time equivalent staff of 42 teachers of whom 39 are full-time. There are 10 full-time equivalent support staff of whom 7 are full-time. A profile of the staff, expressed as full-time equivalents is shown in figure 1. At the time of the inspection there were 560 full-time equivalent students on roll, nearly all of whom were in the 16-18 age group. Full-time equivalent enrolments by age are shown in figure 2. Two-thirds of the students are on advanced courses and the majority are studying humanities subjects, maths and sciences or business. Full-time equivalent enrolments by curriculum area and level of study are shown in figures 3 and 4, respectively.

4 The college operates on a single site of about 45 hectares. Some of the car parks and playing fields are shared with the neighbouring 11-16 school. Accommodation is based in three blocks dating from the 1950s which have been modified and extended. There are specialist facilities for

science and modern languages, and a new information technology area is being built. In addition to its extensive playing fields the college has other grassed areas and the use of a sports hall.

5 The borough's population is 260,000. Eight per cent of inhabitants are from ethnic minority backgrounds but this percentage rises to between 13 and 45 per cent in the wards which constitute the college's main catchment area. Fifty-five per cent of the students in the college are members of minority ethnic groups. The borough's traditional manufacturing base has been in decline for several years and service industries now represent 65 per cent of the employed workforce. Unemployment is 10.3 per cent, but of the 12 wards which make up the college's main catchment area, eight have the highest unemployment rate in the borough. Fifty-eight per cent of school-leavers in Bolton stay on in full-time education post 16.

6 The mission of the college is to develop the intellectual, social and personal potential of all students by offering an enriched and diverse curriculum based on quality and care. Its aims include responding to national and local initiatives in the provision of post-16 qualification and training; providing opportunities for students to fulfil their potential in relation to externally accredited qualifications and developing, through close staff/student relations, a sense of community and partnership.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

7 There is a wide range of provision for those who wish to follow General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) or General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) and advanced supplementary (AS) courses and a developing range of courses leading to qualifications at General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate and advanced levels. In the present academic year, 23 subjects are offered for GCSE, 26 at GCE A level and three at AS, three at GNVQ intermediate level and one at GNVQ advanced level. There are also courses assessed by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) in office studies which enable students to develop skills in word processing, typewriting, shorthand, office systems, audio typing, desk-top publishing, spreadsheet and databases. The college is planning to expand its range of GNVQ courses both in terms of programme area and levels. Other plans for future growth include the introduction of evening class provision for September 1995.

8 In addition to their main course of study students can choose from a range of extra activities, some of which are recreational and some certificated courses. A paramedical course helps to extend the knowledge and skills of students wishing to enter the medical and related professions. A project which develops problem solving and research skills is certificated through Liverpool University. A course entitled 'Understanding Industry' helps students gain greater awareness of the world of business, including marketing, finance, design production, personnel and management. There are also many opportunities to participate in sporting activities

9 The diversification into vocational courses has been successful in attracting students and in achieving good success rates. Students are offered a variety of modes of assessment including the use of coursework in GCSE and GCE A level courses. The mature syllabus for GCSE English is available. Some subjects offer a variety of courses and syllabuses for example, students of mathematics are offered the choice of further mathematics, pure mathematics with statistics and the school mathematics project 16-19 syllabuses at GCE A level, and an AS level syllabus. Students are able to study French, German and Spanish at a variety of levels, but not languages spoken within the local community such as Urdu and Gujarati.

10 Effective liaison with local schools helps students to learn about the college and to choose appropriate courses. During their last two years at school young people and their parents are given several opportunities to gain information and advice from college staff about the range of courses on offer, including presentations in the schools, taster sessions at college, parents' evenings and individual interviews. Parents, students and schools regard the college as efficient and supportive in helping young people to make informed choices. Other arrangements are in place to reach other potential students.

11 Links with higher education are developing. Science teachers are working with Liverpool University, and languages teachers organise a higher education seminar which involves past students of the college.

12 There are very few links with industry. The impact of the world of work on classroom teaching and students' learning experience is not extensive. The business studies course, for example is starting to develop links with employers through work experience, external speakers and students visiting industry. Relations with the TEC are developing. There are few links with community groups.

13 The college is forging international links. It has participated in Bolton's twin town scheme with Paderborn, Germany. A joint curriculum project with a college in Germany has looked at issues concerned with nuclear waste disposal; a pen pal scheme has been established with a lycee in France; there have been geography fieldwork trips to France; and a visit to Brussels was planned and organised by students as part of their business studies course.

14 The image of the college in the community is very positive. There is an effective marketing strategy which is closely tied to publicity, public relations, and the revision of courses. The college produces an informative prospectus and clear course leaflets. Course revision includes detailed estimates of demand, staff-student ratios and cost, changes in syllabus/course content, the consideration of alternative qualifications and the appropriateness of the qualifications in terms of the destinations to which they lead. The college is in the process of reviewing the management of its marketing strategies to improve research, links with industry and income generation.

