

**REPORT
FROM THE
INSPECTORATE**

**St Charles
Catholic Sixth
Form College**

June 1994

**THE
FURTHER
EDUCATION
FUNDING
COUNCIL**

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL**

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) has a statutory duty to ensure that there are satisfactory arrangements to assess the quality of provision in the further education sector. 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.*

*Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry CV1 2WT
Telephone 0203 863000
Fax 0203 863100*

FEFC INSPECTION REPORT 39/94

ST CHARLES CATHOLIC SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

LONDON REGION

Inspected September 1993 - March 1994

Summary

Opened in September 1990, St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College is a major denominational provider of education for 16-19 year old students in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Westminster. It is a well-managed college with a supportive governing body. It successfully recruits Catholic students from a wide geographical area. It is responsive to its community and offers a good range of GCE A level, GCE and vocational courses. The college has had some success in promoting equal regard for the academic and vocational provision which it offers. Staff are well qualified. Students receive good teaching and strong pastoral support and guidance. The Catholic identity of the college, emphasised in the strategic plan, is maintained partly through a compulsory programme of Christian theology. Emphasis is placed on high standards of behaviour and students respect this. Levels of retention, attendance and punctuality are high. Students achieve good examination results in most subjects. The college has a good library and is otherwise well resourced. The accommodation is suitable for students with impaired mobility although few such students have so far enrolled. Other areas requiring improvement are the curricular links between the college and its contributory schools, collaboration between divisions, quality assurance procedures, and methods for identifying and meeting students' needs for learning and language support.

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

Aspects of cross-college provision	Grade
Responsiveness and range of provision	1
Governance and management	2
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	1
Quality assurance	3
Resources: staffing	2
equipment/learning resources	2
accommodation	1

Curriculum area	Grade	Curriculum area	Grade
Science	2	English & media studies	1
Mathematics	3	History and geography	2
Computing	1	Religious education	1
		Modern languages	2
		Sociology, philosophy & psychology	2
Business studies & economics	2	GNVQ	2
Art and design	2		
Theatre studies and music	2		

CONTENTS

	Paragraph
Summary	
Introduction	1
The college and its aims	4
Responsiveness and range of provision	11
Governance and management	23
Students' recruitment, guidance and support	34
Teaching and the promotion of learning	43
Students' achievements	53
Quality assurance	65
Resources	71
Conclusions and issues	83
Figures	

INTRODUCTION

1 St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College, in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, London, was inspected in February and March of 1994, the enrolment and induction procedures having been inspected at the beginning of the autumn term 1993. The inspections of specialist subjects and aspects of cross-college provision were carried out during the weeks commencing 7 February and 28 February, respectively. A team of six full-time and nine part-time inspectors spent a total of 60 days in the college. They inspected 125 lessons, five tutorials and a college assembly, in the course of which they saw most of the teachers and students. They examined a representative sample of students' written and practical work and looked at documentation relating to most aspects of the college's activities. Inspectors held discussions with managers, teaching staff, support staff, students, governors, and representatives of the Central London Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and the Training and Vocational Educational Initiative (TVEI).

2 Concurrently with the FEFC inspection, a representative of the trustee of the college, the Archdiocese of Westminster, inspected the provision of religious education, the spiritual development of students, the liturgical life of the college and links with the Catholic community. He was satisfied that the college was fulfilling its mission in accordance with the interest of the trustee.

3 The report is based on inspections carried out in accordance with 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 St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College occurred early in the cycle, the opportunity for such a response was not available.

THE COLLEGE AND ITS AIMS

4 St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College opened in September 1990. The mission of the college is to provide high quality Catholic comprehensive education for students in the post-compulsory phase. In pursuit of this mission the college aims to build a community based on explicitly Christian values in which the potential of each student is developed to its maximum. All aspects of the college provision are permeated by its Catholic identity.

5 The college was established as a result of the re-organisation of Roman Catholic secondary education in the central area of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Westminster, an area which encompasses the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, the Borough of Westminster and the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. The original target of 750 full-time students was revised downwards to 500 students after two prestigious 11-18 boys' schools effectively removed themselves from the

re-organisation plan by being designated grant maintained schools. The two schools continue to recruit students from other schools to their sixth forms and this affects the college's recruitment. The college has four designated contributory schools; two of them are single-sex girls' schools, two are mixed schools.

6 The college occupies a small, attractive site in North Kensington. The population of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea was recorded in the 1991 census as 138,394. There are significant communities of Spanish, Portuguese and Italian mother tongue speakers and 15.6 per cent of the population is of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin. The unemployment rate for the whole borough averages 13.4 per cent, with a rate of 25.6 per cent in the worst affected wards. Approximately 20 per cent of local residents are self-employed, and 90 per cent of local jobs are in the service sector. A substantial proportion of inhabitants commute to work outside the borough.

7 The college accommodation, originally comprising one purpose-built new building and one refurbished boys' school building, was designed for 500 students with approval for further building should numbers exceed that figure. The college has, in the meantime, acquired and refurbished an adjacent building on a temporary basis. In the setting-up phase the college was well resourced by the local authority.

8 In the first three years, the college grew from 300 to 600 students. In November 1993, there were 738 students on roll, all full-time students between the ages of 16 and 19. Approximately half the students come from the designated contributory schools; the rest from a large number of other schools in 21 of the inner and outer-London boroughs. Female students outnumber male students by a ratio of 3:2. Eighty-six per cent of the students are Roman Catholic; the others are mainly Christians of other denominations. About 24 per cent of the students are of Afro-Caribbean or Asian origin and 20 per cent from Italian, Spanish or Portuguese backgrounds. Thirty-four per cent give their home language as other than English. Data from the Advanced Level Information Service (ALIS) indicate that a large proportion of the students have a home background classified as socio-economic class 3. A big issue for the college in achieving its growth targets is the intense competition among Catholic institutions to recruit post-16 students, particularly General Certificate of Education advanced level (GCE A level) students. An age profile of the students and the percentage of students by type of course are shown in figures 1 and 2, respectively.

9 At the time of the inspection, the college had a staff of 74 including two full-time college chaplains. Fifty-four were teachers; 18 were support staff. Staff, expressed as full-time equivalents are shown in figure 3.

10 The college is organised in four divisions. Each division carries curricular, administrative and pastoral responsibilities. All students are assigned to a tutor group within the divisional structure.

