

# Barking College

**REPORT FROM  
THE INSPECTORATE  
1997-98**

**THE  
FURTHER  
EDUCATION  
FUNDING  
COUNCIL**

***THE FURTHER EDUCATION  
FUNDING COUNCIL***

*The Further Education Funding Council has a legal duty to make sure further education in England is properly assessed. The FEFC's inspectorate inspects and reports on each college of further education according to a four-year cycle. It also assesses and reports nationally on the curriculum, disseminates good practice and advises the FEFC's quality assessment committee.*

*College inspections are carried out in accordance with the framework and guidelines described in Council Circulars 97/12, 97/13 and 97/22. Inspections seek to validate the data and judgements provided by colleges in self-assessment reports. They involve full-time inspectors and registered part-time inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in the work they inspect. A member of the Council's audit service works with inspectors in assessing aspects of governance and management. All colleges are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.*

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## Grade Descriptors

Inspectors assess the strengths and weaknesses of each aspect of provision they inspect. Their assessments are set out in the report. They use a five-point scale to summarise the balance between strengths and weaknesses.

The descriptors for the grades are:

- grade 1 – outstanding provision which has many strengths and few weaknesses
- grade 2 – good provision in which the strengths clearly outweigh the weaknesses
- grade 3 – satisfactory provision with strengths but also some weaknesses
- grade 4 – less than satisfactory provision in which the weaknesses clearly outweigh the strengths
- grade 5 – poor provision which has few strengths and many weaknesses.

Aggregated grades for aspects of cross-college provision, curriculum areas and lesson observations, for colleges inspected during 1996-97, are shown in the following table.

	Grade				
	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
Curriculum areas	9	59	30	2	–
Cross-college provision	18	51	27	4	–
Lesson observations	19	42	31	7	1

Source: *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report.* Grades were awarded using the guidelines in Council Circular 93/28, *Assessing Achievement*.  
Sample size: 122 college inspections

## Retention and Pass Rates

Where data on students' achievements appear in tables, levels of achievement are shown in two ways:

- as a retention rate, which is the proportion of students who completed a course in relation to the number enrolled on 1 November in the first year of the course
- as a pass rate, which is the proportion of students which passed examinations in relation to the number entered. Pass rates for GCE A level are quoted for grades A to E unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for GCSE courses are quoted for grade C or above unless otherwise specified. Pass rates for vocational and professional awards are for successful completion of the full award.

# Summary

## **Barking College**

### ***Greater London Region***

#### **Inspected February 1998**

Barking College is a general further education college in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. The college's self-assessment process is rigorous. The college's self-assessment report is thorough and its judgements are supported by comprehensive evidence. The college has sound plans to improve the quality of provision and, at the time of the inspection, it had made significant progress in carrying these out.

The college offers courses in all of the FEFC's 10 programme areas. Provision in six programmes areas was inspected, together with aspects of cross-college provision. The college offers courses from foundation level to higher education. Since the last inspection, the college has made significant improvements in the quality of its provision. It has productive relations with other colleges, employers, the local authority and the TEC. Teaching is good. The college's quality assurance procedures are exemplary. The proportion of lessons graded 1 or 2 by inspectors was 12 percentage points higher than in the last inspection. The college has improved considerably its support for students. The management of the college is outstanding. Staff are self-critical and they

evaluate their own performance openly and honestly. Governors have strong links with the local community and with major employers. They make a significant contribution to the work of the college. General resources are good. There have been substantial improvements to accommodation and to IT resources over the last three years. The college should improve: the arrangements for governors to receive monthly management accounts in good time before committee meetings; the management of electronics courses; some poor tutorial practice; students' achievements and retention rates on some courses; and poor attendance by some students.

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

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cross-college provision</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Computing	3	Support for students	2
Construction	2	General resources	2
Engineering	2	Quality assurance	1
Business	2	Governance	2
Childcare and health care	2	Management	1
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	2		

# Context

## The College and its Mission

1 Barking College is a single-site general further education college situated in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham close to the border of Havering and less than a mile from Romford. It lies in the area covered by the London East Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The college competes for students with five other general further education colleges and four sixth form colleges in the area.

Barking and Dagenham has eight 11 to 18 comprehensive schools and a new purpose-built special school which caters for students from age three to 19.

2 Barking and Dagenham is the smallest London borough with a population of approximately 157,000. According to the 1991 census, only 30.3 per cent of the population were in professional, managerial or technical occupations, compared with 39.5 per cent in Greater London as a whole. Minority ethnic groups form 6.8 per cent of the population of the borough, compared with 23 per cent in Greater London as a whole. Barking and Dagenham is one of the most industrialised boroughs in London. The industrial belt along the banks of the Thames includes large companies with which the college has developed a range of collaborative provision.

3 In 1994, the college recognised the potential to expand its provision of training on employers' premises in collaboration with existing and new business partners. It established a division of industrial and commercial development, to develop and co-ordinate this work. Collaborative provision expanded throughout 1995 and 1996 and now represents about 30 per cent of the college's total provision.

4 The college in its mission statement aims to be:

- 'a major provider of quality, cost-effective, post-16 learning and personal development opportunities

- a learner-centred college promoting equality of opportunity in all that it does
- a major contributor to the national targets for education and training meeting the needs of school-leavers, employers and adult returners'.

It is committed to working:

- 'to meet client requirements with courtesy, efficiency and professionalism
- in partnership with other educational establishments to provide progression to further and higher education and employment
- with industrial and commercial partners to create a prosperous local economy'.

5 The college has specified six strategic objectives for the period 1997 to 2000.

These are to:

- 'develop an inclusive learner-centred curriculum that meets local, regional and national client needs
- create an organisational culture emphasising staff involvement, teamwork and quality
- exploit the full potential of information technology (IT) within the college, and with its business and community partners
- help businesses to compete within European and global markets
- ensure a safe, healthy and attractive environment in which to work and study
- increase efficiency through the improved management of resources'.