15 An equal opportunities policy has been introduced and a committee formed to discuss ways of implementing the policy, including the production of guidelines for staff and students. Equality of opportunity issues are being effectively addressed, and student opinion has been taken into account. Although there are no teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds, relations between staff and students from different cultures are good. Monitoring systems to analyse equal opportunity issues in enrolment patterns and curriculum delivery are insufficiently rigorous. However, successful efforts are being made to redress gender imbalances on some courses, notably computing and mathematics. In English and art and design, positive steps have been taken to introduce cultural diversity into the curriculum. College publicity materials are written only in English.

16 Many staff, particularly those in management positions, are aware of recent developments in further education and have responded well to them. The staff in computing, languages, art and design, geography, history and politics and government have recognised the opportunities that these developments offer them and this has led, for example, to the well-supported introduction of GNVQ courses. As yet, the developments have had little impact on course design and delivery in English and science.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

17 The corporation board has 15 members: seven local employers, one of whom represents the TEC, two parents, two members co-opted from the local community, one student representing the student council, two staff representatives, and the principal. Several members have sons or daughters who are former students of the college. Board meetings are held at least once a term and are well attended. Members of the corporation are committed to the college and its mission and are very willing to contribute their areas of expertise to developments within the college. There are four subcommittees which meet regularly: personnel and remuneration, finance, audit, and premises and assets.

18 Incorporation in April 1993 and the appointment of a new principal in September 1993 have brought a period of rapid change to the college. Staff are responding positively to the change and they recognise that the college has only begun to develop its long-term strategy. In the first year of incorporation the early progress of the college towards the achievement of its stated aims has been good.

19 The principal has a clear view about the future of the college. Senior staff are reviewing structures and strategies to ensure that they support the college's aims. The college strategic plan and the development of its mission and aims were co-ordinated at senior management level. Staff contributions were channelled through a representative committee. The strategic plan includes an analysis of needs which considers the local and national context and identifies areas for growth. Although the analysis includes information on school leavers and demographic data for the area, there is little evidence of input from local employers or the TEC.

20 The management team is large for a college of its size, although as in other small colleges, many managers also have a teaching load and a range of responsibilities. There are line management structures for academic and pastoral staff, and for administrative and financial staff. The college management structure is divided between the two groups of academic and pastoral staff and administrative and financial staff. Both groups are ultimately responsible to the principal through line management systems. The academic and pastoral team includes a vice-principal, six assistant principals, five of whom are also heads of department, 10 other heads of department and a course tutor for GNVQ intermediate level courses. All posts have job descriptions and the post holders are familiar with their responsibilities, but managers do not have clear targets for achievement. Most managers are heavily involved in the detailed implementation of college policy and spend relatively little time on the development of strategies to fulfil the aims of the college. Not all senior managers have come to terms with the strategic requirements of their roles and are occasionally performing tasks which could be undertaken by administrative staff.

21 There is a variety of operational practice at departmental level. Some departments plan efficiently and effectively, relating aims and objectives to the college's strategic plan. For example, the geography department has documented policies and a comprehensive statement of management which reflect the college's strategic plan. The English department's plans include excellent departmental guidelines and well-defined strategies for implementing the college's aims. Many departments, however, have not developed frameworks for ensuring a consistent approach to the teaching of the subject or the evaluation of courses. The computing department, for example, has a regular cycle of minuted meetings, joint planning and collaborative working while others, such as the science department, rely too heavily on informal systems which result in inadequate dissemination of basic information and a fragmented approach to course delivery.

22 There are no formal mechanisms for the cross-college development of core skills in literacy, numeracy and information technology. No one person has overall responsibility for the co-ordination or development of information technology, which makes it difficult for the college to identify needs accurately or to deploy information technology resources effectively. Some students are able to follow a two-year course without any exposure to information technology.

23 The college's unit of funding for 1992-93, inherited from the local education authority, was recorded in the FEFC report, *Funding allocations 1993-94*, as £2,681 per weighted full-time equivalent student. The median for sixth form colleges was £2,647. The college's estimated income and expenditure for 1993-94 is shown in figures 5 and 6.

24 The allocation of resources to departments takes into account the cost differentials of courses. There is an effective system which allows departments to bid for extra funding for the development of new courses

or for additional resources for existing courses. Financial information systems supply managers with detailed monthly reports on their budgets and the recently-appointed finance manager supports heads of department in making budgetary decisions. The college is instigating a review of procedures for maintenance and replacement of equipment. Currently, the approaches to the identification of resource needs and the deployment of resources vary in approach from a careful and clear system in languages to the ineffective deployment of resources in art. Teaching staff are well deployed, and two departments have managed the absence of staff, owing to long-term illness, in such a way that students' experiences have not been marred. The student information system supports efficiently the enrolment procedures and pastoral care processes of the college, but it is unable currently to provide appropriate information to help with course evaluation.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

25 There are appropriate targets for admissions procedures which ensure that clients are treated according to their rights. These include the length of time taken to reply to an application and the guarantee of an interview by a certain date. The administration of admissions is well developed and identifies management responsibility for tracking the progress of applicants. Students receive an individual interview both before and after their 16+ examination results are known. The guidance and counselling element at the second stage of the admissions process, when students are confirming their choices, should be strengthened. The present course-based nature of the process does not ensure that all students are aware of the range of options open to them. Students are, however, able to change courses if an inappropriate choice has been made, or if their needs change.