RESPONSIVENESS AND RANGE OF PROVISION

11 The college aims to provide a comprehensive curriculum and is responsive to the needs of students of all abilities. Staff are fully aware of the National Targets for Education and Training.

12 Students can choose from 32 GCE A level and 30 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) subjects. Twelve General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses are available in five vocational areas. In art and design, leisure and tourism and business studies, courses are available at all three levels: foundation, intermediate and advanced. There are intermediate and advanced level courses in health and social care and an intermediate level course in manufacturing. The college intends to extend its GNVQ provision during the next academic year. Other vocational courses include the diploma of vocational education accredited by the City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI), a business skills course accredited by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 1 in sport and recreation. The college plans to introduce a one-year, pre-foundation course for those not capable of achieving GNVQ at foundation level in one year. There are 293 students pursuing a vocational course which may be combined with a GCE A level and/or GCSE subjects, 382 are studying for GCE A levels and 63 are taking GCSE subjects only. The numbers of students in each of the curriculum areas are shown in figure 4.

13 It is a condition of entry that students agree to follow an internally assessed and accredited general religious education course, of one-and-a-quarter hours each week. External accreditation for this programme is now being sought. The personal, social and health education programme and the information technology core are also compulsory for all students. There is an optional leisure programme which offers students the opportunity to take part in a wide variety of sporting and some cultural activities and the college has invested in the programme by hiring facilities and appointing a sports instructor. The activities on offer owe much to the goodwill and interest of the staff.

14 A mass is held daily. On Fridays, there is a college mass which is regularly attended by at least 30 to 40 students and staff. It usually has a specific focus, sometimes related to the liturgical calendar, and it is occasionally led by students from particular subject groups, divisions, tutor groups or cultural groups. A recent Afro-Caribbean carnival mass, marking the commencement of Lent, was attended by over 80 students. There is an annual trip during the autumn half-term to Eastern Europe which includes a visit to Auschwitz. On these visits, students take aid to a variety of recipients such as orphanages or old people's homes. Retreats are held every weekend, and usually involve about 17 students and two chaplains.

15 The diocese actively supports the college at all levels. The principal is a member of the Catholic Education Service's Forum 4 which deals with

further and higher education. He is also a member of the Association of Catholic Sixth Form Colleges. Senior members of staff attend diocesan conferences. There are links with local parishes whose priests are invited to the college once a year. The principal visits the local deaneries to speak on educational matters. The college is involved in various activities for charitable organisations such as the Catholic Children's Society. Following their sacramental preparation, a number of students are confirmed each year in the college chapel by an area bishop.

16 There is an annual programme of liaison with the four contributory schools which begins with a visit by the principal, accompanied by students from the college, to address pupils in their final year. Other senior members of staff also visit the schools and attend events such as parents' evenings. Although there are a number of curriculum links, these depend on the initiative of individual staff. The head teachers, the chairmen of their governing bodies and the college principal meet once a term to address matters of mutual interest. Last year the college hosted a meeting of head teachers of the Catholic primary and secondary schools in the college's catchment area to discuss the transfer of pupils from primary to secondary schools. The principal maintains close links with the local authority and attends secondary head teachers' meetings.

17 Links with higher education institutions are limited mainly to contacts relating to student applications for, and admissions to, higher education. Having achieved considerable success with its students in promoting parity of esteem for GNVQ and GCE courses, the college is currently monitoring the responses of higher education institutions to applications from students with GNVQ qualifications. There are good links between curriculum areas and local public services which enable students to carry out the practical activities required in subjects such as sociology and psychology. Tuition in GCSE Italian is provided free of charge by the Italian Embassy. There are no links at present with potential feeder schools which specialise in providing for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

18 For a number of years, the college has been an active member of the TVEI consortium, which comprises nine establishments, and the principal is an active member of the steering group. The college has taken a lead in disseminating good practice in work-related learning through the GNVQ programme. The college's vocational co-ordinator is a member of the Education Business Partnership practitioners' group. Last year, she organised a national staff development conference. Subsequently, teaching materials were produced to support teachers with the introduction of GNVQ. She is currently working with the contributory schools to assist them in implementing programmes at foundation and intermediate levels.

19 The college is located in the region covered by the Central London TEC. In common with sixth forms generally, it has derived only a small amount of finance from the TEC, which is used to fund the specific provision of library-based careers information and assessor training for some staff.

20 There are good links with those employers who offer vocational placements for students on the GNVQ, NVQ and diploma in vocational education programmes. These placements are organised by the divisions and there is no overall co-ordination or evaluation. Once a year, about 25 of these employers spend a day at the college giving mock interviews for students who are hoping to enter employment or to go to university. There is also an annual 'breakfast' for employers to thank them for their contribution. Last year, it was attended by 30-40 people. Good links with the local careers service have continued since St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College was designated as a further education sector college.

21 The principal takes a lead in marketing the college. He writes articles in parish and specialist magazines, raising the general awareness of the college's facilities. Other articles are published in the local and national press. The college produces a well-presented brochure. It also takes a full-page advertisement in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Business and Services Directory.

22 There is a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which is implemented through an equal opportunities working party. The working party has representatives from all divisions and reports to the policy and review committee which is the college's main decision-making body. The college is presently monitoring curriculum materials and students' attitudes in relation to equal opportunities. Targets have been set and responsibilities allocated with a timescale for achievement. A one-day training event held last summer involved all teaching staff in the development of the framework used to inform the policy.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

23 There are 18 members of the governing body, between them reflecting a wide range of expertise. The archdiocese of Westminster, as the trustee of the college, appoints the 11 foundation governors. These include local Catholic clergy, the personal representative of the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, senior Catholic educationalists, a lawyer, financiers and a probation officer. The primary duty of the foundation governors is to uphold the interest of the trustee, that the college is conducted '...in accordance with the practices, rites and doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.' There are also two elected staff governors, two co-opted governors, both councillors of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, a representative of the TEC, who is also the Director of Education and Libraries for the borough, and two parent governors of whom only one has been appointed to date.

24 The governors have established four committees which report back to the full governing body; these are finance and premises, pay and personnel, governors' audit and remuneration. Governors take an active interest in the college. Governors' meetings, which are held twice a term, are well attended. Agenda items are effectively supported by appropriate documentation and by presentations by members of staff. The governors

are supportive of the principal and are advised by him. No formal pattern of visits to the college has been established and, with the exception of the chairman, governors are not as well known to staff and students as they might be.