# Context

## The Inspection

6 The college was inspected in February 1998. Prior to the inspection, inspectors reviewed the college's self-assessment report and information about the college held by other divisions of the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The college submitted data on students' achievements for the three years 1995 to 1997 which were validated against primary sources, such as class registers and pass lists issued by examining bodies. The college was notified of aspects of provision to be inspected approximately two months before the inspection. The inspection was carried out by 11 inspectors and an auditor working in the college for a total of 47 days. They observed 78 classes and examined students' work and documentation relating to the college and its courses. Meetings were held with governors, managers, teachers, students, support staff and employers.

7 Of the lessons inspected, 68 per cent were rated good or outstanding and about 8 per cent were less than satisfactory. This compares with figures of 61 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, for all colleges inspected during 1996-97 according to *Quality and Standards in Further Education in England 1996-97: Chief inspector's annual report*. The average level of

attendance during the inspection was 78 per cent. This compares with an average of 77 per cent for all colleges inspected in 1996-97, according to the same report.

### Lessons: inspection grades by programme of study

Programme	Grade					Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	
GNVQ	2	13	6	1	0	22
NVQ*	6	12	6	2	0	26
Other**	7	13	7	3	0	30
Total	15	38	19	6	0	78

\*includes one tutorial

\*\*includes three tutorials

# Curriculum Areas

## Computing

### Grade 3

**8 Inspectors observed 12 lessons. The self-assessment report is comprehensive and identifies the key strengths and weaknesses of the computing provision. However, insufficient emphasis is given in the report to low retention rates and poor pass rates on some courses.**

#### Key strengths

- well-planned and effectively-managed courses
- an effective range of learning support materials
- accessible and up-to-date computer hardware and software for students

#### Weaknesses

- students' poor punctuality and low attendance on some courses
- poor retention rates on a few courses
- the placing of a few students on courses beyond their capability
- some low pass rates

9 The college offers an extensive range of courses in computing and IT. Students who are successful on these courses can progress to more advanced studies or to relevant employment. A few students are unable to cope with the demands of their courses.

10 Courses are effectively managed. Course team meetings provide opportunities for staff to discuss and, where appropriate, resolve emerging issues. Schemes of work are detailed. Teachers work collaboratively to ensure that there is continuity and progression in the students' learning.

11 Almost all teaching is satisfactory or good. The inspectors agreed with the finding in the

college's self-assessment report that students are provided with an appropriate balance of theoretical and practical work. Lessons are effectively planned and teachers use a good range of learning support materials. In several instances, students arrived late for lessons. Overall, students' attendance in lessons was low. In some lessons, students were reluctant to answer questions. In a few practical sessions, some students made little progress.

12 Some students produce work of a high standard and they carry out practical work competently. However, other students fail to complete their coursework by the specified deadlines. On some courses, for example advanced part-time and GNVQ intermediate, the students' retention and pass rates are low. The majority of successful students progress to computing-related courses in higher education.

13 The inspection team agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report, that the quality of specialist resources is high. Teachers are well qualified and, collectively, they have a good range of expertise. Full-time teachers attend courses and conferences which enable them to keep abreast of current developments in their subjects. Most teachers have assessor and internal verifier qualifications. Students have access to a good range of up-to-date computer equipment. The teaching accommodation is well furnished and it is used well.



# Curriculum Areas

## Examples of students' achievements in computing, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
Advanced full time	Retention (%)	55	71	62
	Pass rate (%)	71	89	61
Advanced part time	Retention (%)	50	50	38
	Pass rate (%)	57	100	63
GNVQ intermediate	Retention (%)	*	*	79
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	23
Other intermediate	Retention (%)	94	98	90
	Pass rate (%)	42	46	66

*Source: college data*

*\*no comparable course running*

# Curriculum Areas

## Construction

### Grade 2

**14 The college has made substantial improvements to the quality of its construction provision since the last inspection. Inspectors observed 12 lessons. The inspectors agreed with the findings in the self-assessment report in respect of this curriculum area.**

#### Key strengths

- carefully-planned and well-presented lessons
- the full involvement of students in their learning
- the industrial context of lecturers
- good internal verification procedures
- many students' good retention and pass rates
- the high-quality of students' practical work, especially in brickwork and interior decorative techniques
- the well-organised tutorials

#### Weaknesses

- students' lack of punctuality and, in some instances, poor attendance
- a few unimaginative lessons
- ineffective integration of IT with the content of courses

15 The college offers a good range of courses in construction. It has been successful in widening participation in these. For example, in 1997-98, 13 women enrolled on the new City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) course in interior and decorative techniques.

16 The curriculum is effectively managed and offers students opportunity for progression. In the school of construction technicians, a two-semester system has been introduced to

facilitate more flexible modes of attendance.

Full-time and part-time programmes are reviewed annually and the internal verification of courses is effective. The inspectors agreed with the findings in the self-assessment report that IT is not sufficiently integral to courses and that there is little specialist computer software available to students.

17 Most teaching is carefully planned. Staff use a variety of appropriate teaching methods. Students are fully involved in classroom activities which challenge them to think and exercise their initiative. Teachers make constant and appropriate references to current industrial practices and they check regularly to make sure that the students understand the lesson. Assignments and projects are vocationally relevant. A few lessons were unimaginative. In these, the teacher talked too much and the students were not given enough demanding work to do.

18 The quality of students' work is generally good. Students carry out practical work competently and safely. A student on the electrical installation course produced a high standard of work in assignments and demonstrated competency in quality assurance, installation and commissioning, fault diagnosis and rectification. In a practical lesson on a C&G course in interior and decorative techniques, the students, all of whom were female, produced a variety of imaginative and creative designs. A student on a brickwork course produced a well-designed herringbone panel and the finished product had acceptable dimensional tolerances. Key skills are effectively incorporated into courses and they are assessed separately. Students spoke favourably of their teaching and learning. The self-assessment report identifies that students are highly satisfied with their courses. Retention rates are satisfactory and pass rates on some courses are above national averages. The achievement rate for the NVQ level 3 qualification has improved significantly over the last three years.

