



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards  
in Education

## New College, Telford

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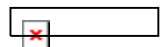
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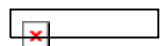
## Basic information about the college



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Name of college:	New College, Telford
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Graham Clark
Address of college:	King Street Wellington Telford TF1 1NY
Telephone number:	01952 641 892
Fax number:	01952 243 564
Chair of governors:	Dr Roger Hargreaves
Unique reference number:	130801
Name of reporting inspector:	Lindsay Hebditch HMI
Dates of inspection:	4-8 November 2002

## Part A: Summary



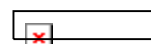
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## Information about the college



New College, Telford is based in the market town of Wellington. Wellington is part of the new town of Telford within the unitary authority of Telford and the Wrekin. The population of Telford and the Wrekin is currently 150,000 and is growing rapidly. Employment rates in the area are high. However, high levels of casual agency work in the economy and the large numbers of unskilled jobs available have led to many young people moving into lowly paid, low-skill jobs. The college draws its students from a wide variety of backgrounds, including dispersed rural communities, post war overspill estates, many of which are centres of significant disadvantage, and the developing new Telford town centre. New College is a major provider of full-time general education for students aged 16 to 19 who live in Telford and the Wrekin. The work of the college is concentrated on a single site which is close to Wellington town centre. During 2001/02 there were 2,185 students at the college. Some 77% of these were students aged 16 to 18 who were following advanced level courses. Some 8% of students are of minority ethnic heritage, compared with 4% in the local population. Some 63% of students are female. The college's mission is " to provide equality of access to the best possible opportunities for those aged over 16 whether they are from Telford or further afield".

### **How effective is the college?**



Inspectors judged the overall quality of provision to be good in art, design and media, music and performing arts, and English and foreign languages. Provision in science and mathematics, business studies, information and communication technology (ICT), humanities, and literacy and numeracy were judged to be satisfactory. The main strengths and the areas that should be improved are listed below:

#### ***Key strengths***

- ethos of the college
  
- good communication
  
- links with the community
  
- course management
  
- guidance and support for students
  
- comprehensive enrichment activities

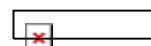
- effective implementation of Curriculum 2000.

***What should be improved***

- attendance
- retention and pass rates
- effectiveness of the college's management structure and quality assurance procedures
- uninspiring teaching, especially in mathematics
- lack of rigour in action plans to drive forward improvements
- some overcrowded classrooms.

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**

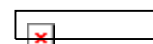


*The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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 and mathematics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Pass rates in science subjects are good but are below the national average in General Certificate of Education

	Advanced level (GCE A level) and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) mathematics. Retention rates are unsatisfactory in some subjects. Teaching is good in science but unsatisfactory in mathematics.
Business studies	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There are very good pass rates on GCE A-level economics and business studies courses. Retention rates on many courses are poor. Work set in lessons does not always match the learning needs of students. Teachers and tutors work effectively together and provide good support for students. Most teaching is satisfactory.
Information and communication technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There are good retention and pass rates on the GCE A-level computing course. Pass rates on General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) ICT courses are well below average. Students benefit from high specification computers and industry standard software. Quality assurance is ineffective. Most teaching is satisfactory.
Art, design and media	<b>Good.</b> Most pass rates are high. Retention rates are mostly poor. Students develop good practical skills in media. Tutorials and personal support are effective. Work experience is integrated effectively within the other elements of courses. Most teaching is satisfactory.
Music and performing arts	<b>Good.</b> GCE A-level pass rates are high. Students show good rates of progression to higher level courses. Retention rates on first and national diplomas are poor. Teaching is good. Students receive effective support in their lessons. There is a lack of sound-proofed accommodation.
Humanities	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Pass rates are high on most GCE AS and A-level courses. Pass rates are well below average in GCSE psychology. Retention rates are poor on many courses. Teaching is good. There is good provision of enrichment activities.
English and foreign languages	<b>Good.</b> Pass rates on GCE A-level courses are well above average. The pass rate on GCSE English is well below average. Retention rates on a minority of courses are poor. Teaching is good. Support for students is good. The languages centre is well resourced.
Literacy and numeracy	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Students receive good support in the learning centre. There are comprehensive procedures for learner referral. There is good practical application of the new curriculum in literacy. The co-ordination of literacy and numeracy is ineffective. There are insufficient resources to support the teaching of basic skills. Pass rates are well below average.

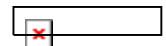
### How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior managers and governors provide a clear strategic direction for the college, which takes account of the diverse community that it serves. Work within the community is extensive. There are productive partnerships with local schools and colleges. Communication within the college is good. The college is developing a new management structure. This new structure has supported significant improvements in

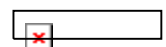
of its quality assurance procedures are ineffective, and have failed to remedy the weaknesses in the quality of teaching and students' achievements identified in the last inspection. Self-assessment is comprehensive but insufficiently self-critical of the quality of teaching and learning. Staff confidence in the reliability of the college's management information is low. The college has identified the causes of the inaccuracies in the management information that it produces and is striving to correct them. Governors do not scrutinise the academic performance of the college in sufficient detail. The college has made slow progress in addressing the weaknesses in retention and achievement which were identified at the last inspection. The college provides satisfactory value for money and has a careful and prudent approach to financial management.

### **To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?**



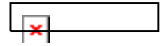
The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. It promotes a welcoming and friendly environment that is appreciated by all learners. A commitment to equal opportunities is fundamental to its mission. Some 8% of the college's students are from a minority ethnic background, double the proportion in the local population. The college has produced a race equality policy and action plan, and has made reasonable progress towards its implementation. Effective procedures are in place to support the monitoring of race and equal opportunities issues. Equal opportunities and race equality are promoted through student induction and in tutorial sessions. Recent staff training has focused on the promotion of race equality in teaching and learning. The student union executive actively recruits membership from minority ethnic groups. Students are also represented on a cross-college equal opportunities committee. The college provides good opportunities for learners from a wide range of educational backgrounds. It has increased the number of courses it provides at places other than the main site. Provision for individual learning support is good. Timetables allow students to undertake part-time employment alongside their full-time programme of study. However, in a minority of courses, there is insufficient attention given to encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning and students' learning plans do not always take sufficient account of specific individual needs. Access to some parts of the college for learners with restricted mobility is unsatisfactory.

### **How well are students and trainees guided and supported?**



Students are provided with good advice and guidance prior to enrolment. All full-time students complete an initial assessment to identify their individual learning support needs. However, the extent to which these identified needs are met varies between curriculum areas. One-to-one learning and individual tutorial support are good. Students speak highly of the informal support they receive from their teachers. However, some group tutorials are less effective when little regard is paid to the setting or monitoring of performance targets, and students do not always value or benefit from the experience. There is a comprehensive range of support services available to students. These include welfare, financial and counselling services. Students receive good advice and guidance on progression to employment or to higher education (HE). Two project workers are assigned to work with students whom the college thinks might leave their course before completing. The college has recently appointed an officer to investigate the reasons for poor attendance. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of this appointment.

## 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***

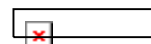
- relaxed atmosphere
  
- helpful teachers
  
- good careers advice
  
- good availability of additional and specialist support
  
- effective induction
  
- wide range of enrichment activities.

### ***What they feel could be improved***

- car parking
  
- transport to and from the college
  
- overcrowding in the canteen
  
- group tutorials

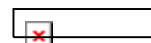
- key skills.

### Other information

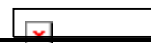


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (local LSC). The college's action plan 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 local LSC. The local LSC 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

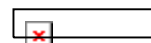


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	66	29	5
19+ and WBL*	57	14	29
Learning 16-18	59	36	5
19+ and WBL*	57	29	14

*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*

### Achievement and standards



#### 16-18 year olds



1. The college offers a wide range of subjects and courses for full-time students aged 16 to 18. At the time of the inspection, three-quarters of the 1,271 full-time students were enrolled on GCE AS and A-level subjects. Many students who enter the college at the age of 16 have average GCSE point scores which are below the national average for those usually accepted for entry to sixth form colleges.