25 The college benefits from strong and firm leadership by the principal. He is deeply committed to the principles enshrined in the mission statement and to maintaining the clearly-stated standards of behaviour and conduct expected of students and staff. Staff are appointed on the understanding that they uphold and respect the ethos of the college. There is a powerful sense of shared purpose and loyalty among the staff, most of whom have been with the college since it opened in 1990.

26 Strategic planning is initiated by a group of 11, comprising the principal, the two vice-principals, the directors of the four divisions and their assistant directors. Day-to-day management and policy formulation is the responsibility of a policy and review committee, comprising the principal, the vice-principals and the directors of division, which meets weekly. Currently, all senior posts are held by men. Curricular and tutorial responsibilities are managed within the divisions. Each of the two vice-principals oversees all aspects of the work of two divisions. In addition, each is responsible for a set of clearly-defined areas of management and administration. There is a good match of skills and experience to these areas of responsibility.

27 The views of the wider staff are represented through a college board where the two vice-principals and the librarian meet with two teacher representatives of each division. The board meets three times a term and considers all issues relating to college life. Most consultation and discussion with staff takes place in the fortnightly divisional meetings, and results are fed back to the policy and review committee through the directors. While the divisional structure is effective in providing a forum for debate, and access to information through the posting of minutes, it is less successful in achieving cross-college collaboration and dissemination of good practice.

28 The management structure has been designed to enable all staff to participate in the development and implementation of policy and to facilitate the integration of the academic and pastoral aspects of the provision. The divisional directors and assistant directors all head curriculum or subject areas and lead teams of tutors within their divisions so that integration is effectively achieved. However, the structure imposes a heavy burden on managers. Assistant directors, for example, may teach for 21 hours a week, in addition to heading a curriculum area and leading a team of nine tutors. Administrative responsibilities, for matters such as health and safety and equal opportunities, are located within designated divisions according to the interest or expertise of the co-ordinating member of staff. These tasks are undertaken by staff at all levels of seniority. Regular working parties are established to deal with specific issues and interested staff have the opportunity to participate.

29 Curriculum area teams hold regular meetings although not all of them are minuted. There is also inconsistency in area teams' recording of the reasons for student withdrawal from courses and the way in which they apply college policy on the entry of weaker candidates for public examinations. There is strong and effective management of the vocational area team, which meets weekly.

30 All staff understand the lines of management and good communication is maintained through regular staff meetings and weekly bulletins and briefing sessions. Whole-staff meetings are primarily for the dissemination of information. Agendas are distributed well in advance of meetings although detailed papers on the major issues are usually distributed immediately prior to the meetings.

31 Allocation of budgets to curriculum areas has moved towards a formula based on student numbers. Subsequently, staff are able to bid for additional funds. The principal is the director of finance and a vice-principal is the finance manager. The unit of resource for 1992-93, as recorded in the FEFC report, *Funding Allocations 1993-94*, was £3,248 per weighted full-time equivalent student. The median for sixth form colleges was £2,647. The college's staff to student ratio is 1:14, and all staff are involved in teaching and tutorial work. There is general appreciation of the need for divisions to act efficiently as cost centres.

32 There are two computer-based management information systems, one for processing data on students, the other for financial management and control. The entry of data is properly controlled and the management information generated is used extensively in college planning. Both systems are adequate for the present demands and there is the potential for increased tracking of the academic progress of individual students. Retention rates are centrally monitored and checked monthly. The reasons for leaving are recorded through the tutors and held at subject area level, as well as on the student administrative system. Students' destinations at the end of the year are recorded through tutors and the careers service. Entries to higher education appear in the college prospectus but details on other destinations are not published.

33 Enrolment targets are set and monitored, and the priorities for recruitment are reviewed annually. The intention of the college is to grow in line with the FEFC target of 25 per cent over three years. There has already been a growth of 20 per cent this year. Subjects which recruit small numbers, such as music and German, have so far been protected and the staff involved have been asked to find strategies for increasing their numbers. In this connection, consideration is being given to offering more flexible provision in German. Course planning takes account of external factors which influence the market, as well as the demands of existing students to progress to other courses in higher education.

STUDENTS' RECRUITMENT, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

34 The recruitment procedures are well organised and properly documented. Students are selected against a hierarchy of criteria which are clearly stated in the prospectus. These give priority to Catholic students from the four contributory secondary schools and include a final criterion which relates to other students who wish to pursue their studies in an explicitly Christian context. All entry criteria are waived for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but the numbers recruited are small.

35 The majority of staff are involved in interviewing students. Course choices and students' plans for progression are monitored carefully. The college makes good use of reports from the schools and applicants are asked to speak on topics which are important to them. Prior to enrolment, students receive information on courses, facilities and services partly through the visits to feeder schools made by the principal and others and partly through advertising in the local press and the deaneries of the parish. Two open evenings are held in November each year. In 1993, about 400 parents and potential students attended one or other of these.

36 Successful applicants are invited to a social evening in May where they meet staff and students in an informal context. Enrolment for the new intake takes place during induction week, when students meet their tutor, subject teachers and curriculum area leaders. Detailed negotiation of academic programmes takes place and students sign up for particular courses. Entry criteria are based on previous GCSE results. There is no college-wide policy on the assessment or accreditation of prior learning, although there are some individual initiatives in curriculum areas. The college-wide induction programme is generally well organised but the tutorial time is not fully utilised. Academic induction is subject-specific and is delivered by subject teachers. There is a comprehensive programme of induction in the use of the library, including tasks designed to develop relevant skills in students of all abilities. Present students wishing to continue their studies formally re-apply and are interviewed and admitted on the recommendation of staff. Students continuing their studies are also enrolled at the end of the first week. Students may change their courses at any time within the first six weeks. Changes are negotiated through recorded consultation with relevant members of staff.

37 The tutorial system is supportive and efficiently managed. Tutor groups contain a mixture of first and second-year students taking either GCE/GCSE or vocational programmes. There are three tutorial sessions and two assemblies every week, which all have a duration of 20 minutes. The tutorial periods are used for prayer, for dealing with administrative matters and for monitoring students who are giving cause for concern. The time allocated for tutorials is insufficient for tutors to develop productive informal contact with the students. There are clear guidelines concerning attendance, punctuality, appearance and general conduct

which are contained in a student handbook. These requirements are rigorously enforced and students are fully aware of the procedures and understand and accept their purpose. There is a daily registration by tutors as well as class registrations; absences are quickly queried and reasons sought. Students' records are well kept and securely filed.

