



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Bexhill College

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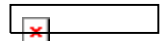
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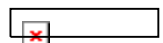
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Basic information about the college

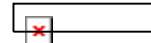


Name of college:	Bexhill College
Type of college:	Sixth Form College
Principal:	Paul Ashdown
Address of college:	Turkey Road Bexhill-on-Sea East Sussex TN39 5HF
Telephone number:	01424 214 545
Fax number:	01424 215 050
Chair of governors:	Dr Keith Foord
Unique reference number:	130670
Name of reporting inspector:	Tony Noonan HMI
Dates of inspection:	25-29 November 2002

Part A: Summary



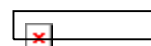
Information about the college



Bexhill College is a medium-sized sixth form college situated on the outskirts of Bexhill, East Sussex. It draws students from a wide rural area, as well as nearby towns. Some areas of Bexhill have very high levels of unemployment and are classified as areas of social and economic disadvantage. Other areas, such as Battle and West Bexhill, are more prosperous. There is little manufacturing industry in Bexhill. Most local businesses are small or medium sized, covering distribution, retail, insurance, banking, leisure and tourism. The care and tourism industries are prominent employers in the area. The college provides general education and vocational courses in: humanities; science and mathematics, visual and performing arts and media; business; English and communication; sports, leisure and tourism; health, social care and public services; and information and communication technology (ICT). No courses are offered in construction, engineering, land-based, retail and customer services, hairdressing, and beauty therapy. Around 70% of the work of the college is provided for students at level 3. There is a small amount of provision at foundation level. There are approximately 1,000 full-time students aged 16 to 18 and also around 500 adult learners, most of whom attend evening courses. There are about 50 work-based learners, the majority of whom are on childcare programmes. The number of students from minority ethnic groups is proportionate to the number of persons from such groups in the local community. In 2000/01, the large majority of students described themselves as white, along with a small number, less than 1%, describing themselves as Asian, Chinese and Black. Almost two out of every three students attending the college are female.

The mission of the college is to achieve 'excellence in the provision of academic and professional education for the community and young people of Rother and Hastings'. The college aims to 'equip all students to meet the challenges of the new century and to provide individually tailored support and guidance which ensures that all students meet their potential'.

How effective is the college?



Inspectors judged provision in humanities (history, classical civilisation, religious studies and philosophy) to be outstanding. Provision in English and modern foreign languages, and visual and performing arts and media is good. Provision in science, mathematics, business, ICT, sports, leisure and tourism, childcare, health and social care is satisfactory. The main strengths and areas for improvement are listed below.

Key strengths

- good teaching
- high pass rates for many General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A-level) and vocational courses
- good support for students

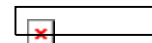
- high satisfaction of learners
- clear strategic direction by senior managers
- expertise and skills of governors
- sound financial management
- outstanding provision in humanities.

What should be improved

- retention rates at level 3 for students aged 16 to 18
- overall pass rates at level 3 for students aged 16 to 18
- reliability of students' achievement data and its use by curriculum staff
- poor accommodation
- insufficient provision at levels 1 and 2
- use of ICT in teaching
- key skills and general studies provision.

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

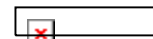


The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum 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	Satisfactory. Pass rates on GCE A-level courses are high. Retention rates on GCE Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) and A-level courses have risen significantly. Students have good practical skills. Teaching is satisfactory or good, but some teaching of theory is uninspiring.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates on GCE A-level courses have risen. Teaching is satisfactory and good on GCSE courses. The range of courses at level 2 is narrow.
Business	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high in GCE A-level business studies, but the retention rate has been low on the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) course. Pass rates are low on some business administration programmes. Much of the teaching is good or better. The students value the support given to them by staff.
Information and communication technology	Satisfactory. Teaching is generally good, with effective use of group work and the Internet during lessons. Retention rates on some courses are low. Specialist resources are suitable for the courses. There is effective monitoring of individual students' progress.
Sports, leisure and tourism	Satisfactory. Courses are planned carefully. Assessment methods are good. Pass rates on some courses have risen. Teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations of their students. Low retention rates on the AVCE and first diploma courses are a serious issue.
Childcare, health and social care	Satisfactory. A wide range of part-time courses meets the needs of learners and employers. Retention and pass rates are rising and for some courses they are above the national average. Learners are well supported by their teachers. Learning materials are well prepared. Few National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) learners achieve their qualifications on time.
Visual and performing arts, music and media	Good. Retention and pass rates on all GCE A2 courses are high. Retention rates on level 2 and some GCE AS courses are low. The teaching of practical projects is imaginative and challenging. There are insufficient resources for media. The accommodation for performing arts is inadequate. Students benefit from the current commercial expertise and knowledge of their teachers.
Humanities: History, classical civilisation, religious studies and philosophy	Outstanding. Teaching across a wide range of courses at GCE AS and A level is stimulating. Students benefit from well-prepared handouts. Teachers give students excellent support. There are high pass rates on all courses. The standard of most students' work is high. Individual courses are well managed but there is insufficient co-

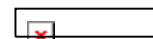
	ordination of the curriculum area.
English and modern foreign languages	Good. Teaching in English is good, well planned and organised. Work is marked well and accurately assessed. Retention and pass rates are especially high at GCE A2 level. Most students work extremely hard and enjoy their subjects. Teachers do not always meet all the needs of students of differing abilities.

How well is the college led and managed?



Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a clear strategic direction from the principal and governors. A key weakness identified in previous inspections, the poor and inadequate state of the college's accommodation, is being addressed through the relocation of the whole college to new, purpose-built premises by September 2004. The overall quality of the teaching and learning in the college is good, and there are only a low proportion of unsatisfactory lessons. Provision is satisfactory in most curriculum areas, good in two and outstanding in humanities. Financial management is effective and overall the college provides satisfactory value for money.

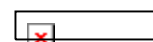
To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



The college's response to educational and social inclusion is satisfactory. The college aims to promote educational and social inclusion by providing a safe environment in which students of all abilities and from a diversity of backgrounds are well supported and learn effectively. Although the majority of students are aged 16 to 18 on level 3 courses, the college has been successful in attracting other types of students, through an expansion in adult literacy and numeracy provision in community venues and work-based learning on employers' premises.