2. In 2001, the most recent year for which complete data are available, pass rates on level 3 courses were in line with the average for sixth form colleges. The college's overall pass rate at GCE A-level was the same as the national average at 89%. In 2001 the average GCE A-level point score for students taking two or more GCE A-level subjects had improved to 16.0 from 15.0 in 1999, compared to a national average of 17.8. Pass rates have been consistently above national average in GCE A-level science subjects, business, law, art and media. However, the percentage of students who achieve grades A-C is well below average. Pass rates have been below average in mathematics and ICT. The college's analysis of data, which compares the students' level of performance at GCE A level with that at GCSE, shows that overall students' achievements are consistent with their GCSE point scores when they enter the college. In 2002, using this calculation, there were some subjects with higher than predicted results, for example, in GCE AS and A-level French and physics. Subjects with lower than predicted results included GCE A-level sociology and GCE AS Spanish and German. The college also offers four national diplomas and four Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs) at level 3. Pass rates on these general vocational courses are in line with national averages. However, in 2001 the pass rate on national diploma in general art and design was excellent at 100%.

3. Retention rates on many academic and general vocational level 3 courses have been consistently below national averages for sixth form colleges in the years 1999 to 2001. Six of the eight areas of learning inspected demonstrated significant weaknesses in retention.

4. At level 2 the college offers 11 GCSE subjects, General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) intermediate courses in science, business and performing arts, and first diplomas in performing arts and popular music. Many students are taking GCSE mathematics and English for a second time. Pass rates in these subjects are well below national averages for sixth form colleges. Retention rates on level 2 full-time courses have improved since 1999, when they were 78%, and in 2001 they were slightly above the national average.

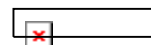
5. The level of students' attainment in many lessons is satisfactory and sometimes good. Students in English, science and foreign languages demonstrate good attainment. They work effectively in groups. Students work well when undertaking practical activities, producing work of a high standard with due regard to safety. Art, design and media students have good technical skills. In many lessons, students' written work is at the level expected for their courses. Students' written explanations are clear and well presented. However, in business studies and mathematics, some students' attainments are low. Students are not fully aware of the standards they are required to meet or the demands of the course. In business studies many students possess low standards of written English.

6. Most students leaving the college with level 3 qualifications progress to HE. In 2002 some 76% of full-time second-year students made HE applications and 90% of these gained HE places. Many of these students came from families with no tradition of continuing in HE.

### ***Adult learners***

7. The number of students on adult courses has risen from a small number in 1999 to over 750 in 2002. Most students follow courses in ICT, art, and GCSE mathematics and English. Data relating to the three years 1999 to 2001 indicate that overall pass rates on courses at levels 1 and 2 are well below average, but retention rates are good. For example, in 2001, the pass rate on level 2 courses was 50%, well below the national average for sixth form colleges of 67%, and the retention rate was well above average at 92%. Conversely, level 3 students achieve pass rates that are slightly above average, but retention rates are well below average.

## Quality of education and training



8. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 137 sessions. They judged that teaching was good or better in 65.7% of the sessions observed, satisfactory in 28.5% and less than satisfactory in 5.8%. Teaching was best in music and performing arts. In this curriculum area over 90% of the teaching was judged to be good or better. The highest proportion of unsatisfactory teaching was in mathematics, where 30% of teaching was unsatisfactory.

9. Teachers have established good working relationships with their students. The best lessons are well planned and set in the context of well-designed schemes of work. In humanities, teachers inspire their students with well-structured tasks and careful questioning. The teaching is largely imaginative and students are involved in a range of appropriate activities, including role-play, case studies and individual presentations. In foreign languages the effective use of the target language helps students to learn quickly. Students learn practical skills particularly effectively in music and performing arts, and art, design and media. In mathematics, business studies, and literacy and numeracy there is too much uninspiring teaching. In some two-hour-long lessons, teachers fail to maintain students' interest, students become restless and have difficulty in concentrating. Some teachers have not adjusted their methods to take account of larger classes and expect students to undertake identical tasks regardless of their potential or ability.

10. Most classes contain students of differing abilities and students who have relatively few GCSE grade A\*-C passes. In some business studies lessons, students lack sufficient knowledge to cope with the level of work being allocated. Other than in a few instances in business studies, teachers do not adapt their teaching methods or materials to ensure that they meet the differing learning needs of students. In science and mathematics, art, design and media and business studies, teachers provide high levels of support to students who are finding it difficult to cope with the work. However, teachers do not ensure that more able students are learning more demanding topics, rather than repeating examples of work with which they are already familiar.

11. The overall attendance rate has declined since the last inspection. In the lessons observed, attendance was 77%, well below the average observed in inspections in sixth form colleges in 2002 of 85%. The highest attendance rate observed was in business studies at 84% and the lowest in sciences and mathematics at 74%. Learning is often disrupted by the late arrival of students, especially during the first lesson in the morning.

12. Most staff are well qualified and experienced. Most hold a teaching qualification for the specialism they teach. The college has been slow to address accommodation issues identified at the last inspection, and increased student numbers have put a strain on the existing accommodation. A full room utilisation survey was last carried out in March 2000 since when student numbers have increased by 5%. A few rooms have become overcrowded and in performing arts, inappropriate areas for practical work, such as non-sound-proofed rooms, are sometimes used. The accommodation is well maintained and clean. Corridors and teaching areas have interesting and informative displays. There are sufficient resources for most subjects and some excellent specialist resources in music technology, media and ICT. Most classrooms have access to the college's internal computer network. All students have e-mail accounts. However, there are insufficient computers for general use in the library at peak times. There are insufficient computer projectors and interactive whiteboards. Specialist curriculum software is not available to students. The information technology (IT) technicians provide good support. The library is open in the evenings and during holiday periods. Library resources are sufficient. There is good liaison between the librarian and curriculum leaders. However, there are insufficient study spaces in

the library to cope with the demand at peak times. Access to some areas of the college is difficult for students with restricted mobility.

13. The assessment of most students' work is well planned and thorough. In most subjects, work is marked accurately and returned promptly to students. Teachers make constructive comments, which help students to identify where improvement is needed. In a few cases, students' work is returned without basic grammar or spelling corrections. In many cases there are regular helpful reports to parents.

14. The information gathered from the initial assessment is not always used effectively to plan programmes of work to meet the individual additional support needs of students and, for some students, learning targets are not precise enough. Teachers place insufficient emphasis on helping students to identify realistic short-term goals and to design a personal action plan to achieve them. In most subjects the monitoring of students' progress against learning goals is satisfactory. Individual reviews of student progress take place three times a year. However, in literacy and numeracy, monitoring arrangements are unsatisfactory. Where learning plans exist, they are often too general and imprecise, or do not take account of previously identified learning or support needs. Not enough is done to help students to develop skills and knowledge which enable them to evaluate their own work.

15. Internal verification is effective in science and business studies, but in literacy and numeracy, procedures are inadequate and do not assure the consistency and adequacy of assessment.

16. The college provides an extensive range of courses at level 3 which includes some 40 subjects at GCE AS and A level, national diplomas and AVCEs. The college has successfully introduced Curriculum 2000. Most GCE A-level students take four subjects from the good choice of academic and vocational subjects. Students benefit from the wide range of curriculum enrichment activities, and additional qualifications and accreditation that are available.

17. All students' key skills in communication and application of number are assessed at induction. The results are conveyed to subject teachers who do not give sufficient consideration as to how these can be met when preparing students' individual learning plans. In business studies and science there is good integration of key skills into assignments. In other subjects, teachers' schemes of work do not include the development of students' key skills. Arrangements for the cross-college co-ordination of key skills are ineffective. Monitoring of key skills acquisition is poor. Few students achieve key skills qualifications. The college has identified this weakness and is seeking to improve its arrangements for key skills provision by the implementation of its revised key skills policy and guidelines.

18. The college recognises that many of its full-time students are making a fresh start in their education. It has therefore developed courses providing a mix of subjects and work experience at levels 1 and 2. Some 250 students are involved in work experience. Employers are well briefed and students' progress is effectively monitored. In art and design, work experience is integrated well with other elements of the course and some students gain employment as a result. Visiting speakers from industry are used to provide awareness of current practice on vocational courses. Support is also provided during the college 'job-seekers' week' in which speakers provide advice on how to apply for a job.

19. There has been a steady growth in evening provision for adults, although the range of subjects available is limited. The college has good links with community groups which enable it to identify the need for new courses. The college does not have any formal advisory committees which involve employers. Links with employers are informal and rely on contacts made within curriculum areas. However, when vocational courses are proposed, contact is made with employers to ensure their relevance as part of the college's approval process.