26 The induction programme at the start of the academic year enables students to become familiar with the college. A student handbook outlines their rights and responsibilities and includes a well-focused student contract. In some departments the induction period is also used well to help students to get to know the staff and gain a clear understanding of the courses upon which they have embarked. In others, college guidelines on induction are not followed.

27 The pastoral support for students during their programme of study is excellent. Students and parents speak highly of the college in terms of its friendly atmosphere and caring environment. The ethos which has been developed encourages students to take some responsibility for organising their own learning whilst at the same time giving them sufficient guidance and support to make the most of the opportunities open to them. Students drawn from a wide range of abilities and backgrounds are helped to develop confidence in themselves and their ability to succeed.

28 The tutorial system is at the centre of the college's successful strategy for supporting its students. Tutors get to know their students well on an

individual basis and support them through timetabled sessions and by being available informally when needed. The system is managed by assistant principals and students are referred to them, or request to see them for additional counselling, where necessary. Some progress has been made in introducing broader educational themes into the tutorial programme which comprises a range of topics, including careers talks, an information session on drug abuse and a theatre group presentation on prejudice. However, organisational difficulties have restricted progress and a review of ways in which the programme can be implemented more effectively is currently under way. In addition to the tutorial system, students' views about the college are conveyed to the management through representation on the governing body and the student council.

29 Formal systems exist for assessing students' progress and setting targets. Attendance is closely monitored and appropriate action taken where necessary. Most students are fully involved in reviews of their progress and in setting targets for learning. The review process contributes to the development of individual plans of action for each student. Parents are sent reports of students' progress and are invited to the college to discuss them. Tutors are generally efficient in keeping records of progress and students are encouraged to develop a record of achievement which details all their activities and achievements during their time at college.

30 Advice on careers and on progress to higher education is generally effective, but the college should strengthen its support for students seeking employment at the end of their course. All students have access to a professional careers officer in addition to seeking advice from college staff. Good links exist with officers from the local careers service who attend parents evenings and are available in college when examination results are published. However, careers officers are insufficiently integrated into the college pastoral system for students to derive maximum benefit from their expertise.

31 For those who wish to progress to higher education, a helpful booklet has been produced. Students are encouraged to seek out information independently, monitored by tutors and assistant principals. Careers information and higher education prospectuses are available in the library and appropriate computer databases have also been installed. A high level of priority is given to supporting students in completing their higher education application forms.

32 Diagnostic testing of students has started on some courses. However, a fully-developed strategy is not yet in place for assessing and meeting students' needs in terms of study skills, literacy and numeracy. Some help is available within lessons but this is recognised as being insufficient and specific timetabled sessions have been introduced either as part of a course or as an optional extra. The needs of some of the students, for whom English is a second language, are not being met effectively.

33 The college has limited experience of catering for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It has made strenuous efforts to

provide effective support for a small number of students with visual disabilities. Recently, the college conducted research in the local area to try to ascertain the number of students who may need foundation level programmes. The results are being analysed with a view to providing suitable courses.

34 The college is responding to sections 44 and 45 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 by ensuring that it provides a weekly collective act of worship and the opportunity to study religious education. Facilities for private prayer are available for all members of the college.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

35 Of the 96 teaching sessions inspected, 51 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed weaknesses. In only five classes were the strengths outweighed by the weaknesses. The grades awarded to the sessions inspected are shown below:

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A/AS level		6	19	19	2	0	46
GCSE		2	10	5	3	0	20
GNVQ		0	7	14	0	0	21
Other		0	6	3	0	0	9
Total		8	42	41	5	0	96

36 The relations between staff and students are good. Students welcomed the supportive, yet disciplined, framework within which they conducted their studies. The best teaching sessions incorporated a stimulating variety of activities, including individual and group work, and the pace of work was appropriate to the abilities of the students. In computing, the frequent use of well-directed questions encouraged students to respond. In the Business and Technical Council (BTEC) national diploma in business and finance, students were involved in a range of assignment tasks designed to involve all members of the class.

37 In mathematics and science, teachers allowed students insufficient time to work on their own or to think for themselves. In some mathematics lessons, for example, students were given little opportunity to wrestle with problems before the teacher provided the answer. In geography and history, teachers occasionally dominated proceedings and provided inadequate opportunity for discussion. In art and design, and in GCSE science, teaching did not always succeed in stretching the more able student and in some business studies classes teachers failed to adjust the pace of learning to meet the varied language abilities of their students. A number of English lessons required a sharper focus and more attention to students' differing needs and abilities. Where more than one member of

staff teaches a subject, the potential benefits of joint planning and development of teaching strategies were sometimes missed.