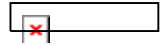
The recently revised equal opportunities policy has clear aims. However, the college does not analyse students' pass and retention rates in relation to ethnicity or gender. Access to some parts of the building is difficult for students with restricted mobility. The relocation of the college involves a partnership with Glyne Gap, a school for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



There are well-organised admissions, enrolment and induction procedures to guide students on to appropriate courses. During the enrolment process, students are interviewed twice and their learning support needs are identified. Students value the quality and range of academic and personal support they receive from teachers and tutors. Tutors monitor students' attendance effectively. Full-time students are set target grades, but in some curriculum areas their progress towards achieving these is not monitored rigorously. The college provides good careers advice and guidance for all students who are applying for higher education (HE) courses or intend to enter employment.

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

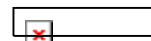
- approachable and supportive teachers
- excellent teaching
- friendly atmosphere
- ready availability of computers
- library
- wide range of courses.

What they feel could be improved

- overcrowded and overpriced canteen
- lack of a common room
- unreliable transport to and from college
- unattractive accommodation

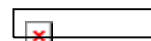
- general studies provision, by making it voluntary.

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

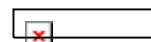


Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors

Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching	66	31	3
Learning	64	34	2

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).

Achievement and standards



16 to 18 year olds

1. Bexhill College offers mainly level 3 courses for students aged 16 to 18. Overall, retention rates have risen at level 1, but show a decline at level 2 and have remained static at level 3. During the three years from 1998/99 to 2001/02, retention rates for courses at level 2 and 3 were below the national average for sixth form colleges.

2. Across the college, overall pass rates have risen over the past four years and those for level 1 and 2 learners are now above the national average. Pass rates for level 3 courses have been

consistently below the national average for the last four years. However, when the pass rates for GCE A-level general studies is excluded from the data, the college has an overall pass rate of 90%, which is in line with the national average. The pass rates on short courses are high.

3. The overall pass rate for GCE A-level courses is high, at 95%. In 2002, the pass rate for 20 GCE A-level subjects was 100%. In the same year, the overall pass rate on GCE AS courses was 85%. Statistics from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) for 2001, show that the average Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) points score for each student taking GCE AS, A2 and GNVQ courses is 19.1. This score has been above the national average for England for the past ten years.

4. Analysis of the value added to GCE A-level students' achievements in 2001 has been carried out, by comparing the grades students obtained in their final examination with their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades on entry. This analysis shows that the value added scores of students in relation to 65% of the GCE A-level subjects offered, match those of students in other sixth form colleges, where overall GCE A-level pass rates are well above the national average. The results in some subjects, such as physical education, physics, biology and human biology, indicate that some students are not achieving their full potential.

5. Compared with GCE A level, few students are enrolled on AVCE and national diploma courses. Pass rates are high on these courses and, in 2001, the overall pass rate on all GNVQ advanced courses was 79%.

6. The college has experienced problems in making key skills an integral part of the curriculum. No student achieved key skills qualifications in 2000/01. In 2001/02 the college introduced changes to the way that key skills were taught and 46% of students who enrolled for the level 2 ICT qualification were successful.

7. GCE A-level general studies was previously an integral part of the tutorial programme for full-time students. In 2000/01, the pass rates for GCE A-level general studies was low at 41%. Staff recognise that insufficient time was made available for the teaching of the subject. More time is now allocated to teaching GCE AS general studies. However, the subject is not valued by a large number of GCE A-level students, who resent the fact that it is a compulsory part of their curriculum.

8. A high proportion of students from the college gain a place in HE. In 2001/02, 85% of those students applying for university entry were successful. Many students progress to other courses in the college. In 2001/02, about 50 students progressed from courses at level 1 and 2 to level 3 courses.

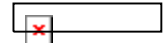
9. The standard of attainment by most students is high. The oral and written work of health and social care students is of a high standard. Science students demonstrate good practical laboratory skills. Teachers encourage students to experiment and be innovative in media, textiles and film projects. The art and photography work of students is exciting and displayed around the college. Learners on ICT courses ask relevant and searching questions. The standard of students' work in the business curriculum area, both in lessons and within portfolios, is high. In lessons, students on humanities courses were highly enthusiastic, demonstrated keen understanding and extensive knowledge.

10. The average level of students' attendance during the inspection was 85%. This is in line with the national average for sixth form colleges and is higher than the 82% attendance rate recorded during the previous inspection. During the last 18 months, the college has introduced successfully a number of measures to improve attendance. These include the appointment of an attendance officer to monitor attendance rates and liaise with students and parents. Most students, especially those on business studies courses, were punctual. Some students who arrived late for visual and performing arts lessons, however, disrupted the learning of those who had arrived on time.

Adult learners

11. The college has taken steps to widen participation in education and training and currently there are around 500 adult students enrolled. Between 1998/99 and 2001/02, overall retention rates for adult students have risen and are now above the national average for courses at levels 1, 2 and 3. The pass rates of adults on courses at level 1 and 2 are high and above the national average, but they are lower on level 3 courses. The pass rates of adults on short courses are high.

Quality of education and training



12. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded by inspectors in 145 sessions. They judged that teaching was good or better in 66% of the sessions observed, satisfactory in 31% and unsatisfactory in 3%.

13. In the best lessons, teaching is carried out with a sense of purpose and momentum. Teachers inspire the students with their enthusiasm and use a wide variety of appropriate methods to stimulate and hold the students' interest. Teachers have a very good relationship with students and provide them with good individual support.

14. Teachers in business and sports, leisure and tourism keep students abreast of current commercial practice through taking them on visits, inviting guest speakers to the college and realistic project work. The personal experience of learners is used to good effect in lessons. For example, in a business lesson, students carried out an investigation into how often they and their families buy certain goods and why they purchase them. Practical lessons are well planned and enjoyed by learners, particularly in sports, science, and visual and performing arts. Teachers use role-play well in history and classical civilisation lessons. They relate learning to previous lessons and other sections of the syllabus. For example, in a GCE AS religious studies lesson, the eight-fold path in Buddhism was presented as a logical continuation of previous work on the Four Noble Truths.

15. In less effective lessons, teachers fail to support students who are having difficulties in grasping concepts or skills and do not provide sufficiently challenging activities for the more able learners. In some lessons, teachers talk too much and do not ask the students questions, or engage them in discussion, or provide them with challenging activities that demand their full attention and concentration. Much of the teaching of theory, particularly in science, mathematics, and visual and performing arts, is uninspiring and carried out unimaginatively.