38 The college aims to keep parents well informed while maintaining a college, rather than a school, ethos. The principal writes to parents to inform them of important events and issues and has recently introduced a newsletter. Reports on students' progress are sent out regularly and parents have opportunities to consult staff at parents' evenings which take place at all key points of the students' courses. Meetings are timed to help parents who work in the evenings. They are attended by at least 50 per cent of the students' families. Students in their final year of study, wishing to apply for higher education, are given careful guidance on the completion of their application form.

39 An active students' council meets monthly to discuss affairs of interest to students and to organise social activities. Representatives from each tutor group provide feedback to fellow students during the tutorial period and staff attached to the council report back to the policy and review committee. A recent result of the council's deliberations has been the development of a students' common room and coffee bar which is planned to open in the summer.

40 There are good relationships between staff and students. Staff are available to assist and counsel students in designated non-teaching time. There is an effective system of referral to deal with problems of non-attendance, poor attitude to work and late submission of work and the system is reinforced by a supportive senior management.

41 The college provides a secure working environment. There is only one point of entry to the premises and all students carry an identity card without which there is no admission. There are two designated first-aiders in the college who record any accidents reported to them, although many students are unaware of this.

42 There is a wide range of provision for first-year students, to support their personal and social development. This is delivered through a core programme of personal, social and health education, careers and information technology. Students spend one-and-a-quarter hours each week for nine weeks on each of these three areas. In addition, the compulsory programme of one-and-a-quarter hours each week of religious education, delivered by specialist staff, includes moral teaching, communication skills and personality development. Religious education, together with the work of the chaplain and the female assistant chaplain, is seen as essential to the pastoral provision of the college and the reinforcement of the college's mission. The chaplaincy is line-managed by the diocese but financed by the college. It operates independently from the academic programme but the chaplain attends governors' and

divisional meetings. Formal contact takes place through the participation of the chaplains in the induction programme, tutorial sessions, the welcoming mass and prayer groups. An effective pastoral service is provided during the college day and chaplains provide support for those in need of personal counselling referring students with problems to external agencies via the relevant vice-principal. The chaplaincy also provides a range of social activities and runs a well-subscribed confirmation programme. Both chaplains are always accessible to students.

TEACHING AND THE PROMOTION OF LEARNING

43 Of the 125 classes inspected, 76 per cent had strengths which clearly outweighed the weaknesses. The quality of work was outstanding in Christian theology, English, media studies, philosophy, physics and computing. The distribution of inspection grades is shown in the table below.

Teaching sessions: inspection grades by programme of study

Programmes	Grade	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
GCE A/AS level		26	35	7	2	0	70
GCSE		5	8	10	0	2	25
GNVQ		7	9	9	0	0	25
Other		2	3	0	0	0	5
Total		40	55	26	2	2	125

44 Lessons were thoroughly planned within clear, coherent schemes of work which related to the requirements of examining boards. In GCE A level and GNVQ programmes the aims and objectives of the work, and the standards to be achieved in order to gain the relevant qualifications, were communicated clearly to the students. This was less effectively done for the GCSE work. Many sessions began with reinforcement of students' previous work and concluded with a summary and clear instructions about homework. Teachers continually checked that students were learning through directed questions, tests and reviews. Most classes were well managed and conducted at an appropriate pace. Teachers were committed and enthusiastic and used a variety of teaching methods in order to promote effective participation and learning.

45 Students value the respect shown them by teachers and the high level of support they receive in and outside the classroom. The college's mission statement states that the teaching 'finds expression in the values of mutual respect and support, of genuine concern for others, of tolerance, cooperation and self-esteem...'. A high level of mutual support is evident among the students, which is encouraged by the general religious education course in which students are helped to increase their sensitivity

to others, their understanding of themselves, and their skills in working with others.

46 There were high expectations of students, in GCSE, GCE A level and GNVQ programmes. The content of lessons and the materials used by students were challenging and much of the work drew on and extended students' experience.

47 A noteworthy feature of many classes was the high standard of small-group and whole-class discussion. Lessons in religious education, English, media, philosophy, performing arts, business studies and GNVQ provision featured well-focused, productive discussion, and occasional role play, in which most students participated. These were frequently used as a logical preparation for written work. Often group discussions were recorded, summarised and reported back to the full class. Discussions in some of the classes inspected included issues of race, gender, religion and culture. Group work was less well used in modern languages, mathematics and biology.

48 Students were encouraged to become more independent in their learning through the use of research projects, extended essays, and the organisation of portfolios and files.

49 Generally, teachers made good use of learning resources such as video recorders, cameras, overhead projectors, information technology packages for media and art and design, and the language laboratory. In some classes there was too heavy a reliance on text books or hand-outs, and, on occasions, some of the latter were poorly produced. Practical work was well integrated with theoretical work in science subjects, art and design and media studies. Most of students' written work was well presented and organised in files. Some of the work of students on GNVQ programmes was word processed. Students appreciated access to computers. In business studies, information technology was being employed in financial work. On the whole, however, opportunities to apply information technology were missed unless the application was specific to the course. For example, in science and in business studies students were not using computers for data analysis or problem solving.

50 The marking and assessment of written work in English, media studies, sociology, philosophy and computing are good. Detailed and informative comments indicate students' strengths, the standards attained and areas for improvement. On the GNVQ programme, teachers are rigorous in ensuring that log books and action plans, under which students themselves set their objectives and plan their learning, are completed by the students. On many GNVQ courses, students are encouraged to evaluate their own performance but this is not consistently the practice in all GNVQ work. Within the GNVQ programme there are examples of schemes of marking which are not uniform. This is confusing for students. The college should address the issue of sharing good practice and standardising procedures.

51 Learning support and language support for speakers of languages other than English are delivered by teachers in class, or provided by tutors from the local education authority (LEA). The LEA provides 0.5 full-time equivalent staff for this purpose. The ability of students to attend discrete support sessions is dependent on their having gaps in their timetables at the right time. Where students are receiving support outside the class, progress reports are written although these are not, as a matter of course, made available to tutors.