20. Support and guidance arrangements for dealing with most students' personal problems are good, particularly through the one-to-one advice which teachers and tutors provide. This high level of individual support contributes significantly to the positive and caring ethos in the college. The college has achieved external recognition for the quality of its advice and guidance. It currently holds Investors in Careers and Guidance Council awards.

21. There is a joint admissions policy for full-time students with Telford College of Arts and Technology. Impartial guidance is given to students to choose the course or programme which is right for them. Taster courses are offered to partner 11-16 schools and there is a Year 10 and 11 school link programme. Teachers regularly attend school careers conferences. Guidance on careers and progression to HE is readily available through central student services and tutorial provision. Thorough induction takes place on all courses.

22. The college has a comprehensive range of guidance services and students make good use of them. A project funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has resulted in the appointment of two members of staff to work with learners identified as at risk of not completing their course. Learning support provided for individual students in the study centre is good. However, the college does not evaluate the impact of this support on students' retention and achievement in sufficient detail. The college has recently appointed an officer to investigate the reasons for poor attendance.

23. At the start of term the college introduced a tutorial policy and professional guidance notes for tutors on the conduct of tutorials. However, the quality and helpfulness of tutorials are inconsistent. The setting and monitoring of realistic targets for students are inadequate in some tutorials. In science, students are set minimum targets grades. However, students on some courses are not set any clear achievable personal targets.

### ***Leadership and management***

24. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors and senior managers have combined to produce a strategic plan that is clear and contains realistic aims, including the expressed priorities to provide equality of access, to respond to individual learning needs and to provide community access to the college's learning resources. Communication within the college is good. Teachers are aware of the college's strategic aims and try to reflect them in their work. However, the college has not achieved its aim to improve the achievements and retention of students. Retention rates remain unacceptably low on many courses. There has been some recent improvement in pass rates but many courses have pass rates below the national average for sixth form colleges. These issues were identified as in need of attention at the last inspection.

25. There are inadequate links between strategic and operational planning. The operational plan for the current academic year is still in its draft form. Earlier this term the college produced a number of relevant position papers on issues such as raising achievement and improving retention. However, the recommendations which they contain have not been included in the college's operational plans.

26. The college is reorganising its management structure. The college has amalgamated its subject areas to create ten new curriculum areas and created new posts at director level for student services, achievement and quality assurance. It is intending to create a new vice-principal post with responsibility for the curriculum. At the time of this inspection, the interim arrangements for curriculum management, coupled with the ineffectiveness of quality assurance procedures, meant that senior management was having insufficient impact on raising standards.

27. The management by subject leaders is good. Schemes of work are of good quality and have been revised and extended in many areas to provide guidance following the introduction of new courses. Course teams meet each month and have identified the need to give due priority to improving retention and pass rates. In some curriculum areas, for

example, English and modern languages, the improvement in course management has led to improvements in students' pass rates since the last inspection.

28. The college's quality assurance arrangements are insufficiently rigorous. The college's self-assessment is comprehensive but does not include sufficient analysis of weaknesses. For example, many curriculum self-assessments do not address long-standing weaknesses in retention in sufficient detail. The college has assessed the quality of its teaching and learning too generously. All teachers are observed as part of an established self-assessment process, but the results of lesson observations are not sufficiently used to devise action plans to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Course review procedures are satisfactory. They make good use of the college's value added data comparing current levels of performance with those at a specific time in the past, to help to identify areas of poor performance. However, the subsequent monitoring of the success of prescribed actions is unsatisfactory. Timescales, resources and success criteria have not been identified nor have individuals been appointed to oversee action. Whilst some of the college's weaker curriculum areas have received additional resources to secure improvements, in others, for example GCSE courses in mathematics and psychology, poor results have persisted without effective action over the past three years.

29. The well-managed staff appraisal system contributes directly to the identification of staff development needs. The college invests substantially in professional development. Comprehensive records are kept of staff development activities. Course leaders and recently qualified teachers particularly value the training and development opportunities they have received. However, some gaps in training remain, for example, the updating of the industrial experience of vocational teachers, and improving the qualifications of teachers in literacy and numeracy.

30. Since the last inspection the college has successfully diversified the curriculum for students aged 16 to 18. It has further developed level 1 courses and extended the range of provision at level 2. The college has responded successfully to the needs of its community and has close and effective links with its ten partner schools. As a result, the college is providing courses for an increasing number of students aged 14 to 16. Partnership links are strong and include membership of a committee which addresses race relations in the community. The college actively promotes good relationships with those of minority ethnic heritage. It has recently revised and extended its equal opportunities policies and established a committee to oversee their implementation. The equal opportunities statement and race equality policy meet statutory requirements. There are also policies on disability and for dealing with harassment. Data on admissions, retention, achievement and progression of students of different minority ethnic heritage are collected. Governors will receive a formal report on these developments for the first time in December 2002.

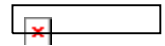
31. The college has experienced significant problems with its management information system. Some of these problems were caused by errors in the software which the college had been using. At the time of the inspection the college did not have a complete and accurate record of students' achievements in 2002. The college has used different software packages to generate data on students' achievements. These have led to confusion amongst teachers. Some of them use data that they have produced themselves rather than the college's management information. The college is aware of this problem, and is taking measures to improve the accuracy and reliability of its data.

32. Governors are committed to the work of the college. They exercise their duty to monitor its financial health carefully and critically. However, the termly briefings from the principal, and annual report on retention and achievement are not sufficiently detailed for them to monitor students' achievements effectively. The college is planning to create a standards committee to address this weakness.

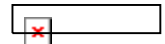
33. The college has adopted a careful and prudent approach to financial management. Budgets are tightly controlled. The college is in a sound financial position and possesses substantial reserves. It adopts a system of worst-case deficit budgeting to protect itself

against fluctuations in student recruitment despite increased numbers of students and has ended each year with a surplus since the previous inspection. The reserves have been identified for capital development, but there are no plans agreed by the corporation for the allocation of these funds to particular projects. The college has adopted the principles of best value when securing resources and services. The college is reviewing the cost of immediate accommodation development needs on its town-centre site. The inspection revealed some shortcomings in current resourcing which are having a detrimental effect on the quality of learning. There is a sufficient number of teachers to meet the needs of students; they are effectively deployed. Value for money is satisfactory.

### Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



#### Science and mathematics



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

#### **Strengths**

- good achievements in science
  
- good teaching in science
  
- successful monitoring of students' progress and setting targets in science
  
- good range of provision at levels 2 and 3.

#### **Weaknesses**

- unsatisfactory retention rates in some subjects
  
- unsatisfactory teaching in mathematics

mathematics.

### ***Scope of provision***

34. The college offers a wide range of courses in science and mathematics. There are GCE AS and A-level courses in mathematics, chemistry, biology, human biology and physics. A small number of students follow the further mathematics GCE AS and A-level courses. GCSE science (single award) and mathematics are offered to students who have not achieved a grade C in these subjects but require one to progress to employment or HE. A pre-GCSE mathematics course has been introduced from September 2002 for students who have not reached GCSE grade D standard in mathematics. There are two vocational science courses, a GNVQ intermediate in science and a national diploma in applied science.

### ***Achievement and standards***

35. Students' achievements in science subjects are good. GCE A-level pass rates improved significantly in 2002 and are generally above national averages for sixth form colleges. GCE AS pass rates in most subjects are above national averages. GCE AS and A-level students in biology, human biology and particularly in physics achieve significantly higher grades than would be expected when compared with their previous GCSE grades. Male and female students perform equally well. In GCSE science a high proportion of students achieve a grade C or above. The GCE A-level pass rate in mathematics had been consistently well below average until 2002, when it improved to slightly above the national average for sixth form colleges. However, of the 106 students who began GCE AS mathematics in September 2000, only 68 took the examination and 36 passed the full GCE A level. Too many science and mathematics students fail to complete their courses. The introduction of the one-year courses in September 2001 has led to an improvement in retention on the GCE A-level course, but has had little effect on the unsatisfactory retention in GCE AS. Pass rates for GCSE mathematics are consistently well below national averages.