16. In 2001, no learner achieved a key skills certificate. Changes have now been made to the way skills are taught and assessed. In 2002, the pass rate for the key skills in IT at level 2 was 46%, which is above the national average. Most learners are now developing the key skills in IT at level 2 and assignments are imaginative and pertinent. A small number of learners are working towards the certificate in key skills of communication at level 3. No student is studying application of number this year. Students without a level 2 qualification in mathematics are advised to take GCSE mathematics, which is not an appropriate course for some learners. The college's aim of making the teaching of key skills an integral part of all subjects and courses remains unrealised.

17. Despite the best efforts of managers over many years to improve the premises, the current accommodation is poor. Many lessons take place in huts, as the main building can only accommodate approximately half the number of students enrolled. Some lessons have to take place in small rooms where it is not possible to carry out certain learning activities, such as group work. Some subjects, for example in humanities and English, have no base rooms and resources have to be transported around the college. Students complain about the erratic heating system in the college. Some parts of the college are inaccessible for students with restricted mobility. Staff make strenuous efforts to make the best use of the accommodation, despite its shortcomings. Attractive displays of art are displayed throughout the college and brighten up corridors and common areas. Students' work is displayed in curriculum areas. For example, language laboratories have posters in foreign languages and photographs of students on exchange trips. The whole college is due to

relocate to new purpose-built accommodation in September 2004.

18. Specialist resources are good in sports and visual arts. Students on media courses benefit from some highly specialised equipment and editing software. Satellite television channels are used effectively in modern foreign language lessons. In performing and visual arts, there is little storage space, and sound and lighting equipment is insufficient. The kiln has not been available to students for two years and they have to use the facilities of a nearby school until the new accommodation is built.

19. The library is welcoming but it contains insufficient space for private study. The book stock is good in some areas, such as history, philosophy and early years. In other areas, however, such as business and accounting, there is little reading material to help learners gain more knowledge than they can gain from basic books. Students benefit from the use of learning resources and books that are kept by staff in many curriculum areas.

20. ICT facilities have improved since the last inspection and students have good access to computers in the IT centre and in the library. Laptops are sometimes taken into lessons for students' use, and many students also use the ICT facilities in curriculum base rooms and specialist workshops. The ICT skills of many learners are very good. For example, business students used the Internet to track the progress of companies on the Stock Exchange and carried out research on organisations prior to visiting them. Modern foreign languages students used ICT to design a page when compiling a mock foreign language newspaper. However, teachers in some areas, such as sports, leisure and tourism, childcare, health and social care, science and humanities, fail to use ICT in lessons to help students learn more effectively.

21. Teachers are well qualified, experts in their subjects and do all they can to help their students succeed. Staff teaching media, film, photography, business, leisure, care and childcare have appropriate relevant commercial experience. Teachers, particularly of sports and leisure and tourism, participate in relevant activities and outside events to keep their professional expertise up to date. Most staff have a teaching qualification and several teachers are working towards one at the college.

22. Students are aware of the assessment requirements of their course. Assessment is carried out well and students' progress is monitored carefully. Students on vocational courses are given well-constructed assignments with clear assessment criteria. Assessment practices on work-based courses are good.

23. Teachers set homework regularly and mark it promptly. Marking is generally thorough and students are given comprehensive feedback on how well they are doing. Business students value the detailed and constructive feedback that they receive on assignments. In some curriculum areas, however, teachers do not annotate students' work in enough detail or give students a sufficiently clear explanation of how they can improve their performance. For example, some mathematics teachers only give students oral feedback or written feedback, which is brief and perfunctory. The progress of individual students is not always checked in lessons. Some teachers on science and mathematics courses do not set students individual targets following assessment, and do not monitor their progress carefully.

24. Procedures for internal moderation and verification of assessment vary across the college and are insufficiently standardised. Internal moderation is carried out well on English and sports, leisure, and tourism courses and the work of each student is marked by two teachers. Clear procedures are lacking, however, for the internal moderation of assessment on performing arts and physics courses. Action points from external moderators' reports on science are not always followed up.

25. In its mission statement, the college emphasises the priority to meet the needs of students aged 16 to 18. The college provides a wide range of GCE A-level courses and offers around 40 subjects. The range of vocational courses is more restricted, particularly at levels 1 and 2. The college offers nine AVCE courses, seven GCSE subjects and five intermediate level courses. No full-time provision is provided at level 1. This year, a foundation course was offered but failed to recruit sufficient

students. At level 3, the timetables are arranged to enable students to take almost any combination of courses, although few learners choose a mix of academic and vocational courses.

26. The college has sought to attract different types of learners by offering adult education and basic skills programmes. Part-time adult education courses are offered in childcare, literacy, numeracy, and art, and around 500 adults are enrolled currently. Around 50 learners are on work-based programmes, mainly in care and early years, with a small number in administration and customer services. Literacy and numeracy courses are targeted at individuals who need help with basic skills. Courses are run for women in a refuge, individuals on drugs rehabilitation programmes, and families identified as 'at risk' by social services. Other work, based at community venues, includes provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

27. Effective links have been established with local schools, the Connexions service, and other external agencies such as 'Learning Link'. Curriculum areas have established links with relevant external organisations through work placements and visits. Business teachers, for example, have good links with a number of employers.

28. Students broaden their experiences through a range of enrichment activities. A newly appointed student activities organiser is working enthusiastically to expand enrichment activities across the college. For example, a college radio station, that enables students to broadcast as a disc jockey, is proving to be very popular. There is a wide range of sports, music and drama activities. Some curriculum areas arrange enrichment events, such as exchange visits for language students and field trips for geology and business studies. Students on visual and performing arts courses benefit from particularly good curriculum enrichment activities. Media students have produced video promotional material for schools and Hastings County Council. Leisure students work as sports leaders with adults with learning disabilities.

29. Prospective students and the parents of those aged 16 to 18 receive good information about the college through a variety of sources. Staff visit local schools to meet with the pupils and their parents to discuss the opportunities for progression. Open evenings are held in the college. The enrolment process features two interviews with college staff. Students receive a helpful induction to the college. They carry out initial assignments which serve as an effective means of explaining the course and assessment requirements to them. Parents of students aged 16 to 18 are kept well informed about their child's progress and they appreciate the feedback that they receive. Staff give generously of their time at parents' evenings and the events are well attended.

30. Students requiring additional learning support are identified when they first join the college through advisory interviews and comprehensive testing of their literacy and numeracy skills. Students identified as requiring support are referred to the study centre, where they receive valuable help from staff. It is not compulsory for students to attend the study centre, however, and many do not take up the support available to them. The procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of learning support are insufficiently effective.