# Curriculum Areas

Attendance was low during the week of the inspection, partly due to a programme of individual tutorials, and it averaged 67 per cent.

19 Tutors are well qualified and suitably experienced. The majority of teachers have obtained verifier qualifications and most teachers and support staff have up-to-date industrial experience. Inspectors agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report that the college has a sufficient number of suitably-equipped workshops for its construction courses. The electrical installation workshop is, however, cramped.

## Examples of students' achievements in construction, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
C&G courses	Retention (%)	72	81	82
	Pass rate (%)	56	78	64
NVQ level 3	Retention (%)	71	72	80
	Pass rate (%)	56	71	80
NVQ level 2	Retention (%)	56	61	50
	Pass rate (%)	62	78	58
Higher national certificates	Retention (%)	75	86	57
	Pass rate (%)	86	92	50
National diplomas	Retention (%)	57	64	58
	Pass rate (%)	100	88	71
National certificates	Retention (%)	64	61	80
	Pass rate (%)	67	75	68

Source: college data

# Curriculum Areas

## Engineering

### Grade 2

**20 The inspection focused on mechanical and electronic engineering courses, including the college's collaborative provision.**

**Inspectors observed 12 lessons.**

**The inspectors agreed with the college's self-assessment of the significant strengths and weaknesses in this curriculum area.**

#### Key strengths

- carefully-planned and well-managed courses
- good or outstanding teaching
- clearly-written and well-presented teaching materials
- good student retention rates on most courses
- good pass rates on most courses

#### Weaknesses

- uninspired teaching in a few lessons
- low attendance rates on some courses
- low retention rates on some electronics courses

21 The quality of teaching is generally good. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of teaching methods to engage and sustain the interest of students in the topic under consideration. Useful reference is made to current industrial practice and theoretical aspects are related to practical applications. Students are encouraged to draw upon their own experiences in the work place. In most lessons, teaching materials are well prepared and they provide students with clear, useful information. Assignment and project briefs are thorough and give clear guidance on grading criteria. Where key skills are an integral part of engineering assignments, students are clearly told how they are to be assessed.

Many mechanical and production engineering students benefit from training which the college provides in collaboration with another college and a large local employer. Such collaboration is successful and the training offered is of a high standard. In a few lessons, students learn little and they are not challenged enough to think and exercise their skills.

22 Much of the students' work is good. Most written assignments and portfolios of work are thorough and well presented. Teachers are consistently fair in their marking and their assessment includes helpful written comments on how the students may improve their work. The inspectors agreed with the findings in the self-assessment report that most teachers expect high standards of work from their students and that many assignments and projects are demanding. One extended project was carefully designed to cover all the mechanical workshop skills which students had acquired over a period of several weeks. In most cases, the completed mechanisms and associated reports were of a high standard. Retention rates are high on many courses. Pass rates are at or above national averages for most mechanical engineering courses and they have risen steadily on electronics and mechanical engineering courses. Most pass rates are high on engineering courses which are provided through collaborative arrangements. Retention rates and pass rates on some electronics courses are poor.

23 Mechanical engineering courses are effectively managed. Most course team meetings have focused on the key issues of students' retention rates and students' achievements. Staff have a clear awareness of the importance of setting and achieving targets and of the need for cost effectiveness in delivery of the provision. The college's self-assessment report refers to staffing problems in the school of electrical and electronic engineering. The management of some of the electronic courses has been ineffective. Some course teams have not adequately addressed the

# Curriculum Areas

significant issues of students' attendance, retention and achievements. The internal verification of all engineering courses is usually thorough.

24 The majority of mechanical engineering students are employed by a major multinational car producer and, together with college staff, they have access to its high-quality training facilities and equipment. As stated in the college's self-assessment report resources are outstanding for engineering provision which is delivered in collaboration with other organisations. Electronics students are provided with excellent computer-based resources. There is a need to update some general equipment. Most teachers are well qualified and, as a result of their industrial links and staff development activities, many have a good knowledge of current industrial practice.

## Examples of students' achievements in engineering, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
C&G mechanical engineering	Retention (%)	86	87	88
	Pass rate (%)	53	60	67
C&G electronic engineering	Retention (%)	94	78	85
	Pass rate (%)	20	28	51
BTEC national and higher national courses	Retention (%)	79	100	100
	Pass rate (%)	80	85	53

Source: college data

# Curriculum Areas

## Business

### Grade 2

**25 Twelve lessons were inspected. Inspectors mostly agreed with the statements of significant strengths and weaknesses of the provision in business given in the college's self-assessment report. In many cases, action is already being taken to address issues identified in the report.**

#### Key strengths

- good range of courses offering students ample scope for progression
- management programmes tailored to individual students' needs
- well-managed and effectively-planned courses and lessons
- good key skills support for students
- good use of students' workplace experiences in lessons
- accurate marking of assignments and helpful feedback to students on their performance
- mainly high retention rates
- good pass rates on some courses

#### Weaknesses

- unimaginative use of visual aids in lessons
- a few insufficiently-demanding lessons for more able students
- insufficient private study by students
- some low pass rates on business administration courses

26 Courses address the needs of a wide variety of students, including school-leavers, people in employment who wish to improve their qualifications in order to enhance their promotion prospects, and adults who want to acquire specific skills that would prove attractive to potential employers. Many students avail

themselves of the progression opportunities offered by the provision. A valuable feature of the management programmes, noted by the college in its self-assessment report, is the extent to which learning programmes can be tailored to the needs of individual students. The business provision has been developed in line with the college's strategic plan. Courses are well managed by teams of teachers who work well together.