36. The success of science students in external examinations is matched by the high standards of their work seen in lessons. Written work is carefully presented and demonstrates that students have a good understanding of what they are doing. For example, all students in a GCE AS biology class were able to plot an accurate graph and write a clear and concise statement describing the trends it displayed. In GCE AS physics, students were able to predict the nature of a graph of results and used this knowledge to draw reliable conclusions. Students are able to express scientific ideas in clear and simple English.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in science and mathematics, 1999 to 2001***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	244	207	214
		% retention	76	70	81
		% pass rate	30	32	26
GCSE science	2	No. of starts	*	53	51
		% retention	*	64	86
		% pass rate	*	62	43
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	103	82	116
		% retention	64	72	65
		% pass rate	74	70	83

National diploma in science	3	No. of starts	29	38	36
		% retention	86	82	69
		% pass rate	96	93	80
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	43	29	57
		% retention	70	69	74
		% pass rate	90	100	93
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	60	69	49
		% retention	80	81	61
		% pass rate	94	84	93

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

\*course did not run

### **Quality of education and training**

37. Science teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and contain a variety of approaches to make learning interesting. Students learn well. They enjoy the range of activities and respond enthusiastically in lessons. For example, in an exciting GCE AS human biology lesson on enzymes, students used pipe cleaners and plasticine to make models of enzymes and enjoyed an amusing role-play exercise entitled 'being an enzyme'. The teacher then skilfully used a computer presentation to summarise what the students had learned. Teachers make good use of ICT. In a good GCE A-level physics lesson on atomic structure, the teacher used a data projector to simulate the expected results from the Rutherford alpha particle scattering experiment using two models of the atom. Students take responsibility for their own learning in science lessons through the effective use of individual learning plans. Students enter the marks they achieve in tests and assessments into their plans during each lesson and use the results to chart their progress against their target grade. Teachers use the plans to identify students who need extra help and to adjust their lesson planning.

38. The teaching of mathematics is unsatisfactory. Much of the teaching is uninspiring and fails to motivate the students. Teachers concentrate on covering the syllabus and give insufficient attention to how much students are learning. In some lessons, teachers used overhead transparencies or wrote notes on the whiteboard which students were unable to read. Students made little progress in these lessons. Some classes were too large for the rooms allocated to them.

39. Teachers of science and mathematics are well qualified and knowledgeable. Many of them work with examination awarding bodies and use this experience to inform colleagues and students of current developments in their subjects. Science lessons take place in traditional, but adequately equipped laboratories. Practical lessons are well managed. However, insufficient attention is given to formal health and safety requirements, such as the need for regular updating of risk assessments in physics. Teachers in biology, chemistry and physics set common tests for students to make sure that standards are consistent in each subject. In science subjects the marking of students' work is regular and thorough. There are effective assessment and verification practices to confirm that standards conform with those of the awarding body.

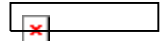
40. Teachers have good links with partner schools and run 'taster' sessions at the college to help students to make an appropriate choice of course. Induction is mostly well organised. It includes initial diagnostic testing to identify which students are likely to need additional support. However, although the additional support is available, many students do not take advantage of it. Subsequent progress monitoring of these students is ineffective.



### ***Leadership and management***

41. Course management by teachers in science is good. Schemes of work are thorough and are made available to students via the college's intranet. Teachers are committed to improving students' retention and achievement, and share good practice within the team. However, quality assurance is ineffective. Lesson observations and the views of students are not used to devise action plans. Although an alternative course has been introduced in response to the poor results in GCSE mathematics, insufficient attention has been given to improving the quality of mathematics teaching.

### **Business studies**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- very good pass rates on GCE A-level economics and GCE A-level business studies
  
- good support for students
  
- effective teamwork.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- poor retention rates on many courses
  
- inappropriateness of the work set for those students transferring from GNVQ to AVCE and GCE AS to A level
  
- no recent industrial updating for staff.

#### ***Scope of provision***

42. The college offers full-time courses at GCE AS and A level in business studies and economics, and GNVQ intermediate and AVCE in business. Some 291 students currently follow these courses, most of them are aged 16 to 18. Many students progress from GCE A level to HE. Some 50% of students who complete the GNVQ intermediate progress to the

AVCE.

### ***Achievement and standards***

43. Pass rates on GCE A-level business studies and economics courses are consistently above national averages. Students generally do better than their prior GCSE performance might suggest. However, retention rates on these courses are poor. Retention rates on the GNVQ intermediate and AVCE business courses improved in 2002, while pass rates remained at the national average.

44. Teachers' expectations of students are high. Students are required to demonstrate a wide variety of skills in their assignments. GCE AS and A-level students analyse and interpret source material. Some students use this material effectively to produce carefully reasoned reports. Second-year GCE A-level students develop the skill of critical evaluation. GCE A-level economics students work with a variety of analytical tools and can apply their learning to everyday business situations. In vocational courses, students develop their personal skills and are given realistic tasks based upon current business affairs to support these developments. Some students lack the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the demands of their course. They are unable to tackle more complex tasks and those involving application of number. Less confident students fail to participate in lessons and become confused by what is being asked of them. Written work is sometimes marred by poor standards of literacy and presentation.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in business studies, 1999 to 2001***

<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Completion year:</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	40	36	23
		% retention	70	86	65
		% pass rate	71	65	73
GCE A-level business	3	No. of starts	89	82	99
		% retention	62	63	65
		% pass rate	95	100	94
GNVQ/AVCE business	3	No. of starts	30	32	45
		% retention	47	66	73
		% pass rate	71	86	73
GCE A-level economics	3	No. of starts	17	12	18
		% retention	71	67	83
		% pass rate	100	100	100

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

### ***Quality of education and training***

45. Most teaching is satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers understand and provide the support that students need to help them learn. These lessons are well planned, develop learning in short steps, and check on and reinforce students' understanding. Students are encouraged to question and test assumptions. Group work is purposeful and students receive constructive support. In one lesson, students were engaged in a role-play exercise based on a topical issue. They were required to prepare for and contribute to a meeting, and engaged in a lively discussion to defend their views. On vocational courses, teachers use an effective combination of group and individual work, and set the work in a practical business context. Teachers ensure that links are made with previous lessons and with other parts of

the course. Assignments are used to help students to develop the key skill of communication. However, in some lessons, students are passive, spend too much time in note taking and have few opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding. In these lessons, students are inattentive, teachers make insufficient checks on their progress and do not vary their language to help students understand what is required of them. Some students do not respond to teachers' questions and the less confident ones fail to contribute to discussions. There is a poor match between work set and the learning needs of some students. In some lessons, students are unable to complete the tasks expected of them without considerable help. This is especially true of some students who have progressed from the GNVQ intermediate course to the AVCE, or from GCE AS to GCE A level. For example, in a lesson where students were asked to apply the concepts of price and income elasticity to revenue, few were able to analyse or apply the information in the expected manner.

46. Work is regularly set and thoroughly marked. Written comments on students' work are detailed and provide useful pointers for future improvements. Assessed work is subject to internal processes of secondary marking and to check the reliability of judgement against examination requirements.

47. College timetables permit students to combine a range of GCE AS with AVCE and GCSE. Many students have taken advantage of these opportunities to develop varied individual programmes of learning. There has been a good take-up for the college's enrichment activities by business students. Work experience is provided for GNVQ intermediate and first-year AVCE students, and clear briefs encourage students to make connections between their work experience and business theory. Subject enrichment for other students is provided through study visits and visiting speakers from industry. However, there is no direct participation of employers in students' assignments, nor are they called upon to assist in assessing students' work.

48. Students are well supported by their teachers and tutors. Course handbooks provide helpful information and guidance. Teachers and tutors work together effectively to monitor students' progress. Targets are set for individual students and progress towards achieving these targets is monitored regularly and thoroughly. The progress of students who have low levels of prior attainment is reviewed carefully and realistic targets are set for them. However, students consider that personal formal group tutorials lack relevance. Tutors and teachers give freely of their own time to support students. The importance of good attendance and punctuality is given a high priority. Individual support in lessons is positive and encouraging. The well-managed induction period helps to identify those students who could benefit from additional support and guidance, teachers ensure that the lesson plans take account of these needs. GNVQ intermediate students work with key skills mentors and make good use of the drop-in study centre. Parents are regularly informed of students' progress.