31. Classroom assistants are allocated to groups on the basis of the needs of individual students. The degree to which supervision of assistants is effective varies considerably from one curriculum area to another. In health and social care, students identified as having learning needs receive valuable help and schemes of work detail the role of classroom assistants. In sports, leisure and tourism there is a lack of direction and the support provided for students is sometimes ineffective.

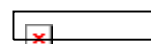
32. Students appreciate the encouragement and all the help and support they receive from teachers and tutors. In many curriculum areas, teachers give extra help to learners outside lessons, during lunch breaks, for example. The college has revised recently the procedures for tutorial provision and a team of tutors operates across the college. All full-time students have regular tutorials, which students find useful and informative. Tutors and an attendance officer monitor students' attendance effectively, and quickly identify erratic or poor levels of attendance through the weekly attendance reports they receive.

33. Full-time students are set minimum target grades based on their prior attainment in the GCSE.

Tutors develop individual action plans, but teachers do not usually have ready access to these plans. Tutors carry out reviews of individual students' progress infrequently.

34. Students can readily obtain help with personal problems through student services. Appropriately qualified counsellors offer a service that has clear procedures and guidelines. Students have good access to housing and medical advice. Financial support is available to them through discretionary grants and student loans. Students receive good advice on careers and on progression to HE. Guidance staff work in co-operation with Connexions personal advisors to provide students with individual interviews and arrange careers fairs. Students receive effective help when applying for courses in HE.

Leadership and management



35. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is clear strategic direction from the principal. Governors and senior managers are agreed on the college's priorities. The strategic plan's objectives include those for raising retention and pass rates, and widening the range of level 2 programmes. A key weakness identified in previous inspections, the poor and inadequate state of the college's accommodation, is being addressed through the relocation of the whole college to new, purpose-built premises by September 2004. There are development plans for the achievement of the college's strategic objectives. These address key issues such as the health and safety of staff and students, and the need to meet recruitment targets. Milestones have not been determined, however, for measuring progress towards achieving these objectives.

36. Governors are well informed about the college and give it excellent support. Staff appreciate the formal links some governors have with the curriculum areas. Communications between staff and governors have improved. The cycle of corporation and committee business is set out in an annual calendar of reports, which the principal has recently established. Previously, the only reports received by governors related to personnel and financial issues and information on the relocation project. Governors have been much involved in overseeing planning of the college's relocation and have devoted less attention to other essential core business such as evaluating the performance of students. Some aspects of governance are unsatisfactory and the corporation has not met all its statutory requirements adequately. Teaching and is good, students learn effectively and there is only a low proportion of unsatisfactory lessons. Provision is satisfactory in most curriculum areas, good in two, and outstanding in humanities.

37. The college provides mainly level 3 courses for students aged 16 to 18. Overall, retention rates for level 1 courses have risen. Between 1998/99 and 2001/02, retention rates on courses at levels 2 and 3 were below the national average for sixth form colleges. Higher retention rates are now a key priority for the college and vigorous action has been taken to achieve these. A new tutorial system has been introduced and this is intended to offer strong support to students at risk of not completing their course or achieving their qualification.

38. Pass rates for most vocational and GCE A-level courses are high. Across the college, overall pass rates have improved since 1999, and those for learners on courses at level 1 and 2 are now above the national average. Pass rates on level 3 courses have been consistently below the national average for the last four years. All GCE A-level students have to follow a GCE A-level course in general studies as part of their tutorial programme. If the pass rate for GCE A-level general studies is excluded from the performance data, then the overall GCE A-level pass rate is 90%, which is in line with that of other sixth form colleges. The college uses a system for calculating the value added to students' achievements by comparing the final examination grades students obtain with the GCSE grades they held on entry. Staff do not use the value added data, however, when evaluating the effectiveness and quality of courses, and when carrying out reviews of the progress of individual students.

39. Curriculum management is satisfactory or good. Course teams for English, modern foreign languages, sports, leisure and tourism, health and social care, and ICT meet regularly and develop effective action plans. For example, in an effort to raise the pass rate in GCE A-level computing, students are now given additional lessons. The day-to-day running of courses is effective. Much informal liaison and co-operation takes place between staff and a good team spirit prevails in the college. There is, however, insufficient co-ordination and curriculum leadership in some curriculum areas. In these areas, little sharing of good practice takes place. The management of the general studies curriculum is ineffective. In some instances, staff have been required to teach general studies courses without sufficient training and resources.

40. The college has a satisfactory quality assurance system, which is implemented by teaching teams and support services. Inspectors mainly agreed with the findings in the college's self-assessment report. The reports of some course teams, however, were insufficiently evaluative. Implementation of action plans drawn up to rectify weaknesses identified through self-assessment is monitored twice a year. In a recent initiative, two governors and an assistant principal carried out a thorough check on the implementation of action plans in certain curriculum areas. Action has been taken to improve GCE A-level biology courses and the overall pass rate, which was low, has risen slightly. Similar action has been taken in respect of the GCE A-level physical education. The proportion of students on this course who obtain high grades has been small but it has now increased slightly. The appraisal system for teaching staff is satisfactory. It draws evidence from lesson observations, verifiers' reports, and feedback from students and staff.

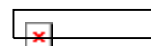
41. Some aspects of the quality assurance system are unsatisfactory. Only a small number of lesson observations take place in respect of each teacher. The previous college management information system (MIS) was unreliable and there were some inconsistencies in the way students' achievements and retention rates were recorded. A new MIS system is now being installed, but has yet to be fully implemented.

42. The college is currently strengthening links with its four partner schools. College staff attend school parents' evenings to talk to prospective students and their parents. The college is an active member of the East Sussex Learning Partnership. It has developed a partnership with a local 11-18 school to provide an appropriate sixth form curriculum for its pupils. After the college is relocated, a local school for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will share the site with the college, thus providing its pupils with access to the college's courses and facilities. The college is increasing its involvement in community-based provision, providing literacy and numeracy courses for adults, and also work-based training.

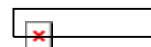
43. Students express high levels of satisfaction with most aspects of the college. They feel well supported and that the college is a safe place to study. The college has revised its equal opportunities policy recently. The corporation has set up its own sub-committee on equal opportunities. All full-time staff will be offered the opportunity to attend training on social inclusiveness that will focus on the needs of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Previously, there was insufficient promotion and monitoring of equal opportunities in the college. For example, governors did not receive reports on equal opportunities.

