



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

The Henley College

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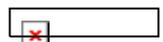
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Basic information about the college

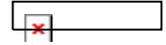


Name of college:	The Henley College
Type of college:	Tertiary
Principal:	David Ansell
Address of college:	Deanfield Avenue Henley-on-Thames Oxfordshire RG9 1UH
Telephone number:	01491 579 988
Fax number:	01491 410 099
Chair of governors:	Peter Luff
Unique reference number:	130789
Name of reporting inspector:	Maggie Startup HMI
Dates of inspection:	14-18 October 2002

Part A: Summary



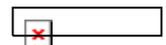
Information about the college



The Henley College is a tertiary college located in Henley-on-Thames on the borders of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire in south Oxfordshire. The college is on two sites: Deanfield and Rotherfield sites are within easy walking distance of each other. The area has very low levels of social deprivation. Student recruitment is from some 40 schools in the region and the college has partnership arrangements with four local 11-16 schools. In the 2002-05 strategic plan, one of the key aims of The Henley College is to be recognised as the major sixth form centre for the area. The college therefore recruits predominantly 16-19 year old full-time students. In the 2001/02 academic year, there were 1,694 full-time students, 1,525 of whom were aged 16 to 18 and 1,500 part-time students, nearly all aged 19+. Some 51% of students were female and just over 92% of students identified themselves as white. The college offers General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A level) and/or GCE Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) in around 40 subjects. There are 16 vocational courses leading to the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE), national and first diplomas. Options for the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) are available in English language, French, Spanish, Latin and mathematics. Key skills are available at levels 1, 2 and 3. A foundation course and higher foundation course are available and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are offered a number of study areas through the Henley Pathways and Pathways Plus courses. The International Baccalaureate Diploma programme has a total of 108 students on roll.

The mission of the college is to be 'the college that students aspire to attend, by providing high quality education and training that meet the needs of our community and individual learners'.

How effective is the college?



The quality of provision in English, languages and communications and humanities were judged to be outstanding. In four other curriculum areas the quality was good and in a further three, it was satisfactory. The work-based learning provision in business and in health and social care was satisfactory. None of the college's provision was considered unsatisfactory. The college's key strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below.

Key strengths

- high and improving retention and pass rates for full-time students at level 3 consistently above national average
- well-established and well-managed International Baccalaureate programme
- good curriculum planning

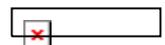
- much good, interesting and purposeful teaching
- very good specialist knowledge of staff in many subjects
- wide range and good take up of the enrichment programme.

What should be improved?

- effectiveness of subject and course reviews, target setting and monitoring
- greater variation in teaching methods to meet the needs of students
- more consistent use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning
- accuracy and availability of management information
- rate of completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- breadth of the curriculum for students at levels 1 and 2.

Further aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in the sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



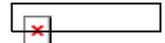
The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how

judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5)

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Science	Good. Mostly good and enthusiastic teaching results in well above average pass rates for most science subjects, with consistently above average high grade passes in GCE AS and GCE A-level chemistry and physics. Practical science is well integrated into teaching schemes. Science facilities are well equipped. There is limited use of ICT in biology and chemistry teaching and where good practice exists, this is insufficiently shared across all subjects.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. The pass rates on most GCE AS and A-level courses and the International Baccalaureate are above average. Retention rates on most courses are good and improving. The achievements of the large numbers of students who study GCSE mathematics are poor. There is a lack of variation in teaching methods and insufficient use of ICT in lessons. The majority of teaching is at least satisfactory.
Business studies	Good. There is much good teaching and very good pass rates in GCE AS and A-level business studies and GCE AS economics. Course reviews and planning are comprehensive and thorough. Poor attendance and punctuality are significant. There is a recent marked improvement in the progress of modern apprentices despite previous poor retention and pass rates.
Information and communication technology	Good. Pass and retention rates are above average in most courses. Good teaching takes place and learning is well supported by good quality resources and thorough assessment of students' work. There is a falling pass rate on GNVQ intermediate information technology (IT) and unsatisfactory mathematical achievement on the national diploma IT course.
Health and social care	Satisfactory. Retention rates on the public service first diploma are good. Pass rates in health studies and the public service national diploma are above the national average. In the Business Technology Education Council (BTEC) national diploma early years, retention and pass rates in the last three years have been well below average. Progression to professional training and higher education (HE) is good, but completion and achievement in work-based learning have been very low.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good. Pass and retention rates are good and rising on most courses and there is good progression to HE and employment. Teaching in performing arts is consistently high. Student work in drama and theatre studies is very good. Teaching time is not always productive and written feedback does not always promote improvement.
Humanities	Outstanding. Humanities provision is outstanding with well above average pass and retention rates and very good teaching. Students' progress is carefully monitored and written work is of a high standard. ICT is insufficiently integrated into the curriculum. Courses are well managed and thoroughly reviewed
English, languages and communications	Outstanding. There are very good retention rates. Students' achievements are outstanding in English and Spanish, and good in French and German. In English as a foreign language, pass rates are good, but low proportions of students sit the examination. Teaching is good or better in a high proportion of lessons, and there is good support for individual students' learning.
Foundation studies	Satisfactory. There is effective additional learning support and good resources available to level 2 and level 3 students. Retention rates on

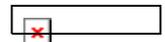
	foundation courses and pass rates on level 1 qualifications are good. Unsatisfactory teaching and low standards of work are evident on foundation courses, but additional learning support teaching is good or better. Curriculum co-ordination is poor.
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How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are good. There has been significant progress on most issues raised in the last inspection in October 2000. Retention rates are high and rising. Pass rates for full-time level 3 provision, the main work of the college, are consistently above the national average. However, achievement at level 2 is below the college target and performance at this level has fluctuated since 1998/99. Strategic plans are clear and based on sound evidence and consultation. Governors have a very good oversight of the work of the college. After a period of operating deficits, its financial situation is improving and expenditure now matches income. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection, with a significant increase in the proportion of lessons in which teaching is good or better. However, the effectiveness of course reviews, target setting for improvement and the monitoring of development plans are not yet consistently good. Until the current academic year, the accuracy and availability of management information have been a problem, but newly introduced procedures should address this issue. There has been slow adoption of the use of ICT in some curriculum areas. The promotion of equal opportunities is sound. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

To what extent is the provision of the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. The college is explicit in its strategic aim to be recognised as the major sixth form centre for the area and targets its recruitment activity accordingly. The International Baccalaureate diploma programme provides a comprehensive and broad curriculum for highly motivated students. To extend participation further, the college has targets to increase the number of students taking up the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme. However, provision at level 1 is very limited. The narrow range of vocational options in the foundation programme restricts progression opportunities for students. The college has a race equality policy with broad aims, but a detailed implementation plan has not been developed. Recruitment data on the ethnicity and gender of students and staff are monitored. This scrutiny has not extended to students' retention or achievement. There is good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

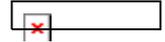
How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



For the majority of students, the support and guidance arrangements at the college are good. Support for full-time students is organised well. Each student has a weekly group tutorial session that covers pastoral and academic matters effectively. On an individual basis students receive good support to help them cope with personal problems. Tutors and the college counselling service respond quickly and sympathetically to such difficulties. The college has a strong commitment to

requirements for support and carefully planned programmes are effective. Most students receive good guidance from the college; this is offered prior to and during entry to the college and forms an important part of the tutorial programme. There is insufficient guidance for students studying at level 3 wanting to enter directly into employment. Students studying part time at the college receive little formal support. There are inconsistencies in the support of students on level 2 programmes. Although a tutorial programme is in place, tutors deviate from this in order to offer students effective support.

Students' views of the college



Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below:

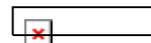
What students like about the college

- good enthusiastic and supportive teaching
- good subject and additional support
- wide programme of enrichment activities
- good mix of students
- positive adult atmosphere.

What they feel could be improved

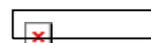
- new timetable format which impacts adversely on study time
- amount of indoor communal space
- quality of the refectory.

Other information



The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the inspection. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC). The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the LLSC. The LLSC is responsible for ensuring that the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) receives the college's post inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

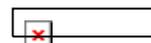
Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	71	24	5
19+ and WBL*	**	**	**
Learning 16-18	67	30	3
19+ and WBL*	**	**	**

Key: The range of grades includes: Excellent (Grade 1), Very Good (Grade 2), Good (Grade 3), Satisfactory (Grade 4), Unsatisfactory (Grade 5), Poor (Grade 6) and Very Poor (Grade 7).

**work-based learning*

***numbers too low to provide a valid calculation*

Achievement and standards



1. The emphasis of the college's provision is on courses at level 3. There are significant enrolments of full-time students aged 16 to 18 on to these courses. The average point score for students entered for two or more GCE A levels or the GCE AS equivalent in 2000/01 was 16.6. This was below the national average of 18.1. On GCE A-level programmes overall, most students achieve grades in line with what might be expected given their prior attainment in GCSE, with students in around one third of GCE A-level subjects getting better grades. In some subjects, however, for example, GCE A-level in human biology and German, students do not perform as well as expected.

2. The overall attendance rate of students at classes observed by inspectors was a relatively low 81%. This is below the corresponding figure of 86% during the previous inspection and is only satisfactory, particularly at this stage of the academic year. Attendance in humanities was good, at over 90%. In the curriculum areas of business studies, visual and performing arts and media and foundation programmes, attendance was poor.

3. The standards most students achieved in written work and in well-organised portfolios show that staff have demanding expectations. Students' oral skills are well developed and most take an active part in classroom discussions demonstrating mature attitudes to their work. Many of them progress to HE. The outstanding achievement of individual students in particular curriculum areas are recognised through 'student of the year' awards. Students undertaking the International Baccalaureate programme are required to complete a 4,000 word essay and the standard of their writing and research skills is high. The best essays and coursework demonstrate a high level of literacy, wide subject knowledge and extensive research. Students spoke articulately and interestingly about their topics and showed wide general and subject-specific knowledge. Where standards were less satisfactory, students demonstrated weak writing skills, poor use of English and did not always complete assessment tasks set by the teacher. In foundation studies, the standard of students' work was low and students' files contained only brief comments to help students progress.