49. Teachers are well qualified and hold teaching qualifications. However, they lack recent industrial experience or awareness of the latest practices. Some rooms used by business students are large, have flexible furniture arrangements and IT facilities, and permit a wide range of learning activities to take place in them. In contrast, some lessons took place in a classroom, which was too small to accommodate all of the students comfortably. In these lessons the teaching methods and activities which can be used are severely restricted. Students benefit from a comprehensive video library built up in the curriculum area.

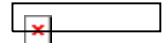
### ***Leadership and management***

50. Leadership and management of the curriculum area are satisfactory. Teamwork is effective and teachers share a clear sense of purpose. Teachers meet regularly to plan and develop programmes, to discuss what does and does not work, and produce learning materials and review the progress of students. Course files are well maintained. Teachers understand the college's quality assurance procedures, but the validity of programme reviews is hampered by the lack of sufficiently reliable data on students' retention and

achievement. Although lesson observations take place, the results are not used in programme reviews to adapt teaching styles and address weaknesses. Action plans do not contain clear strategies for improving the quality of teaching and learning.

51.

### **Information and communication technology**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good retention rates on the GCE AS ICT and GCE A-level courses
  
- good pass rate on GCE A-level computing
  
- high specification computers and industry standard software
  
- efficient resource management.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- well below average pass rates on GCE AS courses
  
- ineffective quality assurance
  
- low attainment of students on GCSE ICT.

#### ***Scope of provision***

52. The college offers full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18 at GCE AS and A level in computing and ICT. There is also a GCSE and AVCE in ICT. Some 308 students follow these courses. The GCSE ICT course is offered for level 2 students. The well below expected attainment of GCSE students demonstrates that some of them would be better placed on an alternative ICT course. Provision for part-time adult students includes the

European computer driving license (ECDL) and ECDL advanced modules and computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT).

### **Achievement and standards**

53. Pass rates on GCE A-level computing have been above the national average for the last four years (1999 to 2002). In 2002, pass rates on GCSE ICT and on the ECDL course were well above average. However, pass rates on GCE AS courses are well below average. Retention rates on GCE A-level computing and GCE AS ICT are high. Students develop good practical skills. In a second-year GCE A-level computing lesson, students carried out a detailed analysis of customer requirements. They were then able to produce design specifications of excellent quality. The attendance rate during the inspection was low at 78%.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communication technology, 1999 to 2001**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
City and Guilds 4242	1	No. of starts	*	*	39
		% retention	*	*	100
		% pass rate	*	*	79
ECDL	2	No. of starts	112	124	155
		% retention	98	91	100
		% pass rate	45	38	55
GCE A-level ICT	3	No. of starts	71	56	75
		% retention	61	59	59
		% pass rate	86	73	70
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	32	18	38
		% retention	56	72	84
		% pass rate	89	100	84

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

\*course did not run

### **Quality of education and training**

54. Most teaching and learning are satisfactory or better. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic. There are good relationships between teachers and students. Lessons are well planned. Teachers explain their aims and objectives clearly. In theory lessons, teachers provide students with good quality learning materials. In the best lessons, teachers show very good, up-to-date subject knowledge and use imaginative approaches to extend the experience of the students. Practical lessons are particularly effective. In one very good lesson, an Internet site showing computerised scans of the human body was used to generate interest in a class who were researching the use of ICT in medicine. In less successful lessons, teachers spend too long demonstrating techniques and leave insufficient time for students to practice by themselves. The more able students become bored and inattentive.

55. Most coursework and assignments are well designed and meet awarding body standards. The overall quality of student portfolios is satisfactory. Work is marked regularly

and is returned promptly. Most marking is accurate, but does not always provide sufficient constructive advice to help students to improve.

56. Students make effective use of the very good access to the Internet that is available to them. There is an appropriate policy on the misuse of the Internet which students accept and adopt. There is minimal use of the college intranet as a learning resource. Most ICT resources for students in the specialist IT rooms are sufficient and are of industry standard. All computers are networked and students are allocated sufficient network space. Many students use their college e-mail account to submit their assignments. Technical support for hardware and software problems is very good and is greatly appreciated by students. However, the rooms used for practical lessons are too hot and stuffy.

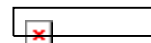
57. Prospective students are able to attend 'taster' lessons before choosing their course. However, students on the AVCE course had not been provided with sufficient information about the course before they enrolled. Initial screening tests are used to identify particular learning needs, but although identified and offered, additional support is not always taken up by students.

58. All students are set individual learning targets based on their qualifications on entry. There is good monitoring of students' progress towards achieving these individual targets. Students receive good, informal pastoral support and subject-specific support from their teachers. Tutorials take place each week and the support and guidance that they provide for students are good.

### ***Leadership and management***

59. The management of computing is satisfactory but there is a lack of co-ordination and direction by respective managers. The management of ICT courses is shared, with full-time courses being the responsibility of the computer studies department and part-time provision managed by the college's business centre. The centre employs large numbers of part-time teachers who are not sufficiently involved in course development and quality assurance. Meetings are infrequent. There are few opportunities for full-time teachers to share good practice with part-time teachers. The self-assessment report recognises the long-standing problems with retention and achievement, but the remedial actions suggested are insufficient to secure improvement. Schemes of work are comprehensive and students are told of the topics they will cover during the term. The efficient management of resources for full-time courses has supported a large increase in student enrolment, with the number of groups doubling over the last two years. Lessons are split into theory and practical aspects so that the computer laboratories can be utilised fully.

### **Art, design and media**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates in GCE A-level art and GCE A-level media
  
- good teaching of practical skills

- effective work experience that supports progression to employment
  
- good tutorial and personal support for students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor retention rates
  
- ineffective checks on students' learning in some lessons.

### ***Scope of provision***

60. The college offers a range of courses for full-time and part-time students in art, design and media. These include a national diploma in design crafts, and GCE AS and A levels in art, media and in design and technology. Part-time courses cover practical craft skills such as stone carving and photography. More than 80% of the 307 students are aged 16 to 18 who are studying full time. Full-time classes are open to adult learners, but few have enrolled.

### ***Achievement and standards***

61. Pass rates are good on all courses. On GCE A-level art and GCE A-level media, pass rates have been well above the national average for each of the last three years (1999 to 2001). The percentage of grades A-C achieved by students on GCE A-level media and GCE A-level design and technology are above the national average. However, retention rates on GCE A levels are poor. In 2001 for example, GCE A-level art and GCE A-level media had retention rates more than 10% below the national average for sixth form colleges. The college's own data indicate some improvement in retention on GCE AS courses in 2002.

62. Art and design students demonstrate a good range of practical skills in their objective drawing and sketchbook work. They understand clearly the design process. Students discuss their work openly and have the confidence to experiment with a wide range of processes and techniques. For example, in a GCE A-level art lesson, students were discussing the Turner Prize. They all made an effective contribution to the discussion and spoke knowledgeably about relevant artists. One student discussed the watercolours of Samuel Palmer in some depth. Another identified a connection between the work of Constable and Pissarro, and went on to demonstrate how he aimed to produce his own work using a synthesis of the two artists' styles. The standard of work in media is high. Students make good use of technical language and they have developed very effective practical skills. In one successful lesson, students demonstrated competence in the use of specialist software in editing a promotional musical video which they had produced themselves. The exciting, colourful, imagery which they generated was particularly sophisticated.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in art, design and media, 1999 to 2001***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCE A-level art	3	No. of starts	61	46	67
		% retention	72	72	*
		% pass rate	100	100	98
GCE A-level media	3	No. of starts	58	65	90
		% retention	62	*	*
		% pass rate	100	100	98
GCE A-level design and technology	3	No. of starts	45	45	42
		% retention	67	80	69
		% pass rate	83	94	93
National diploma in design crafts/ general art and design	3	No. of starts	9	13	23
		% retention	67	62	*
		% pass rate	100	88	*

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

\* unreliable data

### **Quality of education and training**

63. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. Where teaching is good the lessons are thoroughly planned with clear objectives that are conveyed to the students. For example, in a good media lesson, students used their personal action plans to confirm what they had learned and to record their achievement to refine their personal learning goals. The lesson was successful because students clearly understood what they needed to achieve. The theoretical content was demanding, but students found it enjoyable. In less successful lessons, the aims and objectives are not made clear by teachers and students' learning is not checked with sufficient rigour. For example, in one lesson the teacher allowed a single student to dominate group discussion. The lesson tailed off without a crisp conclusion and the teacher failed to check on how much students had understood or whether the lesson objectives had been achieved.