44. The college has failed to achieve its student enrolment targets for the past three years, but it is on line to achieve them in 2002/03. Despite not meeting these targets, the college has remained in sound financial health, and has been able to fund the relocation of the college to new premises. Senior managers, in discussion with faculty heads and directors of study, approve new courses and have procedures that cover the costing of the courses, and assessment of their financial viability. Financial management is effective and, overall, the college provides satisfactory value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Mathematics



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

Strengths

- high and rising retention and pass rates on GCE A-level courses
- good individual support for students in GCE A-level lessons
- good teaching on GCSE courses.

Weaknesses

- poor examination results on one-year GCSE courses
- insufficient participation of students in some GCE A-level lessons
- inadequate target setting for individual students
- narrow range of provision at level 2.

Scope of provision

45. The college offers GCSE, GCE AS and A-level courses in mathematics and further mathematics. Recruitment to mathematics is strong, with 88 students studying GCE AS and 41 students studying GCE A-level mathematics in 2002. The GCE A-level further mathematics course has few students. Many students in the college take the opportunity to improve their GCSE mathematics grade. Short courses are offered for GCSE mathematics examinations in November, as well as one-year courses with examinations in June.

Achievement and standards

46. Pass rates for GCE AS mathematics are in line with the national average for sixth form colleges. Pass rates at GCE A-level mathematics were below the national average in 2000, but have risen

consistently, and both pass and retention rates were above the national average in 2002. Students on the GCE A-level courses build effectively on the work they carried out on their GCE AS course. In 2002, 71% of the students who took the GCE A-level examinations either obtained the same grade as they did in GCE AS mathematics the previous year, or a higher grade. Pass rates are very high for GCE A-level further mathematics. All six students taking the course in 2002 were successful. The proportion of students who obtained grade C or above in GCSE mathematics has been below average for the past two years. The retention rate for GCSE mathematics is in line with the national average.

47. Students' work is of a good standard. In GCSE lessons, students use basic number skills well, particularly in work on fractions. Most students on GCE AS courses have good understanding of algebra, but some have considerable difficulties with basic algebraic manipulation. At GCE A-level, teachers build on the work students carried out on their GCE AS course and thereby help students to become more confident in their use of problem-solving skills. Given the stage they have reached in their course, however, many students are not sufficiently confident when applying their mathematical knowledge and skills to a new task.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE mathematics (grades A* to C)	2	No. of starts	185	189	150
		% retention	84	88	73
		% pass rate	46	26	34
GCE AS mathematics	3	No. of starts	*	105	95
		% retention	*	92	85
		% pass rate	*	66	79
GCE A-level mathematics	3	No. of starts	102	84	50
		% retention	63	76	97
		% pass rate	62	74	96

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

48. Teaching is satisfactory or good. Most teachers are expert in their subjects and can teach with confidence in lessons. They share learning objectives with their students and use well-targeted questions to monitor students' understanding effectively. In many lessons, teachers take account of the students' wide range of abilities by providing good one-to-one support to those who need it, while the rest of the class work through mathematical problems. In a mechanics lesson on work, energy and power, the teacher skilfully related the topic to students' previous learning, thereby strengthening it. In a few instances, teachers failed to capture the students' interest totally. In some lessons, the teacher talked for too long and did not check students' understanding regularly. In others, the teacher failed to provide the students with stimulating activities that excited their interest and motivated them to extend their knowledge and skills.

49. Students and teachers have good relationships. Students speak positively of the support they get from teachers, within and outside lessons. Teachers return marked work promptly. Marking is detailed. Much of the feedback teachers give students is oral. Teachers seldom give students detailed written feedback on how they can improve their work.

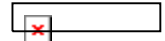
50. For many students who are on it, the one-year GCSE course is inappropriate for them in the light

of their previous attainment. The college's range of mathematics courses at level 2 is narrow and does not meet some students' needs.

Leadership and management

51. Mathematics teachers operate with a great deal of autonomy but are fully involved in faculty meetings. Informal communication is effective between staff. Staff work well as a team. General day-to-day leadership and management are satisfactory and courses are well managed. Teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding of the structure of examinations for their courses. Annual course reviews are thorough and include an analysis of pass and retention rates. In longer-term planning, little effective use is made of data on the value added to students' achievements. There is a lack of co-ordinated measures to raise retention and pass rates, and improve the quality of teaching.

Science



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

Strengths

- consistently high pass rates in GCE A-level physics and chemistry
- high and much improved retention rates for most GCE A-level courses
- well-marked work with constructive comments
- effective technical support for laboratory work
- good practical skills of students.

Weaknesses

- poor examination results of students on biology courses
- low and declining pass rates on GCSE science course

- uninspiring teaching of theory
- ineffective use of ICT in lessons.

Scope of provision

52. The college offers full-time GCE AS and A-level courses in biology, human biology, chemistry, environmental science, geology, and physics, and GCSE science (single award). There are no part-time or vocational science courses.

Achievement and standards

53. In 2002, the pass rates in all GCE A-level subjects rose and were above, or close to, the national average. GCE AS pass rates are less satisfactory, with the exception of that for GCE AS physics, which was 97%. For example, the pass rate for GCE AS chemistry was 73%. Pass rates on biology and human biology courses were lower than those for other science courses. Many biology and human biology students failed to obtain the grades predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE achievements. Retention rates on all GCE A-level courses have risen significantly since 2000. Since 2000, retention rates on GCSE science courses have declined and the proportion of students who obtained a high grade A* to C has dropped. Only one student achieved a high grade A* to C in 2002, out of the 23 students who began the course.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE science (grades A* to C)	2	No. of starts	33	32	24
		% retention	82	77	45
		% pass rate	67	61	10
GCE AS biology	3	No. of starts	*	59	74
		% retention	*	78	86
		% pass rate	*	76	69
GCE AS chemistry	3	No. of starts	*	53	62
		% retention	*	84	89
		% pass rate	*	84	75
GCE A-level biology	3	No. of starts	64	75	19
		% retention	64	67	84
		% pass rate	65	93	100
GCE A-level chemistry	3	No. of starts	40	48	29
		% retention	63	65	97
		% pass rate	88	93	93
GCE A-level physics	3	No. of starts	37	42	22
		% retention	68	62	100

		% pass rate	91	90	100
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Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

