



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

North West Kent College

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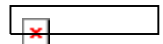
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Basic information about the college

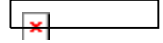


Name of college:	North West Kent College
Type of college:	Further Education College
Principal:	Malcolm Bell
Address of college:	Dartford Campus Miskin Road Dartford Kent DA1 2LU
Telephone number:	01322 629400
Fax number:	01322 629468
Chair of governors:	Brian Williams
Unique reference number:	130725
Name of reporting inspector:	Kenneth L Jones HMI

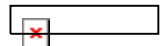
Dates of inspection:

18-22 November 2002

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

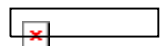


North West Kent College serves the communities of Dartford and Gravesham. The area is undergoing considerable economic development and is part of the Thames Gateway. The college has doubled its income since 1995. Major developments in the area include the Bluewater retail and leisure complex, the international railway passenger terminal at Ebbsfleet and the Crossways business and distribution park on the M25. There is extensive housing development in the area. The college is situated on three sites, one of which is on the River Thames where specialist maritime courses are provided following the merger of the college with the National Sea Training College in 1996. The two main sites are at Dartford and Gravesend. At the time of the inspection, the college was in the process of relocating from the Dartford site to a new site that had been vacated by the University of Greenwich. In partnership with Land Lease, the college operates a training facility, the Learning Shop, at the Bluewater retail and leisure complex and the Hall Training Centre at Gravesend provides specialist courses in refrigeration and air conditioning. Unemployment rates in Dartford are slightly lower than the rates for the south-east, whereas those for Gravesend are almost three times higher than those of the south-east. The college has developed a range of links and partnerships to promote its mission which is:

'To provide high quality education, learning and training which offers people the opportunity to achieve their potential and contribute to the success of the community in the North West Kent area'.

In 2001/02, based on college data, the total number of student enrolments was 17,400. Some 22% of students attend the college on a full-time basis, of whom 76% are aged 16 to 18. Some 90% of part-time students are adults. Kent has a selective system of education with boys and girls grammar schools in both Dartford and Gravesend. In addition, there are selective sixth forms in Kent and Medway and a large number of non-selective sixth forms. Of the 20 feeder schools from each of which the college receives 25 or more applications, 16 schools had lower pass rates of 5 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) A* to C grades than the England average of 50% in 2001. Of the total enrolments at the college, 87% of students are white. The largest single ethnic minority group is Indian, comprising 3% of total student enrolments.

How effective is the college?



The quality of teaching and the achievements of students are outstanding in two of the thirteen curriculum areas inspected, good in two and satisfactory in eight. Provision is very weak in one area. The quality of work-based training has improved significantly since the last inspection in December 2000 and is good. Overall, retention and pass rates were close to national averages for courses ending in 2002, representing an improvement over 2001. There is, however, considerable variability in the performance of courses within and between curriculum areas and over time. Adult learners

last inspection, but the level of less than satisfactory teaching has reduced.

Key strengths

- effective partnership arrangements and community links
- responsiveness to employer needs
- broad curriculum
- good guidance and support for students
- effective work-based learning
- management of projects.

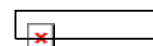
What should be improved

- the consistency and implementation of policies
- target setting for raising standards
- the effectiveness of tutorial arrangements
- the impact of quality assurance procedures on standards
- the sharing of good practice across the college
- the proportion of good or better teaching

- retention rates and/or pass rates on many courses.

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

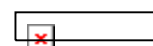


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	Very weak. Leadership and management have been ineffective in raising standards. Pass rates are poor and many students fail to achieve or progress. Resources are inadequate and limit opportunities for learning. Insufficient attention is given to improving the standard of teaching and learning and to sharing good practice.
Construction	Satisfactory. Practical lessons are well taught and there are outstanding pass rates on electrical installation courses. Work-based training is effective. Retention rates on some courses are poor and lack of punctuality disrupts learning. There are effective links with local schools, which provide good progression opportunities for students. The management of health and safety is weak and the standard of housekeeping in workshops is poor.
Engineering	Satisfactory. Practical lessons are well taught, but some theory teaching is unsatisfactory. There are very good retention rates on work-based programmes and good pass rates on motor vehicle National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses. Work based training is effective. Retention rates on some courses are poor. The assessment of work-based learners is good, but the contractual reviews are unsatisfactory. Courses are well matched to the needs of learners and local employers.
Business administration and management	Satisfactory. There are good retention and pass rates on full-time intermediate courses and good progression on professional accounting courses. There are declining retention rates on some part-time and accounting courses. Some teaching is effective, but teachers often fail to set work which is appropriate for the full ability range of students on some courses. Target setting to help students improve their performance is ineffective.
Computing and information technology	Satisfactory. There is a good range of courses which meet the needs of students and employers. Specialist learning resources are good. There are good pass rates on some courses, but low overall pass rates on national diploma programmes and low pass rates on some franchised provision. Most teaching is at least satisfactory, but some

	teaching fails to inspire students and does not provide sufficient challenge. Quality assurance procedures are not yet effective.
Maritime studies	Outstanding. There is a high degree of responsiveness to employers needs and effective collaboration with industry. Support and guidance are effective and pass and retention rates are high. Teaching is very good or outstanding, and the area is well resourced with specialist equipment.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning is effective on sports courses and there are good retention rates on hospitality courses. There are poor attainment and pass rates on some courses. Specialist resources are of a good standard and there are effective links with employers. There is insufficient development of students' key skills.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Good. The curriculum is well planned. Teaching is mostly good or better and students develop good skills. Attendance is good and tutorial arrangements are effective. Resources are good and provide a realistic working environment. There are poor retention and pass rates on two-year courses and ineffective development of key skills.
Health and social care	Satisfactory. There are good retention rates on some courses, but pass rates have declined on others. Teaching is mostly satisfactory or better, but does not motivate more able students. There are good community links and effective community-based courses.
Visual arts	Satisfactory. There is much good teaching and good pass rates on intermediate and most advanced courses. There is good progression to higher education (HE). There are poor retention rates on advanced courses and poor pass rates on photography and General Certificate of Education Advanced-level (GCE A-level) courses. Access to specialist information technology (IT) equipment is inadequate.
Performing arts	Outstanding. Most teaching is very good or outstanding. Practical lessons are particularly effective and students develop excellent performance skills characterised by energy, commitment and discipline. Students are well supported and benefit from an excellent range of specialist resources.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Good. Most lessons are good or better. Teachers ensure that all students participate in activities that extend their skills and knowledge. Courses match students' needs, interests and aspirations. Intervention and support are appropriate and sensitive and help them to feel they are valued by the college.
Numeracy, literacy and English for speakers of other languages	Satisfactory. Support provided through the college learning centres is effective. Individual learning plans are used well to ensure students make progress. Good use is made of vocationally relevant materials for teaching and learning, but little use is made of IT in lessons. There is insufficient evaluation of the impact of the support provided on learning.

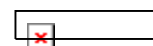
How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors and senior managers set clear strategic objectives and the college has been successful in widening participation and increasing enrolments. Considerable work has been carried out to rationalise the curriculum and to improve the standards of

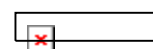
the college with employers and the local community. The accuracy of management information has improved. In 2002, overall retention and pass rates, other than for franchised provision, improved and are at the national average. Working relationships within the college are good, but not all lines of communication are effective. Curriculum management is not consistently good across all curriculum areas. College policies covering areas such as tutorial support, key skills and quality assurance are not implemented with sufficient and consistent rigour across the college. The quality assurance framework is not well understood by staff and quality assurance procedures are not having sufficient impact on raising standards. Financial management is effective. On the basis of overall retention and pass rates and the college's contribution to supporting economic development and improving participation in education and training, the college offers satisfactory value for money.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is good. It attracts many students aged 16 with relatively low previous attainment and adults returning to education or training. The number of students enrolled at the college has more than doubled during the 10 years prior to the inspection. Students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well integrated, and there is a clear strategy to meet the obligations laid down by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act 2001. The college's franchised provision, located in a variety of centres in the community and at the Bluewater shopping centre, has attracted many new students, largely through IT courses. Over 200 pupils from local schools attend classes in a range of vocational areas. Centrally provided support for literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is effective across the college, although not all students who would benefit from this support take advantage of it. Intensive full-time ESOL programmes meet the needs of young refugees and asylum seekers who have recently arrived in the country and wish to take up further education (FE) or training. The college works with a good range of local partners to collaborate in extending provision into the community. In health and care, work in conjunction with the National Child Minding Association has been successful in attracting low income groups into training. The college has successfully bid to lead an initiative to set up a network of community learning centres in some of the most deprived wards in the region. The college has a clear equal opportunities policy and monitors its implementation carefully.

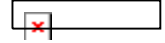
How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



Support and guidance arrangements for students are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the college has introduced a number of new initiatives in relation to initial assessment, tutorial systems and target setting. It has also broadened the provision of additional learning support. A wide range of support, guidance and welfare services is available to full-time and part-time students and trainees. The college is inclusive and serves the needs of a wide range of students including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who are particularly well supported. Students receive good advice and guidance when they first apply to the college and later when they are enrolled on to courses. There is a good range of documentation and resources to inform students of the range of courses and services available. There is good attention to induction at the outset where an initial assessment of students' additional learning needs is undertaken. There is a wide range of additional support in the learning centres and within courses. Many students benefit from this additional support, although it is not effective in all curriculum areas and offers of support are not always taken up. All students receive regular tutorials, including group sessions and one-to-one reviews. Tutorial support is not effective in all areas and retention rates are below national averages on many

by schools and course teams, but there is no systematic approach to monitoring attendance across the college.

Students' views of the college



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

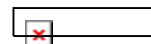
What students like about the college

- welcoming adult environment
- respect and rapport between students and staff
- support provided by teachers and tutors
- specialist accommodation and resources in some areas
- wide range of courses.

What they feel could be improved

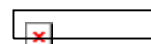
- standards in the refectory
- teaching accommodation in some areas
- transport between Miskin Road and the new site at Oakfield Lane
- key skills.

Other information

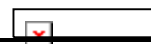


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). The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

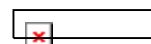


Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	58	34	8
19+ and WBL*	69	26	5
Learning 16-18	51	42	7
19+ and WBL*	69	26	5

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



1. Overall, the previous achievement of pupils aged 16 from local schools is relatively weak. Sixteen of the twenty main feeder schools have GCSE A* to C pass rates below the national average, in many cases significantly so. Entrance criteria for most courses are in line with national norms. Overall retention and pass rates were close to national averages for courses ending in 2002. This represents an improvement over 2001. Retention rates on all levels of NVQ courses are good. There are high retention and pass rates on most short courses for adults. Students' achievements on all the courses in maritime studies are outstanding. However, retention rates on GCSE courses are low. For example, less than 60% of students who started GCSE English in 2001 completed the course.

2. On long courses, there was an overall improvement in pass rates at all levels in 2002. However,

there are significant variations in pass rates both between and within curriculum areas. For example, students' pass rates in science and mathematics are very weak. Pass rates are very good on refrigeration and air conditioning courses, but poor on the NVQ course in plumbing. Retention and pass rates on the electrical installation course at level 2 are outstanding. In health and social care, pass rates vary significantly on many courses from year to year. Pass rates on the national diploma in sport vary considerably from year to year. On both advanced level and GCSE courses, a low proportion of students achieve high grades.

3. The standards achieved by students in lessons and in their work vary from the excellent to the very weak. There are some examples of outstanding and very good work. For example, in maritime studies, students' skills in practical applications such as fire fighting and radar training are successfully developed through effective use of industrial standard simulation equipment. In the same area, the exceptional quality of the distance learning packages gives students on NVQ courses in marine vessels engineering the opportunity to develop portfolios of an outstanding standard. In performing arts, drama students demonstrated excellent physical control and interpretation, producing performances that were disciplined and dynamic. In sports studies, students' coursework is particularly well presented and demonstrates appropriate skills of critical evaluation and analysis. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, participating in activities that extend their skills and knowledge. However, in hospitality, leisure and tourism, and hair and beauty, students do not develop their key skills adequately. Across some areas, students are given insufficient assistance with their numerical skills. The standard of students' work in mathematics and science is particularly weak, and most fail to develop the analytical skills necessary for success. In health and care, more able students are not extended sufficiently to develop higher level intellectual skills. In most of the curriculum areas, inspectors judged that students' levels of attainment were no better than satisfactory. Attendance and punctuality at lessons are satisfactory, but there are some examples of poor attendance on some courses in computing and IT. At the last inspection in December 2000, student attendance was 80%; this has not improved and attendance during the current inspection was 79%. Attendance is carefully recorded at course level, but managers do not have regular reports to monitor attendance trends.

4. The college has no systematic mechanism for analysing how much progress students make in comparison with their prior attainment. In some curriculum areas, rudimentary systems have been established to set targets for individual students, but there is little use of data on prior attainment in setting these targets. As a consequence, the college is unable to make reliable judgements about the impact of programmes of study on students' achievements. Although the college attributes the low proportion of high grades achieved on most courses to students' low prior attainment, the college is unable to provide statistical verification of this.

5. The college is successful in tracking the progression of its full-time students. Around 16% move on to HE, and 32% on to FE and training. Over 90% of students on advanced art and design courses have progressed to HE over the last three years. Some 39% of students progress into either full-time or part-time work, and 8% are identified as being unemployed. There are appropriate opportunities for progression to higher levels of work from most foundation and intermediate courses within the college.