64. Students' work is assessed fairly and accurately according to the requirements of the awarding bodies. On a few courses, written feedback provides students with insufficient information about how they might improve their work.

65. Staff are well qualified and benefit from the professional development which is linked to appraisal. There is good technical support for design crafts and media. Teaching accommodation is attractive, although some of the rooms are overcrowded for the number of students taking the course. In one visual studies lesson, students were unable to produce large, expressive drawings due to the limited space available. They were required to work on small tables, with their individual drawings often obscuring other students' work. Media and design crafts students have access to sufficient computer hardware and software. However, noise levels in the design suite are sometimes intrusive and students are distracted when the adjoining three-dimensional workshop is in use. The college library is well stocked and both teachers and students speak highly of the support they receive from the library staff.

66. There is a comprehensive enrichment programme which successfully extends the experience and learning of students. Students are able to practise stone carving and photography as well as visit art galleries abroad. On the national diploma in design crafts there is a well-integrated programme of work experience which leads to employment for



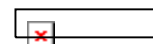
many students. In 2002, 5 out of the 14 completing students were offered appropriate employment by their previous work experience provider. The remainder of the group progressed to HE.

67. Support for students is good. Teachers pay careful attention to learners' individual circumstances. They receive good information about potential students from partner schools and successfully accommodate students with special learning needs on their courses. The individual learning styles are most suitable to students assessed at induction. This information is shared throughout the course team. The tutorial system is well managed. Tutorials are used effectively to monitor the progress of students. Students speak highly of the extra help they receive from their teachers and tutors when they need it. Students feel they are counselled effectively on personal issues, careers and progression to HE.

### ***Leadership and management***

68. Leadership and management of art, design and media studies are good. Teamwork is good. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and their students. They meet regularly and responsibilities are clear and defined. New teachers benefit from the thorough and supportive mentoring they receive from more experienced colleagues. Self-assessment is satisfactory. Teachers have correctly identified weaknesses and, in some cases, have taken appropriate action to address them.

### **Music and performing arts**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates in GCE A levels and GCSE dance
  
- good teaching
  
- good student progression from entry level to higher national diploma (HND)
  
- effective learning support in lessons.

#### ***Weaknesses***

- poor retention rates on national diplomas and the first diploma in performing arts

- lack of soundproofed accommodation.

### **Scope of provision**

69. The college offers a wide range of courses in music and performing arts extending from entry level in expressive arts to first diplomas in music and performing arts, GCSE dance, and at level 3, national diplomas in performance, production, dance and music practice and the advanced certificate in dance. There are also GCE A levels in music, drama and theatre studies, and a HND in music production. Part-time courses cover music practice, music technology and technical theatre studies. Evening classes are available in dance and there is a community choir. There are several enrichment courses available for students, including instrumental lessons and a jazz band. Most students attend full time and are aged 16 to 18. The department has expanded considerably in 2001/02 and student numbers are increasing.

### **Achievement and standards**

70. There are good pass rates on GCE A levels and GCSE dance. In 2002 the pass rate was 100% on GCE A-level theatre studies. The GCSE dance pass rate was also 100%. However, retention is well below average on national diploma courses and pass rates are only at, or just below national averages for sixth form colleges. Pass rates and retention rates are well below average on first diploma courses.

71. Students put particular effort into their practical work and make good progress in lessons. Teachers set high standards in dance and students work hard to achieve them. In one first diploma in music lesson, students showed impressive focus and discipline in the independent rehearsal of their band pieces. Group work is strong; students support each other well and readily offer ideas and encouragement. However, a few students find it hard to work on their own and require the close supervision of their teachers to make progress.

### **A sample of retention and pass rates in music and performing arts, 1999 to 2001**

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE dance	2	No. of starts	38	27	23
		% retention	71	48	57
		% pass rate	56	100	83
GCE A-level theatre and dramatic arts	3	No. of starts	40	20	34
		% retention	73	75	71
		% pass rate	90	93	92
National diploma in performing arts	3	No. of starts	28	39	43
		% retention	71	64	70
		% pass rate	100	100	86
GCE A-level music	3	No. of starts	21	26	34
		% retention	90	88	79
		% pass rate	100	91	96

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

### ***Quality of education and training***

72. Teaching is good. Teachers plan and prepare well for practical lessons and have good working relationships with students. Teaching is especially good on level 2 courses. Most students display high levels of concentration and the ability to work by themselves. One first diploma in performing arts class demonstrated very good attention to detail in small group rehearsals for their show. On level 3 courses, students link theory and practical work effectively. In one dance class, students worked enthusiastically on an assignment involving adventurous fusions of art forms and demonstrated good evaluation skills at the end of the exercise. They used technical vocabulary well in their descriptions of movement. However, most students find it much harder to concentrate productively in theory lessons, and they make few contributions to whole-group discussions.

73. Teachers are well qualified and use their subject knowledge effectively to promote learning. There is good technical support from three full-time technicians. There is also some good specialist accommodation, for example, the theatre, which is equipped to professional standards. However, some accommodation is inadequate. The lack of sound proofing in music rooms creates difficulties for some adjoining classrooms. In a music technology class, a rehearsing band next door distracted students. The use of the foyer as a teaching space is similarly disruptive. Students complain that they do not have enough access to rehearsal spaces. The recording studio is currently mainly used by HE students and is of a good professional standard. Students on lower level courses have few opportunities to use it.

74. Some teachers do not provide students with sufficient detail in their assessment of work, about how well they are doing and how they can improve. Frequently, students are not told when they are expected to submit assignment briefs. Marked work is not always handed back promptly and it is not easy for students to see where they have lost marks. There is no formal appeals procedure, although students report that they feel comfortable discussing their grades with teachers if necessary. Internal verification systems lack rigour. The college knows of this weakness and is currently putting new procedures in place to remedy the issue. It is too early to assess their effectiveness. Parents are kept informed of students' progress.

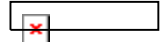
75. There are good progression routes for students. In 2002, some 69% of performing arts students progressed to higher level courses, and 46% of music students and 81% of performing arts students went on to university. Links with the performing arts and music industry are good, with visits and workshops from professional artists and companies, including Royal Shakespeare Company workshops, Birmingham Royal Ballet and Bhangra Music.

76. Pre-course guidance is effective in conveying the demands of the course and what students are expected to do for themselves. The practice of having two teachers in a lesson ensures very good support for students who need it. For example, in GCE A-level music, one teacher was able to accompany and record individual student performances while another teacher taught harmony to the rest of the class. Subject teachers also act as course tutors. Working relationships between tutors and students are good. Students value the informal support provided by their tutors. However, many students do not see the relevance of group tutorial sessions which are not geared to their personal needs. There is good HE guidance and subject teachers provide helpful information to students on specialist courses.

### ***Leadership and management***

77. Leadership and management are good. A new curriculum area leader was appointed in September 2001. There is now much clearer definition of the areas where improvements are needed and the measures required to achieve them. Self-assessment is rigorous. Schemes of work are detailed and teachers work together closely to ensure that their courses meet the needs of students.

## Humanities



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

### ***Strengths***

- good pass rates on most GCE AS and GCE A-level subjects
  
- good teaching
  
- effective use of a variety of resources in teaching geography
  
- good enrichment opportunities for students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor retention rates on a range of courses
  
- well below average pass rates in GCSE psychology
  
- ineffective monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning.

### ***Scope of provision***

78. Most students take courses at GCE AS and A levels, including history, psychology, geography and law. There are GCSE courses in law and psychology. Small numbers of students take courses in archaeology, politics, sociology and religious studies. More than 500 students are enrolled on GCE AS courses, 250 on GCE A-level courses and some 52 students take GCSEs.

### ***Achievements and standards***

79. Pass rates in most GCE AS and A-level subjects in 2002 were well above average, with 98% pass rates in history and geography. At GCE AS the pass rate was 100% in psychology and religious studies. Before 2002, with the exception of law, GCE A-level pass

rates were below national averages for sixth form colleges. GCSE results in law are above the national average figures. However, in GCSE psychology, they are well below average. Retention is below and in some subjects well below, national averages on nearly all courses.