54. Teaching is good or satisfactory. Inspectors observed no unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers give students every encouragement, support them well and motivate them to participate fully in all activities. In the better lessons, the teaching is stimulating. For example, during a GCE AS physics lesson, students worked productively on a number of experiments, investigating the properties of sound waves. Students in each group then explained their findings to the rest of the class confidently, demonstrating a sound grasp of the theoretical concepts. GCE A-level biology students examined simple models of genetic variation, which successfully strengthened their learning of the genetic terms introduced to them in an earlier lesson. In a GCSE science lesson, individual students were assigned different tasks to match their ability and the extent of their knowledge. More able students were required to work out a redox-balanced equation, while others worked on a word equation. In other lessons, all students carried out the same activities, irrespective of their individual abilities. In some instances, these activities were not challenging enough for the more-able members of the group. Some theory teaching is uninspiring and the teacher makes insufficient demands of the students. In some lessons, too much time is taken up by students copying notes from the board. Sometimes, when questions are posed by the teacher, insufficient time is given for the students to work the answer out for themselves.

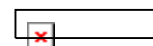
55. Students demonstrate good practical laboratory skills. Technicians provide effective support and assistance to students when they are carrying out practical work, particularly in physics. Teachers and technicians are appropriately qualified and have a sound knowledge of their subjects. Although the laboratories are old fashioned in appearance, they are light and spacious, with adequate equipment. However, there is not enough ICT equipment, with just one computer that gives no access to the Internet in each laboratory. Two laptop computers and two data projectors are shared by the science team. These facilities are not always used effectively. For example, students are not given enough guidance when using a CD-ROM.

56. Staff and students have a good relationship and students feel encouraged and supported in lessons. Homework is set regularly and marked rigorously, and teachers give students good feedback on how they can improve their performance. Sets of textbooks are kept in the science curriculum areas and used effectively by students.

Leadership and management

57. Each subject is organised well on a day-to-day basis. There are detailed and effective schemes of work. Annual course reviews contain a good analysis of GCE AS and A-level results. Students are set minimum target grades and these are determined on the basis of their prior achievements in the GCSE. The extent to which students build upon their previous attainment is not taken into account effectively when drawing up action plans for the continuing improvement of their performance. Action is being taken to address key issues, such as the comparatively low pass rates on biology courses. Biology students now receive core assessments twice a term.

Business



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

Strengths

- very high pass rates for GCE A-level business studies
- challenging and stimulating teaching
- imaginative integration of ICT with course content.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on AVCE business course
- low pass rates on business administration courses
- lack of full-time business studies provision at levels 1 and 2.

Scope of provision

58. The college offers business studies, accounting, business administration and word processing courses. The majority of full-time students study business studies or accounting at GCE AS and A level. There is an AVCE programme, with a relatively low number of students enrolled, and this year there were insufficient students to offer any level 1 or 2 provision in business studies or accounting. Business administration courses are offered at levels 1, 2 and 3, with flexible modes of attendance. Word processing courses are also offered in the evenings. The college has begun to respond to employers' needs, with a small amount of work-based learning in administration and customer services.

Achievement and standards

59. Pass rates for GCE A-level business studies have risen and are now well above the national average. Pass rates for GCE AS business studies and GCE AS accounting are satisfactory. Some pass rates on word processing courses at level 1 and 2 are high, but the overall pass rate on business administration courses is low. The retention rate on the GCE A-level business studies course has risen significantly and is now above the national average. On other courses, however, retention rates are low. In 2001/02, the retention rate on the AVCE course was low. The standard of most students' work in class is high. Students enjoy working individually and together. They attain appropriate standards for the stage reached in their course. Many gain in confidence and self-esteem and are able to analyse and present logical arguments with increasing maturity.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
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GCE A-level business studies	3	No. of starts	92	89	43
		% retention	61	57	98
		% pass rate	56	91	100
GCE AS accounting	3	No. of starts	40	55	48
		% retention	86	83	85
		% pass rate	81	63	83
GCE AS business studies	3	No. of starts	19	107	95
		% retention	100	76	86
		% pass rate	47	84	81
GNVQ advanced/AVCE business	3	No. of starts	14	16	16
		% retention	36	69	29
		% pass rate	40	82	100

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

Quality of education and training

60. Most teaching is good. Teaching on business studies and accounting courses has momentum, and is carried out purposefully and with enthusiasm. Teachers use a range of teaching methods, provide students with a variety of appropriate learning activities and are successful in exciting and sustaining their interest. In lessons, teachers make good links between theory and practice, and relate topics to both the students' and their own experiences. In the best lessons, teachers give the students imaginative and challenging tasks. For example, one teacher began the lesson by asking GCE A-level students to complete at least half a page on two figures, relating to sales. Students initially felt the task to be impossible given the little information they had, but with the teachers' encouragement, they found they could list a whole range of facts and hypotheses to explain the variants, using sophisticated business terminology. Students were able to see the relevance of this task, both in terms of business applications and in helping them prepare for their examinations. In several lessons, the teacher successfully guided the students to move from descriptive work to critical analysis and evaluation. In business administration lessons, the teaching is mostly good or satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers are skilful in ensuring that each student makes good progress at a level appropriate to his or her ability and aptitude.

61. Many students demonstrate considerable skill in IT. In one lesson, for example, students used the Internet effectively to research companies in preparation for a two-day visit to these organisations the following week. They then prepared questionnaires of a professional standard. Some students use the Internet to track stock market shares regularly as part of their studies.

62. Students are aware of the assessment requirements relating to their courses. Homework is set regularly, and is marked and returned promptly. Students value the detailed and constructive feedback they receive on written assignments. However, individual students' progress and understanding are not always checked in lessons. The teaching of key skills is not an integral part of lessons. Students receive little assessment of their key skills. Schemes of work and lesson plans contain little or no reference to key skills. Although there are established procedures for the internal verification of assessment, these are not always rigorously followed on some courses. Procedures for referring students for help and support if they are at risk of failing are unclear.

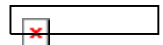
63. Most staff have relevant commercial experience and draw upon this effectively in their teaching. There are some good links with businesses through work placements and visits. Students on business studies, accounting, and business administration courses have access to good ICT facilities in the computer centre and also in well-equipped base rooms. The library does not have sufficiently up-to-date printed or visual materials for business students.

64. Students speak highly of their teachers, particularly their willingness to advise them on a wide range of academic and personal issues. Tutorials are effective. Tutors give help and support with their HE applications. The implementation of some students' action plans is not monitored effectively.