16 to 18 year olds

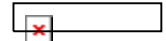
6. On GCE A-level courses, students aged 16 to 18 perform badly. Less than half of the students who embark on these courses complete them successfully. In 2002, results improved on GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) courses to around the national average. Overall college retention rates are low on advanced General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses, but pass rates are above the national average. On vocational courses at level 2, overall retention rates are better than the national average, with pass rates at the national average. Retention rates are low on GCSE courses and pass rates at A* to C are around the national average. However, in GCSE mathematics, in 2002, no student achieved a high grade. On entry level and foundation courses, students' pass rates have improved to above the national average. For example, on the NVQ level 1 in motor vehicle studies, the pass rate has increased from 7% in 2000 to 100% in 2002. In the years 1998 to 2001, no foundation modern apprentices left out of 25 starters. Pass rates in engineering improved significantly in 2002. However, there is slow progress for some work-based learners in construction,

retail and customer service. Few students aged 16 to 18 achieve key skills qualifications.

Adult learners

7. Adult learners perform particularly well on short courses, for example, in maritime studies and some IT courses such as Internet technologies (stage 1). The college's franchised provision in community settings, mostly in computing and IT, has good retention rates, but some low pass rates which distort the overall college statistics for adults at foundation and intermediate level. Retention and pass rates for adult students on entry level and foundation courses are above national averages. At intermediate level, pass and retention rates are at national averages. On engineering courses, there are good retention rates on work-based programmes. However, those adults taking GCSE courses fare less well, with most students failing to achieve a grade A* to C. At advanced level, overall retention rates have improved over the last three years and are at the national average.

Quality of education and training



8. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 233 sessions. They judged that teaching was good or better in 61% of lessons, satisfactory in 32% and less than satisfactory in 7%. The proportion of satisfactory teaching is the same as that observed during the last inspection carried out in December 2002, but there has been a decrease in the proportion of good or better teaching and a corresponding increase in the proportion of less than satisfactory teaching. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in 11 of the 13 curriculum areas inspected. Teaching is very good or excellent in 26% of lessons. The best teaching is in maritime studies, hairdressing and beauty therapy, performing arts and on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Where teaching groups are adult or predominantly adult, teaching is more effective overall with 72% of such lessons being good or better. Teaching on advanced courses is marginally more effective than that on intermediate courses and the quality of teaching on foundation level courses is below the overall average of good or better teaching for the college. In computing and IT and hospitality sports, leisure and travel, teaching is consistently better on advanced courses. In health and social care, teaching is more effective on intermediate courses, but the teaching does not make sufficiently high demands of more able students. The percentages of lessons graded good or better, satisfactory and less than satisfactory for learning were 59%, 38% and 6%, respectively.

9. The most effective lessons are well planned and learning objectives are clear and understood by students. Relationships between students and teachers are good and students are motivated and committed to learning. During economics lessons, teachers effectively motivate students who are eager to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and apply their knowledge of economics to real business situations with confidence. In maritime studies, theoretical principles are clearly demonstrated and practical tasks expertly demonstrated. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, teachers plan lessons carefully to meet the needs of students with different abilities. Teaching in the performing arts is challenging and stimulating and teachers and students have high expectations. Students at all levels take responsibility for their own learning and make effective use of their time and the learning opportunities offered to them. In the most effective lessons for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, learning outcomes are clearly defined and linked to student's individual learning plans. Some lessons are unimaginative and poorly planned. Sufficient attention is not given to the needs of students with different abilities and experience. Teachers do not provide sufficient activities to stimulate students' interest in their work and do not check that they are learning. There is little opportunity for discussion and questioning is superficial and only involves a part of the class. Students waste time copying notes.

10. There is much good practical teaching. In construction, students benefit from clear demonstrations of craft skills and individual tuition during practical lessons. In the best lessons in computing and IT, teachers help students to think through problems and enable them often to solve them on their own. In engineering, teachers ensure that students understand the theory

underpinning practical work and give students good feedback on their work. Students' understanding of practical work is carefully checked. Although there is much unsatisfactory teaching in science and mathematics, practical lessons in science are well planned and students carry out practical work with enthusiasm and confidence. Practical teaching is often set in realistic vocational contexts which help to motivate students and their understanding of theoretical concepts is extended through practical activities. In engineering, construction and health and social care, good use is made of work placements and work experience and students' learning in the workplace is consolidated in lessons at the college.

11. College policy aims that all students should achieve intermediate level qualifications in application of number, communication and IT and that students on advanced courses should achieve at least one key skill at advanced level. The policy has not been implemented effectively across all areas. Although the numbers of students successfully completing the key skills tests and portfolios in 2002 increased substantially, the overall success rate across the college continues to be low. There is effective teaching of key skills in engineering and construction and in work-based training. In health and social care, students make good progress on the key skill elements of their courses. In many areas, there is insufficient integration of key skills teaching with the main vocational or academic elements of courses and students fail to see the value of the qualifications. In hairdressing and beauty therapy, for example, insufficient attention is given to developing key skills and there is little assessment of key skills development in practical, work-related contexts. Skills are not developed in hospitality, sport leisure and tourism. In computing and IT key skills teachers do not take sufficient account of students' existing skills and few students are entered for the qualification in the visual arts and media.

12. The college has a clear assessment policy and the assessment of students' and trainees' work is fairly and accurately carried out. The initial assessment of students' basic skills has improved since the last inspection carried out in December 2000. In autumn 2002, over 85% of the student intake was assessed on entry. The progress of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effectively assessed and monitored. Trainees are effectively assessed in the workplace in construction and engineering. Work experience placements for students and trainees are well planned and follow-up assessments are comprehensive. Homework is regularly set and returned promptly in most areas. Assignments are usually well designed and carefully marked. Assessment in the performing arts is particularly thorough. However, in some cases, teachers do not include sufficient, helpful or diagnostic comments to help students to improve the standards of their work. Arrangements for reviewing students' progress are clear and followed by teachers. Parents and employers are provided with regular reports on students' progress and the college holds consultation evenings. However, insufficient attention is given to target setting and action planning with individual students to help them improve the standard of their work or to prevent them withdrawing from courses. Teachers do not make effective use of data on students' previous attainments to assess the effect of their teaching on individuals and groups of students.

13. Awarding body moderators' reports are positive and coursework is set and completed to a good standard. Internal verification procedures are appropriate and students' achievements are carefully recorded. At the time of the inspection, the college had recently reorganised internal verification procedures and had appointed an internal verification co-ordinator and established an internal verification forum. The college has a clear policy for teaching and assessing key skills, but this is not always applied consistently at course level. For instance, those students who have been assessed as needing level 1 application of number are currently without instruction. In addition, the arrangements for application of number in some sport and IT courses are ineffective.

14. Most teachers are appropriately qualified. A majority of teachers either have or are working towards a recognised teaching qualification. All teachers employed at the college have ready access to relevant professional and college-based staff development opportunities and the take up of these is good. All staff development activities are clearly recorded and there are clear links to the college information learning technology (ILT) strategy. The college has experienced significant difficulties in recruiting appropriate staff in some curriculum areas.

15. The college is generally a welcoming place, but there is little display and celebration of students' work. At the time of the inspection, the college had recently purchased a site vacated by the

University of Greenwich at Dartford to replace its Miskin Road campus. Refurbishment of the new site at Dartford is scheduled for completion in April 2003. The refurbishment and phased relocation is well managed and is being achieved with a minimum of disruption to students. The relocation will improve the learning environment significantly, particularly so in the visual and performing arts where there is currently some unsatisfactory accommodation. Additional accommodation will also be provided for construction courses at the Gravesend Campus. The college has improved its buildings, accommodation and learning resources at the Gravesend campus since the last inspection. There is good access for students with restricted mobility, who can gain entry to most parts of the college. There are appropriate arrangements for prayer rooms.

16. Classrooms are well maintained and there are good or excellent resources in many areas such as performing arts, computing and IT, health and social care and maritime studies. However, some areas of the college are drab, untidy or unsuitable. The area for brickwork is small and inhibits the learning activities that can take place. Classrooms and laboratories used to teach science and mathematics are cheerless and some are unsuitable. Some of the areas used for the visual and performing arts are dirty and untidy.

17. Overall, students have good access to information and communication technology (ICT) and other learning resources at the three main campuses, although there are weaknesses in some curriculum areas. The large, multipurpose IT suite is unsuitable for teaching theory; partitions used to separate groups do not provide sufficient sound proofing for students to learn effectively. The resource centres are well equipped and of a good quality. There are good study areas and good facilitator support. There are appropriate library facilities at each of the three centres. There is an intranet for staff use but there are no intranet facilities for students. There are few social and recreational areas for students. There are nurseries at the Gravesend and Dartford sites.

18. The college provides a broad range of full-time and part-time courses in most curriculum areas. During the seven years prior to the inspection, the number of enrolments more than doubled. The college is socially inclusive, and has been successful in providing education and training opportunities from entry level to HE. The majority of courses are vocational, and meet the needs of both 16 to 18 year olds and adults in the local community. Most programmes offer good progression routes within the college. There is highly specialised provision in maritime studies, one of only four such centres in the country. There is also specialist provision in the areas of refrigeration and air conditioning, performing arts, and some ICT and finance courses. An increasing amount of work at venues in the community, for example in ICT and health and social care, provide flexible learning opportunities for adults. The range of advanced GCE courses on offer is narrow and many of the courses are not successful. Provision over the two main sites has been rationalised in some curriculum areas, but some potential students are unwilling to travel to the site further from their home.

19. The college has very productive links with local employers. In conjunction with the Bluewater shopping centre, a wide range of IT courses are offered. In engineering and construction, good relations with local employers have contributed to the success of work-based learning. There is also good collaboration with local employers and national agencies in health and social care. In maritime studies, collaboration with industry is outstanding. Links with local schools have improved, and over 200 school students attend college for one day a week for 'tasters' in vocational courses.

20. There are good opportunities for students to add to their main programme of study with additional qualifications and appropriate enrichment activities in some curriculum areas, for example, health and social care and performing arts. Some 60% of full-time students benefit from appropriate work experience. However, enrichment opportunities across the college as a whole are few.

21. Prospective students receive good information about the college in attractive publicity and promotional materials that include accurate descriptions of courses. They are given good initial advice and guidance by central admissions staff, and are interviewed by course admissions tutors. A well-planned induction programme enables students to settle quickly into their courses. They receive much informative documentation about their courses at this early stage, along with a students' handbook and the college charter.

22. There is a comprehensive range of support services co-ordinated through the college student services section. Students have access to careers advice provided by qualified college careers advisers, supplemented by external support, from the Connexions service, although that level of support has been much reduced. The student services and advice team provide one-to-one support and advice for students on demand that includes referrals for counselling support from professionals. The team also administers the learning support fund which, during the year of inspection, received 750 applications from students for financial help with transport, resources or childcare and made 621 awards. Student services have been accredited by the Guidance Accreditation Board. The team also provides direct support to the curriculum areas for work experience placements that are taken up by 60% of full-time students and support to tutors in resourcing tutorial topics and enhancing enrichment activities, including external visits, visiting speakers and sports. There are two well-subscribed college nurseries that give priority places to the children of students and they have received good reports from Ofsted.

23. There is a well-established procedure administered by student services at initial interviews or induction to assess students' additional learning and support needs. There are specialist dyslexia assessment and support workers and supporters for the visually impaired who offer excellent support to their students. Full-time students and work-based students complete basic skills tests, as do students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Those in need of additional support are offered access to a programme of additional learning support in the college learning centres or receive additional learning support on their course from learning support workers deployed from the centre to extend the range of help that classroom teachers can provide. This in-course support is particularly well developed and effective for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

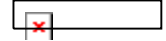
24. The additional learning support in the learning centres is well organised and effective for the students who take up the offer of support and they make substantial gains in literacy and numeracy. This has made substantial contributions to improving student retention. There is a wide range of in-course additional learning support deployed across more than 35 groups of students. This was introduced as a pilot scheme during the year of inspection. However, some of this on-course support is deployed to groups of students who have no clearly identified additional support needs, as for example in electrical installation and beauty therapy, where there is insufficient interaction between the teacher and the support worker and the time of the support worker is not put to good use. In other cases, however, this in-course support is very effective, and much valued by teachers and students. For example, students in performing arts benefit from the work of a support worker based in the programme area and they make significant gains in literacy and numeracy as a result of the support provided.

25. There is good additional learning support in health and social care and very effective support and intervention by learning support assistants during lessons on courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is very good monitoring and support for distance learning students in maritime studies. Some students who are identified as needing extra help are reluctant to take it up. For example, almost half of the full-time students are identified as having some additional literacy or numeracy needs at, or below, level 1 and around 60% of these received support. The college's pilot work to develop additional learning support at course level is an attempt to improve the level of support received by students who need it.

26. Regular, timetabled tutorials for all full-time students have been strengthened since the last inspection. There is a college-wide tutorial framework which has been developed by faculties with the support of advanced practitioners (experienced teachers) who are responsible for facilitating development and spreading good practice. The introduction of individual learning plans where students agree and tutors review clear targets for improvement and achievement was being piloted in several curriculum areas at the time of the inspection. In some areas, there is effective tutorial practice that helps students to raise their achievement of higher-grade work. For example, in hairdressing and beauty therapy and childcare education, action planning is effective and there are high levels of participation in tutorials. The practice in the tutorials in other curriculum areas is less consistently effective, and the discussion of progress is too general and lacks clear targets to help students secure improvements in their work. In hospitality and uniformed studies, for example, there is ineffective use of target setting and students are not fully involved in the system for reviewing and monitoring progress. In engineering, the on-the-job reviews of work-based learning trainees lacked

depth. In business administration, an area where individual learning plans are being piloted, there is insufficient setting of clear targets to raise achievement on level 3 courses.