80. Standards of attainment in all lessons observed during inspection are satisfactory or better; in lessons where attainment is good, students are able to express their views confidently and clearly. They can analyse data and deal with abstract ideas. Students ask perceptive questions and demonstrate good knowledge of their subjects. For example, in a geography lesson on river flow, students responded thoughtfully to the teachers' demonstrations. In a GCE AS evening lesson in psychology, students reflected sensitively and analytically on aspects of child behaviour based on their own shared experiences. Written work is of an appropriate standard. However, there are examples of outstanding coursework in geography. An assignment on the regeneration of Liverpool was beautifully presented by most students, using a range of photographic, statistical and diagrammatic evidence, and involving clear and mature judgements. Most students develop their ability to work by themselves but a few students remain overly dependent on the teacher. Progression to HE is good.

***A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 1999 to 2001***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE psychology	2	No. of starts	46	42	61
		% retention	83	69	87
		% pass rate	42	31	32
GCSE law	2	No. of starts	34	24	29
		% retention	82	67	79
		% pass rate	57	56	52
GCE A-level law	3	No. of starts	57	50	65
		% retention	68	54	65
		% pass rate	95	100	88
GCE A-level psychology	3	No. of starts	70	95	98
		% retention	66	59	69
		% pass rate	70	77	71
GCE A-level sociology	3	No. of starts	24	24	17
		% retention	46	46	65
		% pass rate	36	70	82
GCE A-level geography	3	No. of starts	86	63	71
		% retention	83	75	77
		% pass rate	86	98	89
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	74	68	75
		% retention	77	79	75
		% pass rate	86	87	88

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

***Quality of education and training***

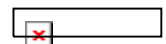
81. Some 71% of teaching observed was good or better and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is authoritative and teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects. Lessons are well prepared and supported by well-developed schemes of work, effective handouts and course material. A range of successful teaching methods is used; group and pair work, debate, question and answer and some effective explanations. Geography teachers use a variety of strategies and resources successfully to sustain students' interest, moving between map work, video and diagrammatic presentation with ease, relating learning successfully to fieldwork and practical demonstrations. Teachers use aspects of the Telford locality effectively to develop students' perception of difficult concepts. In a GCE A-level history lesson, the teacher skilfully developed ideas on Elizabeth I's foreign policy using a survival game which forced students to make judgements and choices. In a GCSE psychology lesson, team teaching was used successfully to support students in developing the methodology for carrying out a psychological experiment. However, not all teaching leads to effective learning. Where teaching was less successful, there was a failure to break down or clarify difficult concepts. At times, group or pair work was not effectively controlled and lacked purpose. In a few lessons, a minority of students were not involved in the main activities and did not contribute to discussion.

82. Humanities courses provide students with a range of opportunities to enrich their learning experience. For example, fieldwork and foreign trips in geography and archaeology, a visit from a judge and a prison officer to a law lesson, a mock trial for law students, and visits and conferences for history students. The library effectively supports these courses with a limited but up-to-date bookstock and a wide range of magazines. Teachers provide effective support for individual students. They readily offer help in their own time. The marking of students' work is completed promptly and feedback to students is thorough. This term, teachers have begun to set individual targets for students. The monitoring of performance against these targets is becoming an increasingly important feature in helping to raise achievement. Attendance was poor in a number of lessons during inspection. Average attendance overall during the inspection was 76%, which is well below the average for sixth form colleges. Classrooms are spacious, well furnished and attractively decorated with students' work and study aids. However, some large groups were taught in rooms which were too small to accommodate them comfortably.

### ***Leadership and management***

83. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Newly appointed curriculum area managers have supported staff in developing more effective teamwork. Teams hold monthly, purposeful meetings and have begun to share good practice. There is a ready exchange of information. Schemes of work were reviewed at the end of the last academic year to identify ways of promoting equality of opportunity. While systems for managing learning in the classroom are well developed, managers are only now beginning to have regard to improving retention, achievement and attendance. Managers conduct annual performance reviews with subject teachers and information gathered is fed to the curriculum area self-assessment report and action plan. Students' views on the quality of provision were not available for all subject reviews. Self-assessment does not sufficiently take account of teaching quality. Staff have participated in a wide range of professional development opportunities. Many of these have contributed to the successful introduction of Curriculum 2000 in the subjects inspected in humanities.

### **English and foreign languages**



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

### ***Strengths***

- very good pass rates at GCE A level in 2002
  
- good teaching
  
- well-resourced language centre
  
- comprehensive arrangements for supporting students.

### ***Weaknesses***

- poor retention rates on some courses
  
- well below average pass rates in GCSE English.

### ***Scope of provision***

84. The college has a wide range of daytime courses in English and modern languages at level 3. These include GCE AS and A levels in English language, literature and language, and literature, French, German and Spanish. There are GCSE courses in English and Spanish. French is offered at level 2 in GNVQ business French. Evening classes include Open College Network (OCN) at level 1 in French, Italian and Spanish; two GCSE courses in English and Urdu, and a GCE AS English literature course. Enrichment courses in languages, including Japanese, are offered to students aged 16 to 18. Students can study from a choice of 12 languages through the language centre, using independent learning study packs.

### ***Achievement and standards***

85. Pass rates for GCE A-level courses for the past three years (2000 to 2002) have been well above average, with 100% success in five subjects in 2002 and 99% in one. Pass rates at GCE AS are more variable. Pass rates in GCSE English have been below the national average for four years (1999 to 2002). Action has now been taken to improve this situation, with the introduction of a pre-GCSE English course for students who need more time to develop their skills at the start of the current term. Retention rates on many GCE A-level courses have been well below average. However, a significant improvement was seen in 2002. Retention in GCE A-level French reached 95% and retention in all three English GCE A levels, reached, or was close to national averages. However, the retention rate in GCE A-level German remained well below average at 63%. Retention rates on GCE AS courses were slightly below national averages. The retention rates on current 2002/03 courses show a significant improvement and are now matching standards expected.

### ***A sample of retention and pass rates in English and foreign languages, 1999 to 2001***

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	1999	2000	2001
GCSE English	2	No. of starts	167	143	151
		% retention	78	71	80
		% pass rate	37	44	37
GCE A-level English literature	3	No. of starts	87	57	83
		% retention	75	84	77
		% pass rate	91	100	95
GCE A-level French	3	No. of starts	29	26	29
		% retention	69	69	69
		% pass rate	95	94	95
GCE A-level German	3	No. of starts	18	13	22
		% retention	78	69	68
		% pass rate	93	100	73
GCE A-level English language	3	No. of starts	97	71	54
		% retention	66	77	81
		% pass rate	80	75	89

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

### **Quality of education and training**

86. Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives that are effectively conveyed to students. Teachers use a variety of activities to gain and sustain the interest of the learners. For example, in one GCE A-level English literature class, students looked at short extracts from two contrasting films on Othello, with the objective of developing skills to interpret character traits. A lively discussion ensued after each extract. This discussion was managed skilfully by the teacher and students were able to see how character's features were built up through costume, voice, body language, gesture, actions and personality. Students then worked effectively in pairs to draft essay plans on the leading characters in the play. In modern languages lessons, teachers make good use of the target language, limiting the use of English to instructions on assignment briefs. Students are encouraged to develop their speaking skills. In a GCE AS German class, the teacher used three different ways to introduce and reinforce new vocabulary on the theme of 'rights and responsibilities': reference to a dictionary, with translation into English; the reading of a short text, with explanations in German; then a short listening exercise, after which significant words were identified. These were followed by a short talk in German on the history of Germany 1945-1989, establishing detail by effective question and answer, then by a short film partly in English and partly in German on the destruction of the Berlin Wall. Group and pair work are used extensively in both curriculum areas to good effect. Understanding is frequently checked and learning is assessed firmly in the context of examination performance and success. Standards of attainment are good. However, the standards of speaking skills of some modern languages students is below that expected. Students are able to work collaboratively and are developing the skills to work independently. The standard of students' written work is good. It is neat and well produced with much of it presented in a word processed format.

87. Resources within the curriculum area are good. Most classrooms are well equipped and clean. However, some rooms are rather shabby and in need of refurbishment. Teaching materials are excellent and resource packs, reference books and dictionaries are readily available. The library stock is good and there is an annual subscription to many magazines and periodicals. Staff are well qualified. Modern languages benefits from a well-resourced



languages drop-in centre, staffed by a part-time technician/manager. Here, students including many who are not following a language course, have access to a wide range of materials including text, video, tape, satellite television, intranet and Internet.