27 Courses and lessons are planned carefully. There are detailed schemes of work for all courses and the preparation of these to a common format is a strength which the college recognised in its self-assessment report. Most lessons are managed effectively by appropriately-qualified teachers who are committed to ensuring that their students succeed. Teachers provide their students with a range of carefully-planned activities which motivate them and help them to learn effectively. Students are given good help and support with key skills. In general, teachers cope well in dealing with the different levels of ability of students in the same group. A few lessons, however, were insufficiently demanding for the more able students. Although most teachers are aware that they need to check periodically that students understand the lesson, they do not always do this effectively, as the college recognises in its self-assessment report. Some teachers do not use visual aids well. In some lessons, students were required to do little more than copy notes laboriously from the whiteboard or an overhead projector transparency. With the exception of the lecturers on management courses, teachers do not expect or require their students to undertake much private study in their own time.

28 As the college records in its self-assessment report, adult students have ample opportunities to apply knowledge and skills gained in the workplace in their assignment work and in work carried out in lessons. Full-time students benefit from well-organised work placements.

# Curriculum Areas

Students on administration courses have regular opportunities to undertake business-related tasks in the college's business centre. The IT equipment used by business students is steadily being upgraded.

29 Most students' written work is of an appropriate standard. The portfolios of work by students on courses leading to general national vocational qualifications (GNVQs) and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) are carefully maintained and provide clear evidence of competences acquired. On the whole, students' work is satisfactorily presented. Students on GNVQ courses at foundation and intermediate levels seldom use a wordprocessor to improve the presentation of their work. Teachers grade assignments accurately and usually provide students with detailed guidance on how they could improve their work, a strength recorded in the self-assessment report. Students are

developing sound communication skills.

They make particularly good progress in lessons on timetabled key skills.

30 In its self-assessment report, the college recognises that retention rates are good on most business courses. The pass rates are generally satisfactory, but in some cases, rates have declined over the past year. In its self-assessment report, the college expresses concern about the substantial number of students who fail to gain a full NVQ in administration. However, students on the NVQ administration course have a good record of obtaining jobs. Many students who successfully complete their course progress to higher level programmes.

## Examples of students' achievements in business, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GCE A level accounting	Retention (%)	91	91	65
	Pass rate (%)	10	60	64
GCE A level business studies	Retention (%)	*	*	91
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	68
RSA NVQ level 3 administration	Retention (%)	*	81	96
	Pass rate (%)	*	54	55
NVQ levels 3 and 4 management	Retention (%)	*	97	96
	Pass rate (%)	*	71	71
GNVQ advanced business	Retention (%)	96	96	96
	Pass rate (%)	57	76	48
BTEC national certificate business	Retention (%)	62	42	52
	Pass rate (%)	96	81	77
Association of Accounting Technicians foundation	Retention (%)	86	62	96
	Pass rate (%)	24	74	41

Source: college data

\*no comparable course running

# Curriculum Areas

## Childcare and Health Care

### Grade 2

**31 Inspectors observed 16 lessons on courses offered in the college and as part of the college's collaborative provision. The inspectors agreed with the college's comprehensive assessment of the quality of provision in this curriculum area. The action plan for addressing issues raised in the self-assessment report is proving effective.**

#### Key strengths

- well-managed, effectively-planned courses and lessons
- the good range of teaching and learning methods
- the good use made of students' work experience in lessons
- the good evaluation by teachers of students' work
- the high standard of students' work
- mainly high retention rates
- some high pass rates

#### Weaknesses

- the failure to complete the internal verification of some students' assessed work
- low attendance by some students

32 The college provides an extensive range of care courses. The proportion of students enrolled on the college's collaborative courses is high. Overall, lessons are well planned and managed. The college's division of industrial and commercial development effectively monitors the quality of courses offered outside the college. Schemes of work are good and lesson plans are detailed. They ensure that the syllabus is covered properly. The self-assessment report draws attention to the effectiveness of the teaching and learning on care courses.

33 Considerable efforts are made by the college to ensure that students participate in work experience. As far as possible, work experience is planned to match students' interests and aspirations. Students are prepared carefully for their work placements and their progress in these is monitored effectively. In lessons, teachers draw upon the work experience of students effectively and it is an important focus of learning activities and assignments.

34 Some progress has been made in improving the effectiveness of internal verification procedures. However, the self-assessment report notes that more work is needed to strengthen the internal verification process within NVQ and GNVQ programmes.

35 Teaching is generally good. Activities are varied to sustain students' interest and to extend their knowledge. Students' assignment briefs are clear. In general, teachers mark students' work appropriately and return it within a reasonable timescale. As part of their assessment, teachers provide students with written comments and detailed feedback on their work to help them to improve their performance. In a few instances, however, teachers fail to correct spelling and grammar. Students make good use of IT in the presentation of their work. The inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that most students' work is of a high standard.

36 Although pass rates on some courses fell in 1996-97 most are at or above the national average for the sector. In general, retention rates are good, and in some cases they exceed the target set by the college. Accommodation is fit for the purpose to which it is put and specialist equipment is satisfactory. The accommodation and specialist equipment available to students on courses which form part of the collaborative provision are of a high standard. Teachers are appropriately qualified.



# Curriculum Areas

## Examples of students' achievements in childcare and health care, 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
GNVQ foundation and intermediate	Retention (%)	86	78	71
	Pass rate (%)	52	65	59 <sup>1</sup>
Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (NNEB)	Retention (%)	83	81	87
	Pass rate (%)	72	71	75
NVQ level 2 direct care	Retention (%)	84	86	74
	Pass rate (%)	46	59	74 <sup>1</sup>
NVQ level 2 childcare	Retention (%)	85	77	98
	Pass rate (%)	76	48	68

Source: college data

<sup>1</sup>some students still to complete

## Examples of students' achievements in childcare and health care (collaborative provision), 1995 to 1997

Course grouping		1995	1996	1997
St John Ambulance certificates	Retention (%)	*	100	100
	Pass rate (%)	*	97	97
British Red Cross first aid certificates	Retention (%)	*	100	100
	Pass rate (%)	*	97	95
Other first aid certificates	Retention (%)	*	100	100
	Pass rate (%)	*	100	100
Hairdressing certificates and diplomas	Retention (%)	36	57	63
	Pass rate (%)	97	76	80
Holistic therapy certificates	Retention (%)	*	*	100
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	87