Leadership and management



27. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a well-established strategic planning process. Senior managers and governors have developed a three-year strategic plan with clear objectives: to ensure that the curriculum offered meets the needs of the community; to review and develop human and physical resources; to develop partnerships; and to ensure that data systems support teaching and learning. Considerable work has been undertaken to rationalise the curriculum. At the time of the inspection, a major capital investment to move from a dilapidated site in Dartford to a campus recently vacated by Greenwich University was underway. Many partnerships are established linking the college to community groups in the area. Much work has been undertaken to improve the accuracy of the centrally held data on students. However, its use by middle managers is not yet fully effective.

28. The college management structure is well understood by staff. It has been changed periodically to balance workloads and improve efficiency. For example, there has been a reduction from four to three faculties. A school of science and mathematics has been disbanded and a new school of GCE A-level studies established, although there has been no head of school for a considerable period due to illness. Regular senior and middle management meetings along with a schedule of meetings for faculties, schools and programmes help with communications. This is also helped by regular newsletters, use of e-mail and the college intranet. However, not all of the lines of communication are effective since a number of middle managers do not fully understand the importance of completing documentation thoroughly and on time. Generally, working relationships are good. Work-based learning is effectively managed. There is good work-based assessment for modern apprenticeships in engineering and construction. Pass rates in engineering improved significantly during the twelve months prior to the inspection. Service level agreements have been established between the college training unit and occupational areas with arrangements for regular progress reviews. There is a thorough recruitment system that ensures that staff with the relevant skills and qualifications are employed.

29. Curriculum management is not consistently good across all curriculum areas. For example, in the maritime studies and hairdressing and beauty therapy areas, the management of the programmes is very good. There are responsive teams, high standards of classroom management and effective evaluation of students' views. On the other hand, the leadership and management of science and mathematics within the school of GCE A-level studies are very poor. Curriculum planning is weak and there is insufficient use of appropriate data. In a number of programme areas, there is little effective sharing of good practice and insufficient use made of staff development to improve teaching. Target setting at all levels within the college is weak. The main focus during the twelve months prior to the inspection had been on improving the accuracy of data and on setting meaningful retention and pass rate targets. The majority of targets and actions specified to bring about improvement are too vague to have an impact on standards.

30. The college is involved in many effective partnerships. For example, a highly valued 'learning shop' has been developed in the Bluewater retail centre involving a number of partners. Four new centres are now planned for the Kent-Thameside area. Relationships with influential groups such as the LSC, South East England Development Agency, Government Office of the South East and the University of Greenwich are good.

31. The quality assurance framework is not well understood by staff. A quality assurance manager has been appointed. One of his duties is to improve the consistency with which staff comply with documentary requirements, a weakness identified in the last inspection report. Programme area reviews have been improved and a new policy/procedure was written in January 2002. These

reviews are carried out over a two-year cycle. They are well structured and should enable managers to compare recruitment, retention and pass rate and destinations data over a three-year period. Programme monitoring forms have also been improved by using printouts from the new software introduced to analyse students' achievements. They have not been effective in the past since some staff have not completed them or have done so perfunctorily. It is too early to measure the effectiveness of either of these improvements. The self-assessment process is insufficiently rigorous. The report is mainly descriptive focusing too much on process rather than outcomes. Insufficient use is made of evidence from lesson observations to form judgements on teaching and learning. However, most of the grades allocated by inspectors are in agreement with those determined by the college.

32. The management of staff development is much improved. The college was re-accredited for Investor in People in July 2002. A staff development manager, and a committee that meets about five times a year, oversees the activity. In January 2002, a college-wide training needs analysis was carried out which led to a staff development plan. In February 2002, the staff development policy and the evaluation procedures were revised. Evaluation of staff development activity is now thorough and staff benefit analysis and cost benefit analysis have been carried out. The college lesson observation scheme is not having sufficient impact on the quality of teaching and learning. In some areas, such as science and mathematics, ICT and health and social care, it is not applied with sufficient rigour and good practice is not shared. There is an effective staff development programme for those involved with work-based learning who have developed skills in IT applications, key skills training and assessment, and equality of opportunities.

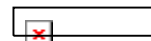
33. Some historical students' retention and pass rate data are inaccurate. There has been a considerable improvement in the accuracy of the data in 2001/02. Retention rates have improved to the national average. Pass rates for other than franchised/Ufi provision have also improved to the national average. The software used to analyse retention and pass rates is relatively new to the college and, as yet, the use made of this on-line data by heads of school, programme leaders and teachers is in some cases inadequate.

34. There is a good equal opportunities policy and procedures for its implementation. There are regular reports to governors. The new lesson observation scheme includes checks on equal opportunity issues in lessons. Student recruitment, retention and pass rate data have been carefully analysed by disability, ethnicity, gender, learning difficulties and widening participation categories. The checking of the implementation and understanding of equal opportunities policy is not sufficiently thorough for work-based learning.

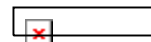
35. Governors oversee the strategic direction of the college effectively. They attend an annual strategic planning day and set targets for the senior management team through appraisal of the principal. These targets are not sufficiently focused. Governors receive regular reports on progress against the annual operating statements. There are very close links with the curriculum areas. For example, two link governors are allocated to each faculty. They have reviewed their duties and through regular interviews with students, teachers and managers have built up a good insight of the work of each of the faculties. In addition attendance at programme review meetings gives them the opportunity to analyse the performance of each of the programmes taught by college staff.

36. Teachers have annually negotiated agreements. These are carefully checked by senior managers to balance workloads and ensure effective use of staff. There is good monitoring of staff statistics such as staff turnover and sickness by gender and ethnic minority group. However, the systems for covering classes at short notice are sometimes not good. Finance management is effective. Budgetary forecasting and control is detailed leading to useful course costing. Reports to budget holders are regular and informative. On the basis of overall retention and pass rates and the college's contribution to supporting economic development and improving participation in education and training and social inclusion, the college offers satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Science and mathematics



Overall provision in this area is **very weak (grade 5)**

Strengths

- good technical support in science.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GCE AS and A-level courses
- poor retention on GCE AS courses
- declining recruitment and poor internal progression on all courses
- poor standard of learning in mathematics
- inadequate resources for teaching and learning
- no use of ILT by students
- inadequate leadership and management.

Scope of provision

37. The college offers GCSE courses in mathematics and human biology and GCE A-level courses in biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics. GCSE mathematics and GCE AS mathematics and biology courses are provided during the day and in the evening. Some 100 students enrol for GCE AS courses and around 20 for GCE A level. Of these, approximately 25% are adults. Around 115

students enrol on GCSE courses, 10% of whom are part-time evening students. Science options are provided on access courses. There is no vocational provision in science.

Achievement and standards

38. Pass rates on GCE AS and A-level courses are poor. Few students gain high grades in GCE AS or A-level examinations. Retention rates for both GCE AS and A-level courses are low, but in-year retention rates on GCE A2 courses are satisfactory. Retention rates for GCSE mathematics improved steadily during the three years prior to the inspection, but pass rates declined over the same period. Enrolments have declined steadily on most courses and progression from GCE AS to A2 and from GCSE is very low.

39. Mathematics and science students have poor analytical and problem-solving skills. Their oral presentation and group work skills are also weak. Mathematics students are able to apply basic mathematical techniques with some success, but their ability to apply their knowledge to resolving problems is weak. In science, students carry out practical work with confidence and they develop good practical skills. Students do not develop skills in the use of computers as tools in either science or mathematics.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE mathematics	2	No. of starts	187	129	95
		% retention	55	64	71
		% pass rate	50	40	33
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	28	15	5
		% retention	*	33	80**
		% pass rate	30	0	50
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	22	14	14
		% retention	*	50	64**
		% pass rate	43	50	33
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	27	19	16
		% retention	*	47	81**
		% pass rate	67	43	46
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	***	14	22
		% retention	***	71	59
		% pass rate	***	0	23
GCE AS physics	3	No. of starts	***	14	11
		% retention	***	86	82
		% pass rate	***	0	22
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	***	14	11
		% retention	***	86	85
		% pass rate	***	75	67

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

* date unreliable

*** retention data for GCE A2-level in 2001/02 are in-year and not directly comparable with the data for the previous two year GCE A-level course*

**** course was not available*

Quality of education and training

40. Practical lessons in science are effectively planned and well supported by technicians. Students carry out practical work with enthusiasm and confidence. In the best lessons, teachers question students skilfully to check their understanding and to promote deeper, reflective thinking. In one GCSE mathematics lesson, students predicted the shapes of graphs and debated their results. In many lessons, however, students are passive for long periods of time, taking notes in silence. Teachers do not provide opportunities for students to discuss their work and reinforce their understanding of scientific and mathematical concepts. Due to poor questioning and checking of learning, teachers are frequently unaware that students have failed to grasp key concepts or points of technique. In one lesson, for example, students had understood very little after an hour's teaching. Teachers do not pay sufficient attention to the learning needs of different groups of students when they are planning lessons. As a result, some students struggle whilst the more able are idle or bored. In many lessons, only a few tasks are set and students who finish their work have to wait for others to catch up. Many mathematics lessons are predictable and there is little variety in methods of teaching. Much of the teaching is dull and uninspiring and mostly involves note taking and repetitive exercises. Resources for learning are confined to textbooks and worksheets. In both science and in mathematics, students have little or no opportunity to use computers, data-loggers or graphic calculators which restricts both the scope of learning activity and the development of skills.

41. There is no overall assessment policy or clear statement of student entitlement, and practice is left to the discretion of individual staff. On most courses, suitable homework is set regularly and marked accurately, but little use is made of diagnostic assessment to set individual targets and learning goals to help students improve their performance. In one of the evening classes observed during the inspection, students' work had not been collected for marking and students are not given individual feedback on their progress.

42. Initial induction through tutorial groups is thorough, helpful and includes assessment of learning support needed in basic skills. Monitoring of students' attendance and performance is patchy and at the discretion of individual teachers. Reviews of students' progress, based on feedback from subject teachers, are carried out each term and based on target grades. However, target setting is not always thorough and reviews of students' progress in achieving targets are ineffective.

43. There is little subject-related enrichment activity to enhance learning. There are no mathematics workshops to help students on mathematics or science courses. Very few external trips or fieldwork take place. The key skills courses provided fail to meet the needs of advanced students.

44. Classrooms and laboratories are drab and, in some cases, unsuitable. There is no dedicated accommodation for mathematics and students' work is not displayed. GCSE biology is taught in an inappropriate classroom that limits the practical work that can be carried out. In a number of classrooms, the whiteboard is too small and can not be seen clearly by students. Appropriate regard is given to health and safety requirements in laboratories, but some hazards are not dealt with adequately. For example, fuming nitric acid, which represented an unnecessary hazard to staff and students, was found stored in a chemistry fume cupboard during the inspection.

45. Library resources are few. The book stock is old and out of date. A few periodicals are available in the library, but there are no learning materials in any media format that can be used by students for independent study. The computer network has no specialist software packages relevant to science or mathematics and there are no online learning materials or resources.

Leadership and management

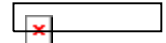
46. Leadership and management are inadequate. There has been no head of school in post to lead

developments due to illness and appropriate cover arrangements have not been put in place. Systematic action has not been taken since the last inspection to raise standards. Few of the weaknesses identified during the last inspection have been addressed. Quality assurance and quality improvement procedures are ineffective or non-existent. Self-assessment and course review procedures are lacking in scope, rigour and meaningful outcomes. Analysis of student pass rate data is cursory. There has been little or no analysis of students' progress relative to their qualifications and attainment on enrolment at the college. Differences in achievement by gender or ethnicity are not analysed.

47. Systems for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning are not in place. Lesson observation is not thorough and staff development programmes are not developed to raise the standards of teaching and learning. Schemes of work are just lists of topics, and good practice is not shared.

48. The range of courses fails to meet the needs of students. Vocational courses in science have failed to recruit and there are very low numbers on some courses.

Construction



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- much good teaching and learning in practical lessons
- outstanding pass rates in electrical installation
- effective links with local schools
- good retention rates of modern apprentices
- well-supported, work-based learners in good placements.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on some programmes

- slow completion of modern apprenticeship frameworks
- lack of student punctuality disrupting learning in some lessons
- poor housekeeping in some workshops and laboratories
- some poor management of health and safety in workshops.

Scope of provision

49. The college provides courses in brickwork, carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, plumbing, gas, refrigeration, air conditioning and electrical installation at intermediate and advanced levels on a full-time and part-time basis to suit the needs of students and employers. At the time of the inspection, there were 823 students enrolled on full-time and part-time courses in construction. Some 70% of students are aged 16 to 18 and many have chosen their course as a result of attending the college on school-link programmes. Around 175 students attend the college through work-based learning programmes. Of these, 32% are advanced modern apprentices, 59% are foundation modern apprentices and 9% are following NVQ training. Modern apprentices are employed in a wide range of small independent to large international companies that work mainly in the south-east of England. A large number of adults attend short courses in electrical installation, air conditioning and domestic gas safety to update their skills and knowledge. The college no longer provides GNVQ courses in construction and the built environment due to staff recruitment difficulties.

Achievement and standards

50. Pass rates on some courses are high. All the students on the City and Guilds intermediate electrical installation course have been successful for the three years prior to the inspection. Pass rates on the intermediate City and Guilds refrigeration and air conditioning course were well above the national average, but retention rates were below the national average. Pass rates for NVQ level 2 in plumbing have been well below the national average for the two years prior to the inspection. Retention and pass rates on NVQ level 2 brickwork and wood occupations are at, or below, the low national averages for these courses.