52 The college has no clear system for identifying and diagnosing the needs of students who require learning support for particular aspects of their work. Students who are having difficulty in coping with the work, but who are not identified for specific learning support, receive subject-based support of varying quality. Some teachers are skilled in using methods that cater for the wide range of ability to be found within some groups. However, there were instances where weaker students were not receiving the support required. On the GNVQ programme the intention is that core skills should be integrated with the vocational studies and assessed through the vocational curriculum. In practice, they are not always fully integrated. Students' learning needs, particularly in core skills, were not always systematically identified and developed in relation to their vocational area. Staff development is required to improve some teachers' skills in supporting students.

STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS

53 Teachers are generally successful in developing a high level of student commitment. Students studying computing make frequent use of facilities outside the normal working day of the college. Manufacturing, art and design and business studies students expressed enthusiasm for their work and appreciation of the additional help received from teachers. On GNVQ programmes, students take responsibility for a wide range of activities as an integral part of their studies. This includes the planning of revision programmes on health and social care courses and managing independent research on leisure and tourism courses.

54 There is clear evidence that students develop a variety of relevant skills. For example, students on modern language courses respond well to the task of reading literature in a foreign language and many progress to further language studies in higher education. Nevertheless, there is scope to encourage some students to apply their skills more widely. Those engaged in design studies do not fully exploit drawing skills and photography to support their work and, although business studies students possess sound knowledge of information technology, the extent to which they use it in written work is limited.

55 In some subjects, students develop good communication skills which are enhanced through their regular work in small groups. During a diploma in vocational education session students with varied abilities

were given good opportunities to share ideas and contribute their respective skills in preparing for a music concert. In a GCSE English lesson, class discussion of an extract from a film was followed by purposeful group work aimed at developing formal presentations.

56 Students' achievements were improved by the use of informative assignments and constructive feedback from teachers. In history, and in government and politics classes, an informative assignment cover-sheet offered students guidance on the criteria used for marking. Christian theology, English and philosophy students benefited from assessment sheets which included a section where they could set goals aimed at improving their performance. These helpful practices could be introduced more widely.

57 Student retention rates are monitored at regular intervals. In February 1994, 95 per cent of students enrolled in November 1993 were still attending. This level of retention is well within the figure used for financial forecasting.

58 The college has a good record of achievement at GCE A level and in the GCSE. In 1993, the college improved its examination performance over the previous year in both GCSE and GCE A level examinations.

59 Of the 950 GCSE entries in 1993, 63 per cent of the results were at grades A-C compared with a national average for sixth form colleges of 50 per cent. Eight per cent of entries were at grade A. In 17 subjects, at least 80 per cent of entries were grade C or better. The less satisfactory results were in mathematics, science, physical education and music.

60 In 1993, there were 490 GCE A level entries, 83 per cent of these at grades A-E. This compares with a national average for sixth form colleges of 82 per cent. Almost 50 per cent of the results achieved were grades A-C, in line with the national average; 10 per cent were at grade A, a proportion slightly lower than the national average. Students were particularly successful in business studies, government and politics, computing, media studies and some language studies. In business studies, for example, all candidates achieved pass grades and 58 per cent achieved grades A or B. In computing, all candidates achieved grade C or better. Results for English, French and mathematics were less satisfactory. In English and French there was a significant bias towards passes at the lower grades. In mathematics only 45 per cent of candidates achieved pass grades.

61 The college subscribes to ALIS, a commercial service which provides a measure of students' predicted GCE A level examination performance set against their actual performance. The first set of results computed by the college suggest that students' achievements are better than the predicted level in the majority of courses analysed. Computing, business studies and Christian theology are subjects of particular note in this respect. The excellent Spanish results are undoubtedly influenced by the fact that the majority of the candidates are native Spanish speakers or are bilingual.

62 Students enrolled on GNVQ courses clearly benefit from the support of an enthusiastic team of teachers. Results for the pilot GNVQ intermediate level courses were outstanding in art and design, where 38 per cent of those enrolled achieved a distinction. Overall, 51 per cent of students enrolled on the five intermediate courses offered by the college achieved at least a pass grade. A further 28 per cent who completed portfolios of work, but did not reach the standard required for a GNVQ, were awarded a diploma in vocational education together with credits for the GNVQ units in which they had been successful. Of the 51 students who enrolled on DVE programmes 90 per cent achieved a diploma.

63 The college enters a small number of students for GCE advanced supplementary (AS) examinations. These tend to be used as a fall-back for students unlikely to gain passes in their A level examinations. Students' achievements in 1993 were barely satisfactory; the majority of students who passed their examinations obtained a grade D and more than 60 per cent of students failed their examinations in mathematics. The college is reviewing its AS provision in the light of developments in modular A level courses.

64 The compulsory religious education programme is followed by all students and accredited by the college. Students present two pieces of written work each year, one on knowledge and understanding, the other on evaluation. In 1993, 378 students were accredited, including 21 who gained a distinction, and a further 48 who were awarded a credit.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

65 The college is in the early stages of developing its quality assurance procedures. There are regular divisional meetings and vocational course teams meet every week to review progress. Each curriculum area currently institutes some elements of quality control and some produce prioritised action plans based on their own internal reviews. However, at present there is no systematic implementation of quality control procedures across the college. Senior management is seeking to standardise the existing procedures and intends to implement a formal annual review and evaluation of GCE A level and GCSE courses this year. It is anticipated that GNVQ provision will also be brought into this review process to ensure that all courses are evaluated to the same level of detail. All subject leaders will complete a subject review form at the end of the academic year. Although the reasons for students leaving a course or the college are recorded elsewhere, the college should consider making provision for such information on the form. Whilst some students have completed the comprehensive GNVQ assessment research project questionnaire and some departments have developed their own student questionnaires, there is no college-wide mechanism for obtaining the views of students. The college monitors progress in relation to the Women in Science and Technology initiative.

66 The main performance indicator used to inform course reviews throughout the college is examination results. The ALIS analysis of the 1993 GCE A level results has been distributed to all subject leaders and consideration is being given to its implications. The college recognises the potential for this information to assist in the promotion of learning.

67 The library service has developed its own rigorous system of quality control entailing daily, weekly and monthly analyses of loans, study visits and enquiries. This stands out as an example of good practice.