Source: college data

\*no comparable course running

# Curriculum Areas

## Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

### Grade 2

**37 Inspectors observed 10 lessons. The findings in the self-assessment report in relation to provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are detailed. Inspectors agreed with the college's identification of strengths and weaknesses in this area of work. Some of the weaknesses are already being addressed.**

#### Key strengths

- the wide range of appropriate learning activities for students of different abilities
- the success of the teaching in furthering the students' personal development and in increasing the students' confidence and self-esteem
- mutually-supportive and hard-working students
- a good range of learning materials
- effective testing of students' learning

#### Weaknesses

- poor attendance by some students
- the failure of a few lessons to meet the needs of students of differing abilities
- insufficient accreditation of students' IT and vocational skills

38 Teachers are enthusiastic and they are committed to helping their students to succeed. Lessons are well planned and they are carefully designed in order that they will engage and sustain the interest of students with a wide range of abilities. In class, the relationships between staff and students were friendly and positive. Teachers gave students encouragement and they checked that the students understood

what they were learning. Students were mutually supportive. Overall, the teaching was successful in helping the students to increase their self-confidence.

39 In most lessons, students were fully involved in a range of learning activities. Students are exceptionally well satisfied with their courses. They receive good support and guidance from teachers. In a few lessons, the teachers did not take account of the ability range of students, some of whom were unable to cope.

40 Induction procedures for students are particularly effective and innovative. Students are provided with individual timetables and these are drawn up in the light of students' results in initial tests and assessments. Inspectors agreed with the judgement in the self-assessment report that procedures for monitoring and measuring students' progress are clear and effective and that they are linked to those for the annual review of students' performance and the maintenance of records of achievement.

41 The college provides a range of nationally accredited courses. Students' retention rates on these courses are impressively high. However, there is insufficient accreditation of students' IT and vocational skills. Some courses are too difficult for some students. The self-assessment report recognises these shortcomings in relation to the level and scope of courses. The college is taking steps, through the Open College Network, to improve the range of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

42 The overall management of the curriculum is good. A closely-knit team of staff ensures that there is continuity in students' learning. Some minutes of team meetings lack clarity and fail to identify who is responsible for carrying out agreed actions. The college has good links with schools, including special schools and pupils use the college's facilities.

# Curriculum Areas

43 Accommodation is satisfactory. However, a few teaching areas are cramped and unsuitable for the size of the class using them. The staff work room is too small.

44 The self-assessment report identified the lack of opportunities for students to progress to work experience as a weakness. A member of staff has been appointed to co-ordinate the arrangement of work experience for students.

# Cross-college Provision

## Support for Students

### Grade 2

**45 The college's self-assessment of support for students was thorough. Inspectors agreed with the statements in the self-assessment report of the main strengths and weaknesses of the support provided for students.**

#### Key strengths

- good advice for prospective students
- good learning support for students across the college, including those with learning difficulties
- good personal counselling, welfare advice and other support for students
- effective support for key skills development in vocational areas
- much good tutorial provision

#### Weaknesses

- some ineffective monitoring of the learning support provided
- variable quality of tutorials in a minority of courses

46 Prospective students receive detailed information and advice about the college and its courses. The college organises open evenings, holds 'drop-in' guidance sessions throughout the year and provides an information service. In addition, the college has an advice shop in a local shopping centre. The college's prospectus is well designed and is complemented by a range of course leaflets. The college has effective links with local special schools, the local adult college, London East TEC and the University of East London. College staff attend careers events and open evenings at local schools. New students attend effective induction programmes. A successful 'welcome fair' gives students an introduction to all the college's services.

47 Since the last inspection, the college has made considerable improvements to the management and provision of learning support. A new key skills centre has been developed where any student can receive additional help in communication, literacy and numeracy. Teachers in the centre have developed materials to help students improve key skills within different vocational contexts. All schools in the college are working with the new key skills centre to develop vocationally-relevant key skills. The majority of foundation, intermediate and advanced level students take a basic skills test in literacy and numeracy when they enrol. Those who do not perform well in these tests are referred to the centre where they can receive additional support for their learning. Most of those who are identified as needing support attend the centre regularly. Systems for monitoring the uptake and effectiveness of learning support are not yet fully effective.

48 The college's support for students with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, and sensory impairments is a particular strength and this is recognised in the self-assessment report. Deaf students have access to outstanding facilities. They are supported by educational communicators who are experts in British Sign Language, attend lessons with students and work closely with them to ensure that they understand the work. There are also several note-takers who work alongside visually- and hearing-impaired students, and dyslexic students. The work of these staff is appreciated by the students and it has enabled them to progress and achieve success on a range of courses such as mechanical engineering, business studies and IT. One student spoke movingly of his amazement at finding himself a successful student on an access to higher education programme, after a school career which left him with no confidence in his own abilities. He hopes to progress to university and become a social worker to support others with sensory impairments.

# Cross-college Provision

49 Tutorial support is provided for all full-time students and for most part-time students. Tutorial programmes include individual tutorials when students discuss their progress with their tutor, and group tutorials where topics such as job application procedures and higher education opportunities are covered. Tutorials were well prepared and tutors kept good records of tutorial activities. Relationships between tutors and students were good. In individual tutorials, it was clear to the students that the tutors had monitored their progress closely and productive discussions took place. Following a recent internal inspection of tutorials which formed part of the self-assessment process, the college identified strengths in the tutorial system. It also found that some tutorials were not conducted well and, following discussions with staff and students, inspectors agreed with this judgement.