38 Students' work was marked thoroughly and opportunities were often provided for them to assess their own achievement alongside the tutor's assessment. In GCE languages, students received good feedback on their learning, but in mathematics and science opportunities were often missed to check that students had successfully grasped the knowledge and concepts covered during lessons.

39 In most subject areas, there was clear documentation setting out the aims and objectives of courses and the approaches to learning to be encouraged by staff and expected of students. In English and mathematics, programme documents incorporated timescales and assessment schedules. Departmental handbooks varied in the quality of the information they provided to students.

40 Most teaching programmes reflected the requirements of the examination and validating bodies. In the GNVQ art and design course, some adjustment is required to achieve a better balance between the development of core skills and the acquisition of knowledge.

41 Some subjects, for example, geography, BTEC national diploma in business and finance and GCE A level mathematics successfully incorporated information technology into their learning programmes. However, opportunities to provide all students with relevant information technology experiences were being missed. This was particularly the case in science and GCE A level business studies.

42 Core skills of numeracy, communication, and problem solving were being developed in many of the subjects taught. In English, students' abilities to work with each other in groups was being developed through opportunities to plan work and undertake research. In BTEC business and finance, students' involvement in planning and organising an educational visit to Belgium provided opportunities for them to develop a range of skills and to experience the discipline required in effective team work. In geography and GNVQ advanced business, core skills were clearly identified in the learning programme. In GCE A level and GCSE computing, however, students were given insufficient opportunity to undertake practical work.

43 In some of their subjects students were provided with details of the assessment procedure and schedule and they appreciated this. Most assignment programmes were devised to match the requirements of the syllabuses, but in business studies they were less well planned, and this resulted in an uneven pattern of work for students over the academic year. In English, a varied programme of assignments motivated and extended the learning of students. In GCSE science, the assessment of students' progress was inadequate.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

44 In 1993, the college's GCE A level pass rate, excluding general studies, was 81 per cent compared with an average of 82 per cent for sixth form colleges nationally. The proportion of students gaining three or more GCE A levels has varied from 43 per cent in 1991 to 39 per cent in 1993 and those gaining two or more passes has declined from 73 per cent in 1992 to 68 per cent in 1993. In 1993, the average points score for candidates entering for two or more GCE A levels was 11.8, (where A=10, E=2) placing the college in the top 35 per cent of colleges within the further education sector. Achievements of GCE A level students entering with a GCSE points score below 30 (where A grade = 7 points, D grade = 4 points) compare favourably with national figures published in the Audit Commission/Office for Standards in Education report, *Unfinished Business*, but those with higher GCSE scores (45-50 points) do significantly less well. The college has begun to address the issue of identifying and supporting the learning of students whose performance appears to fall below their potential.

45 GCE A level pass rates are higher in science than in humanities courses. The average GCE A level point score per student in science was 11.25 compared with 9.5 for humanities and 12.25 for mixed humanities/science courses. Some particularly good results were achieved in individual subjects. In two of the last three years, all students passed in GCE A level art, English literature, German, Spanish and applied engineering graphics and a poor GCE A level business studies pass rate of 55 per cent in 1992 was improved to 96 per cent in 1993. Other results were more disappointing. The pass rate in GCE A level politics and government declined from an average of 85 per cent in the previous four years to 55 per cent in 1993. Only 49 per cent of entrants passed GCE A level general studies in 1993 compared with 64 per cent in 1992.

46 In 1993, the overall GCSE pass rate, grades A-C, was 47 per cent compared with the national average for sixth form colleges of 50 per cent. Grade A-C passes were achieved by over 60 per cent of students in law, English language, geography, religious studies, media studies, English literature, French, German, craft design and technology and physical education. Poorer results included mathematics (31 per cent), business studies (28 per cent), biology (15 per cent), science (11 per cent) and art, where no candidate achieved above a grade D.

47 Students entering for vocational qualifications achieved good grades. Of the 30 students enrolled on the BTEC national diploma in business and finance course, 28 achieved the diploma, a pass rate well above the national average. Eighty-six per cent of students entering for the diploma of vocational education achieved the diploma and 17 of the 42 who completed the course used the diploma to progress to higher level courses. Five students achieved passes in single-subject examinations in secretarial skills and 20 per cent of the passes obtained were at distinction level.

48 The college monitors the destinations of students taking GCE A levels, the diploma in vocational education and BTEC national courses, but not

those of students leaving the GCSE course. Most students come to the college intending to go on to higher education and most of them are successful in achieving their goal. Of 126 students completing the GCE A level course in 1993, 116 progressed to higher education courses and 10 obtained employment. On the BTEC national diploma course 24 of the 28 students gained places in higher education. Of these 24, 10 students had entered the course with less than four GCSE C grades and would therefore not have been candidates for a GCE A level course. For these students in particular, the BTEC course provided a successful alternative route to higher education.