51. Retention of work-based students has improved significantly during the four years prior to the inspection. The retention rate of advanced modern apprentices has increased from 68% in 1999/2000 to all of those who started in 2001/02. Similarly, the retention rates of foundation modern apprentices have increased from 60% in 1998/99 to 96% of those who started in 2001/02. Completion rates of modern apprenticeships are slow with most students failing to complete within the timescales agreed in their original learning plans. However, students following NVQ training have demonstrated better success, with an average of 46% completing successfully during the four years prior to the inspection.

52. Effective additional learning support makes a significant contribution to students' achievements in this area. Students' attainment in practical lessons is good, with students producing work of a satisfactory industrial standard. Painting and decorating students work confidently in corridors and other public areas of the college.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Domestic gas safety	X	No. of starts	21	44	50
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	65	98	98
GNVQ in construction and built environment	1	No. of starts	50	78	13
		% retention	86	59	23
		% pass rate	67	26	67
City and Guilds 2360 electrical installation	2	No. of starts	11	43	15
		% retention	100	81	93
		% pass rate	100	100	100
NVQ in mechanical engineering services (plumbing)	2	No. of starts	22	94	87
		% retention	100	51	77
		% pass rate	82	48	49
NVQ in brickwork	2	No. of starts	8	48	15
		% retention	88	48	67
		% pass rate	29	40	50
NVQ in wood occupations	2	No. of starts	8	73	28
		% retention	50	40	54
		% pass rate	50	52	50
City and Guilds 2070 refrigeration and air conditioning	2	No. of starts	18	69	*
		% retention	83	67	*
		% pass rate	60	80	*

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

* replaced by two-year NVQ programme

Quality of education and training

53. All construction students are tested to determine the level of their numeracy and literacy skills during initial induction. Over 50% of students in the area receive additional support, which is mostly provided as part of their main lessons. The support provided for students is of a high standard and they express appreciation of the opportunities afforded to them. Both classroom and workshop-based teaching is mostly good and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. The preparation, presentation and organisation of most lessons is good. Students benefit from clear demonstrations of craft skills and individual tuition in practical activities. In wood occupations NVQ level 2, for example, students were shown the correct way to change cutters on a portable router with the teacher carefully pointing out possible hazards and stressing the importance of working safely. In the better lessons, students' learning is supported by good team teaching, which addresses the needs of individual students. Students' lack of punctuality disrupts some lessons, however, and is not routinely admonished by teachers. Assignments are realistic and students' complete workbooks through research and collection of evidence from the workplace. Theory and practical activities are well integrated. Most students respond well during lessons and work diligently. The development of key skills is helping students to achieve better work on their main programme. The tutorial and student review procedure for full-time and part-time students is good.

54. Work-based students receive good training from experienced supervisors and trades people. Students benefit from good work placements and most gain valuable experience, which contributes evidence towards their NVQ portfolios. Most work-based students attend college on a day-release basis both to develop the theoretical knowledge that underpins their chosen trades and to build their portfolios of evidence. Assessors visit students regularly at their workplace to carry out training, assessment and portfolio development activities. College staff provide a good level of support and there is effective communication between the college, placement companies and the site-based supervisors. All learners are linked to a liaison officer who undertakes initial induction, quarterly reviews and safety audits. Most reviews cover pastoral, equality of opportunity, health and safety aspects well, but the setting learning targets is not well established. Reviews lack clear targets to help students progress through their programme and to improve their performance. Teachers monitor the progress of work-based students carefully.

55. Teachers are suitably qualified for the subjects they teach and many have recent industrial experience. Adequate technical support is provided in workshops. Risk assessments are not complete and some teachers are not sufficiently conversant with health and safety requirements. Cramped facilities for brickwork inhibit the learning activities that can take place. The lack of a covered external area for bricklayers limits the scale of the tasks they are able to undertake. Painting and decorating students use public areas of the college to practise their craft, but this sometimes distracts other students. All students have easy access to computing facilities and the comprehensive library that provides a good service and range of materials for learners' studies. Some portfolios benefit from word processed material, but students do not make sufficient use of computers to develop their IT skills.

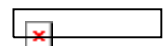
56. Internal verification is robust and well documented and is applied consistently. Students are provided with good written and verbal feedback, although progress charts are not generally displayed in workshops for students to observe their progress. Students' progress is reviewed regularly and feedback is provided to employers and parents on a termly basis. Teachers promptly contact parents on an informal basis to address issues of attendance and progression.

57. Appropriate account is taken of students' prior attainment and experience during assessment for key skills and NVQ awards. The range of programmes meets the needs of both the buoyant local construction economy and individual. Many employers contribute materials and equipment to the college for training purposes.

Leadership and management

58. The area is led and managed effectively. Courses match students' aspirations well and students can join programmes at various times during the year. Action planning resulting from course review and self-assessment is raising standards. Work-based learning is well managed. The academic monitoring of work-based learning students has improved significantly since the last inspection carried out in December 2000. Regular monthly monitoring and review meetings are held with academic and finance staff and appropriate action is taken to address weaknesses and disseminate good practice. Individual student records are well maintained.

Engineering



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

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- good teaching of practical work
- very good retention rates on work-based programmes
- good work-based assessment
- courses well matched to needs of learners and local employers
- improving achievement on motor vehicle NVQ programmes.

Weaknesses

- some unsatisfactory theory teaching
- poor retention and pass rates on some courses
- unsatisfactory contractual reviews for work-based learners.

Scope of provision

59. Engineering and motor vehicle courses match the needs of students and employers and there are good progression opportunities either within the college or to a neighbouring HE institution. Some 30 students follow full-time national diploma courses in engineering, with a further 336 students following part-time and evening only national certificate courses in engineering, computer-aided engineering and City and Guilds commercial electronics courses. Some 12 students are enrolled on full-time manufacturing/engineering skills courses. Around 40 students follow full-time motor vehicle maintenance courses and 116 follow part-time and evening-only motor vehicle and fabrication and welding courses. Some 56 pupils aged 14 to 16 enrol on programmes in mechanical, fabrication and welding, motor vehicle and electrical engineering. In 2001/02, approximately 18% of engineering students were aged 16 to 18. At the time of the inspection, there were 68 foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships of whom 53 were on motor vehicle apprenticeships.

Achievement and standards

60. Retention rates on work-based programmes are very good. Only 2 students left out of 60 starters on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships during the period 1998 to 2001. Pass rates on motor vehicle NVQ programmes improved markedly during the three years prior to the inspection. For example, on the NVQ level 1 and level 3 courses in motor vehicle studies, the pass rates have

increased from 7% and 25%, respectively, to 100%. Retention rates on these two programmes have generally also been above the national average. Pass and retention rates, however, are poor on some courses. Retention and pass rates on the national diploma in engineering were below the national averages for the two years prior to the inspection. Retention rates have been below the national average on the national certificate and on the computer-aided engineering courses for the two and three years prior to the inspection, respectively. The pass and retention rates on a few courses have fluctuated markedly above and below the national averages over the three-year period prior to the inspection, for example, on the performing engineering operations NVQ and its precursor course.

61. Students develop appropriate hand skills and those who have gained experience through employment are confident in workshops and are able to work with a minimum of supervision. Some of the students who have had little experience of practical work lack confidence and are very demanding of teachers' attention. For example, they are not sure of the correct drill size to use or have difficulty in using a hacksaw to cut materials to the required shape. Most students undertaking laboratory work use test equipment with confidence and are, for example, able to build electronic circuits with a minimum of help. Attendance in lessons is generally satisfactory.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ in motor vehicle studies	2	No. of starts	27	24	13
		% retention	17	75	77
		% pass rate	7	38	100
NVQ performing engineering operations	2	No. of starts	24	19	22
		% retention	92	37	86
		% pass rate	64	83	67
City and Guilds 2300 computer-aided engineering	2	No. of starts	72	42	25
		% retention	83	78	88
		% pass rate	70	55	95
National certificate in engineering	3	No. of starts	21	21	12
		% retention	91	62	75
		% pass rate	90	100	89
NVQ motor vehicle studies	3	No. of starts	13	32	18
		% retention	92	94	89
		% pass rate	25	67	100
National diploma in engineering	3	No. of starts	*	20	12
		% retention	*	65	54
		% pass rate	*	69	67

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

* data unreliable

Quality of education and training

62. Most lessons are well organised. Supporting notes, and material for recording students' progress in their work and assignments, are appropriate and used widely. Teachers check students' progress carefully. The teaching of practical work is effective and motivates students. Lessons involving

practical work are well planned and effective use is made of practical exercises to reinforce theoretical concepts. Good use is made of supporting notes and log sheets to record results. Usually, students are required to answer supplementary questions that consolidate further their understanding. For example, students working on a three-stage power amplifier had to answer questions that tested their understanding of how a circuit and its components worked. In practical workshops, students develop skills effectively. On the motor vehicle full-time course, the development of hand skills is aided by practical exercises such as manufacturing a clamp for hydraulic brake pipes. In key skills lessons, some numeracy work is closely related to electrical and electronic theory. Students' understanding of practical work is tested and good feedback is provided on their work. In one practical lesson, on the wiring of an electrical consumer unit, the teacher completed a detailed checklist with each student to determine the quality of their work and their understanding of the topic.

63. Some aspects of theory teaching are unsatisfactory. The pace of work in these lessons is often slow and there is sometimes too much copying of notes from the board or projected images. The work set is not always matched sufficiently closely to the needs of all the students in the group. More able students are not sufficiently stimulated and become bored and many students do not contribute to discussions during these lessons.

64. Facilities and laboratories for teaching engineering are satisfactory and resources are fit for purpose. Engineering and motor vehicle workshops are suitably equipped with a range of hand tools, machines, welding/fabrication equipment, motor vehicles and computer-controlled machinery. There are sufficient tools for students to work individually. Computing equipment has modern software, including microprocessor software, simulation packages and a computer-aided drawing package. Work-based learners have access to a wide range of excellent resources where they work.

65. The assessment of learners in the workplace is good. They are visited frequently and all assessment is undertaken by college staff. Assessment is well planned and organised and students are given clear guidance on how to improve their performance. An appropriate range of portfolio evidence, including job cards, is carefully recorded. Photographs are used to provide further visual evidence of work undertaken.

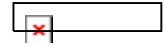
66. The process for completing the contractual learner progress review is ineffective. The on-the-job reviews take place more frequently than required for contract purposes. However, there is little target setting and there is no detailed recording of progress. There is a cursory checking of equal opportunities. There is little cross-referencing to the college-based reviews and the action plans prepared following assessment.

67. All prospective full-time students are interviewed and all full-time and a substantial number of part-time students are tested to determine their numeracy and literacy skills at the start of their course. Specialist staff linked to the vocational area provide effective help for students identified as requiring support. Key skills and basic skills support, for example, are provided by learning support teachers in motor vehicle workshops. Other students attend the college's central learning support unit for individual help. Personal tutorials are used effectively to support individual students. Actions and targets for improving performance are discussed and set.

Leadership and management

68. The management of the area is satisfactory. Engineering staff meet regularly in their respective teams. Effective actions have been taken to improve the poor performance of NVQ programmes. These include a greater emphasis on portfolio building, the integration of key skills with NVQ programmes and the development of a Monday evening workshop for learners. The quality of work-based assessment has improved significantly since the last inspection due to positive management actions. Self-assessment reports for the area do not, however, address issues relating to teaching and learning and retention and pass rates with sufficient rigour.

Business administration and management



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

Strengths

- good retention and pass rates on full-time level 2 courses
- good progression on professional accounting courses
- good economics teaching.

Weaknesses

- poor retention and pass rates on level 2 part-time NVQ accounting
- declining retention rates on some level 2 part-time courses
- ineffective target setting in tutorials.

Scope of provision

69. The college provides a wide range of business and professional courses. Full-time business provision includes the GNVQ at intermediate level, the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) in business, a secretarial administrator programme and GCE A levels in accounting, law and economics. Part-time courses include a range of secretarial skill courses and professional courses including the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT), the Institute of Management Accounting, and the Institute of Credit Management. Students can attend short introductory book-keeping courses and progress through the range of NVQs in accounting at foundation, intermediate and technician levels. The college also provides modern apprenticeships in accounting at levels 2 and 3. Some 180 students between the ages of 16 and 18 follow business-related courses and around 300 adult students.

Achievement and standards

70. Retention and pass rates are good on intermediate courses including the GNVQ intermediate business and business administration. There are good pass rates on GCE AS economics, with 100% retention rates in 2002. There are declining retention rates on some part-time intermediate courses, including the NVQ level 2 course in accounting. The advanced GNVQ course was replaced

by AVCE in business in 2001 and, although retention rates improved in 2002, both recruitment and pass rates declined significantly.