Leadership and management

65. Day-to-day management of the business area is good. Managers provide effective, informal and continuous support for their team members. Staff work hard on improving the quality of provision. Managers make insufficient use of performance data when setting targets, such as those for retention rates and the promotion of equal opportunities.

Information and communication technology



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

Strengths

- high and rising pass and retention rates on many courses
- effective use of the Internet through group work
- good monitoring of students' progress.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on AVCE ICT course
- failure of some teachers to ensure students' full participation in learning activities
- insufficient emphasis on the commercial applications of programmes.

Scope of provision

66. At level 3, the college offers GCE AS and A-level computing, and ICT and AVCE ICT courses. A GNVQ course in ICT at intermediate level is provided but the college does not offer an ICT course at foundation level. Many students also study key skills ICT at level 2 as part of their GCE A-level

programme. Evening courses for adults are offered in integrated business technology (IBT) and computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), but numbers for these are low.

Achievement and standards

67. In 2000 and 2001, the pass and retention rates for many courses were below the national average. The retention rate for the AVCE IT course was also low during the same period. Many pass and retention rates have risen in 2002. All students completing the GNVQ intermediate ICT course passed. The pass rate for the GCE AS ICT course was 87%, compared with the national average of 77%. The value added scores of students on the GCE A-level computing course, calculated by comparing the final examination grades students obtain with their GCSE grades on entry, are broadly in line with the national average.

68. In most lessons, students' standards of work are satisfactory. In a minority of lessons, however, some students' programming skills were weak. Many students progress from level 2 to level 3 courses. Last year, half of the students on level 2 courses went on to appropriate courses at level 3.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	18	15	11
		% retention	72	93	91
		% pass rate	77	50	100
GCE AS IT	3	No. of starts	*	54	72
		% retention	*	74	94
		% pass rate	*	70	87
GCE AS computing	3	No. of starts	*	50	52
		% retention	*	86	88
		% pass rate	*	84	83
GCE A-level IT	3	No. of starts	*	*	16
		% retention	*	*	100
		% pass rate	*	*	63
GCE A-level computing	3	No. of starts	45	57	27
		% retention	60	65	96
		% pass rate	71	64	81
AVCE IT	3	No. of starts	*	18	15
		% retention	*	56	60
		% pass rate	*	67	89

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

69. Most of the teaching is good and students learn effectively. No lessons were unsatisfactory. Students use the Internet with ease in many lessons to carry out research for their projects or for

class discussions. In one lesson, students created a quiz with Internet links given as clues. In another, students researched Internet protocols and e-mailed other members of their group to inform them of the Internet links they had discovered.

70. Students work well together to gather information and formulate opinions, which they are then able to present to the whole class with confidence. Some students pose thoughtful and incisive questions. In one carefully planned lesson, students were asked to study several cases of computer misuse and they formed a mock jury to decide on the appropriate sentence for `hackers', based on the Computer Misuse Act.

71. In a few lessons, the teacher talked too much, did not question the students and did not give them enough to do themselves. Occasionally teachers gave unclear explanations of topics or used complex language, which is too difficult for many students to understand. As the self-assessment report acknowledges, in some lessons, students have difficulties relating their activities to a commercial context. In one session, for example, students were unable to explain why it would be necessary for a computer program to distinguish between positive and negative numbers for practical applications. The college is addressing this issue by arranging for students to visit major companies and see how they use ICT. In addition, guest speakers from local businesses and industry are being invited to come and talk to students.

72. Teachers provide good feedback on homework, highlighting what students need to do to improve their work. Occasionally, teachers send comments by e-mail. The college, however, does not provide students with a college e-mail account. Students can access teachers' powerpoint demonstrations on the college's computer system and they find these helpful when carrying out revision. They cannot access the information from a computer outside the college.

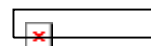
73. Individual students' progress is carefully monitored throughout the year. A student review week takes place every term and during this, students are set targets for raising their performance. Teachers monitor students' progress. They offer extra help to those students who need it and this is greatly valued by the students concerned.

74. There is enough specialist computer hardware and software to meet students' needs. Few data projectors and digital whiteboards, however, are available. Most IT rooms are comfortable and spacious. Teachers can see the students' monitor screens easily and have room to go around and assess their work. Occasionally, some computer rooms get uncomfortably hot. The library only has a few computer instruction manuals and other computer-related texts. A larger selection of books is stored in the IT rooms.

Leadership and management

75. The ICT curriculum area is well managed. Staff work well together as a small but effective team. Informal discussions are supplemented by regular meetings, at which agreed actions are monitored. For example, staff have organised additional lunchtime sessions for students on the GCE A-level computing course, with the aim of raising the pass rate. The uptake for these sessions is high.

Sports, leisure and tourism



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on most courses

- lively and challenging teaching
- good commercial links
- good practical facilities for sports
- effective organisation of courses.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on AVCE and national diploma courses
- consistently low pass rates on GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course
- ineffective use of teaching resources
- inadequate target setting for students
- poor use of data in curriculum management.

Scope of provision

76. The college offers GCE AS and A-level physical education, first and national diploma sports science, AVCE leisure and tourism courses, and a leisure and tourism course at intermediate level. Students on these courses can work towards an additional qualification in sports leadership and the award for sports representatives.

Achievement and standards

77. In 2002, the retention and pass rate on the GCE A-level physical education course rose to above the national average. The pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate travel and tourism and the first diploma in sports science courses have also risen significantly, and in 2002, were in line with the national average. In contrast, the pass rate on the GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism course

has been consistently low, and since 1999, has been below the national average. The retention rates on the AVCE and national diploma courses are low.

78. Students' attainment in lessons is at least satisfactory and often high, particularly in practical sessions. Sports students develop sports leadership skills while working with adult students with disabilities.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	15	18	19
		% retention	93	73	89
		% pass rate	64	45	71
First diploma sports science	2	No. of starts	16	19	13
		% retention	88	75	73
		% pass rate	100	67	95
National diploma in sports science	3	No. of starts	19	30	21
		% retention	74	71	65
		% pass rate	93	89	100
AVCE leisure and recreation	3	No. of starts	*	*	28
		% retention	*	*	46
		% pass rate	*	*	92
AVCE travel and tourism	3	No. of starts	18	23	24
		% retention	89	70	54
		% pass rate	80	94	77
GCE AS physical education	3	No. of starts	*	35	30
		% retention	*	76	86
		% pass rate	*	88	96
GCE A-level physical education	3	No. of starts	22	37	18
		% retention	68	72	94
		% pass rate	93	77	94

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

79. Most teaching is good or better. Teachers are enthusiastic. Their teaching is lively, vibrant and purposeful. Students clearly value and enjoy their lessons. Teachers have high expectations of their students, most of whom are keen to learn. A range of different teaching strategies is used. These encourage students to be critically evaluative and to engage in reasoned argument when working with others. In one lesson, the teacher enlivened debate, using current topics as examples of how data are used in everyday life. A few lessons, however, were uninspiring. In these, the teacher failed to kindle the students' interest in the topic being studied and did not make it exciting.