68 The training and development of staff are managed by one of the vice-principals and proposed action is sanctioned by the principal. All training and professional development must have direct relevance to the aims of the strategic plan and the needs of the curriculum. As well as the five annual staff development days inherited from pre-designation schools regulations, the college has taken the decision to conduct more of its training in-house next year. This is intended to enable larger numbers of staff to receive training with the least possible disruption to the delivery of the curriculum, and to ensure that the training will be sharply focused. Although this policy brings some gains in efficiency, it has the disadvantage of restricting access by staff to external bodies and fellow professionals. Five members of staff have been supported by the college in gaining post-graduate qualifications and it is intended that this aspect of the policy should continue. The college has a budget of £12,000 for staff development, which is 0.67 per cent of the total pay expenditure. This year a large proportion of this sum has been spent on assessor training for vocational courses.

69 There is a very supportive induction and mentoring process for newly-qualified teachers which includes classroom observation and formal feedback on progress. A staff appraisal system was introduced in 1992 and all teaching and support staff have been appraised. Procedures for appraisal are well defined and most staff have found the process constructive and beneficial to professional relationships. Clear objectives for appropriate staff development have been identified.

70 The college has distributed copies of the Charter for Further Education to all staff and copies for students to consult are available from the library. A draft college charter, which will draw upon many of the procedures now operating, is in the course of preparation for discussion by the policy and resources committee. Full consultation on this has yet to take place.

RESOURCES

Staffing

71 Teaching staff in almost all subject areas are suitably qualified for the courses they teach. The staff are highly committed and provide strong support for students.

72 In several subjects, including business studies, many teaching staff have recent commercial or industrial experience. In other subject areas, including some of those offering GNVQs, there is a need to extend teacher's experience of industry and commerce.

73 Since the college is relatively new, all of the teaching staff have been appointed during the last four years. As a consequence, the age profile of the staff is low. Thirty-one teachers are below the age of 35. Many of the younger staff have good information technology skills and are able to utilise these in their subject teaching.

74 Support staff provide an adequate service in almost all subject areas. However, in art and design they are over-stretched. Additional technician support by technicians in information technology will be required as resources are increased. Foreign language assistants are provided for French, German and Spanish.

Equipment

75 The college is well equipped in almost all areas. Both classrooms and practical areas provide a range of resources that are used effectively to support learning. In a few subjects there are some weaknesses or shortages of equipment. For example, other than in the theatre workshop itself there is a lack of drama equipment. There is a shortage of good learning resources to support the newly-introduced GNVQ leisure and tourism programme.

76 The library has a wide range of books providing good support for most subjects. There are approximately 9,000 volumes. There are about 70 study spaces and the college's monitoring statistics indicate that the library is heavily utilised. The budget for the library is currently £24,000. The catalogue is computerised and is readily accessible to students. An adjacent careers library provides access to a range of resources, including relevant databases.

77 The information technology equipment available to students is good. There is a favourable student to workstation ratio (7.3:1 workstation). There is good access to facilities for all subjects with the exception of leisure and tourism where it is unsatisfactory. Art and design have recently introduced a suite of high-quality computer workstations and these are providing excellent support for students. The major computing facilities are provided through a network and this supports a range of software for students' use. The response on the network is, however, slow at peak times and many workstations are not able to support the latest versions of software. Access to printing facilities in several parts of the college also requires some improvement.

78 The college has excellent facilities for people with hearing impairment and, on two of the sites, for those with impaired mobility. Some facilities exist for people with visual impairment. The college is committed to providing for students with significant general learning difficulties.

Accommodation

79 The quality of the accommodation is excellent in almost all areas. Much of the provision operates within a single campus consisting of three main buildings, and two further pre-fabricated units which have been introduced recently. An additional building nearby is rented, but the college intends to stop using it in the near future. Of the three main buildings, one is new and the other two were refurbished for the opening of the college. The new building has been designed to a much higher specification than that normally found for buildings in the further education sector. The surrounding areas immediately adjacent to the college have been landscaped to a high standard and include gardens and exterior seating for students and a multi-purpose playing area for basketball and five-a-side soccer.

80 Almost all interior areas are carpeted and well decorated and many rooms are furnished in a way which allows them to be used for a range of activities. There is some good use of wall displays and a physical focus has been developed for almost all subject areas. Classrooms are bright and spacious, and good quality practical areas support many of the specialist subjects. The library is of excellent quality and provides a good range of resources for both students and staff. The theatre workshop is a rare example of a facility which successfully meets the needs of daily class teaching and also of public performance. The gymnasium, restaurant and students' common room are all of good quality. Many staff have their own work areas or classrooms and adjoining the staffroom there is a workroom which is equipped with computers, a printer and a photocopier.

81 Two of the main buildings provide access for wheelchair users but not the third, which has no lift. Although the buildings had been maintained to a very high standard, at the time of the visit the roof of one of the main buildings was leaking and this was causing safety problems in the language laboratory. Much of the accommodation used is entirely suitable for its purpose, with a number of exceptions in history, geography and mathematics and in some of the art rooms which were, on occasions, over-crowded.

82 The college applies strict rules to protect the high quality of the internal and external environment and to promote in students a feeling of ownership and pride in the facilities. This approach is successful and students behave responsibly towards the facilities provided for them. There was no evidence of damage or excessive wear to any of the furniture, furnishings or decoration, and little evidence of litter.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

83 The college is making good progress towards fulfilling its mission to provide high- quality Catholic comprehensive education for students in the post-compulsory phase.

The strengths of the college are:

- the wide range of GCE/GCSE and vocational courses
- the strong commitment to achieving parity of esteem between vocational and GCE/GCSE courses
- the successful integration of Christian values into the academic and pastoral life of the college
- clear, well-understood management structures
- well-qualified, dedicated staff
- effective structures for student support and guidance
- a coherent set of non-examined programmes to promote personal development
- much good, well planned teaching
- generally good examination results
- attractive, well-cared for accommodation which is respected by the students
- good, well-managed library provision.

84 If the college is to improve further the quality of its provision, it should:

- widen its sphere of marketing to enable more students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to benefit from its facilities
- develop existing links with contributory schools to include curriculum matters
- seek to encourage wider dissemination of good practice by facilitating better collaboration across divisions
- consider ways of assessing and accrediting prior learning in students without normal 16+ qualifications
- continue to develop its quality assurance procedures
- strengthen procedures for identifying and meeting students' learning and language support needs.