71. Most students are punctual and attentive in lessons. Written work in portfolios and assignments is of a good standard. Students work well and confidently towards their targets. Students in accounting carry out a wide range of calculations competently during lessons. Many students progress through the different accounting course levels and secure responsible positions. The standard of most students' work is good and their assignment work is well organised.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	25	29	12
		% retention	92	69	83
		% pass rate	91	80	80
Business administration	2	No. of starts	21	22	25
		% retention	86	86	100
		% pass rate	72	84	92
NVQ accounts (1 year)	2	No. of starts	62	63	59
		% retention	76	71	66
		% pass rate	57	38	54
Institute of Legal Executives certificate	2	No. of starts	69	66	39
		% retention	86	77	70
		% pass rate	85	98	89
GCE AS economics	3	No. of starts	*	8	14
		% retention	*	63	100
		% pass rate	*	100	93
GNVQ advanced business and AVCE business	3	No. of starts	55	52	**25
		% retention	73	58	72
		% pass rate	89	87	67

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

* course not running

** course changed to AVCE business

Quality of education and training

72. Most teaching is satisfactory or better, but there is some unsatisfactory teaching. The teaching of economics is very effective. Teachers motivate students through their expertise and enthusiasm. Students respond well, are eager to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding and debate and make judgements confidently. Students apply their knowledge of economics to real business situations effectively. For example, in one AVCE business economics lesson, most students were able to draw supply and demand diagrams for using monetary policy to increase economic growth or to decrease unemployment. One student ably demonstrated this, at her own request, on the whiteboard. In the most successful management and professional lessons, teachers explain

complicated business concepts clearly. In one effective lesson, students were introduced to the rules governing the calculation of capital gains. The teacher questioned the class effectively and students identified current examples to clarify points of detail and were absorbed in the exercise. Business and administration lessons are well planned and teachers check and monitor the progress of individual students carefully.

73. In the poorer lessons, work is not sufficiently demanding or varied to take account of the needs of the full ability range of students in classes. In these lessons, the use of questioning to check students' understanding and monitor their individual progress is often inadequate and fails to identify the difficulties that some students have in understanding new concepts. The prior knowledge and skills of students is not always recognised. For example, in IT, teachers do not pay sufficient regard to the knowledge and skills of individual students when planning tasks for them to carry out in lessons.

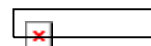
74. Assessment is carefully carried out and students are provided with detailed and encouraging feedback to enable them to improve the standards of their work. The work of business administration and secretarial students is carefully marked and grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors are corrected. Tutors are supportive and discuss progress and agree targets with students. However, tutorials are often of a pastoral nature and fail to identify clear and achievable targets to help students to improve their performance. Some of the targets are undemanding and are not sufficiently precise to motivate students and students do not always have copies of what has been agreed. At the time of the inspection, individual learning plans linked to students preferred learning styles were being piloted with full-time first-year students. It is too early to judge the impact of the development on learning. There is some use of data on previous attainments to monitor the progress of GCE A-level students, but analysis of other students' progress against their achievements at enrolment is not carried out.

75. There are good facilities for students to gain experience of IT and develop skills in using different software packages such as industrial standard accounting packages. Workbooks used in the IT area are up to date and appropriate. Many teachers have relevant vocational experience, and good use is made of the expertise and experience of part-time teachers whose main employment is in industry or commerce. A large, multipurpose IT suite is inappropriately used for theory teaching. Partitions used to separate groups do not provide sufficient soundproofing for students to learn effectively.

Leadership and management

76. The management of the curriculum area is satisfactory. Teachers are effectively deployed and appropriate use is made of resources. Lesson observation is linked to teacher appraisal. Course teams contribute to self-assessment and targets for enrolment, attainment and achievement are set and monitored. However, some course reviews are not carried out with sufficient rigour and action plans do not clarify the actions that need to be taken to bring about improvement.

Computing and information technology



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on GNVQ foundation IT and Internet technologies courses
- broad range of courses and good progression routes matched to employment opportunities

- good specialist learning resources
- effective individual support for students during practical work.

Weaknesses

- poor pass rates on Integrated Business Technology (IBT) II and computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT) franchised provision
- poor retention on national diploma programmes
- poor attendance on some courses
- insufficient challenge in many lessons
- weak review and evaluation of provision to secure improvement.

Scope of provision

77. The college offers a broad range of courses that match students' interests and employment opportunities. There are progression opportunities from foundation to advanced level and to HE within the college. Full-time provision for around 300 students includes GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses in ICT, national diplomas and awards for computing practitioners. City and Guilds modules encompassing hardware and software support, web design and computer animation as well as software applications are also provided. Introductory part-time short courses are offered during the day and in the evenings. Around 3,000 adult students enrol at local community and franchised centres.

Achievement and standards

78. Pass rates on GNVQ foundation IT and Internet technologies programmes are good. Retention rates on CLAIT and IBT II part-time courses for adults are good, but pass rates are poor. In 2002, pass rates on IBT II were 24% compared with national rates of 60%. Retention rates on the national diploma courses are below the national average.

79. Students of all ages develop good practical skills. Not all students, however, work and achieve their full potential in lessons. Many adult students in the community venues gain personal confidence through their success in learning to use computers.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
CLAIT (short and 1 year)	1	No. of starts	*	699	678
		% retention	*	96	86
		% pass rate	*	40	52
City and Guilds 7261 (30-hour short courses)	1	No. of starts	*	322	577
		% retention	*	96	99
		% pass rate	*	93	53
GNVQ foundation IT	1	No. of starts	15	41	46
		% retention	73	78	80
		% pass rate	73	91	78
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	*	16	53
		% retention	*	88	77
		% pass rate	*	79	59
City and Guilds 6965 IT systems support technicians	2	No. of starts	*	48	84
		% retention	*	79	90
		% pass rate	*	68	68
National diploma in ITA in 2000, 2001 computing in 2002	3	No. of starts	54	38	54
		% retention	72	50	68
		% pass rate	83	100	59
GCE AS IT	3	No. of starts	*	23	28
		% retention	*	65	71
		% pass rate	*	73	85

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

80. Teaching in 50% of lessons is good or better, but there is some unsatisfactory and undemanding teaching. Teachers plan lessons well, but formal schemes of work and lesson plans often lack detail and clarity about learning outcomes. In the best lessons, students are effectively supported in their practical work. Skilful questioning by teachers enables students to think through, and often solve, problems on their own. In one well-planned lesson, students were designing the graphics and navigation of a CDROM. The teacher was knowledgeable and provided students with immediate, constructive feed back which enabled them to learn effectively. In another effective lesson, the teacher had prepared a range of different activities to introduce computer animation. A simple paper folding exercise captured the students' imagination and enabled them to evaluate a computer animation that the teacher had prepared and to produce successfully their own computer animation sequences. The activities were carefully designed and managed to develop students computing skills as well as to maintain their interest in the topic. In other lessons teaching is often undemanding. In some lessons, the activities fail to inspire students and they lose interest. Teachers do not give sufficient thought to what students need to learn and do not set individual goals to enable them to build on the knowledge and skills they have already acquired. As a result, some students make little progress. In some lessons, teachers do not prepare activities that enable students to

carry out work that is suited to their individual needs. For example, in an application of number lesson, all the students worked on the same exercises despite a wide range of previous attainment in mathematics. Some students did not do anything for long periods of time and they learnt little.

81. The college has good specialist resources that include hardware for a range of technician and servicing courses as well as a newly equipped computer centre at the Dartford campus. Resources include a good range of multimedia and web design software to support a wide range of courses in new media technologies. The college produces its own workbooks and handouts. These are very clearly written and explain complex ideas and techniques well. Sometimes teachers choose activities that cannot be carried out effectively in the room timetabled for the lesson. In one lesson, for example, a discussion involving the whole class could not be carried out effectively in an open-plan computer workshop. In another IT workshop, there was insufficient space for large classes to work comfortably and learn effectively.

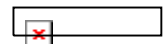
82. Teachers mark and return students' work promptly. A standard feedback sheet provides students with detailed information on how to improve their work. On some assignments, students are asked to assess their own work against the criteria set, which helps them identify ways of improving their performance.

83. All full-time students have a weekly tutorial, which includes individual one-to-one progress reviews. There are no timetabled tutorials for adults. However, students in the drop-in workshop at one franchised centre receive an individual tutorial for every 12 sessions booked and can receive more during quiet periods. Students are appreciative of the individual support they receive and students in franchised centres have full access to all college-based support services. Many full-time IT students are identified as needing further learning support for numeracy and literacy as a result of initial assessment. In one lesson, all students in the class benefited from help with language expression while developing their PowerPoint presentations. The quality of in-class learning support is not always effective. In another class, a student in a wheelchair did not receive the help he needed for him to learn effectively.

Leadership and management

84. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is insufficient liaison and sharing of good practice between the college and its franchise partners. Teaching teams on college sites work closely together and communication is effective. Teachers have successfully implemented curriculum changes to make programmes more relevant to the needs of students. Course reviews lack rigour and target setting is not used effectively to improve standards. Many quality assurance processes had just been changed prior to the inspection and are not yet well established. Insufficient attention is paid to improving the quality of teaching and learning and to raising retention and pass rates.

Maritime studies



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

Strengths

- excellent retention and pass rates on short courses
- good specialist, industrial-standard, teaching resources and equipment

- responsive collaboration with industry to develop new provision
- very good or outstanding teaching
- well-structured and effective distance learning materials
- effective pre-enrolment advice and guidance with regard to training regulations
- effective support of distance learning students.

Weaknesses

- ineffective checking of learning in some lessons.

Scope of provision

85. The college offers a diverse mix of over 150 specialist maritime-related short courses of varying duration. Students are drawn worldwide, and teachers regularly teach overseas. Short courses are designed specifically to meet commercial and industrial needs in response to changes in legislation and international requirements for the training of seafarers. Most short courses are approved and certified by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). Specialist courses are often developed through collaboration with the maritime industry. Short courses, which are usually between one day and two weeks duration, include courses in port management, marine surveying, and specialist courses in marine refrigeration. A number of NVQs and modular courses are offered through distance learning. Merchant vessel operations and merchant vessel engineering distance learning courses have been replaced by marine vessel operations and marine vessel engineering courses due to changes in the International Standards for Training and Certification of Watchkeepers 1995. During 2001/02, there were over 2,900 enrolments. The majority of students are adults with only about 100 being aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

86. Most students are employed and need to complete courses successfully to remain in employment, gain promotion or comply with changes in regulations or legislation. Retention and pass rates for short courses are high, especially for electronic navigation and radio courses are particularly high. Because of the specialist nature of the courses, national averages are not available for distance learning courses such as the NVQ 3 merchant vessel operations and the NVQ 3 merchant vessel engineering. However, retention rates are good for distance learning programmes with pass rates of 100% for both programmes over a three-year period.

87. Students are committed to gaining the qualifications they have enrolled for and develop their

knowledge and skills effectively during lessons. They achieve the required industrial standards. Evidence portfolios prepared by students on NVQ distance learning courses demonstrate that they are making good and steady progress relative to their prior attainment. Distance learning students develop effective learning and working skills, which enable them to gain qualification under working conditions that can often be difficult.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Radio operator	X	No. of starts	103	252	176
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	100	100	99
Radar and ARPA training stage 1	X	No. of starts	10	15	17
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
Personal survival techniques	X	No. of starts	665	375	569
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	98	99	100
Efficient deckhand	X	No. of starts	47	13	19
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	100	100	100
RYA day skipper shore-based theory	2	No. of starts	22	12	11
		% retention	100	100	91
		% pass rate	81	75	100

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

Quality of education and training

88. Most teaching is good or better and many practical-based lessons are outstanding. Lessons are carefully planned and skilfully managed. Theoretical principles are clearly explained and practical tasks expertly demonstrated. Learning is consolidated through realistic exercises and simulations. Lessons often involve imaginative computerised simulations. For example, specialist industrial-standard simulation software is used on computers to teach navigation and radio operating skills. During a radio course, students were required to respond to distress messages using simulated radio equipment. Their responses were made on computer images of industrial-standard equipment according to procedures they had already learned. Teachers develop students' skills and confidence carefully. In one outstanding lesson, students were required to extinguish fires using fire blankets, hoses and extinguishers. Individual students' attempts were observed by the other students and the group learnt from each other. In another effective lesson, students practised abandonment techniques into a life raft in a pool, and had to exit and swim to another life raft where other students helped them aboard. The syllabuses on many of the statutory short courses are extensive and have to be covered in a short period of time and there is consequently insufficient checking of learning in some lessons, particularly with large classes. Effective use was made of PowerPoint presentations in some lessons to ensure that students had grasped key points.

89. The area has excellent specialist resources. Equipment includes navigation and engineering simulators, engineering models, practice navigation equipment, a survival pool and survival equipment, and a range of industrial-standard lifeboats and rescue boats at a waterside centre. There are also specialist ropework facilities for teaching seamanship. A fire-fighting training centre is

equipped to industrial standard. Radio training is carried out using modern communications equipment, but display monitors on radio and navigation simulation computers are dated and no longer of industrial standard. A comprehensive range of air conditioning and refrigeration models includes many examples for marine applications, which can be used for fault-finding exercises. The room used for demonstrating survival equipment is too small and hot for effective teaching. The stock of maritime books in the main college library is adequate, but there are few periodicals and many reference texts are dated. Most teachers have sea-going qualifications, which are updated regularly and most teachers have the opportunity to attend conferences and events. Teachers adhere to the merchant navy uniform dress code, which engenders a professional attitude and expectation.

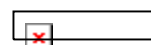
90. Assessment is rigorous and there are very effective and comprehensive assessment and monitoring procedures for distance learning. During an initial induction period for distance learning students, existing knowledge is evaluated and an action plan prepared and agreed with the student. Learning packs contain comprehensive learning materials and assessment exercises that are returned to tutors for marking and comment. Marking is fair and accurate and indications are given as to how performance can be improved.

91. Students are given effective support and guidance. Enquiries from prospective students are dealt with effectively and students are given good advice about statutory training requirements. Good careers advice is given to young people, and college staff often refer them to employers. Advice is often given on bursaries and other financial help with the cost of training.