4. The separate reports on areas of learning provide more detail about achievement and standards on particular courses.

16 to 18 year olds

5. Most students aged 16 to 18 are on level 3 courses and they perform well. Inspectors found that many level 3 students achieved well above average results in 2001/02. Pass rates have been consistently around 85%, a figure that comfortably exceeds the latest available national average of 77%. In some subjects, the results in 2002 are outstanding. These include GCE A-level courses in history, government and politics, sociology, Spanish and English.

6. In 2002, the results of students taking the International Baccalaureate programme are very good, with students scoring above the worldwide average in standard level biology, economics, German, mathematics and psychology and at higher level in biology, English, European history and psychology. In French, German and Spanish at standard and higher level, the average grade is close to, or in some cases above the international average.

7. Less than 7% of the students at the college take qualifications at level 1 and nearly 20% of students take level 2 qualifications. At level 1, pass rates have improved for the last three years and in 2000/01 were just above the national average. However, the numbers of students on these courses has fallen in the same period from 361 to 75. At level 2, pass rates have been inconsistent. They fell significantly in 1999/2000 to 44%, but recovered in 2000/01 to 88%, well above the national average. Some students perform very well, for example, those taking GCSE English, whereas others, most notably those taking GCSE mathematics in the daytime, are very likely to fail.

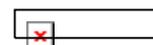
8. In work-based learning, most of the trainees are aged 16 to 18 and are undertaking modern apprenticeships in a range of curriculum areas including business administration, customer service, hairdressing and childcare. Although many have achieved National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ), very few have completed their apprenticeship framework, mainly because of a failure to complete key skills. Improvements in assessment practice and changes in the arrangements for teaching key skills at the start of the academic year mean that most trainees are now making good progress with their learning plan.

9. Retention rates of students aged 16 to 18 at the college have improved markedly over the three years to 2000/01 and they have exceeded the national average for the last two of these years in all levels.

Adult learners

10. The number of adults on courses is small by comparison to students aged 16 to 18. In 2001/02, there was only one adult for every ten students aged 16 to 18 enrolled on courses from levels 1 to 3. Pass rates for adults on GCE A level and other level 3 courses were in line with the national average in 2000/01. In the same year, at level 2, pass rates were above the national average and the pass rate in GCSE subjects was significantly above. However, on level 1 courses, pass rates have been below the national average in each of the three years to 2000/01. There has been a steadily improving trend in the retention rate of adult students over the three years to 2000/01, and national averages are clearly exceeded.

Quality of education and training



11. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 154 sessions. They judged that 95% of the teaching was at least satisfactory, and in 71% it was good or better. However, only 3% of teaching (four lessons) was judged outstanding. In 5% of lessons the quality of teaching was unsatisfactory. Four curriculum areas had no unsatisfactory teaching. The highest proportion of good or better teaching was seen in English, languages and communications and in humanities. No curriculum area had less than 50% of teaching judged good or better.

12. Most lessons are well planned with good schemes of work that take account of the needs and interests of students. There is much good, interesting and purposeful teaching by staff who have expert subject knowledge. Full-time and part-time staff in both mainstream and work-based areas are well qualified. Most have a teaching qualification and many years' professional experience in teaching their specialist subject.

13. The majority of lessons are well structured and delivered with confidence. Teachers often use a variety of teaching styles and methods to ensure students' interest and motivate them to learn. For example, in English, teachers are aware of individual student needs and tailor their approach accordingly. Teaching is of the highest standard and effectively and progressively develops students' knowledge, vocabulary, and the understanding of concepts and skills. Because of this good quality teaching, students are well motivated and develop good independent learning skills. In other lessons, teachers very ably integrated different activities. In modern foreign languages, the teaching and learning of grammar are effectively integrated with other aspects of the course and students have developed a systematic approach to the learning of vocabulary, recording new items immediately without prompting from the teacher. In science, practical work is used extensively in all teaching to support learning.

14. Not all teaching is effective, however. In a number of curriculum areas, teachers used a very limited variety of teaching methods and there was an over-reliance on whole class teaching, where the teacher talked for long periods of time and students gradually lost interest. In such lessons, teachers were too ready to accept one word or short answers from students and did not seek explanations or question the reason for their response. In a significant number of lessons, there was insufficient use of IT to support teaching and learning including, in a minority of lessons, poorly produced handwritten worksheets and handouts. A college-wide staff development programme is in place to increase the use of IT in lessons, although the beneficial impact of this work is not evident in all areas of the curriculum, especially science and mathematics.

15. In many lessons, there was effective linking of teaching to assessment at the end of the course and examination requirements. Through questioning in class, and well-planned and marked assignments, students were very clear about what they needed to do to succeed. In performing arts, for example, the assignment briefs all carried the grade requirements for pass, merit and distinction grades. These were fully understood by students who were encouraged to improve their own learning objectives. Conversely, in other curriculum areas, the quality of written feedback was inconsistent. There were a few examples of very good, in-depth, constructive commentary given to students whilst at other times, comments were too brief and gave insufficient guidance to what

needed to be done to reach expected standards.

16. In most lessons, learning is regularly checked. In the best, teachers take account of the different levels of attainment of their students and prepare different tasks to match the range of ability and potential. Teachers take care to ensure that the students learn logically and challenge them to explain concepts using correct terminology. In a minority of lessons, however, opportunities for teachers to reinforce learning were not taken. For example, in a humanities session, the pace was dictated by the need of the teacher to complete the lesson plan. Here, not enough emphasis was placed on questioning techniques that tested and probed the student more deeply and little time was given to allow students to digest new knowledge or practice new skills.

17. Overall, the quality of accommodation and facilities is good. In many areas of learning, accommodation is fit for purpose. Space utilisation is well above sector norms and is improving year on year. Since the last inspection, the maintenance budget has increased by 30%. There is a planned programme of redecoration to upgrade teaching areas. However, there are continuing difficulties with the flexibility of accommodation and heating and ventilation problems on the Rotherfield site. Inspectors also noted overcrowded classrooms in some curriculum areas that had a negative impact on teaching and learning. The quality of refectories and toilet areas is satisfactory; however, students remain unhappy with the lack of sufficient indoor communal space.

18. Resources to support teaching and learning are good. Since the last inspection, further investment has been made in IT provision across the college and in specialist areas. There is a ratio of one computer to every five full-time students and, in some areas, one computer to every two staff. A robust network provides secure access to modern applications and development software. The library and learning resources facilities are well equipped and well managed and compare favourably with those of sector norms. These are well used by students for purposeful work.

19. The college has a clear policy on assessment. Procedures are in place that set out the roles and responsibilities of staff for ensuring that students are fairly assessed. In most curriculum areas, assignments are well designed to meet the requirements of respective courses. In some areas, the quality of teachers' marking of students' work is high. For example, in humanities, ICT, mathematics and science, teachers set work frequently and mark it promptly. Detailed summary comments are provided with helpful suggestions for improvement. However, this good assessment practice is not found in all areas. In the Health and Social Care early years course and in visual and performing arts and media, business and foundation studies courses, written feedback to students lacks sufficient detail to help students to improve their work.

20. The progress being made by students is regularly monitored and recorded. Parents of those aged 16 to 18 are kept well informed and are also made aware of issues that may impede progress such as poor attendance. The college has recognised the need for a more systematic approach to monitoring progress and setting students achievement targets. Minimum target grades are set on the basis of prior attainment such as GCSE results. Other targets, for example, ones related to what is to be studied in the immediate future, are often too broad to provide realistic and measurable short-term goals. The extent to which students have been able to meet with teachers on a one-to-one basis to agree individual targets has varied from one curriculum area to another. In September 2002, the college introduced individual learning plans for every full-time student and staff have been allocated time to meet with students on an individual basis. It is too early to judge the effectiveness of these new arrangements.

21. Internal verification and procedures for standardising marking are at least satisfactory in most areas. In visual and performing arts and media, however, internal verification is weak. There is no evidence to show that work across the respective areas is graded evenly and fairly through rigorous checking. Assessment practice in work-based learning has improved significantly in the past year. For example, in hairdressing, schemes of work clearly and regularly identify opportunities for assessment, and care is taken to ensure that there is always a distinction between training and assessment.

22. Good links have been established with the four partner schools in the area to exchange data on students' performance and learning needs and the college is represented on the governing body of

each school. An area board, on which all partners are represented, meets regularly to discuss issues and plan strategically. Two teachers from partner schools teach part-time at the college. Around 90 pupils from partner schools are currently studying applied GCSE in business, engineering and health and social care at the college.

23. The college offers students a wide range of enrichment activities. Levels of participation are high. In addition to sports, cultural and social activities, students are able to achieve accreditation in first aid, community sports leaders award and a number of sports coaching qualifications. The enrichment programme is responsive to student demand through requests made by tutors and the Students' Union Executive. Courses in driving test theory and self-defence have been provided at students' requests. Students and staff have a number of opportunities to visit France, Germany and Spain on exchange programmes.

24. The timetable allows students a wide choice of studies and the opportunity to combine GCE A level and vocational qualifications. There is a well-established and well-managed International Baccalaureate programme, enrolment for which has remained steady at approximately 50 students in each year of the two-year course. The college holds a dedicated open evening in March for parents and students, where the features and requirements of the course are explained. Every student studies six subjects, three at higher and three at standard level chosen from six groups which cover science, humanities, mathematics, first language and world literature, art and a foreign language. A particular feature of the programme is that all students are required to study 'Theory of Knowledge' which is designed to encourage critical reflection and develop independent thinking skills. 'Creativity, Action and Service' is a fundamental part of the diploma curriculum and students have taken part in a diverse range of activities through the college enrichment programme including mounting a production of 'Lysistrata', representing their country at the Great Britain skiing championships and organising a Jubilee party.

25. Level 2 vocational programmes account for only 10% of provision and in some areas, such as health and social care, recruitment is low. At foundation level, provision is very limited. The curriculum in this area is narrow and has not been developed in response to students' interests or future needs.

26. The college lacks adequate links with industry and local employers. Vocational students have two weeks' work experience, but there is no such arrangement for GCE AS and A-level students. Whilst strategic planning takes account of local and regional labour markets, there is no formalised forum for involving employers first hand at either college or faculty level in order to respond to local needs. There are few instances of employers contributing to programme design or the assessment of students' work on vocational programmes.