49 Most students at South Bolton Sixth Form College enjoy their studies, are well motivated and have a friendly but respectful rapport with their teachers. Students on GCE A level and equivalent programmes speak about their work clearly and with enthusiasm. Some GCSE students, especially in mathematics and English, are less enthusiastic and occasionally display negative attitudes towards their studies.

50 In 1993-94, 70 students are taking part in a community service scheme which enhances the awareness of those considering the caring professions. Students on the scheme work as volunteers in schools, hospitals, nurseries and residential homes for the elderly. Employers are encouraged to evaluate the young person's progress and the comments made form a useful addition to the student's record of achievement.

51 The numbers of students who complete their courses compare favourably with the published figures in *Unfinished Business*. The following percentages of students successfully completed their respective courses in 1993:

- 79 per cent of students on the GCE A level courses
- 90 per cent of students on GCSE courses
- 86 per cent studying for the diploma for vocational education
- 93 per cent on the BTEC national diploma in business and finance course.

The college plans to improve its arrangements for identifying and following up the reasons for students leaving courses early.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

52 A high-quality learning experience for all students is a key feature of the college's mission. Discussions, involving staff throughout the college, have taken place to consider the most effective ways of adopting quality assurance strategies but as yet there is no quality assurance policy which covers all aspects of the college's activities. A few staff regard the implementation of such a policy as imposing an unnecessary framework of accountability on classroom teachers. Senior staff have identified targets for different facets of the college's work but there is no systematic monitoring nor an effective mechanism to ensure that action follows, where necessary.

53 The college is involved in value added analysis: the detailed analysis of examination results includes a review of students' qualifications at entry to the college compared with their achievements at the end of their course. Comparisons are made with national averages and differences in individual student performance between subjects are scrutinised. Trends in results from year to year are identified and reasons are sought for changes. Course and subject teams are required to produce annual reports which are discussed at meetings between the principal, the vice-principal and heads of department. Some examples exist, such as in business studies, where improvements have been made as a result of the reviews. There is, however, no consistency of approach and reports vary in the extent to which they review and analyse the management and teaching of the curriculum. Targets for improvements in quality are not recorded and few reports include standards for curriculum delivery or indications of how courses might be developed or revised. Information gained from the evaluation process could be used more systematically to inform the admissions process. Departments have no enrolment targets because they are seen as units which are too small for this to be effective. A consequence is that many staff do not feel involved in contributing to the growth targets of the college.

54 Some subjects, including mathematics, business studies, science and English, seek student views on the effectiveness of courses. In GNVQ and BTEC business courses, student involvement on course teams is welcomed by staff and students as a constructive feature of course management. Elsewhere, a few staff appear reluctant to consult students as part of the course evaluation process and, even where such consultation does occur, little evidence exists of students' views influencing course reports. The involvement of parents, employers or interested parties outside the subject team in reviewing the curriculum is conspicuous by its absence.

55 An appraisal process for full-time teaching staff is due to complete its first cycle by the summer of 1994. The scheme is an inherited one, negotiated between the local education authority and teachers' associations. The appraisal process is designed to identify development needs, but has limitations as a means of reviewing staff performance across the whole range of their responsibility. Although the college intends to expand the scheme, no plans are currently in place to appraise support staff. Outcomes from the appraisal process do not inform the staff development programme but plans for the reorganisation of management responsibilities are intended to remedy this.

56 A variety of staff development activities has been undertaken by staff. Some of these activities have been to support individuals who have changed roles or taken on new responsibilities; others have been linked to the college's curriculum development plans. The college's staff development budget has been sufficient to accommodate staff bids for attendance at external courses but not all staff who attend courses subsequently report on their experiences to colleagues. Although there is some induction of

new teaching staff, this is not part of a coherent strategy for development. The urgent need for training in information technology skills for teaching staff has not been met.

57 The college has begun to devise its student charter in line with the Charter for Further Education. Working groups have been given the task of designing different aspects of the charter. At present, the college uses a student contract, setting out the entitlements and expectations of students, as part of the induction procedure.

RESOURCES

Staffing

58 Staff are well qualified, caring, and committed. Over 90 per cent of teachers are graduates and 20 per cent have post-graduate qualifications. All teachers have a teaching qualification. There are sufficient teachers to deliver the programmes of study but an inadequate number of qualified support staff for the library and for information technology. Few teaching staff have recent and relevant industrial experience.

Equipment/learning resources

59 Equipment and materials to support teaching and learning in the classroom are of a good standard. There is a range of audio-visual equipment for general use. The language laboratory is well equipped with video, television, tape recorders and overhead projectors. The college has computers in the ratio of approximately one to every 10 students but their availability is not managed as effectively as it might be. There is a good range of software. Students and staff have access to suitable photocopying equipment. Teacher-produced materials used by students in languages, English and computing are of a particularly high standard. There also are good-quality learning kits to support work in mechanics and statistics within mathematics. Equipment in art and design should be updated to reflect current industrial practice and to support vocational courses more effectively.