Leadership and management

92. The management of the area is outstanding. Senior managers understand the needs of the industry and provide clear direction. The area has an outstanding record of successful collaboration with industry. Teachers share a commitment to achieving high standards and ideas and good practice are shared. Course teams work together effectively on all aspects of planning and operational management and courses are provided at short notice in response to the needs of clients. Courses and working practices are continuously reviewed and action taken to maintain high standards.

Hospitality, sport, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- good teaching, learning and attainment on sport courses
- good retention rates on hospitality courses
- effective additional support for hospitality students

- good range of specialist practical facilities
- productive links with industry and work placements
- good progression routes in sport and tourism.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on the diploma in travel operations and uniform services courses
- poor attainment and pass rates on catering courses
- insufficient evaluation of learning in hospitality lessons
- insufficient development of key skills
- ineffective target setting in tutorials.

Scope of provision

93. The college offers a range of full-time courses in sport, leisure and tourism, and hospitality. Sports courses include GCE AS and A-level qualifications in physical education, a GNVQ first diploma in sports science and a national diploma in sports studies. Leisure, tourism and hospitality courses include a national diploma in travel and tourism, City and Guilds preliminary cooking at foundation level and NVQ qualifications at level 2 in reception and food and drink service. A range of short courses includes first aid at work, basic and intermediate hygiene, and Galileo - a computerised airline reservation system qualification. A sport foundation course is provided for pupils aged 14 to 16 from ten local schools as part of a schools-link programme. Teachers also run 'taster' and coaching sessions for local schools. There are approximately 170 students on full-time courses, most of whom are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

94. Retention rates on hospitality courses are at, or above, the national average. Retention rates on the national diploma in travel operations and intermediate uniform services course are poor and have declined significantly during the three years prior to the inspection. There are poor pass rates on the NVQ level 2 food production course. Pass rates on the national diploma in sport and the

intermediate uniform services course improved significantly in 2002. There is good achievement on short sports courses with 100% pass rates on the first aid at work and the national pool lifeguard award for 2002.

95. Students work well in teams and display good interpersonal skills. Progression in sport and hospitality courses is good with many students progressing to Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes and many hospitality students gain relevant employment. Many students gain vocationally relevant awards in addition to their main course of study.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hospitality, sport, leisure and tourism, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds preliminary cooking 3330	1	No. of starts	19	10	8
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	74	80	100
NVQ food preparation and cooking	2	No. of starts	45	51	27
		% retention	76	60	71
		% pass rate	59	79	40
Intermediate preparation for uniform services	2	No. of starts	12	12	16
		% retention	67	50	38
		% pass rate	42	8	100
NVQ sport	2	No. of starts	*	8	19
		% retention	*	86	68
		% pass rate	*	50	100
NVQ food service	2	No. of starts	56	51	34
		% retention	90	83	84
		% pass rate	40	84	75
National diploma in travel operations	3	No. of starts	20	43	34
		% retention	95	63	59
		% pass rate	70	89	85
National diploma sport	3	No. of starts	14	15	12
		% retention	100	93	75
		% pass rate	93	57	100

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

96. Teaching in 60% of lessons is good or better, but there is also some unsatisfactory teaching. In the best lessons, schemes of work are well prepared and lessons are carefully planned. Teachers are well qualified and make good use of their own industrial knowledge and experience. There is good teaching in sport and tourism. Clear objectives are set and an appropriate variety of teaching methods are used to stimulate and motivate students. For example, in a lesson on the development of sport, the teacher encouraged students, through effective questioning, to explore issues concerning the development of sport and the relationships between national and local strategies.

Students worked together in groups to develop local strategies that would promote social inclusion in sport, based on their own experiences. In another lesson, a student used dance with a large group of male and female students to demonstrate effective communication and coaching skills. In many lessons, theory and practice is effectively linked. For example, in one lesson, the teacher kept questioning students to reinforce their understanding as they worked on dummy patients during a first-aid class. In some less successful lessons, teachers do not cover the work set out in lesson plans and there is insufficient checking of students' learning. In a few lessons, the teaching is dull and uninspiring and teachers do not apply theory to a practical industrial context and students lose interest in their work and become bored. Teaching in hospitality lessons is not sufficiently demanding for the more able students and teachers do not give sufficient help to students to enable them to evaluate and improve their practical work. In one lesson, the teacher asked the students if they had enjoyed themselves rather than evaluating the extent to which they had achieved the objectives of the lesson, which were to work on their own, hygienically, and use knives effectively.

97. The teaching of key skills is not sufficiently linked to course topics. Teachers do not develop key skills during practical lessons. There is little use of IT in the hospitality or sport courses and computer facilities are poor for hospitality students.

98. Students demonstrate good practical skills in their vocational areas, but records of their progress are not sufficiently detailed. Students' assignment work and portfolios are well presented and demonstrate good use of IT. Much of the feedback to students following assessment is verbal and teachers gave few written records to students to help them identify what they can do to improve their work.

99. Most students are assessed within the first few weeks of their course to see if they need additional support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. A number of students with varying learning needs and disabilities are well supported on hospitality courses. They are helped by a team of support workers and during group exercises teachers take the opportunity to work with individual students to help them maintain and improve the quality of their work. In sports lessons, equal opportunities are actively promoted and discriminating attitudes are challenged and used effectively to raise students' awareness of equal opportunities issues.

100. The tutorial system does not encourage students to take responsibility for their own progress. Group tutorials are often not well planned. Targets agreed with tutors are weak and are not demanding enough to help students to raise their level of understanding and skills. They are too general and do not set specific dates for review and completion. In hospitality, tutorials do not address the study skills needed to help students achieve their qualification.

101. A good enrichment programme is available to all students, which includes exchanges with students from other countries, sports teams and opportunities to gain additional qualifications. There are good links with industry and European colleagues. Students take part in exchanges with catering students in other countries. The few work-based students are employed in a variety of good catering establishments with good employer support. Students attend national and regional exhibitions to help them broaden and extend their knowledge of the industry and to learn about new developments in specialist equipment. Students attend work placements during their course and this experience is used effectively to develop their learning on their return to college. Students make presentations to their fellow students about what they have learnt.

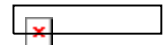
102. The college has a wide range of good specialist practical resources providing students with good, realistic work experience. With the acquisition of the new campus at Dartford, the college has two swimming pools and three sport halls. There is good IT equipment and software for travel and tourism courses. Much of the catering equipment is suitable for course requirements. Practical rooms are well equipped and reflect industrial standards, but some theory teaching rooms are drab and have no subject identity.

Leadership and management

103. The management of the area is satisfactory. Teachers work well within their teams, but there is

little collaboration or sharing of good practice between hospitality and tourism teams. Course team meetings take place regularly and action plans are recorded. Budgets and physical resources are managed effectively. Course level targets are set to improve the performance, but self-assessment reports are produced with insufficient involvement of teachers and tutors. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report for hospitality, but considered that it failed to address weakness in teaching and learning. Quality assurance for the uniform service provision is inadequate. External moderators' reports repeatedly highlighted poor internal verification, which has not been addressed. There is an over-reliance on part-time teachers.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



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

Strengths

- good teaching
- effective support for part-time students
- effective action planning and target setting
- good specialist resources for practical work
- good enrichment opportunities for students
- effective curriculum management.

Weaknesses

- poor retention and achievement on two year courses
- poor integration of vocationally relevant IT

- ineffective development of key skills.

Scope of provision

104. The college offers full-time and part-time courses in hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapy for some 188 full-time students and 132 part-time students. Qualifications are offered at NVQ levels 2 and 3 or their equivalent. Complementary therapy courses include Indian head massage, reflexology, aromatherapy and body massage. There is no work-based provision, although some 20 salon-based hairdressing students attend college on a traditional day-release basis. About half the full-time students are adults and flexible timetable arrangements enable students with childcare responsibilities to attend college. Most part-time students are adults following beauty therapy and complementary therapy courses either during the day or the evening. There is an extensive enrichment programme that provides good opportunities for students to gain a broader perspective of the industry.

Achievement and standards

105. The retention and pass rates are good and are generally above national averages for one-year courses in hairdressing and beauty. There are good pass rates on part-time and some full-time courses, including NVQ level 2 beauty therapy, complementary therapy courses and body massage. There are poor retention rates on two-year courses. The retention rates for the two-year advanced beauty therapy and holistic therapy courses were significantly below the national average in 2002. There are good pass rates for salon-based students. In 2002, 86% achieved both their NVQ and key skills qualification, which is significantly above the national average. Attendance is high, at 89%.

106. All students develop a good level of practical skills. Students across all programmes demonstrate a high standard of professional appearance and conduct in salon settings. The standard of students' work is good and nationally recognised companies offer students good work opportunities and hold recruitment days for cruise ships, which encourages students to gain specific qualifications for the industry and commercial experience.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ beauty therapy (one year)	2	No. of starts	38	62	44
		% retention	87	85	82
		% pass rate	88	*	94
NVQ hairdressing (one year)	2	No. of starts	35	41	24
		% retention	67	80	83
		% pass rate	86	61	79
NVQ hairdressing (two year)	2	No. of starts	60	52	52
		% retention	65	60	60
		% pass rate	80	72	*
Beauty therapy NVQ (two year)	3	No. of starts	**	17	13
		% retention	**	80	62
		% pass rate	**	100	88
Body massage diploma	3	No. of starts	28	30	23

		% retention	89	70	96
		% pass rate	100	76	100
Diploma in holistic therapy	3	No. of starts	**	15	12
		% retention	**	87	50
		% pass rate	**	67	83

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

* data unreliable

** course did not run

Quality of education and training

107. There is much good or better teaching. Lesson plans take into account the individual learning needs of students. Teachers use a range of imaginative teaching methods and students achieve a high level of practical skills. For example, in an effective practical lesson, the ability levels of all students were accommodated through the appropriate allocation of timed professional treatments. The more able students concentrated on developing their technique and treatment times closer to industrial acceptable norms by working on a greater number of clients in the salon, while those students who needed more time concentrated on developing competent techniques through working on fewer clients. Effective questioning of students in the practical salon settings help to develop their understanding of both theory and practical application. Teachers use their expertise well to ensure that learning is effectively consolidated. For example, following a practical lesson on perming, the teacher used a series of diagrams to illustrate the chemical changes that occur as a result of the treatment. Students worked in small groups and the teacher skilfully managed the feedback from each group to consolidate students understanding of key concepts.

108. Part-time, day-release hairdressing students are well supported by the college. They are visited in their employers' salons regularly by a workplace assessor. Progress reviews clearly identify students' individual learning and support needs and targets are agreed. Teachers take these needs into account when students attend their day-release classes. Students make good progress towards achieving their learning goals and employers are informed about their progress. They value the day-release programme and support it well. Careful timetabling takes account of the difficulties students with family commitments have attending college.

109. Assessment is effectively planned across all courses and students have access to the full range of assessment opportunities during the practical salon sessions. Target setting and action planning for individual students is effective. Attendance is effectively monitored. Students understand the assessment and action planning process and make good progress towards achieving their individual learning goals. Initial screening is effective and highlights individual support needs. Teachers adjust their lesson plans to accommodate these needs. Personal tutors meet their students regularly to discuss their progress. The action planning process enables tutors and teachers to focus on the learning needs of individual students. Weekly timetabled tutorial and action planning sessions help students to maintain their portfolios of evidence. Sufficient attention is not being given to developing the key skills of college-based students and there is little assessment of key skills in vocational situations.

110. The salon accommodation is of a good standard and reflects good industrial standards. Good commercial products are used in treatments. The reception training facilities are not fully used for teaching and assessment. Computers located in the salons are not used effectively for teaching and learning. They are not linked to the college IT system and there is no vocationally specific software for students to use.

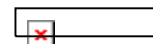
111. There is a good range of course-related enrichment opportunities. They provide students with

the opportunity to gain further relevant vocational qualifications. For example, there are short courses in fashion make-up, nail art and professional product training provided by nationally recognised companies. The college also hosts visits from suppliers for the benefit of local employers and students. These visits identify new commercial practices and tutors are enthusiastic to use this information to develop the enrichment programme. Students organise the event and their management of the occasion is used as assessment evidence towards their qualification.

Leadership and management

112. The area is effectively led and managed. There is effective teamwork across all the subject areas. Students express high levels of satisfaction with the courses. College quality assurance procedures are effectively managed at curriculum level. Regular team meetings routinely address issues such as retention and pass rates, internal verification, action planning and student issues. Effective monitoring of courses and analysis of action plans are a useful base for self-assessment. Strengths and weaknesses are thoroughly evaluated, however, some of the retention and achievement data which are used do not accurately reflect pass rates.

Health and social care



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

Strengths

- good pass rates on intermediate level courses
- effective in-class learning support
- productive community links.

Weaknesses

- students' slow progress on NVQ early years and diploma in nursery nursing courses
- poor planning of teaching for more able students in many lessons.

Scope of provision

113. The college provides courses in childcare and education at foundation and intermediate levels, AVCE in health and social care, NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in early years and care and NVQ level 3 in care and teaching assistance. Full-time and part-time courses are provided during the day and part-

time courses during the evening and on Saturday. The part-time day course is for adults who work as classroom or learning assistants. Day workshops are held at college for work-based students. Evening courses for NVQ early years and care students and are held in community venues. Qualifications in areas such as first aid, manual handling and basic hygiene are provided through short courses. Most students are aged 16 to 18 and only a small number of adults enrol on full-time courses. There are some 160 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and 20 adults. Only about 10 of the 262 part-time students are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

114. There are good retention and pass rates on the developing childminding practice certificate and good pass rates in childcare and education. The pass rates on the diploma in nursery nursing dropped significantly in 2002 and are well below the national average. There are good retention rates on the NVQ level 3 early years and the diploma in nursery nursing. Retention rates on courses in child minding and foundation in caring, which had been recently introduced at the time of the inspection, are good and well above the national average.