FIGURES

1 Age profile of the students (at November 1993)

2 Percentage of students by type of course (at November 1993)

3 Staff profile - staff expressed as full-time equivalents
(at November 1993)

4 Number of students in each curriculum area (at November 1993)

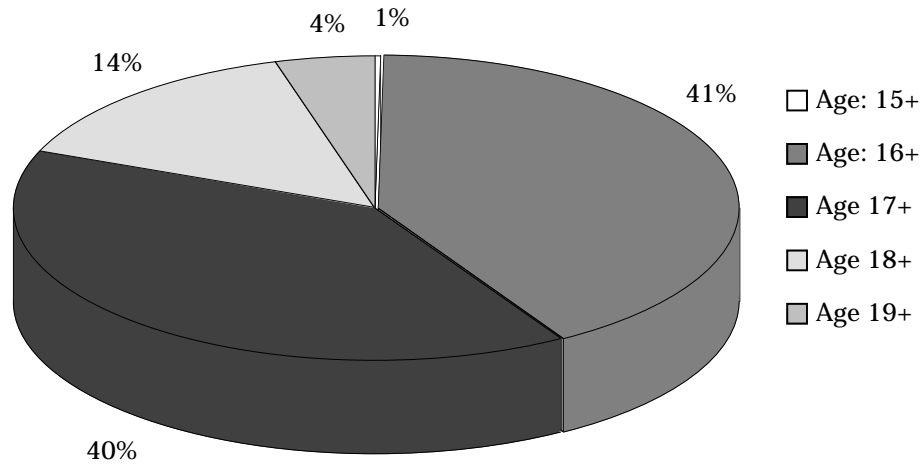
5 Recurrent income (for 12 months to July 1994)

6 Estimated expenditure (for 12 months to July 1994)

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

Figure 1

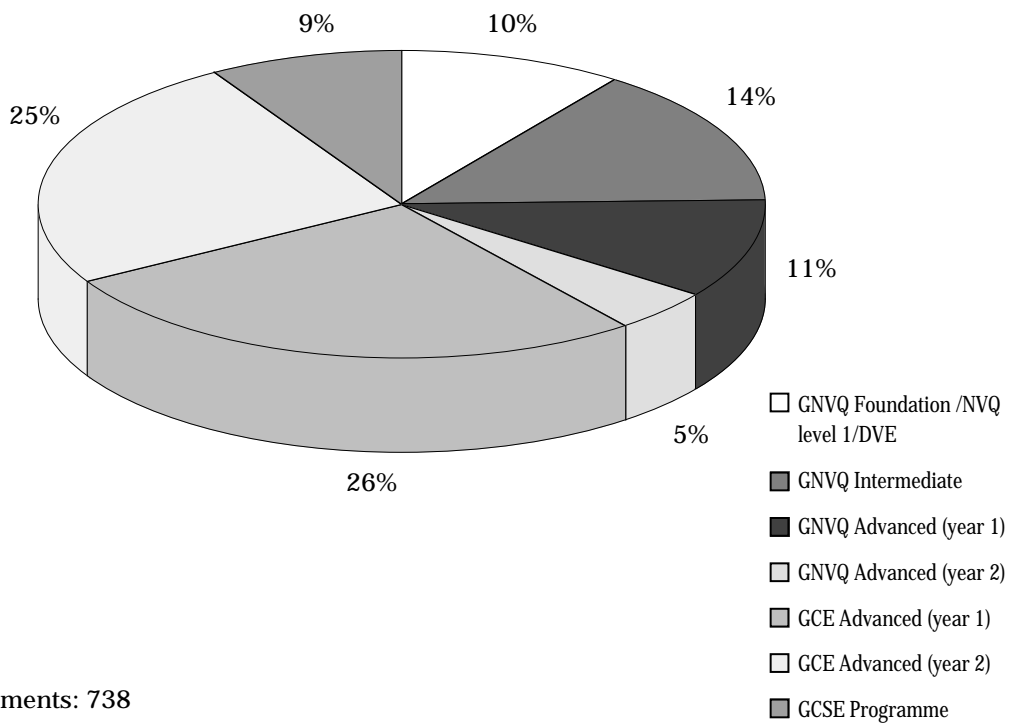
**St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College: age profile of the students
(at November 1993)**



Enrolments: 738

Figure 2

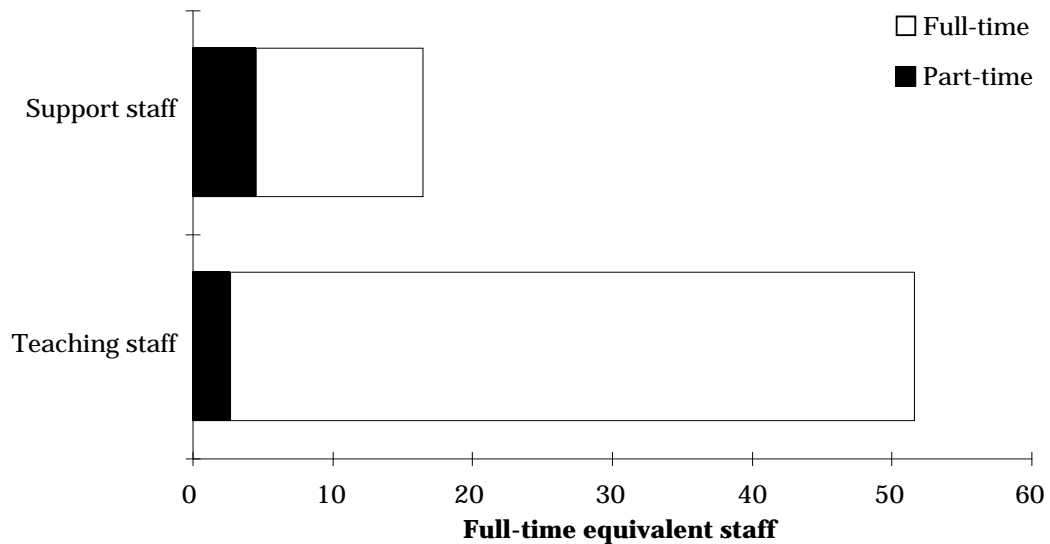
**St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College: percentage of students by type of course
(at November 1993)**