50 Students receive good personal counselling, welfare advice and vocational guidance from a small but well-qualified and experienced team of staff. The self-assessment report did not note that some students on courses which are part of collaborative provision are not aware of their entitlement to use the services of this team, and other college services. The president of the students' union is a full-time student on sabbatical leave who, with the assistance of a youth worker, provides informal advice and assistance for students who might not seek help through more formal channels. The local careers company has an office in the college foyer, where students can drop in for advice or make appointments to see an adviser. However, students from some schools in the college do not take advantage of the services offered by the vocational guidance officer or the careers service. Since the last inspection, a purpose-built crèche facility has been set up in the college grounds. The crèche is run by the area health authority and provides places for local hospital workers as well as places for 15 children of students. The college has created a support fund of £10,000 for students aged 16 to

18, and about 350 students received financial assistance from this fund during 1996-97. There is also an access fund of £19,000 to assist older students. The counsellor helps students to obtain their grants and benefits to which they are entitled, and also obtains about £25,000 annually for students from charitable trusts.

## General Resources

### *Grade 2*

**51 The college's self-assessment report is comprehensive and detailed in relation to resources and inspectors agreed with most of the strengths and weaknesses it identifies. The college had begun to improve the quality of its general resources by the time the inspection took place.**

#### Key strengths

- the effective programmes for the development and maintenance of resources
- the improved library and key skills centre
- the media resource services for teaching staff
- the well-equipped management and administration work areas
- the substantially-improved IT facilities

#### Weaknesses

- some classrooms and workshops in need of refurbishment
- some inadequate work areas for teachers
- unsatisfactory social and refectory areas for staff and students

52 The college occupies a level 12 hectare site one mile from Romford town centre. The site has 17 buildings which have been developed in several distinct phases since the 1960s.

# Cross-college Provision

The accommodation provides a pleasant working environment. The self-assessment report notes that proposals to demolish some huts and redevelop the site are in the college's accommodation strategy.

53 Extensive surveys of the condition of the college's buildings have been carried out to inform maintenance programmes and strategic planning. Most buildings are well maintained and of good quality but some accommodation is in need of refurbishment. The college has recently completed a £1.5 million building works programme to rectify defects in its accommodation, to comply with safety regulations and to correct serious overheating in one recently-erected building.

54 Most management and administration areas are in good condition and are pleasant working environments. Some work areas for full-time teachers are overcrowded. Social facilities do not fully meet the needs of staff and students. Staff have to use programme area workrooms as social areas and students use the main refectory as a meeting place. The 'Bistro' is attractive and provides good value for money. A recently-opened coffee bar and many vending machines offering drinks and snacks, are well used by students.

55 In a recent survey of students' opinions about the college, 94 per cent of students expressed satisfaction with the library and the learning resource centre. The college notes in its self-assessment report that considerable improvements have been made to learning resources, such as computers, video-film and CD-ROM collections. There is good liaison between library staff and teachers. Staffing in the library and for the information service has been increased since the last inspection and as a result, the library's opening hours have been extended. The well-stocked careers library provides valuable support for students and teachers. The library has 86 study spaces and these are heavily used at peak times.

Teaching and learning are well supported by a media resources centre. This provides teachers with reprographic services and co-ordinates the use of audiovisual equipment.

56 The college notes in its self-assessment report that substantial improvement has been made in the provision of IT resources over the last two years. There is a computer workstation for every seven full-time equivalent students. Machines have been upgraded and almost all are new. A college-wide computer network is being developed with assistance from the local TEC's competitiveness fund. Motor vehicle engineering teachers are using IT to produce training materials for use by students and industry. The college is developing the use of video-conferencing to facilitate on-line tutorial links with Havering College of Further and Higher Education and a large vehicle manufacturing company in the locality.

57 The college's sports hall is a valuable amenity and students have access to it at set times during the day. The college has two football pitches which are used regularly by college teams and also rented to outside associations.

58 The accessibility of the college for students with disabilities has been improved with the provision of ramps and automatic doors and designated parking spaces. The college's self-assessment report acknowledges that some areas of the college are not easily accessible to wheelchair users. Social amenities, the library, the learning resource centre, the key skills centre and support services are situated on ground floors and are accessible to all students. There is a range of specialist equipment in the key skills centre that is used effectively to support learning for students with sensory impairments.

# Cross-college Provision

## Quality Assurance

### Grade 1

**59 The college is committed to assuring that the quality of its provision is high.**

**The inspectors agreed with the detailed findings and judgements in the college's self-assessment report in relation to quality assurance. The college is already taking steps to address weaknesses in the quality assurance arrangements which were identified in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- the annual review of the quality of courses and support services
- the rigorous system of internal inspection
- the comprehensive process of self-assessment for curriculum areas and support services
- the inclusion of the views of employers, governors, the TEC and the local authority in the self-assessment process
- the involvement of governors in quality assurance
- the effective staff appraisal system and the successful staff development programme

#### Weaknesses

- the lack of rigour in a few course and support service reviews

60 The college's quality assurance procedures are outstanding. The continual refinement of the quality assurance system has led to measurable improvements in many of its aspects. The director of curriculum planning and quality assurance is well supported by the quality manager. Quality assurance committees reporting to the academic board and to the corporation play an important role in improving the quality of provision. The key features of the

college's quality assurance system include: an annual review of courses and services; a programme of rigorous internal inspections leading to reports and action plans; biennial surveys of students' views; well-defined procedures for dealing with students' complaints; sound procedures for the internal verification of courses; the systematic follow up of reports from external verifiers and examiners; and the work of the self-assessment review group which includes employers and representatives of the local authority and the TEC.

61 There are numerous examples of improvements resulting from the college's quality assurance procedures. These include: improved learning support for students; longer opening hours for the library and learning resource centre; better IT resources and improvements in the quality of the information available to managers.

62 In its self-assessment report, the college emphasises the importance of its internal inspection process which is thorough and rigorous. Numerous inspections, modelled on those of the FEFC's inspectorate, have covered tutorials, marketing, four major curriculum areas and the collaborative provision at seven centres. All internal inspection reports are made available to staff. The implementation of action plans to improve provision, which are drawn up following internal inspections, is closely monitored by relevant senior managers, the quality assurance committees and the corporation.