27. Key skills provision is unsatisfactory. In recognition of this weakness, at the start of the academic year, the college has provided clear guidelines as to when and how the skills should be taught; introduced staff development courses for subject specialists and created a dedicated key skills team. Level 2 and level 3 students are required only to study applied ICT key skills starting at level 2 and progressing to level 3. Where appropriate, students are fast tracked to level 3.

28. Most students receive good guidance from the college before and during their studies. There is a comprehensive programme of visits to local schools and well-attended open days at the college. Specialist advisors, including Connexions staff, are on hand at initial interviews and at enrolment. All students following full-time programmes receive a comprehensive induction at the start of their programme. This provides adequate preparation for their time at the college.

29. For full-time students, there is well-organised support. Each student has a personal tutor who leads a weekly group tutorial session that covers pastoral and academic activities effectively. These sessions follow a carefully documented college-wide programme that is used by all tutors on level 3 programmes. Tutors are an effective central reference point for the college's comprehensive system of absence reporting and follow up. Staff receive helpful training to prepare them to carry out their tutorial role. However, there are considerable variations in the quality of tutor support within some level 3 programmes. There are also inconsistencies for the support of students on level 2 programmes. The college has a tutorial programme for this level, but tutors deviate significantly from

the standard schemes in order to offer students effective support. There is much good practice in this area, only shared informally between staff.

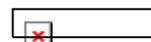
30. Students receive good support to help them cope with personal problems. Tutors respond quickly and sympathetically to such needs, and readily offer one-to-one support. Students can visit one of the college's trained counselling staff by appointment or at regular 'drop-in' sessions. College counsellors refer students to specialist external agencies including the local Connexions service.

31. The college has a strong commitment to meeting individual learning needs. Procedures are in place at the student's initial interview, at enrolment and during induction to identify any additional needs. These include testing of students' levels of literacy and numeracy. Support programmes are carefully planned and detailed records kept. Students receive good additional support for needs such as dyslexia, numeracy or literacy. Support tutors work alongside subject teachers in some lessons. Other support is on an individual basis in addition to subject timetables. The college organises a wide range of extra classes to help those with difficulties in specific subject areas, or to further improve already well-developed skills.

32. Guidance and help with university entry are an important part of the level 3 tutorial programme. Tutors on vocational courses offer help on progression and on direct entry into employment. There is insufficient guidance for students studying for GCE A levels and the International Baccalaureate to enter directly into employment. Although the local Connexions service offers such advice, few tutors refer students to this service. High quality careers guidance computer software in the college library is not working. College data show almost one in five students enter employment on leaving college, but there is little detailed analysis of these statistics to assist managers in planning effective guidance.

33. Students studying part time at the college receive little formal support. Tutorial support for such students is the responsibility of the subject teacher. There is no specific time allotted to tutorial support in the students' programmes. While tutors often respond diligently to need outside class time, many of these are part-time teachers and receive no training for this role. There is no structured induction for part-time students.

Leadership and management



34. Leadership and management are good. There has been significant progress on most issues raised in the last inspection in 2000. A new principal started at the college in September 2001. There is a clear sense of direction in the college. The strategic focus is primarily towards full-time students aged 16 to 19, with added emphasis on modern apprenticeship provision. Compared to the standard at the time of the last inspection in October 2000, the overall quality of teaching has improved. The proportion of lessons observed by inspectors in which teaching is good or better has increased significantly, from 62% to 71%. There was also less unsatisfactory teaching (5% compared with 9%). Roles and responsibilities of senior management are clear. Senior managers work with a sense of purpose. Communications in the college are good, with weekly bulletins to both staff and students, and effective e-mail usage. Staff are consulted and involved in discussions on the strategic direction of the college. There is an open style of management, with managers responsive to staff and willing to give their time.

35. Enthusiastic, committed subject leaders and course co-ordinators set a clear direction for their teams. Most courses are well planned to meet personal and external requirements. Regular scheduled team meetings take place in most curriculum areas. Improved systems have been introduced in work-based training through the Henley Training Company, and trainees now make good progress. However, there is insufficient sharing of good practice between related subject teams. There is little collaboration neither between teams teaching science subjects, nor between those for modern foreign languages, despite being in the same faculty. In contrast, staff in ICT and

mathematics constructively share materials and approaches to teaching. On occasions, the respective roles of additional support staff and subject teachers are not defined, for example in foundation studies.

36. A comprehensive calendar sets out a cycle of actions for the implementation of quality assurance systems. The self-assessment report for 2000/01 is clearly structured. It contains most, though not all, strengths and weaknesses identified by the 2000 inspection. In most cases, development plans are linked with college strategic objectives. However, the self-assessment did not identify overall key strengths and areas for development for the college as a whole. The review of teaching and learning lacked detail in faculty self-assessment reports. There is insufficient review of performance against targets. Some curriculum area development plans failed to tackle identified weaknesses. In other cases, such plans sought to eradicate weaknesses not previously cited. Despite the introduction of the quality assurance calendar in the 2000/01 academic year, the monitoring and review of progress against targets and action plans is inconsistent across curriculum areas. Such work is good in humanities, business and English. It is less effective in health and social care, foundation studies, mathematics, science, and ICT. In many cases, review updates in February and July 2002 were cursory. Few reviews contained statistical evidence to back up claims for improvement on retention rates and attendance levels. Curriculum area reviews had minimal reference to equal opportunities issues.

37. The internal teacher observation system in 2002 exaggerated the quality of teaching compared to lessons seen in the inspection. Although particular staff have been appointed to promote and encourage wider use and training has been provided, there has been limited advance in the use of ICT for teaching and learning since the last inspection. Good progress has been made in visual and performing arts and media, but there is relatively little use of ICT in science and mathematics. The use of ICT is not sufficiently identified in humanities' schemes of work nor is its potential fully exploited in modern foreign languages.

38. The induction process for new staff is good. Mentors are allocated to all new staff. Appraisal is conducted biannually for all staff, with training needs being linked to staff development. In the interim year, staff can identify development needs. The college has maintained Investors in People status.

39. The accuracy and timeliness of management information have been a weakness since the last inspection. Turnover of staff in 2001/02 hampered the continuity of developments in this area. During that year, little accurate data were available. The absence of accurate data handicapped self-assessment judgements and inhibited course teams in monitoring progress against targets and plans. The appointment of new staff and improved ICT is beginning to have a positive impact.

40. Longer term strategic planning has improved since the last inspection. Objectives are specific and clear. Planning is based on national and local priorities, and considers local and regional labour markets and demographic analysis. Views of feeder schools, parents, students, staff and governors are considered in formulating the strategic direction of the college. Standards and provision of similar colleges are scrutinised, and opportunities for collaborative ventures are considered. Targets for retention rates, pass rates, attendance and performance against prior achievement are demanding, but most are realistic. Equal opportunities issues were not considered in the 2001 to 2004 plan, but are included in the revised plan for 2002 to 2005. Operational objectives and plans support the strategic plan. The college management committee and the corporation monitor progress.

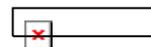
41. Governors are well informed about the standards achieved by the college through their regular meetings, visits and scrutiny of available data. They have a good oversight of the strategic direction and performance of the college. They bring relevant experience from a range of business and community backgrounds. The college sends timely reports to the finance committee, and there is a more critical oversight of plans for financial improvement than at the time of the last inspection. The principles of best value are now applied when considering provision of resources or services. After a period of operating deficits and forecasts of further deficits, the college is matching expenditure to outcome. A small operating surplus was achieved in 2001/02, subject to audit. Measures have been taken to reduce staffing costs. Systems of financial reporting are sound, though insufficient use is made of financial performance indicators. The curriculum and strategy committee effectively reviews academic performance and quality issues. Corporation meetings are well attended. Minutes of

meetings are thorough, though a cycle of regular business agenda items has not been constructed for all committees. A governor is linked to each faculty, and participates in performance monitoring reviews with the faculty head. There is a link governor for equal opportunities, and the corporation plans to monitor such issues more closely to meet the requirements of recent legislation.

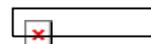
42. The college has a well-established focus on equality and diversity. There is good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. An equality committee monitors enrolments and staff recruitment by gender and ethnicity, and reports findings to the Academic Board and the college management committee. The college has devised race equality policies for staff and students. However, it did not consult with students, staff and parents in drafting these policies. Although the college plans to monitor retention and achievement of learners from minority ethnic groups, it does not have a cohesive implementation plan for the policies nor details of the monitoring arrangements.

43. The college has engaged consultants to review its cost structure compared with similar colleges. Salary costs were high in 2000/01, but steps were taken to reduce these as a percentage of college income for 2001/02. A course-costing model has been used as a monitoring and planning tool. The college provides satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- well above average pass rates in most science subjects
- good and enthusiastic teaching
- good integration of practical science into teaching
- well-equipped science facilities.

Weaknesses

- limited use of IT in biology and chemistry teaching

- insufficient sharing of good practice across science subjects.

Scope of provision

44. The college has a good range of GCE AS and A-level courses in biology, human biology, chemistry, environmental science and physics. These represent just over 300 enrolments, with 116 of the students on the second-year GCE A-level course. In addition, biology and chemistry are available at both standard and higher level in the International Baccalaureate; out of 108 International Baccalaureate students, 25 are following higher level science courses. The national diploma applied science (sports studies) course has 59 students. Currently, there are neither level 2 courses in science, nor vocational science courses. All enrolled students are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

45. Pass rates on most courses are above average. For example, GCE AS results for 2001 were well above national averages in every science subject. Retention rates were near to or above national averages. In 2002, the pass rate was above 80% for every GCE AS and A-level science, except for GCE AS human biology (77%), with particularly high pass rates in GCE A-level chemistry, human biology and physics. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C in GCE A-level in the three years to 2001 show consistently well above average achievement in both chemistry and physics. The proportion of higher grade passes in biology were near to national averages, but very few students achieved a higher grade pass in human biology. Data available for 2001 suggest that most students taking GCE AS do as well as would be expected from their prior attainment. In human biology, overall, students do less well than expected. Pass rates for the national diploma in sports studies have been well above average in the years 2000 to 2002. However, with all 33 students achieving a pass in 2000, the pass rate dropped to 75% in 2002. In International Baccalaureate science, every student, at both levels, has achieved a pass over the last three years (2000 to 2002), with average grades in both biology and chemistry in line with or above worldwide averages.