115. Full-time students work towards key skill qualifications at an appropriate level in application of number, communication and IT and many are successful. Most students produce work of an appropriate standard, but students on the early years and diploma in nursery nursing courses make slow progress. Many NVQ students do not achieve the full qualification within the period agreed in their learning agreements.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Certificate in childcare and education	2	No. of starts	15	17	24
		% retention	67	76	75
		% pass rate	90	54	88
Developing childminding practice	2	No. of starts	18	*	17
		% retention	94	*	100
		% pass rate	94	*	88
National diploma in childhood studies	3	No. of starts	34	45	45
		% retention	77	69	60
		% pass rate	76	71	81
Diploma in nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	31	15	22
		% retention	77	93	89
		% pass rate	83	100	59
National diploma in science (health)	3	No. of starts	11	9	10
		% retention	73	89	66
		% pass rate	86	75	83
NVQ in early years	3	No. of starts	18	64	53
		% retention	78	92	99
		% pass rate	71	80	52

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

116. Most teaching is satisfactory or good, but there are some unsatisfactory lessons. In most lessons, teachers use a range of imaginative teaching methods to maintain students' interest in their work and develop their learning. For example, in one lesson, students acted the part of three and five year olds playing competitive board games. They gained insight into how children feel and behave when they do not win. In another lesson students had been encouraged to research the views of a range of learning theorists and gave presentations which included acting out the research they had read about. Another group of students had chosen favourite fairy stories and was making puppets and puppet stages for use with children at the college nursery. The students developed knowledge and skills that they needed to complete their assignments. In some weaker lessons, the teachers had failed to plan the work adequately and students did not understand the purpose of the lessons. The tasks set were too easy and did not motivate all the students in the class. In a lesson on budgeting, students identified items for purchasing from early years catalogues. Students were not clear about the purpose of the lesson and the work was not sufficiently demanding for their level of study. There was no attempt to develop students' key skills in the application of number.

117. Students with specific learning needs are well supported during lessons. Learning assistants help sight-impaired students with note taking and help students with other special learning needs with the interpretation of text and new knowledge. Teachers create opportunities during group work for providing additional support for those students who need more time to complete tasks. However, in a significant number of lessons, the work is not sufficiently demanding to enable more able students to fulfil their potential. In these lessons, the tasks set do not take account of the different abilities of students and the needs of all students in the groups are not met. Some students, for example, complete the work set quickly and thereafter have nothing to do for long periods of time. Extra learning materials appropriate to their needs are not provided.

118. Teachers are well qualified and most have relevant experience of care services. They recount relevant experiences for illustrative purposes during lessons to help students gain insights into the realities of working in care occupations. Work placements are well organised and the experience students gain is linked effectively to college-based activities. Students make good use of their experience of work for illustrative purposes during lessons. Health and social care students on advanced courses benefit from work experience throughout the year. An enrichment programme gives students opportunities to gain skills in self-defence, assertiveness and stress management.

119. Students' work is assessed carefully and is returned with clear comments that help them to make further progress. Initial diagnostic assessments are carried out at, or just after, enrolment to identify students' specific learning needs. The results are used by teachers to set learning targets for students through the preparation of individual learning plans. The plans are reviewed regularly and modified in the light of the progress the students are making. Students are given clear information about their progress. However, the targets set for assessing work-based students are not always adhered to and students' learning plans are not always modified to reflect changes in targets. Although the college had sufficient work-based assessors at the time of the inspection, a shortage of assessors had a detrimental effect on students' progress in the year prior to inspection.

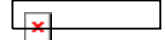
120. Courses are well provided with a good stock of textbooks, journals and magazines both at the college library and in classrooms. Students use the Internet to find information for completing assignments, but the use of IT in teaching is hampered by the lack of computers in classrooms. Equipment and teaching materials for early years education are of a high quality. Accommodation is spacious and allows for innovative learning. One classroom is set up as a play area and children from the college nursery are invited to play.

Leadership and management

121. The area is well managed. Managers have responded well to a demand for community-based learning and are widening participation. College membership of organisations such as the NHS Workforce Confederation and the West Kent Primary Care Trust has led to NVQ early years, care training and childminding courses being offered at community locations where the people who wish to enrol on the courses feel most comfortable. Course reviews and self-assessment are carried out

carefully and strengths and weaknesses acknowledged. Teachers are given responsibilities to lead on different parts of the action plan.

Visual arts



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

Strengths

- much good teaching
- good pass rates on level 2 and most level 3 courses
- students' development of good critical, communication and design specific IT skills
- good progression to HE from advanced art and design courses.

Weaknesses

- poor retention rates on advanced media courses and GCE AS media and art
- unkempt appearance of art areas and little display of students' work
- poor pass rates on full-time photography courses and GCE AS and A-level art
- inadequate specialist IT equipment.

Scope of provision

122. The college provides a good range of courses at intermediate and advanced level with good progression opportunities in art design and media. There are few part-time courses. At intermediate level, 58 full-time students follow courses in media and art and design. There are part-time intermediate courses in photography and life drawing. Some 260 full-time and 60 part-time students

study for advanced qualifications, mostly national diplomas, in fine art, three-dimension (3D) design, graphics, fashion, multimedia, media and photography. The college also offers part-time GCE A-level courses in art and media, a non-certificated foundation course in art and design, and a foundation course in photography. There are no courses at entry level. Most full-time students are aged 16 to 18.

Achievement and standards

123. Students achieve good pass rates on most full-time courses. Pass rates were well above the national average on the GNVQ intermediate art and design, and the national diploma in art design, which replaced the GNVQ advanced diploma in 2002. Retention rates, however, are at, or below, the national average. Retention rates for GCE AS were 17 percentage points below the national average. Pass rates on the intermediate GNVQ in media, which was introduced 2002, were above the national average with good retention rates. Pass rates are very poor and declining on the national diploma in photography, City and Guilds photography, and GCE AS and A-level art courses. Pass rates on media courses are good, but the retention rates on the national diploma and GCE AS media courses were below the national average in 2002. Retention rates on the national diploma in media are also declining. Retention rates were good on the national diploma in photography in 2002, but numbers on this course halved during the three years prior to the inspection. Retention rates on part-time photography courses are also very poor.

124. Students develop good critical, analytical, research and computer design skills. Practical work in art and design is well researched and is carried out competently but some students' work lacks inspiration and creative ambition and consequently, although these students gain their qualifications, they fail to achieve high grades.

125. Many of the students who complete art and design courses progress to HE. Some 90% of students went on to HE during the three years prior to the inspection. The number going to HE in media is low, but many find full-time employment.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and guilds photography 9321	1	No. of starts	45	36	**
		% retention	78	61	**
		% pass rate	34	23	**
GNVQ intermediate art and design	2	No. of starts	32	35	31
		% retention	75	86	77
		% pass rate	79	70	92
* GNVQ advanced art and design	3	No. of starts	33	21	*
		% retention	61	62	*
		% pass rate	95	85	*
* National diploma in design	3	No. of starts	*	*	27
		% retention	*	*	81
		% pass rate	*	*	77
National diploma in photography	3	No. of starts	20	14	10
		% retention	75	64	90
		% pass rate	67	100	56
National diploma in	3	No. of starts	31	35	48

media		% retention	87	65	56
		% pass rate	88	95	96
GCE AS media studies	3	No. of starts	***	20	25
		% retention	***	75	68
		% pass rate	***	87	94

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

* GNVQ art and design replaced by national diploma in art and design 2001/02

** 9321 replaced by 6923 in 2002

*** course not available

Quality of education and training

126. There is much good teaching and teachers and students work well together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Most lessons are well planned and theory and practical work are well integrated. In an effective fashion lesson, where students worked on developing research and design skills, students used materials creatively and experimented with confidence. The teacher carefully discussed ideas and progress with each student and guided them without being prescriptive. Students used computers effectively and discussed their ideas confidently. The best lessons are clearly introduced and students understand what is expected of them. In a lesson on the use of digital cameras and image manipulation, the teacher was enthusiastic and clearly interested in the topic. The students were clear about the purpose of the lesson and were motivated and absorbed in their work. In a less satisfactory photography lesson, students looked at photographs the group had taken, but were bored and talked amongst themselves. They were not clear about the purpose of the lesson and what was expected of them. They learnt little.

127. There is a comprehensive range of enrichment activities. These include visits, exhibitions of students' work, collaboration with industry, competition entries and 'live' projects with the local authority. There is some good internal collaboration. For example, a successful fashion show was organised using the creations of fashion students, modelled and produced by performing arts students, and filmed by media students. There is some development of key skills, but there is no specific support for developing communication and numeracy skills.

128. Students learn successfully and develop their understanding, knowledge and confidence through both theory and practical work. They develop good skills, but practical art and design work often lacks creative ambition and excitement. Projects are well planned, but creative exploration is not taken far enough and students fail to realise their full potential. Observational drawing is sound, but unexciting. Students develop good critical and analytical skills. They express themselves with confidence and engage readily in discussion. In a successful media lesson, students contributed well and enthusiastically to discussions on the work of Cronenberg. They explored classical and gothic concepts, bringing in Greeks, Romans, Fascism, Superman and Batman, Descartes and Einstein amongst others.

129. Students are well advised about the content, purpose and requirements of courses prior to enrolment. Assessment is thorough and assessment criteria clearly stated on all assignment briefs and explained to students. Teachers' comments on assessment sheets are detailed and help students to improve the standard of their work. Students also assess their own work, which helps them to identify how they can improve their performance. Tutorials are used effectively to develop action plans and monitor individual students' progress. Teachers and tutors support students well and provide good advice on both academic and personal issues.

130. Teachers are well supported by technical staff and, at the time of the inspection, a further

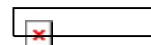
technician was being appointed to maintain computers and digital equipment.

131. Students do not have sufficient access to computers when working on design projects or when working independently. Students and teachers do not have sufficient access to equipment with appropriate zip disk drives, printers and scanners and all the equipment available is not compatible. Much of the accommodation is dull and dilapidated and does not provide an appropriate place for learning. There is little display of students' work around common areas to improve appearance, create visual stimulation and celebrate students' achievement. Art and design studios are unkempt, and materials and equipment are disorganised. Drawing classes take place in a dirty, untidy studio and teachers have to lock the door during life classes, creating a health and safety risk. At the time of the inspection, plans for relocating the provision to new, well-designed accommodation were well advanced. The relocation will improve facilities and resources significantly.

Leadership and management

132. Management of the area is satisfactory. Courses and programmes are clearly documented. Course teams work well together and teachers meet regularly to review students' progress and to plan for improvement. Procedures for improving quality are not having sufficient impact across all courses. Course teams do not give sufficient attention to target setting and the monitoring of improvement. Good opportunities are provided for staff development. At the time of the inspection, an advanced practitioner had been appointed to provide mentoring and support to improve teaching practice, but it was too early to assess the effect of this.

Performing arts



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

Strengths

- much outstanding teaching
- excellent range of specialist resources
- high retention and pass rates
- rigorous assessment of assignments
- excellent student support
- excellent performance skills.

Weaknesses

- poor accommodation for music and some dance classes.

Scope of provision

133. The college provides a comprehensive range of vocational courses in the performing and technical arts at intermediate and advanced levels for some 200 students. The majority of students are full time and aged 16 to 18. Intermediate awards are provided in acting and dance and intermediate diplomas in stagecraft and music. Advanced courses are offered in stagecraft, acting, dance, music and music technology. Students also have the opportunity to study for additional qualifications to complement or extend their main course of study. Technique qualifications such as the International Society for Teachers of Dance (ISTD) examinations are also offered. Students are assessed according to experience and ability and attend classes to improve and develop their technique. In the intermediate diploma and the national award in music, students can study for theory grades 3 and 5.

Achievement and standards

134. Retention and pass rates across most courses are consistently high. All the students on the first diploma in performing arts passed in 2002. Students' practical work is consistently good across all courses. Students at all levels demonstrate outstanding energy, commitment and discipline. In drama, students exhibit excellent physical control and interpretation. A first-year national diploma group preparing for an unscripted performance used every inch of the space available to them in an explosion of movement, sound and image. The resulting performance was focused and dynamic. Students' participation in activities such as touring shows, research trips and working on films help students to develop both as performers and people. Many students progress to HE in performance-related courses.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
First diploma in performing arts	2	No. of starts	24	33	24
		% retention	88	94	88
		% pass rate	85	97	100
National diploma in drama	3	No. of starts	29	50	37
		% retention	100	60	86
		% pass rate	97	87	96
OCN performing arts	3	No. of starts	**	26	33
		% retention	**	100	94
		% pass rate	**	85	100
National diploma in technical theatre	3	No. of starts	**	17	10
		% retention	**	100	80
		% pass rate	**	94	88
Sound recording (1 year)	3	No. of starts	49	*	32
		% retention	98	*	81

		% pass rate	67	*	81
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Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* *unreliable data*

** *course not running*

Quality of education and training

135. Performing arts students are provided with a realistic, working environment in which to learn and teachers have established a highly focused approach to training, which reflects best professional and artistic practice. Teachers and students have high expectations and standards, which are evident from the quality of the practical work produced by students. Most teaching is very good and some lessons are outstanding. Lessons are well planned and work is set in a realistic vocational context. The disciplined manner in which both teachers and students approach their work enables students to work co-operatively and effectively both as individuals and as part of an ensemble. For example, in dance lessons, all students remove jewellery, tie back their hair and wear clothing that is appropriate to the dance style being practised. Teachers are dynamic, enthusiastic and demanding and students learn at a pace, which is challenging and stimulating. Students respond positively to this approach. During a rehearsal for the show 'Ebenezer', scenes were broken down into small sections of movement or phrases and repeated until correctly performed. In a music lesson in which students were playing and recording Afro-Cuban music, the focus on technique, posture and quality of artistic interpretation enabled students to achieve an impressive final recording of their work. Students respect each other's opinions and efforts and lessons and rehearsals are productive. Students at all levels make effective use of their time and the learning experiences provided by the college.