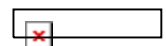
88. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are effective in English and modern languages. After initial interview and enrolment, a minimum target grade, based on prior achievement, is identified. Students' progress is then reviewed at monthly intervals by subject staff and personal tutors. Attendance is monitored and followed up systematically. Individual learning plans were introduced at the start of term, with action plans and targets. Students speak positively of the impact of this system on their progress. Staff analyse retention and achievement data and draw up action plans, but the issue of retention on some courses has not been addressed with enough rigour. In modern languages, students are expected to make effective use of the languages centre. Study time is recorded and monitored each week. Those conducting external verification procedures have praised the rigorous assessment carried out by the English teachers.

89. Students are well supported by curriculum teams. Learners with specific weaknesses are quickly identified and supported by individual teachers. Some are also referred to the study centre. Students of modern languages are also supported in the languages drop-in centre, where their knowledge and language skills are developed through either revision or additional work. Students following a pre-GCSE re-sit course in English receive extra support in lessons from a help teacher. Induction procedures are efficient and helpful. Foreign language assistant teachers are used effectively to support modern languages students.

### ***Leadership and management***

90. English and modern foreign languages are well managed in an open and relaxed style. Teachers work well in teams, sharing ideas and good practice. Communication between team members is effective through close contact and regular meetings at which curriculum development issues are discussed and action plans advised. All staff participated in the production of the thorough and realistic self-assessment report.

### **Literacy and numeracy**



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

#### ***Strengths***

- good practical application of the new curriculum in literacy
  
- good support for individuals in the learning centre
  
- comprehensive procedures for learner referral
  
- effective group work in literacy.

### ***Weaknesses***

- well below average pass rates on basic skills and key skills qualifications
  
- insufficient resources for basic skills
  
- ineffective co-ordination of literacy and numeracy
  
  
- ineffective internal verification of basic skills.

### ***Scope of provision***

91. Basic skills provision is delivered across a range of curriculum areas in the college. These areas include mathematics, communications, core curriculum and lifelong learning. Learning support for literacy and numeracy is organised through a specialist learning centre. The college's courses have been developed primarily to meet the needs of the 16 to 18 age group. However, there is an increase in the number of courses in adult basic skills, family literacy and numeracy. The college has introduced pre-GCSE numeracy and literacy courses at the start of this term. These provide an appropriate entry point for students who are not yet ready for GCSE standard. Students may take examinations such as numberpower, wordpower and key skills.

### ***Achievement and standards***

92. Pass rates on courses in basic skills and key skills have been consistently well below average. Many students successfully meet their individual learning targets but do not achieve a qualification. Retention rates in literacy and numeracy are above average, but well below average in the key skills programmes of application of number and literacy. Individual learning plans for students are based on an appropriate model, but all previously identified needs are not always included. Learning targets are set, but these are often too general or vaguely worded to be of use to students who require specific short-term learning goals to motivate them. The monitoring of students' progress against the targets in their plans is insufficiently rigorous, particularly in numeracy. Some students do not progress as quickly as they should. Small numbers of students progress to level 2 courses.

### ***Quality of education and training***

93. Lesson planning in numeracy does not take sufficient account of the different needs of students. Some aspects of numeracy lessons are unsatisfactory. Teachers have good classroom management skills and are effective in promoting a pleasant, productive working atmosphere. Teachers match the progress that students are making against the new curriculum and key skills standards. They develop their own teaching materials, and concentrate on everyday practical tasks which add realism and relevance to the lessons. The most successful lessons involve students in a variety of group work. Students are often encouraged to work together. This collaboration helps them to gain confidence and improve their social skills. Support in lessons and one-to-one tuition help students to organise and

plan their work. However, some basic skills groups are too large and contain students of widely different ability. Teachers find it difficult to provide enough personal guidance in lessons where the class size is large, and the learning needs of some students are not fully met. Lessons in numeracy are less effective than those in literacy. Lesson planning does not take sufficient account of the different needs of students. Much of the teaching is unsatisfactory. Teachers often talk too much. Where this happens, students become bored and little learning takes place.

94. Very few staff possess a professional qualification in the teaching of basic skills. Teachers have received limited basic skills training and there has been minimal professional development for teachers working in the area. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. The resources available in the learning support centre are adequate. However, the base room for the advantage programme is very poorly equipped for basic skills sessions and there are insufficient computers or materials for basic skills students.

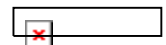
95. Teachers give students a great deal of support outside of their lessons. Learner referral mechanisms are comprehensive. Students' needs are identified through the cross-college initial assessment process, through the work of tutors or through self-referral. The support that is provided is effective. However, not all students who are identified as needing support choose to take it up. Teachers who provide learning support, some of it outside normal lessons, give careful guidance to students on the quality of their work and what they need to do to improve. Some assessment in literacy and numeracy is thorough, but sometimes teachers provide insufficient feedback to students in their written comments, and in a few instances, do not mark the work at all.

#### ***Leadership and management***

96. The cross-college co-ordination and leadership and management of basic skills are ineffective. Insufficient communication between teachers of basic skills has led to differences in practice. Internal verification procedures are not yet rigorous enough to secure consistency in the assessment of students' work. The monitoring of the effectiveness of the provision of literacy and numeracy is a priority which the college recognises. The college has recently formed a basic skills co-ordinating group. It is too early to assess its impact. The college does not produce a separate self-assessment report for literacy and numeracy. However, where the topics are referred to in other reports, no comment is made about the significant difference in the quality of teaching and learning, for example, in literacy and numeracy.

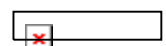
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#### **Part D: College data**



**Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age**

<b>Level</b>	<b>16-18 %</b>	<b>19+ %</b>
<b>1</b>	3	14
<b>2</b>	16	26



<b>3</b>	70	16
<b>4/5</b>	0	2
<b>Other</b>	1	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

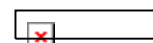
Source: Provided by the college in 2001

**Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age 2000/01**

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments %
Science and mathematics	1,619	105	23
Land-based provision	2	0	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	80	6	1
Business administration, management and professional	334	74	5
Information and communication technology	968	308	17
Retailing, customer service and transportation	0	0	0
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	251	7	3
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	0	0	0
Health, social care and public services	47	31	1
Visual and performing arts and media	1,171	276	19
Humanities	833	94	12
English, languages and communication	1,240	67	17
Foundation programmes	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,601</b>	<b>1,058</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Provided by the college in October 2002

**Table 3: Retention and achievement**



Level (Long courses)	Retention & pass rate	16-18			19+		
		1998/99	1999/00	2000/01	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01
1	Starters excluding transfers	1,439	199	108	57	141	96
	Retention rate (%)	85	66	76	89	84	83
	National average (%)	80	81	83	70	74	74
	Pass rate (%)	73	48	51	24	32	47
	National average (%)	62	70	66	61	65	66
2	Starters excluding transfers	882	810	742	185	178	229
	Retention rate (%)	78	69	83	92	84	92
	National average (%)	80	81	81	71	75	74
	Pass rate (%)	62	70	75	38	43	50
	National average (%)	81	79	83	68	68	67
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,950	1,716	3,503	36	41	129
	Retention rate (%)	70	69	79	36	54	60
	National average (%)	78	80	84	65	70	71
	Pass rate (%)	78	85	84	38	80	68
	National average (%)	85	85	85	61	63	66
4	Starters excluding transfers	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Retention rate (%)	*	*	*	*	*	*
	National average (%)	*	*	*	72	*	*
	Pass rate (%)	*	*	*	*	*	*
	National average (%)	*	*	*	50	*	*

*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 Sixth form colleges).*

\*numbers too low to provide a valid calculation

Sources of information

1. National averages: Benchmarking data 1998/99 to 2000/2001: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England, The Learning and Skills Council.

2. College rates for 1998/99 to 2000/2001: College ISR (Individual Student Record).

**Table 4. Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level**

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			Sessions observed
	Good or better	Satisfactory	Less than satisfactory	
	%	%	%	
Level 3 (advanced)	72	24	4	102
Level 2 (intermediate)	48	36	16	25
Level 1 (foundation)	44	56	0	9
<b>Total %</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>136</b>

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