46. Levels of attendance and punctuality are above average. Students have mature attitudes to their work and it is evident that many enjoy their study of science. In sports studies, students are eager to apply their practical experience of a particular sport to their scientific study. Rates of progression to HE are high. Almost all written work is at a good standard, with clear presentation of practical science results. When preparing assessed practical exercises, or sports studies assignments, students frequently make good use of IT.

A sample of retention and pass rates in science, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	*	59	52
		% retention	*	93	90
		% pass rate	*	82	87
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	*	52	59
		% retention	*	94	86
		% pass rate	*	90	82
GCE AS physics	3	No. of starts	*	59	53
		% retention	*	86	87

		% pass rate	*	88	85
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	41	29	47
		% retention	78	69	94**
		% pass rate	86	90	86
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	43	33	38
		% retention	77	67	92**
		% pass rate	85	95	97
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	54	47	44
		% retention	80	81	89**
		% pass rate	90	73	97

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

*course did not run

**retention for 2001/02 is over one year

Quality of education and training

47. All teaching of science is satisfactory or better. Three quarters of the teaching is good, with some very good lessons. Teachers are competent in and enthusiastic about their subjects and in the best lessons they plan well to support the ability range and meet the needs of individual students. Physics and sports studies teachers make good use of ICT to support learning; for example, through use of CD-ROMs that illustrate topics such as projectiles; for presentation and analysis of experimental data; or with projected presentations using both text and pictures of student sporting activity to summarise conclusions from practical tasks. Teachers have good knowledge of examination requirements. This, and much integration of practical work into all teaching, ensure that students are interested in and committed to their studies, and know what to do to improve. Students value the physics reading list: the wide range of recommended books provides guidance for reading, both about subjects required for examinations and more recent discoveries in physics. A few handouts are poorly produced, sometimes handwritten, and in biology and chemistry lessons there is insufficient use of ICT or, on occasions, its introduction does not enhance the learning process. Nevertheless, students are encouraged to use the Internet for research in biology and environmental science, and teachers suggest useful websites. Where lessons are less well planned, teachers still provide good coverage of examination requirements, but pay insufficient attention to the need to provide tasks of varying demand to match the range of student abilities.

48. Students are well supported by a regular programme of homework and assignments. The format and nature of feedback vary across the sciences, but teachers mark work carefully and provide students with guidance about how to improve. Overall and individual target grades are set for each subject, and progress of students is monitored regularly. Teachers have made little use of available data to analyse reasons for underachievement or to guide course development.

49. Students have a wide choice of science subjects and courses at level 3. Additional workshops in science subjects introduced this academic year have enhanced provision and are appreciated by students. There is good guidance for students who wish to study science in HE. Work experience ceased to be offered to students taking GCE A level from 2001/02 and there are few industrial links.

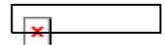
50. Science teachers are well qualified and experienced. They have had recent opportunities for both subject-specific and ICT training, although the beneficial impact of the latter is not evident in biology and chemistry. Laboratories are effectively serviced by technical staff. The range and quality of equipment is above average. Computers with network access are available in each laboratory and there is a high quality, modern computer suite for sports studies. There is appropriate textbook provision for all subjects. Apart from one small biology laboratory, which is too cramped for the

numbers of students taking the course, the science teaching area provides a good working environment.

Leadership and management

51. Individual science subjects are well led and managed, with clear direction and effective quality assurance systems. The overall faculty self-assessment report has identified several important key issues for science, but this summary report has only a limited focus on science as a curriculum area. There is a good range of science courses to meet the needs of level 3 students. The BTEC national diploma sports studies course responds well to local sporting interests and provides a non GCE A-level science qualification. Most, though not all, lesson plans include strategies to support the range of abilities. There are significant differences in the use of ICT to effectively support teaching and learning across science subjects and insufficient opportunities to share the good practice that exists. Responsibilities for management of equipment and recording of risk assessments are unclear.

Mathematics



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- above average pass rates for most GCE AS and A-level courses
- above average pass rates for mathematics in the International Baccalaureate
- good and improving retention rates on most courses
- highly valued mathematics workshops
- very thorough assessment and monitoring of students' work.

Weaknesses

- very low pass rates for daytime GCSE mathematics
- falling pass rate in GCE A-level statistics

- lack of variation in teaching methods
- poor accommodation
- insufficient use of ICT in lessons.

Scope of provision

52. The college provides a good range of full-time GCE AS and A-level mathematics courses for school-leavers. Students combine modules in mathematics, pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics to give them a variety of GCE AS or A-level awards, including double mathematics GCE A level. There are currently about 190 enrolments on these courses. All International Baccalaureate students study mathematics at standard level. Students who come to the college without GCSE mathematics at a minimum of grade C take this at intermediate level or, alternatively, they may study level 2 application of number. In 2001/02, 123 students took GCSE mathematics. For adult students, there is a part-time evening GCSE course.

Achievement and standards

53. Pass rates on most courses are good. Students taking GCE A-level further mathematics, GCE A-level mechanics and the two GCE AS mathematics courses have achieved pass rates, at or above the national average. Above average numbers of students achieve passes at higher grades in GCE AS further mathematics, and the two GCE A-level mathematics options. Pass rates of students taking GCE A-level statistics have declined in the last three years from an outstanding 100% in 2000 to below the national average in 2002. All of the students undertaking the International Baccalaureate programme in 2002 passed for the third time in the last five years (1998 to 2002). Large numbers of students are enrolled on the daytime GCSE course. Pass rates on this course are very low and falling. For example, of 123 full-time students who started a GCSE mathematics course in 2001/02, only 5 achieved a grade C or above. The pass rate for the small number of part-time evening students on GCSE mathematics is good and rising from 56% in 2000 to 80% in 2002.

54. Punctuality and attendance are good. Retention rates are good and increasing on most courses. GCE A-level coursework is of a high standard. Several students have been awarded full marks for their externally moderated work. They use graphical calculators with confidence. Project work on the International Baccalaureate was not always well presented. The majority of GCE A-level students progress to HE courses.

A sample of retention and pass rates in mathematics, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE daytime (one year)	2	No. of starts	140	101	123
		% retention	69	89	85
		% pass rate	22	16	5
GCE A-level	3	No. of starts	26	46	20

mathematics (mechanics)		% retention	62	30*	100
		% pass rate	94	86	95
GCE A-level mathematics (statistics)	3	No. of starts	54	23	15
		% retention	80	74	100
		% pass rate	100	88	87
GCE AS mathematics (mechanics)	3	No. of starts	***	42	38
		% retention**	***	*	92
		% pass rate	***	*	80
GCE AS mathematics (statistics)	3	No. of starts	***	47	44
		% retention**	***	96	91
		% pass rate	***	76	85
GCE A-level further mathematics	3	No. of starts	11	12	10
		% retention	82	75	90
		% pass rate	100	88	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* unreliable data

** only in-year retention

*** course did not run

Quality of education and training

55. The majority of teaching of mathematics is at least satisfactory. Just over half of the teaching is good, with some very good lessons. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and all are well qualified with mathematics degrees and teaching qualifications. Teachers' assessment of homework and coursework is carried out very well. Students' work is assessed accurately and they receive prompt, detailed and useful feedback on their work, both orally and in written form. However, there is a lack of variation in teaching methods. Most lessons involved direct talking from the teacher, followed by individual practice. There is little discussion of methods or ideas used to solve mathematical problems. Students have too few opportunities to demonstrate and develop their skills, understanding or achievement in these lessons. Students work conscientiously, but rarely have the opportunity to work collaboratively.

56. Many course materials are out of date and teachers rarely devise these to meet the particular needs of the students. In one worksheet example, the call-out charge for an electrician to visit a house was stated to be an unrealistic £5. There are no mathematics materials on the college intranet to support students' learning. The use of ICT in lessons is limited to the use of graphical calculators.

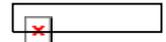
57. There is good internal scrutiny of the marking of coursework to ensure that it meets examination requirements. Students appreciate the careful monitoring of their individual progress. Homework exercises prepare students well for examinations. Those on GCE AS and A-level courses can easily measure their progress against examination requirements through regular practice of examination questions. Progress reviews every term emphasise achievement grades, but do not identify the action points for improvement. No mathematics-specific initial assessment takes place to determine students' knowledge on entry to the college. This means that teachers do not adapt work to meet the ability of the high achievers or those who are having difficulty. Specialist mathematics workshops, which help to meet the individual learning needs of students, are highly valued by both staff and students. Parents are regularly informed of students' progress.

58. Two of the four teaching rooms are too small for the size of the groups being taught. These make it difficult for teachers to organise group work or move around the room to help individual students. Students who were unable to make progress with the task often had to wait some time for teacher assistance. Inadequate ventilation produces a stifling atmosphere in all rooms. In addition, the sound of the neighbouring class travels through the partition between two of the rooms causing unneeded disruption.

Leadership and management

59. The curriculum area is satisfactorily managed, but there is a lack of clear direction on improving students' learning or raising standards of work. Curriculum management roles are clearly defined and all members of staff have opportunities to contribute to decision making. Staff work well together, communication is good and there are regular team meetings, but little discussion of teaching and learning strategies. All courses have schemes of work, although they lack sufficient detail on teaching methodology such as what does or doesn't work well. They do not adequately describe how they meet the needs of students of different abilities. The internal faculty course review process identified the lack of variety in teaching methods and stimulation by teachers. However, no action was taken to redress this issue. In the self-assessment, whilst student achievements are rigorously analysed, together with attendance and retention rate data, targets are rarely set for these. The teaching observation scheme recognises strengths effectively, but is poor in identifying weaknesses.

Business studies



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- very good pass rates on GCE AS and A-level business studies and GCE AS economics
- much good teaching
- thorough and comprehensive course review and planning
- good quality individual work-based portfolios.