60 The library stock is poor. Although many out-of-date books have been removed from circulation and new stock has been purchased there are still out-dated and inappropriate books in English and geography and shortages of texts in mathematics. There are few periodicals or newspapers in the library and there is no 'cuttings' service which students could use for their own research. Many books and periodicals and all audio-visual resources are held in the subject departments and this limits their accessibility. The range of materials to support students working on their own is poor. Liaison between departments and the library is informal. Departments have a limited impact on the library's purchasing strategies.

Accommodation

61 The college provides an attractive and welcoming environment for students which is conducive to learning. A building survey has been

carried out and a refurbishment maintenance schedule is in preparation. Work has recently been undertaken to create a pleasant dining area and the college has recognised the need to improve other social facilities for students. Space is at a premium. The college understands that proposed growth will put a strain on accommodation and is reviewing the situation.

62 Most classrooms are attractive, clean and well maintained. In nearly all cases, teaching rooms are allocated to a specific subject area and many have effective wall displays which help to create a subject identity. Displays in computing, history, geography, government and politics, business studies and English support students' learning. Furniture is generally in good condition. The library is too small for the number of students it has to serve and has limited space for private study. Science laboratories are too small for some practical lessons and often unsuitable for theory lessons. In the laboratories, students' view of the blackboard is obscured by pipes and wires.

63 The accommodation is largely inaccessible to students with restricted mobility. There are no lifts, ramps or toilets adapted for wheelchair users.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

64 The college has made substantial progress in its mission to develop the intellectual, social and personal potential of its students. The strengths of the provision are:

- the college's clear view about future development and its positive response to rapid change
- a supportive governing board
- effective liaison with local schools
- the varied range of courses including successfully introduced vocational courses and the effective curriculum enhancement programme
- good course completion rates
- excellent pastoral support for students
- success in beginning to address equal opportunities issues
- well-qualified, caring and committed staff.

65 If the college is to build upon the progress already made it should address the following issues:

- the roles and expectations of senior post holders
- systems to ensure consistent delivery of the curriculum and cross-college initiatives
- the means for identifying students who require help in developing core skills and the provision of appropriate learning support
- the variable examination results in non-vocational courses and the fact that more able students do not always fulfil their potential

-
- links to extend the impact of the world of work on classroom teaching and students' experiences
 - improvements to science laboratories, the library and private study facilities.

FIGURES

-
- 1 Staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)

 - 2 Percentage enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by age (1993-94)

 - 3 Enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by curriculum area (1993-94)

 - 4 Percentage enrolments expressed as full-time equivalent by level of study (1993-94)

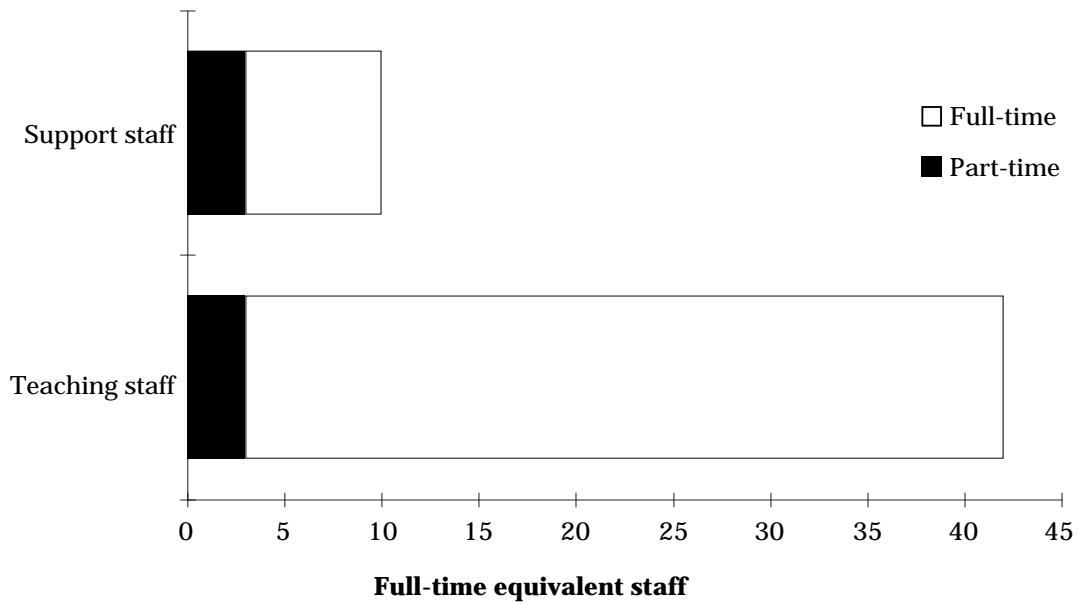
 - 5 Recurrent income (1993-94)

 - 6 Estimated expenditure (1993-94)