Enrolments: 738

Figure 3

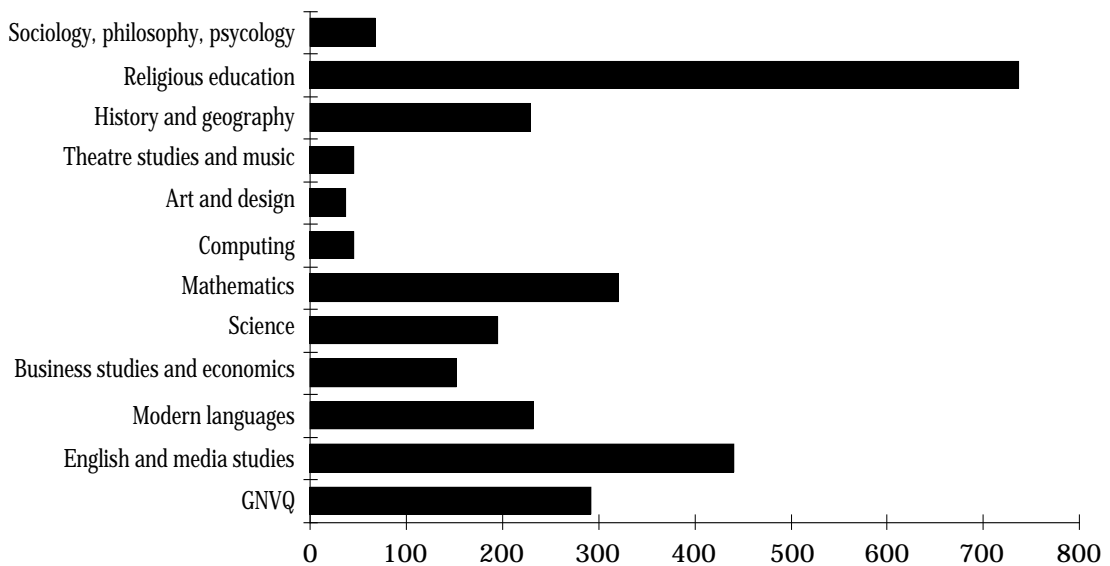
St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College: staff profile-staff expressed as full-time equivalents (at November 1993)



Full-time equivalent staff: 68

Figure 4

St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College: numbers of students in each curriculum area (at November 1993)

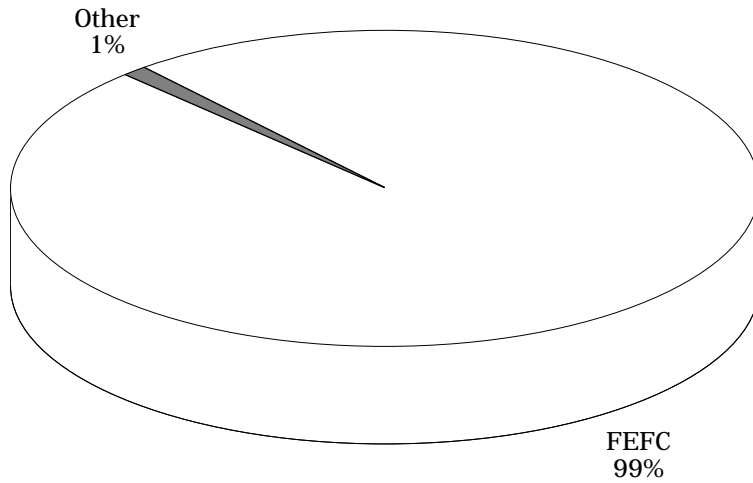


Enrolments: 738

Note: Students may appear in several of the areas. Curriculum area figures exclude GNVQ subjects offered in these areas. All students take religious education.

Figure 5

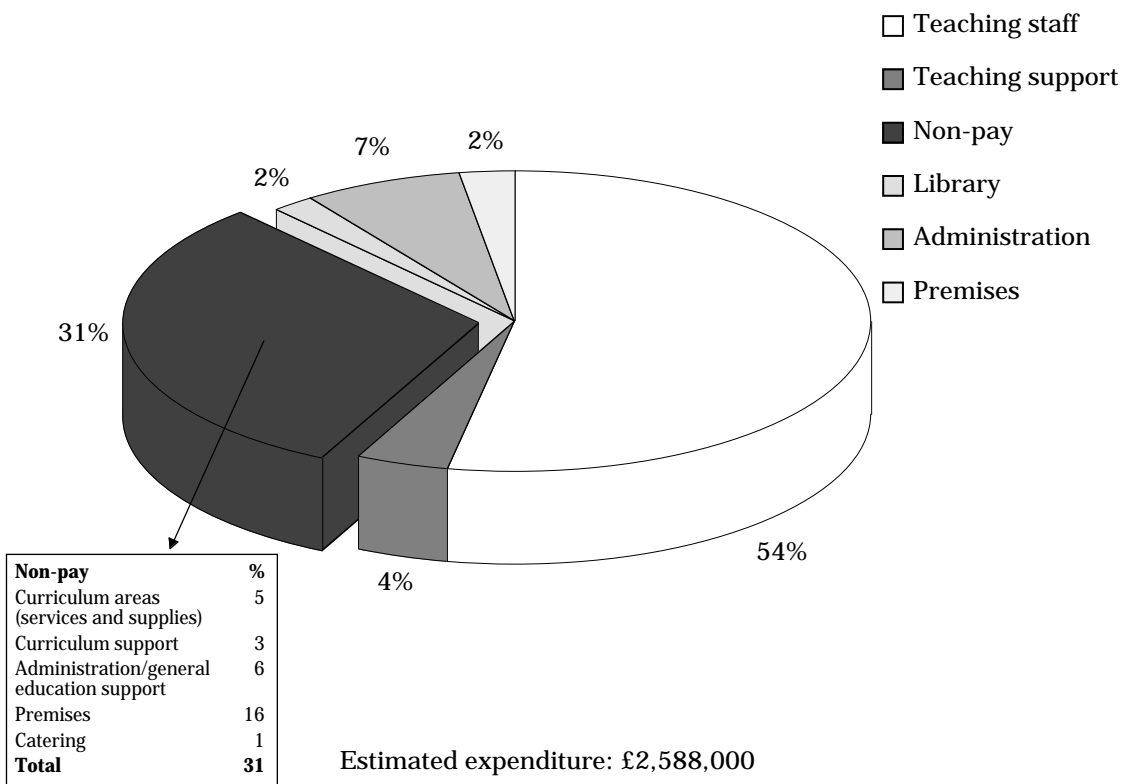
St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College: recurrent income (12 months to July 1994)



Recurrent income: £2,702,000

Figure 6

St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College: estimated expenditure (12 months to July 1994)



Published by the
Further Education Funding Council
June 1994