Weaknesses

- poor attendance and punctuality

- insufficient links with industry
- poor retention and pass rates on work-based learning.

Scope of provision

60. The college provides full-time GNVQ intermediate, AVCE, GCE AS and A-level courses for students aged 16 to 18 in business, economics and accounting. There are about 140 students currently on these programmes. There are no part-time day or evening classes. The Henley Training Company offers work-based learning programmes. There are 17 advanced and 4 foundation modern apprentices in customer service and 8 advanced and 5 foundation modern apprentices in administration. All are employed by organisations in the surrounding areas. All training and assessment currently take place in the workplace.

61. The courses offered provide a general business programme including economics and accounting. The flexible timetable enables a wide range of subject and course combinations, including sports activities, which students appreciate. Specialist professional programmes and secretarial courses have been run in previous years but no longer attract sufficient students. There is no part-time day or evening provision.

Achievement and standards

62. Students' achievements are very good on GCE AS and A-level business studies and GCE AS economics considering their standards on entry. Pass rates on GNVQ intermediate business and AVCE business fell below national averages in 2002 and are unsatisfactory, having been good in the previous two years. Retention rates on all courses are satisfactory and on GCE AS economics it is very good. Many students progress to HE. Most students have good quality and well-organised portfolios that provide evidence of competence, knowledge and understanding matching course requirements. Students are able to work independently as well as in groups. There was poor attendance in 8 of 11 sessions observed and instances where late arrivals went unchallenged in most classes. Retention and pass rates on modern apprenticeships have been poor. Since 1999/2000, only 6 have achieved the full framework out of 91 students. Only one of these was within the scheduled completion time; 35 are still on the programme; and 37 have achieved the NVQ only. However, significant improvements in the rate of progress were evident in portfolios seen during the inspection. Most apprentices are now on target to achieve the full framework within the timescale.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business studies, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	22	18	22
		% retention	64	72	77
		% pass rate	100	77	53
AVCE business	3	No. of starts	78	63	68
		% retention	74	73	76
		% pass rate	88	93	69

GCE AS economics	3	No. of starts	*	*	34
		% retention	*	*	97
		% pass rate	*	*	94
GCE AS business studies	3	No. of starts	*	114	87
		% retention	*	88	87
		% pass rate	*	89	92
GCE AS accounting	3	No. of starts	*	21	20
		% retention	*	86	75
		% pass rate	*	72	60
GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	*	*	62
		% retention	*	*	100
		% pass rate	*	*	95

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

63. Teaching is good in 9 out of 12 lessons observed. In the remainder, it is satisfactory. Lesson plans are detailed with clearly stated aims. In most lessons these are achieved. A variety of teaching methods are used which actively involves most students in learning. There is a mixture of group and individual work, with reference to students' own work experience and real business issues, although these are not always fully utilised. On occasions individual students do not participate and are not drawn into group work or discussions. Most teachers use questioning techniques well, but occasionally questions are too general and elicit limited response. Schemes of work are thorough and meet course and examination requirements. Teachers monitor students' assignments carefully, but the effectiveness of written feedback is inconsistent. Some is very detailed and provides students with clear constructive comment for improvement, but for others, comments are minimal with little helpful guidance, either on the standard achieved against that expected or how to reach it.

64. Teachers are well qualified both on mainstream courses and work-based learning. NVQ assessors have relevant industrial backgrounds and some mainstream teachers have undertaken training on the latest industrial practices. Computer resources are located in dedicated suites on site and used well by students, but there are no computers in classrooms. Students make good use of the library and there are adequate relevant reference materials. Some accommodation used for business classes is uninspiring with wall displays that are sometimes out of date. Some rooms are very overheated and large groups were allocated to rooms that were too small.

65. Teachers are approachable and provide advice and guidance to students with concerns and difficulties. Some students receive individual additional learning support from specialist staff. There were examples of good support for work-based students with difficulties such as serious illness, personal problems and for those who have had changes in employment. Students and apprentices receive comprehensive induction programmes. In work-based learning, initial advice and guidance are related to job roles and individual needs to identify the appropriate NVQ and level. Students with identified needs in relation to key skills are supported by a key skills specialist through relevant workbooks and coaching.

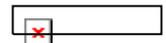
Leadership and management

66. The business courses provided in the college are well managed and operate effectively. Staff

appreciate the open style of management within the faculty and college. They feel consulted and kept informed of developments. Team meetings are held according to college schedules. The self-assessment process is thorough and identifies weaknesses and actions for improvement. Quality assurance at course team level is satisfactory. Most files are well maintained. Communication between sites is good and the interchange of internal e-mail is seen as important to the team.

67. Learning on work-based programmes is well managed. The self-assessment report was honest and self-critical and subsequent action planning has been vigorously implemented. Individual learning plans are up to date and carefully monitored. Achievements are recorded and students and employers know how they are progressing. Assessors have good industrial experience and use this to coach and advise students. Assessors visit students in their placements at least monthly and respond flexibly to workplace pressures. Students appreciate being able to contact assessors by e-mail and mobile telephone. Each student receives a relevant textbook for reference. From the start of this term, key skills are being assessed along with those for NVQ. Reviews are carried out every three months and mostly involve workplace supervisors. However, reviews do not always reinforce equal opportunities and some students' understanding of these issues is superficial. There is clear action planning by assessors on each visit, but reviews are not used to provide specific quarterly targets. Currently, there is no off-the-job training, but this is due to start shortly. Most students have on-the-job coaching by supervisors and assessors.

Information and communication technology



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- good teaching on GNVQ intermediate and GCE A-level courses
- above average pass and retention rates on most courses
- good practical ICT skills achieved by most students
- good quality computing resources
- thorough assessment of students' work.

Weaknesses

- mathematical achievement unsatisfactory on national diploma IT

- falling pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate IT course.

Scope of provision

68. There is a good range of level 3 computing and IT courses. The level 3 provision includes GCE AS and A-level courses in computing and in ICT, the national diploma in IT, and the AVCE ICT. There is also a GNVQ intermediate IT and the European computer driving licence (ECDL). In all, there are about 520 enrolments on these courses. Opportunities for adults wishing to study part-time ICT courses on the college's main sites are limited. The college has, however, established an IT centre in nearby Marlow. No IT courses at foundation level are currently running.

Achievement and standards

69. The pass and retention rates of students on computing and ICT courses are above average. In 2002, the pass rates for GCE A-level computing and for AVCE ICT were well above the national averages. The pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate are above the national average, but have fallen over the last three years. The retention rates for the ECDL have been very high for the last four years. Retention rates for the AVCE ICT course and for the national diploma in IT are high.

70. Students work diligently in class and quickly develop advanced skills in the use of computer applications. ICT students have a good working knowledge of the Internet and use it frequently as a research tool in their studies. Portfolios of work are well organised and most are of a high standard, although some contain examples of the poor use of English. The grasp of binary work is unsatisfactory on the year two national diploma IT course and many in the year group are struggling with programming machine code.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communication technology, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
ECDL short course	2	No. of starts	76	29	16
		% retention	97	97	100
		% pass rate	41	55	69
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	24	24	22
		% retention	78	71	82
		% pass rate	89	88	72
GNVQ advanced/AVCE ICT	3	No. of starts	***	15	38
		% retention	***	87	87
		% pass rate	***	85	79
National diploma in IT	3	No. of starts	27	46	46
		% retention	80	82	85
		% pass rate	72	84	87
GCE AS IT	3	No. of starts	***	94	78

		% retention	***	78	82
		% pass rate	***	89	**
GCE A-level/A2 computing	3	No. of starts	59	61	21
		% retention	71	55	100*
		% pass rate	50	63	95

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* this represents retention for A2 which is a one-year course

** unreliable data

*** course did not run

Quality of education and training

71. Most teaching is good and features a variety of learning strategies. Lessons are well planned with detailed schemes of work. Students are well motivated and often show a high level of enthusiasm for the work. Teachers provide good individual support and students learn quickly through a series of well planned, short activities. ICT resources are often used effectively to teach IT and computing. Students have good quality worksheets and other teaching resources placed on the college intranet. Interactive whiteboards and multimedia projectors are used effectively. In one lesson, research was undertaken on computer crime. A report was created using desktop publishing software and then e-mailed to the tutor for marking. In another lesson, students creatively manipulated images that had been captured using digital cameras and created animations and sound tracks. Various technologies were combined with ease and impressive results were created. In an enrichment class, advanced networking concepts were developed through the careful use of professional training resources that featured simulations and online course assessments.

72. In a few lessons, a number of students were inattentive. In undertaking research they merely copied from Internet sources without assimilating the information and developing a good understanding. Teachers did not challenge this lack of active participation or determine the students' quality of learning.

73. The tutorial system efficiently monitors the progress of students. Good guidance is available to support the progression for level 3 students wishing to go on to university. Detailed tutorial notes record interviews with students. Full-time students are assessed on entry for learning support needs and, if necessary, appropriate support is provided. Teachers mark students' work effectively and helpful written comments indicate how students could improve. Assignments used in vocational courses are well constructed with clear assessment criteria. Learning in GCE A-level classes is well supported by regular homework that is issued and marked promptly. Some teachers receive homework via e-mail, edit the document by using a different colour or font and then return via e-mail. This practice enables teachers to respond effectively and provide extensive comment. In this way, model answers to examination questions can easily be quickly inserted into the student document.

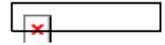
74. Teachers are well qualified and have considerable technical knowledge of the subject. They are able to keep up to date through opportunities for professional development. Teaching and learning are supported by good quality computing resources situated within spacious accommodation. A number of rooms have air conditioning. Well-managed network resources provide access to modern application software and professional programming and web development tools. In most lessons, the handouts and workbooks given to students are good.

Leadership and management

75. The computing and IT teams are well managed. The competent and dedicated staff teams meet regularly to deal with issues and share resources well. An inclusive and supportive management style prevails, within which staff views contribute to the decision making process. The self-assessment process is faculty based rather than based on the curriculum area. It is too broad in

scope and not sufficiently focused on ICT. It does not identify strengths and weaknesses nor action to be taken to raise achievement or support all students. Value added data, used to predict how well students might perform based on their previous GCSE results, are not used to set sufficiently demanding targets. An 'at risk' list, used to identify students with poor attendance and punctuality is not effective in changing the behaviour of some students.