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

Figure 1

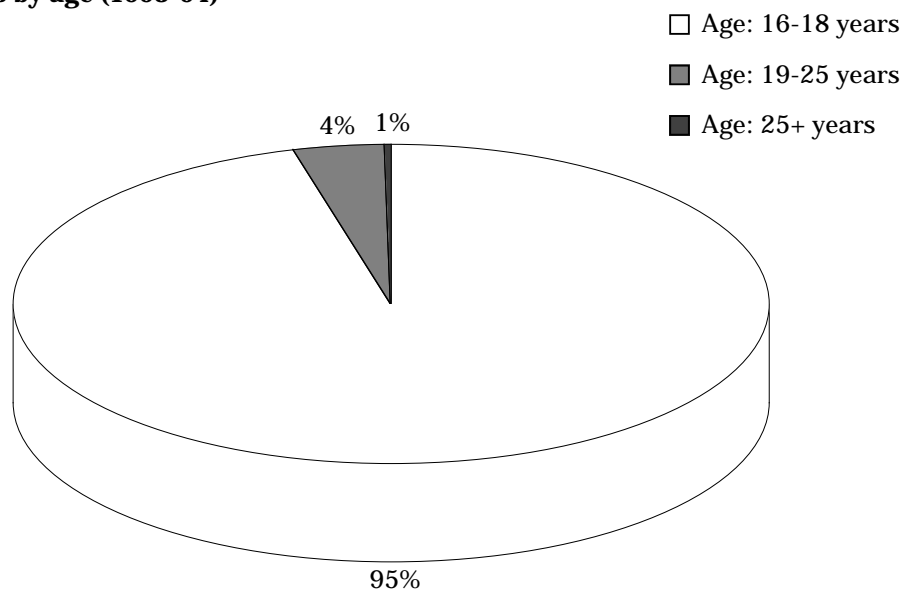
South Bolton Sixth Form College: staff profile – staff expressed as full-time equivalents (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent staff: 52

Figure 2

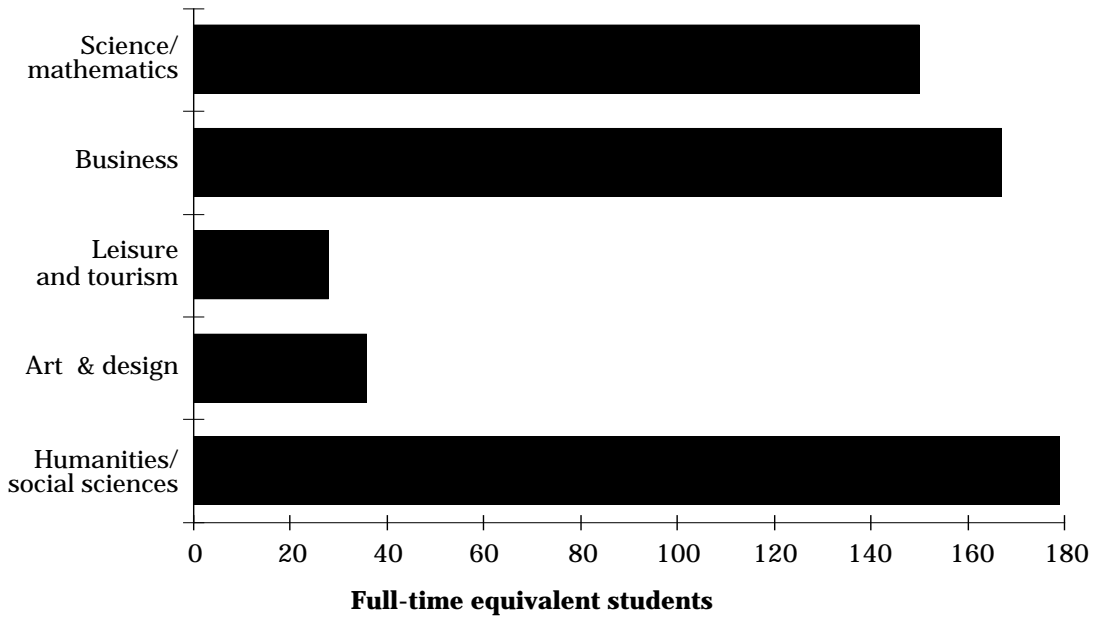
South Bolton Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by age (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent enrolments: 560