136. Assignments are clear and well thought out and assessment procedures are thorough. Students' work is double marked. The second marker comments on the assessment judgement and grade awarded. The quality of written feedback to students on their assessed work is high and clear guidance is given about how students can improve their performance. All students are aware of their progress and what they have to do to improve. Frequent reviews of progress are conducted through formal interviews, with follow up discussions if there is cause for concern.

137. There is an excellent range of specialist equipment and students benefit from using industrial standard equipment. Theatre and studio space for drama is excellent and can be adapted for a variety of production styles. Students were able to 'fly' in the show 'Ebenezer' that was being rehearsed at the time of the inspection. However, the floors of the theatre and studio are dirty and some areas are in need of redecoration. The dance studio is light and airy with dance barres and mirrors. A second dance studio is situated in a mobile classroom and is not an appropriate place for practical lessons. There are no mirrors on the wall and the dance floor is too small to allow students to work in comfort. Music and music technology are accommodated in an old house on the campus. Although significant investment has taken place to resource and equip the recording studios, some of the other workspaces are poor. At the time of the inspection, plans were well underway for re-locating the performing arts into new facilities at Easter 2003.

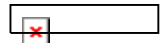
138. Teachers have close links with the industry and many work as professional performers on a part-time basis. These links are used effectively to give additional external opportunities for students and provide them with a valuable resource for specific advice and guidance relating to careers and opportunities within the professions.

139. Students recognise and value the personal and academic support they receive from teachers. Students are tested to determine whether they have any learning support needs and effective support is provided. A learning support assistant works closely with teachers in the area and any student found to be falling behind with his or her academic studies has to negotiate deadlines for improvement. The support provided is also having a major impact on standards of literacy.

Leadership and management

140. The management of the area is outstanding. Managers have created a professional environment, which provides students with excellent opportunities for extending and exploring their creative potential and increasing their employability. The curriculum has a clear artistic and creative identity and managers set high standards and clear direction to which all staff and students subscribe. Teachers work together effectively as teams and share ideas and good practice. Review and evaluation of courses and individual students' performance are used effectively to bring about improvement or maintain high standards.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



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

Strengths

- students' success in achieving challenging targets
- much innovative teaching
- programmes that match students' aspirations and potential
- effective intervention and support
- managers' involvement in improving teaching and learning.

Weaknesses

- little use of computers to extend teaching and learning
- cumbersome systems for monitoring and evaluating students' progress.

Scope of provision

141. There are 102 full-time students of whom 21 are adults. Some 96 students enrol on part-time

courses. Enrolments have grown steadily during the four years prior to the inspection. Students follow an entry level modular programme designed to develop general education and independence skills. Students are offered a wide choice of vocational options and there is an emphasis on work-based experience that will help students to gain employment. There has been a steady growth of student numbers over the last four years.

Achievement and standards

142. Students achieve well against personal targets set out in individual learning plans. The targets are challenging and take into account individual students' levels of capability, interests and needs. These are plotted against the City and Guilds profile. Students are punctual and attendance is consistently high. All students progress to further study or employment. All students' behaviour in classes was moderate and focused on the work set. Where students follow vocational courses, their work is at a standard comparable with their capability.

Quality of education and training

143. Most teaching is good or better and teachers have high expectations of their students. Lessons are well planned and meet the learning needs of individual students. Students have both social and academic targets. In the most effective lessons, learning outcomes are clearly defined and linked to students' individual learning plans. Teachers use a wide range of teaching methods, such as individual work and work in pairs or groups. Tasks are well structured and students are given clear instructions. In a well-structured vocational lesson, students worked carefully to clear deadlines set by the teacher to prepare a meal. The teacher gave students individual attention and their motivation and confidence developed as they completed different tasks successfully. In a lesson on enterprise, the teacher helped students to take an appropriate level of responsibility for their own learning by getting students to reflect upon and evaluate their own contributions to the team's enterprises, and then set future targets.

144. Teachers question students effectively to check that they are learning and to help them to develop their thinking and reasoning skills. For example, in a communications lesson, teachers effectively drew upon students' experiences in considering future plans. Teaching materials are carefully prepared and used effectively by teachers. In one communication lesson, the teacher used colour-coded work, with varying font and size to maintain students' interest and motivation. In less effective lessons, teachers relied too much on worksheets.

145. There is insufficient use of computers during lessons to extend students' learning. In only one of the lessons did the teacher use a computer to help students learn. Students do not use computers to improve the presentation of their work or to get information and develop their ability to work on their own.

146. Work placements are used successfully to help the development of students' social and personal skills. A wide range of enrichment activities, such as day trips and activities throughout the locality enable students to apply the skills they acquire to real-life situations. Effective links have been developed with social services to develop practical activities to help students develop their learning and personal skills.

147. Assessment techniques are appropriate and students are given detailed feedback on what they have achieved and how they can advance their learning. Information about students' progress is copied on to individual learning plans and this information is not often shared with other staff. This process of recording does not make best use of teachers' time.

148. Students are well supported. Additional learning support is identified as part of the initial assessment process and is effective in both separate specialist and vocational lessons. Teachers and support staff have a detailed knowledge of students and work together effectively. Teachers and support staff are attentive to the needs of individual students during lessons and ensure that all students participate. They intervene in a timely and sensitive manner, where students lose concentration, without being patronising. In one lesson, a difficult situation with a student with

Tourette's was skilfully avoided. Group and individual tutorials are used effectively to consolidate the learning achieved during lessons and to review and revise action plans. Students are encouraged to assess their own progress and to set targets to advance their learning in most lessons. Action plans are reviewed every five weeks and new targets set. An effective tutorial was organised as a formal meeting with an agenda which the students had agreed beforehand. This approach encouraged students to work together and developed their numeracy and literacy skills through the reports they presented on money raised at a celebration evening.

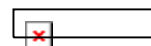
149. Students feel that they are valued by the college, and that they are contributing to the life of the college. Students' achievements are celebrated during lessons. In one classroom, students could easily identify with food packages around the room to enable easy recognition and to make connections between activities in the classroom and real life situations.

150. There is some poor accommodation with little storage space and little display of students' work. IT equipment is mainly old and unused.

Leadership and management

151. The area is well led and managed. Managers set clear standards and communication is effective. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and managers have established a positive ethos that encourages initiatives that will lead to improvement. Teachers and support staff work together well as a team and share good practice. Appraisal procedures are used effectively to help improve teaching and learning and teachers are provided with good training and development opportunities. Course reviews and self-assessment are used to identify weaknesses and to plan for improvement and development. This has resulted in critical evaluation of the provision and the identification of weaknesses.

Literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages



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

Strengths

- effective literacy, numeracy and ESOL teaching in learning centres
- productive use of individual learning plans
- development and use of vocationally relevant teaching and learning materials.

Weaknesses

- little use of ICT in teaching and learning

- no level 1 key skills application of number provision in many areas
- insufficient evaluation of learning support.

Scope of provision

152. The college offers additional learning support in literacy, numeracy and ESOL to students on the two main campuses at Dartford and Gravesend and at the learning shop at Bluewater shopping centre. This support is provided on a one-to-one or small group basis in the college's learning centres, or in-class, which the college has recently introduced in a few vocational areas on a pilot basis. The college also offers intensive full-time basic level ESOL programmes, mainly for young refugees and asylum-seekers, and two part-time, community-based basic skills and ESOL programmes in partnership with other organisations. Key skills communication and application of number at level 1 are provided within a number of vocational programmes across the college. At the time of the inspection, 358 students were receiving learning support in literacy, numeracy and ESOL. There are some 45 students mainly aged 16 to 18 on the full-time ESOL programmes, and 21 adult students on the community-based programmes.

Achievement and standards

153. Retention and pass rates for students who take up and complete the offer of additional support are good. For example, in 2002, the retention rate for students receiving basic skills support was 92%, and the pass rate on their main qualifications was 100%. The retention rate in the full-time ESOL provision was low in 2002, but the college has since re-designed the programmes to address this weakness and the retention rate was showing an improvement at the time of the inspection.

154. Students receiving additional support or on separate specialist programmes are motivated to learn and develop their skills. They are attentive in lessons, and approach their work with seriousness and determination. Students in ESOL lessons sometimes find it difficult to work in pairs or small groups. Most students make good progress. Standards of attainment are generally satisfactory and appropriate to the students' individual starting points and targets.

Quality of education and training

155. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, with effective teaching of one-to-one and small groups in the learning centres. Lessons are made vocationally relevant, partly through the use of a good range of paper-based materials that have been developed and catalogued according to the vocational area. In small group sessions, teachers encourage students to participate in discussions and share ideas. In one lesson, a small group of performing arts students were discussing the way in which selection was being made for an arrangement of a dance routine. The teacher used effective questioning to help the students organise their ideas so that they could record their views in their daily learning logs. Teachers are sensitive to the range of students' ability levels and their individual needs and all students speak highly of the support they receive.

156. Most teachers are well qualified and have completed specialist training in the teaching of basic skills. One teacher was using the methods and styles of teaching recommended in the adult core curriculum training to good effect with a mixed ability group. Through shared reading of an extract from a biography she was able to introduce the concepts of past tense and chronology and use reading skills to develop writing skills by inspiring each student to make a plan of their own biography.

157. All full-time students across the college have an initial assessment at induction or shortly

thereafter. Students who are identified as needing additional learning support are offered regular one-to-one, or small group support in the learning centres, or in-class support where available. Each student, who receives literacy, numeracy or ESOL support, has a diagnostic assessment and an individual learning plan. Individual learning plans are used effectively to set clear objectives, referenced to the adult core curriculum, and are kept up to date. Progress is monitored and recorded, and the results of termly reviews are shared with the vocational tutor.

158. The in-class support that students receive is not always effectively integrated with their main programme of study. There is insufficient planning and liaison between basic skills support staff and vocational staff in advance of lessons resulting in missed opportunities for literacy or numeracy development for the students. Due to staff recruitment difficulties, several courses have not been receiving any teaching in the key skills application of number. At the time of the inspection, the college was planning to re-instate the provision.

159. Workshop areas and classrooms are unattractive and sometimes untidy and dirty. There are few computers for use by students and staff and students do not have the opportunity to develop their literacy or numeracy skills using ICT software, except in the learning shop at Bluewater. The ESOL programme includes IT lessons, but there are no IT resources that the students can use on their own to practise and develop their language skills. The library has few books or other resources to help the teaching of literacy, numeracy or ESOL.

Leadership and management

160. The college has clear and appropriate policies for basic skills and key skills, to which senior management is committed. Roles and responsibilities are well defined and understood. The college has responded positively to the national basic skills quality initiative, and has made good progress towards the targets contained in its action plan. Teachers of basic and key skills meet regularly, but the recording of meetings is sometimes inadequate. All staff were involved in the production of the detailed self-assessment report. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report. Communication within the programme area is generally good, as is communication to and from senior management. There is good support for staff training. There is some inefficient use of staff resources in the provision of in-class support, and the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of learning support is inadequate.

Part D: College data

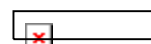
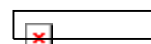


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18	19+
1	20	14
2	39	17
3	27	9
4/5	0	1
Other	14	59
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age

Curriculum area	16-18	19+	Total
	No.	No.	Enrolments
science and mathematics	296	106	2
land-based provision	0	0	0
construction	240	734	6
engineering, technology and manufacture	257	1,188	8
business administration, management and professional	951	2,133	18
hotel and catering	721	3,161	22
health and community care	136	1,439	9
art and design	480	170	4
humanities	412	238	4
basic education	397	1,321	10
visual and performing arts	659	406	6
English languages and communication	404	124	3
foundation programme	663	766	8
Total	5,616	11,786	100

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
1	Starters excluding transfers	773	804	756	726	577	602
	Retention rate	87	85	79	82	84	84
	National average	81	80	79	79	79	77
	Pass rate	68	67	57	74	60	73

	National average	60	65	69	61	65	68
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,703	1,655	1,689	1,273	1,146	1,197
	Retention rate	81	77	74	77	79	69
	National average	76	77	76	80	79	78
	Pass rate	72	70	57	75	68	61
	National average	65	66	69	62	65	70
3	Starters excluding transfers	788	970	1,207	750	752	755
	Retention rate	76	81	70	80	77	76
	National average	75	76	78	79	79	79
	Pass rate	63	73	70	69	60	61
	National average	73	75	77	63	66	70
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	17	31	4	189	182	113
	Retention rate	94	94	*	85	79	85
	National average	84	80	83	84	80	84
	Pass rate	50	47	*	61	43	34
	National average	65	65	57	58	57	54

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

Sources of information:

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

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

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

* too few students to provide a valid calculation

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	62	32	6	95
Level 2 (intermediate)	58	32	10	81

Level 1 (foundation)	54	39	7	28
Other sessions	69	28	3	29
Totals	61	32	7	233

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