Health and social care



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- good range of teaching methods used in public service
- pass rates on BTEC national diplomas in public service and health studies above national averages
- good retention rates on the BTEC first diploma in public service
- good progression to HE and professional training in all areas
- effective support for modern apprentices.

Weaknesses

- well below national average retention and pass rates on BTEC national diploma early years
- insufficiently thorough marking of students' work on BTEC national diploma early years
- no level 2 provision in early years
- very low completion and achievement on the modern apprentice programme.

Scope of provision

76. The college offers a small range of full-time courses in this area. There is no part-time provision. The core provision in health and social care is BTEC national diplomas in health studies and early years. There are no level 2 courses in early years and the first diploma in care has failed to recruit students for the academic years 2001/02 and 2002/03. For the public service sector, the college offers a BTEC first diploma and a national diploma. The Henley Training Company recruits students to modern apprenticeship training programmes to study at levels 2 or 3 for awards in childcare and education. Currently, there are no adults enrolled on full-time courses. Part-time first aid and lip-reading courses are available to all students. For 2001/02, there were around 140 enrolments on health and social care courses.

Achievement and standards

77. Retention and pass rates on most courses are satisfactory. In the BTEC first diploma in public service, retention rates are good; they have exceeded the national average by more than 10%. Pass rates on the BTEC national diploma in public service are above the national average. For example, 91% of the national diploma students received a full BTEC diploma in 2002. Retention and pass rates on the BTEC national diploma science (health studies) are above the national average for this course. Retention and pass rates on the national diploma in early years are falling and are well below the national average. For modern apprentices following NVQs in childcare and education, retention and pass rates have been very low for the last three years. There have been improved retention rates in 2001/02 and two trainees have achieved the full framework at level 3.

78. The observed standard of students' work in public service is high. Contributions made in lessons by many of the national diploma students are perceptive and thoughtful when identifying issues associated with world disasters. Second-year health studies students apply their knowledge of the workplace effectively to the research unit and demonstrate a good level of understanding of issues related to inequalities in health. The standard of written work in early years is at best satisfactory and students do not always succeed in completing the assessment tasks set by teachers. There is good progression to employment, HE and professional training for health studies, early years and public services. Standards of work on the modern apprentice training programme are satisfactory. Those apprentices who do complete the framework provide relevant information in carefully cross-referenced portfolios of evidence.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
BTEC national diploma public services	2	No. of starts	*	26	16
		% retention	*	84	69
		% pass rate	*	85	91
BTEC first diploma in public services	2	No. of starts	12	17	16
		% retention	83	88	88
		% pass rate	70	80	79
BTEC national diploma early years	3	No. of starts	14	18	26
		% retention	100	78	65
		% pass rate	71	71	65
BTEC national diploma	3	No. of starts	24	16	12

science (health studies)	% retention	75	75	75
	% pass rate	88	67	89

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

79. Schemes of work in health studies, public services and early years are well written and describe what students need to do to succeed. Teachers prepare good lesson plans and most identify objectives for learning. In the most effective lessons in public service, teachers use a variety of teaching methods that successfully engage students in learning activities and link theory to practice. Students approach classroom-based work enthusiastically. Teachers ensure that theoretical work relates directly to course requirements tested in the outdoor environment. For example, national diploma students studied maps and contour lines to plot a hiking route as part of an outward bound activity. Students demonstrated good skills when using CD-ROMs to assist them in searching for relevant information about international historical influences on world events.

80. Teaching in early years is satisfactory. First-year students are keen to learn and when teaching is good, teachers prepare imaginative activities to illustrate why children behave in particular ways. In a few lessons, teaching does not challenge students to work beyond the basic level. Students become uninterested and easily distracted. In a minority of lessons, a small number of students were allowed to dominate the discussion. First-year and second-year students in early years are taught in one group for part of the week. In some of these lessons, teachers modified their language and provided separate work to differentiate between students' respective learning needs. In others insufficient account was taken of second-year students' previous learning: teachers failed to set more demanding tasks to encourage reflection and extension of their knowledge and understanding of the early years curriculum.

81. Work-based apprentices working in small groups are supported effectively by teachers. Many of these staff are recent appointments and have relevant qualifications and experience. Good individual target setting and review have had a favourable influence on the achievement of these students.

82. Assessment of students' work is well planned in all of the health and social work courses. Dates for the return of work are set well in advance and teachers expect students to keep to them. Teachers provide constructive and relevant written feedback to health studies and public service students. Assessment of early years assignments is less thorough and students do not receive enough information on their standard of work to that expected or about what they need to do to improve. On occasions, the scrutiny of internal verification becomes merely a repeat marking exercise and does not provide a judgement about the validity or reliability of the quality of assessment.

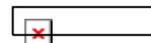
83. Tutorial support for students on all courses is good. Students get expert help when applying for HE degrees or professional training courses. Most teachers are well qualified and experienced. Opportunities to provide training for staff who do not have recent and relevant vocational experience are planned. There are sufficient resources to support public service, health studies and early years. Good opportunities exist for health studies students to be taught in science laboratories.

Leadership and management

84. Leadership and management of the faculty are satisfactory. Public service courses are led effectively by a co-ordinator who sets high standards for students and monitors progress effectively. A new course co-ordinator for health studies and early years started recently. An action plan to address issues of retention and pass rates in early years is now in place. During the last academic year, good progress has been made in setting individual targets for modern apprentices designed to help them complete the full framework qualification in childcare and education. The self-assessment report does not focus specifically enough on issues that have a significant impact on performance,

retention rates and learning. The teaching observation scheme has been successful in recognising strengths, but there has been little action to redress weaknesses in teaching. In most lessons, equality of opportunity is promoted well through the methods used to meet individual student needs.

Visual and performing arts and media



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- pass and retention rates on most courses are good and rising
- good progression to HE and employment
- standard of teaching in performing arts is consistently high
- students' work in drama and theatre studies is very good.

Weaknesses

- teaching time is not always used productively
- low expectations of students' punctuality
- written feedback does not promote improvement.

Scope of provision

85. The college offers a wide range of courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18 in art and design, media and performing arts. There is a very limited offer for part-time and adult students. For students in art and design, courses are available from level 2 GNVQ intermediate to AVCE art and design, or GCE AS/A-level courses in specialist areas such as photography, fine art and media up to the foundation diploma in art and design. The range of courses in performing arts includes BTEC first diploma, national diploma and GCE AS/A level in theatre studies, music and a recently introduced course in GCE AS/A-level music technology. For 2001/02, there were over 900 enrolments on visual

and performing arts and media courses.

86. There are some gaps in the range of courses and the flexibility of study patterns, for example, there are very few part-time courses available for adults. A full and varied programme of educational visits is well organised and offers good opportunities to broaden student learning. Art students this year will make visits to Kew gardens for observational drawing, the Tate Modern, and Italy.

Achievement and standards

87. Pass rates on all courses are good and rising. Pass rates on the diploma in foundation studies in art and design and GCE AS/A-level theatre studies have been 100% for the last three years (2000 to 2002). The pass rate for GNVQ intermediate art and design has risen from 75% in 2000 to 100% in 2002. The standard of work seen in performing arts and media is consistently high. At classroom level, value added data, used to predict how well students might perform based on their previous GCSE results, are not used effectively to improve students' performance.

88. There is good progression to HE and employment from many courses. Students on the foundation diploma in art and design gained degree places in institutions such as St Martin's in London. One performing arts student found employment on the 'Lord of the Dance' tour of the United States and others progressed to good quality advanced courses such as the LABAN School of Dance.

89.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts and media, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	19	12	9
		% retention	58	100	78
		% pass rate	64	75	100
GCE A-level communication/ media	3	No. of starts	75	101	51
		% retention	72	60	96
		% pass rate	94	98	94
National diploma in general art and design/AVCE	3	No. of starts	25	28	*11
		% retention	68	82	100
		% pass rate	94	100	91
National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	28	26	26
		% retention	100	85	100
		% pass rate	100	100	88
Diploma in foundation studies art and design	3	No. of starts	18	14	17
		% retention	94	93	94
		% pass rate	100	100	100
GCE A-level/AS theatre studies **	3	No. of starts	22	20	14
		% retention	64	70	93
		% pass rate	100	100	100

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* national diploma in general art and design replaced in 2000/01 by AVCE art and design

** figures relate to two-year GCE A-level syllabus

Quality of education and training

90. The quality of teaching is good overall and is consistently high in performing arts. In some of the best lessons observed, students were inspired by the staff to take an active and animated part in group discussions. Teaching on the national diploma in performing arts is very strong, having high expectations and places considerable demands on students that in turn encourages very good attendance rates. In one performing arts tutorial group, there was full attendance from the 27 students who were fully involved in the lesson on personal presentation. Conversely, in a number of other lessons in media and art and design, students who were late and caused disruption were not challenged by teachers to make greater efforts to arrive on time, nor asked for an explanation.

91. Staff use well planned schemes of work and good quality assignment briefs that direct students to the requirements needed to achieve higher grades. In performing arts lessons, the assignment briefs all carry the grade descriptions for pass, merit and distinction and submitted work is subsequently graded accordingly. These requirements are fully understood by students who are encouraged to evaluate their own learning. A few teachers do not ensure all students actively participate in the lesson and do not assess their level of understanding to determine whether the lesson objectives are met.

92. Staff are well qualified and are supported by equipment and accommodation which is mostly good. Students and staff appreciate the extensive library facilities. Many art and design staff regularly exhibit their own work throughout the college. They have up-to-date knowledge of the requirements and standards of a career in the industry. Many art and music staff have a higher degree in their subject area. Recent improvements and additions to design ICT and music technology equipment have helped considerably to improve students' ability to work to the set deadlines. Photography students make good use of industry-standard digital imaging software to give variety to their finished work. Students report that they have ready access to computer facilities on both college sites. A few art studios are too cramped for producing large practical work.