Figure 3

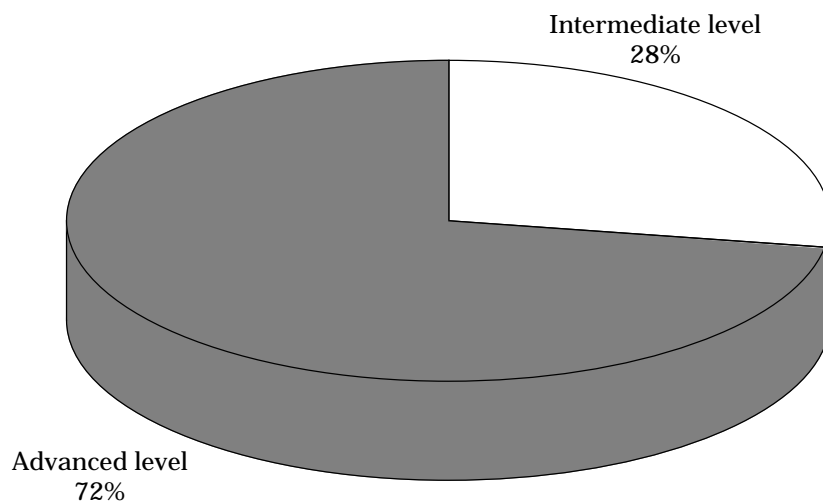
South Bolton Sixth Form College: enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by curriculum area (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent enrolments: 560

Figure 4

South Bolton Sixth Form College: percentage enrolments expressed as full-time equivalents by level of study (1993-94)



Full-time equivalent enrolments: 560

Figure 5

South Bolton Sixth Form College: recurrent income (1993-94)

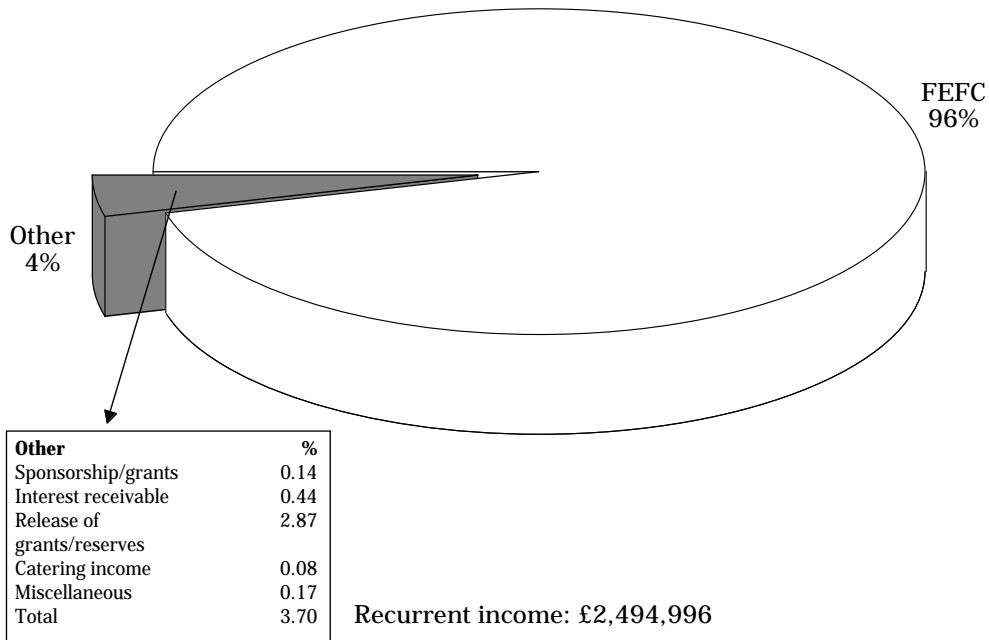
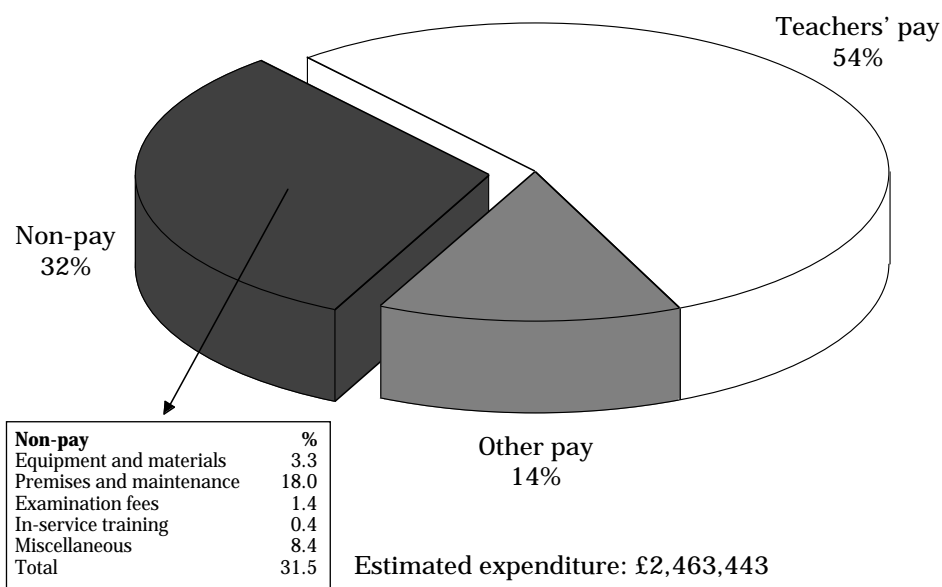


Figure 6

South Bolton Sixth Form College: estimated expenditure (1993-94)



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