63 The college evaluates the quality of its provision against increasingly-demanding criteria. Course reviews are based on evidence which is drawn from a variety of sources including students' views, data on students' achievements, retention rates and destinations, records of lesson observations, and the reports of external examiners and verifiers. The college has thorough procedures for monitoring the

# Cross-college Provision

quality of all its courses. The manager responsible for quality assurance and members of the quality assurance committee ensure that these procedures are being carried out effectively by auditing a sample of course and service reviews, moderating grades awarded in self-assessment and by joint observation of lessons. The college recognises that some courses are reviewed more rigorously than others.

64 The self-assessment process and the self-assessment report were thoroughly scrutinised by the self-assessment review group. An internal review panel and the two quality assurance committees moderate the grades awarded. The evidence gained from 152 graded lesson observations was used in preparing the self-assessment report.

65 Expenditure on staff development represents 2 per cent of the staffing budget. Staff development is closely linked to the college's six strategic objectives. It is effectively organised. In its self-assessment report, the college notes the beneficial impact that staff development has had on the quality of provision. In 1995, the college obtained the Investor in People award and it is preparing to be reassessed for this award. Staff development needs are identified mainly through the staff review and appraisal system, self-assessment, and the internal inspections. Much of the training for staff including accredited management training and assessor and verifier training takes place in the college. There are clear procedures for bidding for staff development funding and for evaluating training which has taken place.

## Governance

### *Grade 2*

**66 The self-assessment report on governance is thorough. It identifies many strengths and weaknesses in governance which were also found by the inspection team. The inspectors broadly agreed with the judgements in the self-assessment report.**

#### Key strengths

- the governors' strong commitment to make the college succeed
- good clerking arrangements
- the governors' effective contribution to strategic planning
- the appropriate committee structure for the corporation
- the involvement of governors in assuring the quality of provision

#### Weaknesses

- poor attendance by some governors
- distribution to governors of the college's financial information

67 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its assessment, the governance of the college is good. The corporation substantially conducts its business in accordance with the instrument and articles of government. It also substantially fulfils its responsibilities under the financial memorandum with the FEFC. Governors give careful consideration to key financial issues facing the college. Managers keep governors informed of the college's current financial position through the circulation of monthly management accounts. However, these accounts are not always made available to governors in advance of personnel and finance committee meetings, and as a result, they are unable to give sufficient consideration to them. The annual budget for 1997-98 was not



# Cross-college Provision

considered fully by the personnel and finance committee in advance of the corporation's approval. The personnel and finance committee has sometimes considered detailed financial matters which more properly fall within the remit of managers. None of these weaknesses were identified in the self-assessment report.

68 The college has sound procedures for conducting the corporation's business. The full corporation meets at least three times each year. There are 12 members including the principal, a staff member and a student member.

The corporation is supported by appropriate committees, whose work is overseen but not duplicated by the full corporation.

The committees have appropriate terms of reference. From time to time, governors invite persons who are not governors but who have particular expertise to assist in the work of the subcommittees. The clerk to the corporation maintains a comprehensive set of standing orders on the conduct of the corporation's business. There is a useful governors' handbook which includes relevant information on governors' responsibilities. The clerk provides clear guidance to governors on current issues affecting the sector. Papers prepared for the corporation and its committees provide a good basis for decision-making. The self-assessment report notes that the corporation has established an appropriate register of interests which includes declarations by all governors and senior college managers.

69 Half the governors were members before incorporation. With their long service and knowledge of the college, they bring a high degree of stability to the corporation. Many governors have strong links with local community organisations and major businesses. The corporation recognised in the self-assessment report that there were few women members and has recently appointed a woman to fill a vacancy. Attendance at corporation and some committee meetings has been poor. Whilst meetings have been quorate

during the last 12 months, there has been poor attendance at personnel and finance committee meetings.

70 Governors contribute effectively to the strategic planning process and have a clear understanding of their role. They attend training events regularly and are kept informed about developments in the college, including curriculum issues. The governors have an effective 'quality committee' that oversees the quality of the college's provision. Governors assess their own performance. The self-assessment report recognises that most governors have produced personal development plans with the support of the college's staff development manager. The chair of the corporation appraises the performance of the principal against the college's strategic objectives.

## Management

### *Grade 1*

**71 The self-assessment report for management is thorough and reflects a culture of honest self-criticism in the college. The strengths and weaknesses of management identified in the report are the same as those found by inspectors.**

#### **Key strengths**

- clear management structure and reporting lines
- effective communication systems
- a clear timetable and procedures for strategic planning
- productive external links
- monitoring of financial performance
- the successful promotion of equality of opportunity
- increasingly accurate information from central management information systems

# Cross-college Provision

## Weaknesses

- some middle managers' lack of experience in budgetary management

72 The college, its staff and other resources are well managed. The management structure and lines of responsibility are clear and operate within a culture of openness and self-criticism. Management responsibilities have been refined and there is now more delegation of authority to middle managers. The rationale for such refinements are understood by staff.

The self-assessment report notes that heads of school have substantial responsibility for the management of resources and for curriculum development. In response to concerns expressed by middle managers about the workloads of heads of school, the principal has shadowed one of the heads and is seeking professional advice on making the workloads more equitable. Responsibility for advising the principal on how the college complies with health and safety regulations rests with a full-time health and safety officer who is supported by an effective committee.

73 In its self-assessment report, the college recognises that internal communications are effective. Senior managers adopt and encourage an open and consultative management style. Staff are kept informed about college matters and other relevant issues through a regular newsletter, briefings by the principal and senior managers, and through various meetings. Reports from the strategic management team form a regular item on the agenda meetings of faculties and schools. Directors hold fortnightly meetings with their heads of school and these are minuted. Course teams meet formally at least six times a year. Since the last inspection, good progress has been made in ensuring part-time teachers are included in course teams. Many part-time teachers now attend course team meetings. A comprehensive staff handbook gives clear guidance on various

college systems and procedures. In their last report, inspectors found that the academic board was ineffective in providing advice to the principal. The college has increased the number of teaching staff on the board and it is now more effective in its advisory role.