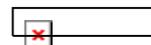
93. Written feedback on assignments gives insufficient detail to help students to improve their work. There is no evidence that internal verification takes place to ensure that marked work from respective areas is graded evenly and fairly. However, teachers informally share assessment decisions on the work of students taking different courses within the faculty. External verifier reports in art and design show that the quality of assessment meets examination board requirements.

94. Staff make themselves available for individual tutorials 'on demand', but the structured programme of individual tutorials is often focused primarily on 'at risk' students. Students commented favourably on staff advice and support from their teachers. Additional support needs are identified, articulated and met. Tutorials are stimulating and support students well. Staff on vocational courses in art and performing arts have extensive personal resources that support their tutorial lessons. However, there is little sharing of good practice in tutorials.

Leadership and management

95. Management of the curriculum area is good, providing clear information to staff on initiatives to improve learning. Communication is good between the faculty senior management and course leaders, but there is a lack of formal course meetings on a regular basis to plan effectively. Each subject area is organised into course teams under a co-ordinator and there is student representation at some meetings. The self-assessment report lacked detail in the evidence to support statements on quality of teaching and learning. Value added data are not used effectively to help students improve. In most lessons, equality of opportunity is promoted well through the methods used to meet the individual needs of students.

Humanities



Overall provision in this area is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- well above average retention and pass rates on GCE AS/A levels and on International Baccalaureate
- very good teaching
- detailed and effective assessment of students' work
- high standard of students' written work.

Weaknesses

- insufficient integration of ICT across the curriculum.

Scope of provision

96. A wide range of subjects is available to students in humanities at GCE AS/A level. Students can also study the International Baccalaureate and GCSE Latin is run as a lunchtime activity to support ancient history and classical civilisation. Classes are run during the day and there is very little evening provision with the exception of GCE AS/A-level psychology. Courses recruit well and numbers are increasing with over 800 enrolments in 2001/02. The International Baccalaureate is a well-established course that attracts an average 50 students each year.

Achievement and standards

97. Humanities students achieve well above average results in all subjects and in the International Baccalaureate. Retention rates are good on all courses. In 2002, GCE A-level history, government and politics and sociology achieved a 100% pass rate and excellent retention rates. GCE A-level geography, philosophy and psychology achieved pass rates of over 90%. There are a significant number of high grades in many subjects. Pass rates on most GCE AS courses are also over 85%. In history and psychology on the International Baccalaureate, students achieve above the worldwide average. Students often produce written work of a high standard, especially in coursework, essays and assignments. International Baccalaureate students frequently write impressive essays on diverse subjects such as contemporary French politics, American criminal history and father figures in Jane Austen novels. The best essays and coursework demonstrate a high level of literacy, wide

subject knowledge and extensive research. Students' oral skills are well developed and most take an active part in classroom discussions.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
International Baccalaureate (two year)	3	No. of starts	43	47	44
		% retention	81	89	100
		% pass rate	94	100	93
GCE A-level history (two year)	3	No. of starts	80	69	42
		% retention	84	72	93
		% pass rate	88	90	100
GCE A-level psychology (two year)	3	No. of starts	69	64	60
		% retention	58	61	92
		% pass rate	95	82	95
GCE AS history (one year)	3	No. of starts	*	94	63
		% retention	*	87	89
		% pass rate	*	91	93
GCE AS psychology (one year)	3	No. of starts	*	130	119
		% retention	*	86	87
		% pass rate	*	86	85
GCE AS sociology (one year)	3	No. of starts	*	90	88
		% retention	*	88	90
		% pass rate	*	80	86

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

98. There is much very good teaching in humanities. Staff are well qualified and use their expert subject knowledge in teaching and the preparation of subject materials. Handbooks and resource packs are well produced and useful. Teaching is effectively linked to final assessment or examination requirements. Schemes of work are detailed and useful although lesson plans do not always detail objectives for learning. In many lessons, there is effective development of literacy, particularly in vocabulary. Technical vocabulary is routinely used and the meaning of words explained and set into a subject or general context. There is some lively and inspiring teaching using varied strategies and motivating students to learn. In a philosophy lesson, relevant and enlightening parallels were drawn between ancient philosophers and current affairs. Students were effectively encouraged to explore how ethics are as relevant today as in the ancient world. In a classical civilisation lesson, the teachers' use of video and text skilfully enhanced students' knowledge of Sophocles. Whole class discussions and question and answer sessions are usually well managed with stimulating contributions from students who often show wide general knowledge. In a sociology lesson, students explored the changing place of religion in society using a number of contemporary examples to reach their conclusions. In a few lessons, teachers talked for long periods of time and

teaching did not benefit from enough varied activities. On occasions, the pace was dictated by the need to complete the teachers' predetermined lesson plan and students were given little time to digest new knowledge or practice new skills.

99. Students have good access to ICT and a new ICT facility suitable for large groups became available at the start of term. Students use the Internet sites to gather materials and are encouraged to produce their work using word-processing facilities. Law students use specialist software for information gathering and self-assessment. However, ICT is insufficiently integrated with other elements of the humanities curriculum. There are no humanities materials on the college intranet and no ICT facilities in classrooms.

100. Students' progress is carefully monitored. Written work is regularly set and promptly marked. Marking is detailed and helpful with supportive comments designed to help students' progress. If further advice is needed students are referred to specific workshops. All students feel well supported and receive target minimum grades that are reviewed at twice yearly meetings with their subject teachers. Staff are seen as friendly and approachable and there is good communication between the college and the students' parents, guardians or carers.

101. Most resources in humanities are good with the exception of some overcrowded classrooms. In these, teachers are not always able to provide prompt help to individuals due to the number of students in the class. Teaching rooms are pleasant and have a discrete subject identity with attractive displays and teaching aids. All rooms have video players and subject resources such as sets of books. The library has an adequate book stock to support humanities students and a good range of journals. There are a wide variety of enrichment activities to support GCE AS/A level and International Baccalaureate.

Leadership and management

102. Humanities provision is well managed and staff have a genuine commitment to improving student achievement. Equality of opportunity is promoted well through teachers' attention to individual learning needs. Regular meetings at faculty, course and subject level take place and teachers see their managers as approachable and responsive. Courses are thoroughly reviewed using the college system and there has been a noticeable improvement in retention and pass rates over the past three years (1999/2000 to 2001/02).

English, languages and communications



Overall provision in this area is **outstanding (grade 1)**

Strengths

- very good retention rates
- outstanding pass rates on most full-time courses
- good or better teaching in the majority of lessons

- good support for individual students' learning
- good enrichment opportunities.

Weaknesses

- insufficient sharing of good practice between course leaders in modern foreign languages.

Scope of provision

103. A good range of courses is available. There are full-time advanced courses at GCE AS and A levels in English literature, English language and English language and literature, French, German and Spanish. There is also a one-year, GCE A-level English course during the day for part-time and 'fast-track' full-time students, and evening courses in modern foreign languages and English as foreign language. English and languages form part of the International Baccalaureate programme. GCSE courses are offered in English and languages. Open College Network (OCN) courses in languages are provided from levels 1 to 3. Spanish is included in the college's foundation programme. In English as a foreign language, part-time classes are offered at six different language levels. In total, there are 475 enrolments on English courses and 392 enrolments on modern foreign languages courses, mainly full time. There are 225 enrolments on part-time English as a foreign language courses.

Achievement and standards

104. Retention rates are very good in English, modern foreign languages and English as a foreign language. On English GCE A-level courses, it is well above average. Retention rates are also good on International Baccalaureate and GCSE courses in English and languages. Pass rates on English courses are well above average. They are consistently outstanding on GCE A-level English courses, with a well above average proportion of high grades. Pass rates are also well above average on GCE AS English courses. The proportion of GCSE students achieving grades A* to C in English is consistently above average. In modern foreign languages, there are outstanding pass rates in Spanish at GCE A-level and GCSE, and above average pass rates in German and French at GCE A level. On the International Baccalaureate programme, pass rates and the grades achieved are well above average in English and modern foreign languages. Students make good progress in comparison to their prior achievements on advanced courses in English and Spanish, but do less well in German. In English as a foreign language, low proportions of students who start programmes actually sit examinations. Of those who do, pass rates are well above average.

105. Attendance was satisfactory in the lessons observed, at 84%. Students' written work in English is of a high standard. Students apply the knowledge and skills developed in lessons, often with enthusiasm and creativity. Students on International Baccalaureate courses in English display exceptional confidence and perception in expressing their responses to literature. In modern foreign languages, the best written work by International Baccalaureate students is extremely thoughtful and expressed in very fluent, idiomatic language. Students in modern foreign languages are confident in oral work, although the quality of their expression varies considerably at this early stage of their courses. In one very good GCE A-level Spanish lesson, students studying the role of women in society readily adopted the roles of Spanish women of different generations and spoke fluently about their views on modern life. In English as a foreign language, attainment in oral work is high, but some students have weak writing skills. Many students in English are able and willing to express their ideas in lessons, although a minority is less forthcoming at this early stage of the year.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English, languages and communications, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	81	77	79
		% retention	69	84	86
		% pass rate	**	**	61
First Certificate in English (long)	2	No. of starts	125	86	85
		% retention	99	93	94
		% pass rate	31	59	42
GCE A-level English language and literature and English literature	3	No. of starts	126	110	129
		% retention	83	74	95
		% pass rate	95	98	100
GCE AS Spanish	3	No. of starts	*	9	20
		% retention	*	89	85
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	35	30	28
		% retention	80	73	86
		% pass rate	74	82	96
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	23	33	36
		% retention	74	82	92
		% pass rate	100	93	97

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

** data unreliable

Quality of education and training

106. Teaching is of a high standard on English courses. There are good schemes of work, and the objectives of lessons are conveyed to students. Staff have developed good course handbooks, introductory booklets and others on particular topics. Teachers create a friendly, supportive but purposeful atmosphere within the classroom. They are very aware of the individual needs of students and tailor their approach accordingly, particularly in marking and one-to-one support. Teaching on English courses effectively and progressively develops students' knowledge and skills in literary criticism, the analysis of language and creative writing. Difficult concepts are skilfully explained and there is constant reinforcement of key vocabulary. In one outstanding GCE A-level lesson, the teacher encouraged the students to think about their knowledge of poetry, and to explore the differences between prose and poetry, carefully introducing tasks of increasing demand. The students participated with enthusiasm. They were able to name many modern poets, and made good progress through group and individual work. Students develop their ability to work by themselves, using well-designed handouts produced by staff, and use the Internet effectively for research. Students' written work, completed since the start of this term, shows the progressive development of knowledge, skills and understanding.

107. There is much good teaching in modern foreign languages, with grammar effectively integrated into lessons. There is particularly good use of the target language by teachers, and they adopt an effective approach by allocating discrete tasks taking account of students' different ability in French. Language assistants and workshop sessions provide good support for individual students. Students systematically record new vocabulary and are given regular tests to check their learning. Teaching in some lessons relied too heavily on material from textbooks. In one lesson, up-to-date French newspapers were used effectively as a learning resource. There has been progress in developing the use of ICT in language teaching, but its potential is not fully exploited. In English as a foreign language lessons, a good range of teaching methods is used, which engages the attention of students and provides good opportunities for practice in speaking English. However, there is insufficient regard for the needs of individual students in terms of planning activities of varying demand or the checking of understanding. Part-time students have to purchase a card to use the Internet in the college library, and this is a barrier for some English as a foreign language students in making use of this facility.

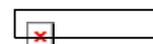
108. Students of English and modern foreign languages are able to take part in an impressive range of educational visits including, for example, a work experience exchange with a lycée in Montpellier for students of French, and theatre visits for those studying English. There is good take-up of subject-related enrichment activities. Teachers are well qualified and experienced; many have higher degrees. Learning resources, both bought-in materials and those produced by staff, are good. Classrooms are pleasant, with student work and relevant posters displayed on the walls. Each language classroom has a clear national identity. There is an adequate supply of overhead projectors, tape recorders and video players and there are ample stocks of suitable dictionaries in language classrooms. The library is well stocked and library staff are energetic in identifying and developing resources. Students make good use of books, periodicals and video recordings.

Leadership and management

109. Courses are well managed by enthusiastic course leaders. In English, course team meetings are effective and there are good arrangements for judging the quality of the assessment and internal standardisation of marking. In English as a foreign language, the course leader ensures the mainly part-time staff are clear about assessment standards and course requirements. In modern foreign languages, course leaders plan their separate courses well, but do not share good practice sufficiently or collectively consider the development of language provision.

110. Most course reviews are thorough, and include analysis of retention and pass rate standards. Not all course reviews make use of the conclusions reached from lesson observation or destination data, and part-time courses in modern foreign languages are not evaluated. Equality of opportunity is promoted well through the methods used to meet the individual needs of students.

Foundation studies



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- good retention rates

- good pass rates on level 1 qualifications

- effective additional learning support.
- good resources for individual and dyslexia support.

Weaknesses

- low standards of work on foundation programme
- unsatisfactory teaching on foundation programme
- poor learning materials in literacy and numeracy foundation programme
- poor curriculum co-ordination.

Scope of provision

111. The college provides a literacy and numeracy programme for nine students aged 16 to 18 and five 19+ students. These students are following foundation courses at entry and level 1, but are only entered for literacy and numeracy qualifications. The college also provides additional learning and dyslexia support in literacy and numeracy to 10 students at level 2 and 56 students at level 3. There are 25 sessions of in-class additional learning support for intermediate GNVQ courses.

Achievement and standards

112. Retention rates on foundation courses in 2000/01 were good. There were good pass rates in level 1 certificate of achievement in oral basic skills, word power and number power. The pass rate in entry level number power is well below average. The college has not provided pass rate data for 2001/02. Current foundation students have not been set individual learning goals nor are all students working to demanding targets. The standard of students' work is much worse than expected. In individual additional learning support, provision is matched to the students' learning needs and the content of their main programme. Students having additional support are set learning goals that link to improvement targets for their current work, their future plans and progress. In many lessons, a small number of students arrive up to 30 minutes late. Whilst teachers ask for reasons, there has been no improvement in punctuality.

A sample of retention and pass rates in foundation studies, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds 3793	1	No. of starts	30	6	13

communication skills (wordpower) foundation		% retention	83	50	92
		% pass rate	30	0	42
City and Guilds 3794 numeracy (numberpower) foundation	1	No. of starts	19	*	12
		% retention	89	*	92
		% pass rate	53	*	45
Certificate of achievement in basic oral skills	1	No. of starts	19	10	12
		% retention	89	100	92
		% pass rate	88	100	91
City and Guilds communication skills (wordpower) stage 1	1	No. of starts	*	*	14
		% retention	*	*	79
		% pass rate	*	*	91
City and Guilds (numberpower) stage 1	1	No. of starts	*	*	14
		% retention	*	*	79
		% pass rate	*	*	91

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

113. Most additional learning support teaching is good or better. It is relevant to students' interests, experience and their main course of study. Students agree clear, short-term and long-term learning goals. They receive constructive feedback on their progress. In -class additional learning support is most effective when it has been planned with the subject teacher. In an intermediate GNVQ leisure and tourism class, the support tutor was helping all students to meet the deadline for assignments and maintained an industrious atmosphere amongst a group of lively young students. Additional learning support teaching was less effective where there has been poor liaison with the subject teacher. In these lessons, students were ill prepared for the session and the support tutor struggled to make the learning relevant to individual students' needs.

114. Too much teaching in foundation studies is unsatisfactory and is not meeting students' learning needs. Where teaching is good, students enjoy the classroom activities and are enthusiastic in both individual and group work. Students are encouraged to discuss their learning. In many instances, their contribution is mature and thoughtful. However, teachers do not always build on this enthusiasm and discussion to extend learning. In the less satisfactory lessons, the learning activities fail to stimulate and hold the students' attention. Students became inattentive when they were not given sufficiently demanding work. Teachers addressed the class as a whole and did not tailor the learning activities to suit the differing abilities of students. Where attempts were made to provide different learning activities they were unsuccessful, as the different work sheets used required the same level of literacy. In most foundation classes all the students carry out the same tasks, irrespective of their aptitude. There is no use made of ICT, although there is a computer in the classroom. Teaching and learning activities in foundation studies rarely related to the students' own experiences and interests.

115. The majority of staff are adequately qualified to teach literacy or numeracy and have had recent training in the new curriculum requirements. Accommodation for literacy and numeracy lessons is satisfactory. Rooms are bright and airy with students' work, posters of famous people who have dyslexia, and strategies to improve study and organisational skills well displayed. The learning materials in foundation courses are of poor quality. Many of them are aimed at the primary age

group and books are out of date and not relevant to the students' course. Handouts and worksheets are often poorly prepared. In some instances, the instructions are confusing and students struggle to understand what they have to do. Teachers do not always ensure that students follow instructions. Learning resources for additional support are well prepared and make use of a variety of sources. These include the library, information from the Internet and the students' own experiences and writing. However, teachers rarely share resources.

116. The assessment and monitoring of students' work in foundation studies is weak. Assessment of students' learning needs does not take place until the sixth week of their course. Feedback in lessons and on written work is brief and superficial. It does not help students to understand what they need to do to improve. There is limited monitoring of students' progress or recording of achievements. In individual and most in-class additional support sessions, teachers focus the students' learning support activities on their assessed subject work and are careful to give positive feedback that emphasises strengths and develops strategies for improving weaknesses. Not all subject teachers fully understand the role of the additional learning support teacher nor do they make best use of this resource.

117. The provision of additional learning and/or dyslexia support is good for level 2 and level 3 students. Teachers use learning materials that help students to focus on both immediate coping strategies and their long-term learning. Students are helped to consider their learning needs in relation to their future education and employment plans. Dyslexia support helps students with preparation of assignments and examinations. In-class support helps those who have poor behaviour, may be at risk of leaving or are falling behind with their work. This provision, however, is not consistently effective.

Leadership and management

118. Leadership and management, as well as curriculum co-ordination, are unsatisfactory on the foundation programme and to a lesser extent in additional learning support. The college has recognised these weaknesses and recently implemented a new management structure for both areas. Managers have introduced revised operational arrangements for both foundation and additional support provision. These plans are not yet fully developed and have not yet had a significant impact on improvement. For the additional learning support, the recently developed systems are not yet fully understood by all staff. There are occasions when the resource is not fully used.

119. There are course reviews for foundation studies, but these lack rigour and do not include specific targets for improvement. The self-assessment report has overstated the strengths and underestimated the weaknesses in this area.

Part D: College data

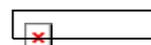
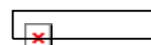


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18 %	19+ %
1	1	44
2	11	22

3	77	22
4/5	0	0
Other	11	12
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments %
Science	1,016	485	24
Agriculture	9	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering	112	1	2
Business	510	114	10
Hotel and catering	200	41	4
Health and community care	110	12	2
Art and design	700	55	12
Humanities	2,424	302	42
Basic education	89	137	4
Total	5,170	1,147	100

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
1	Starters excluding transfers	361	137	75	286	304	215
	Retention rate (%)	79	86	85	74	88	92
	National average (%)	81	80	79	79	79	77

	Pass rate (%)	20	43	94	53	37	57
	National average (%)	60	65	69	61	65	68
2	Starters excluding transfers	630	767	457	379	325	224
	Retention rate (%)	66	78	82	82	94	89
	National average (%)	76	77	76	80	79	78
	Pass rate (%)	69	44	88	47	44	94
	National average (%)	65	66	69	62	65	70
3	Starters excluding transfers	2,025	1,997	4,079	247	270	219
	Retention rate (%)	74	77	81	68	77	83
	National average (%)	75	76	78	79	79	79
	Pass rate (%)	84	86	84	75	54	73
	National average (%)	73	75	77	63	66	70

Note: Summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).

Sources of information:

1. National averages: Benchmarking Data 1997/98 to 1999/2000: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, The Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

2. College rates for 1997/8-1998/9: Benchmarking Data 1997/98 to 1999/2000: Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

3. College Rates for 1999/2000: provided by the college in spring 2001.

Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	72	24	4	122
Level 2 (intermediate)	73	27	0	22
Level 1 (foundation)	25	50	25	4
Other sessions	83	0	17	6
Totals	71	24	5	154

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