74 Strategic planning by the college is sound. The strategic plan reflects the college's mission and it informs the work of staff at all levels. There is a clear timetable for planning which involves staff and governors. Schools and support sections produce their own development plans which contribute to faculty and directorate plans. Targets are set for retention, attendance and achievement, and progress towards reaching these is monitored by course teams and heads of schools. In its self-assessment report, the college recognises the value of its effective system for the approval of new courses. Course proposals take into account the resource implication of the new course and the possible effect of the new provision upon existing courses.

75 Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively in the college. There is an equal opportunities committee. This regularly reviews policy and practice in relation to the promotion of equal opportunities across the college. A strategic planning day on equal opportunities was held in November 1997 on which staff addressed issues relating to race, gender, and an integrated approach to provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The college has produced a policy on 'inclusivity' in response to the report of the Tomlinson Committee. Schools within the college are required to gather statistics which are relevant in the context of equal opportunities, and they must identify actions in their operating plans which specifically aim to promote equality of opportunity.

76 The self-assessment report identifies problems which the college has had in ensuring that its information about students is accurate.

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The college has attempted to improve the accuracy of this information by setting up an on-line, computerised system of students' records. It has established a working party to look into ways of providing managers with the key information they need.

77 The FEFC's audit service concludes that, within the scope of its review, the college's financial management is good. While there is detailed and effective monitoring of the college's financial performance by management, financial reports have not been extended to include forecasts of out-turn for both income and expenditure to the financial year end nor a rolling cashflow forecast for 12 months ahead. The budget planning process is well defined and clearly understood by staff. The college has developed a system of financial management which involves devolving budgetary management for about half of both income and expenditure to schools. Staffing costs are also delegated to heads of schools. Some middle managers need more help with, and training in, the operation of the new system of delegated budgets. There have been improvements in the quality of financial reports received by managers. More training is planned for staff on the compiling of financial reports.

## Conclusions

78 The self-assessment report used for the inspection was the third one produced by the college. The inspectors found the document helpful in planning the inspection. The college has developed a self-critical culture and all staff were involved in the self-assessment process. The self-assessment report presents a clear and thorough evaluation of the college's work and the inspection team agreed with most of its findings. The college made rigorous judgements about the quality of its provision and these are supported by detailed evidence drawn from the course reviews, lesson observations and internal inspection. The grades which the college

awarded itself as a result of its self-assessment were generally the same as those given by the inspectors.

79 Strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection are listed under each section of this report. The main strengths and weaknesses are identified in the summary.

# College Statistics

## Student numbers by age (November 1997)

Age	%
Under 16	0
16-18 years	32
19-24 years	19
25+ years	49
Not known	0
Total	100

Source: college data

## Student numbers by level of study (November 1997)

Level of study	%
Foundation	66
Intermediate	11
Advanced	8
Higher education	1
Leisure/recreation (non-schedule 2)	14
Total	100

Source: college data

Note: foundation data include outward collaborative provision students

## Student numbers by mode of attendance and curriculum area (November 1997)

Programme area	Full time	Part time	Total provision %
Science	205	1,562	4
Agriculture	0	94	0
Construction	212	1,040	3
Engineering	498	6,422	17
Business	397	2,171	6
Hotel and catering	275	2,125	6
Health and community care	211	23,647	58
Art and design	582	384	3
Humanities	273	460	2
Basic education	128	210	1
Total	2,781	38,115	100

Source: college data

## Staff expressed as full-time equivalents (November 1997)

	Perm- anent	Fixed term	Casual	Total
Direct learning contact	119	29	0	148
Supporting direct learning contact	53	8	0	61
Other support	105	0	0	105
Total	277	37	0	314

Source: college data, rounded to nearest full-time equivalent

# College Statistics

## Three-year Trends

### Financial data

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Income	£11,562,000	£13,667,000	£14,261,000
Average level of funding (ALF)			
Out-turn to 1995-96; funded 1996-97	£17.65	£15.06	£18.83
Payroll as a proportion of income	64%	63%	53%
Achievement of funding target	111%	137%	103%
Diversity of income	20%	14%	12%
Operating surplus	-£350,000	£599,000	£1,050,000

Sources: Income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

ALF – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), Funding Allocations 1996-97 (1996-97)

Payroll – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Achievement of funding target – Performance Indicators 1995-96 (1994-95 and 1995-96), college (1996-97)

Diversity of income – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

Operating surplus – Council Circulars 96/29 (1994-95), 97/35 (1995-96), college (1996-97)

### Performance data for students aged 16 to 18

Qualifications		1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
GCE A level	Number of candidates	53	112	92
	Average point score per entry	2.5	2.1	2.7
	Position in tables	bottom third	989	bottom third
Advanced vocational	Number in final year	+	289	269
	Percentage achieving qualification	+	73%	74%
	Position in tables	+	middle third	middle third
Intermediate vocational	Number in final year	*	235	178
	Percentage achieving qualification	*	60%	53%
	Position in tables	*	middle third	bottom third

Source: DfEE

Note: the majority of the college's students are 19 years of age or older

The achievements of these students are not covered in published DfEE performance tables

+course not running

\*1994-95 intermediate vocational results not available

# College Statistics

## Students' achievements

		<i>1994-95</i>	<i>1995-96</i>	<i>1996-97</i>
Advanced academic	Pass (%)	65	48	62
	Retention (%)	83	88	86
Intermediate academic	Pass (%)	58	44	32
	Retention (%)	81	72	88
Advanced vocational	Pass (%)	55	56	67
	Retention (%)	68	72	90
Intermediate vocational	Pass (%)	47	57	61
	Retention (%)	69	65	86

*Source: college data*

**FEFC Inspection Report 50/98**

**Published by the  
Further Education Funding Council  
May 1998**