80. Talks by guest speakers and industrial visits add variety to learning programmes and provide

variety. Some students undertake work placements, where they put into practice theories learned in the classroom. Staff have relevant experience in the sports and leisure industries. The services of support staff are not always used effectively.

81. Some audiovisual aids are of poor quality or are not used well. For example, in one lesson a powerpoint presentation took so long to set up, that by the time the equipment was ready to use, the students had lost interest. Many visual materials are poorly prepared and difficult to read. Facilities for practical programmes are good and include a large sports hall, an all-weather playing area and playing fields. In contrast, changing facilities and general teaching accommodation for sports students are poor. There is no performance laboratory. Accommodation for leisure courses is good and some displays of student work brighten up the area, creating a comfortable and pleasant learning environment. General equipment for all courses is satisfactory.

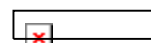
82. There are effective procedures for internal verification of assessment. Teachers mark students' work to consistent standards. Some marking is not helpful. Written comments from the teachers are merely descriptive and fail to provide students with advice on how they can improve their work.

83. Support for students is good and is valued by them. Leisure and tourism students complete an effective induction. During this, they carry out an assignment they find interesting, which helps them make the transition from school to college. Additional learning support is made available to those students who are identified as being in need of it. Attendance at learning support sessions is voluntary and many students fail to accept the help they are offered.

Leadership and management

84. Staff are led by enthusiastic managers. Course organisation is effective. Staff teams hold regular meetings, at which they carry out self-assessment and discuss and agree annual performance targets. There is insufficient use of data on students' performance in curriculum planning. Managers carry out annual appraisals of teachers effectively. During these, the training needs of staff are identified and are subsequently met through a valuable staff-development programme.

Childcare, health and social care



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

Strengths

- high pass rates on childhood studies and nursery nursing courses
- consistently high retention rates on NVQ level 3 early years course
- successful progression of students to further courses
- good individual support from teachers.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on NVQ level 3 courses
- low and declining retention rates on AVCE health and social care course
- insufficient communication with employers of work-based learners.

Scope of provision

85. The provision includes full-time day courses in childcare and health and social care, and part-time day courses leading to an NVQ care and early years at levels 2 and 3. There are part-time evening courses leading to an NVQ in care and early years, and also courses in child minding at levels 2 and 3. Work-based learners attend the college for theory lessons and help with key skills. The college is developing provision for foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. There are no foundation level courses for those not yet qualified to undertake a course at level 2 or 3. Care students can follow short courses and gain qualifications, such as those in first aid, food hygiene and manual handling, with the aim of improving their employment prospects.

Achievement and standards

86. Pass rates on the national diploma in childhood studies, the AVCE health and social care, and the diploma of nursery nursing courses are well above the national average. Few work-based learners complete their courses on time. In 2002, 60% of learners working towards an NVQ in care at level 2 and 91% of learners working towards an NVQ in care at level 3, did not achieve a qualification. The college continues to support these students, however, and many of them aim to gain qualifications eventually. Retention rates are high on the GNVQ intermediate health and social care, the NVQ level 3 early years and the national diploma in childhood studies courses. Retention rates, however, are low and declining on the AVCE health and social care and NVQ level 3 care courses.

87. Many students progress to further courses in the college. In 2002, 35% of the students on the level 2 certificate in childcare and education course went on to the level 3 diploma in childcare and education course. Around two thirds of the students completing level 3 courses in 2002 entered employment and one third went on to HE. A high proportion of students on early years courses progress to HE.

88. The written and oral work of students in lessons is good and most learners make the progress expected of them. Students develop good personal and learning skills, such as working independently, working collaboratively, and the skills of analysis and synthesis.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ advanced/AVCE health and social care	3	No. of starts	34	18	17
		% retention	65	56	47

		% pass rate	84	80	100
NVQ early years	3	No. of starts	23	26	27
		% retention	96	100	93
		% pass rate	27	15	52
Diploma in nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	9	21	8
		% retention	67	67	75
		% pass rate	100	86	100
National diploma in childhood studies	3	No. of starts	19	8	18
		% retention	100	75	83
		% pass rate	95	100	100
NVQ care	3	No. of starts	*	30	21
		% retention	*	100	57
		% pass rate	*	17	8

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

89. Much of the teaching is good or better. Lessons are well prepared and schemes of work are thorough. The teaching materials used in some lessons were imaginative and helped the students to extend their knowledge. In one lesson on the childcare and education course, enterprising use was made of a collection of visually stimulating books. The students assessed the suitability of different books for different age groups, thereby developing their evaluative skills effectively.

90. Teachers support students well and give particular priority to helping students who are finding aspects of their work difficult. In an NVQ care lesson, case studies of varying degrees of complexity were chosen carefully for different students to discuss, thereby meeting their specific learning needs. In a few lessons, some students did not find the tasks they were given demanding enough. They finished them quickly, learnt little, and were left with nothing to do. Students demonstrate satisfactory IT skills in assignments and portfolio work, although there is little use of ICT in lessons.

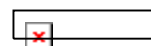
91. Theory lessons on NVQ courses are well planned but some are not well attended. Individual progress reviews for work-based learners conducted in the workplace are often carried out in unsuitable locations. For example, the reviews are sometimes carried out where young children or elderly clients are present, and this can be embarrassing for the learners concerned. NVQ assessors are thorough in their assessments. Assessments are fair and meet the awarding body requirements. Internal verification of assessment is carried out satisfactorily. Feedback to students on their assessment is thorough. Progress reports are sent to the parents of students aged 16 to 18 twice a year and more frequently if necessary. There is insufficient communication with employers of work-based learners and they are not notified formally of their trainees' progress.

92. Additional learning support is offered to students, although it is up to them to accept it or not. Students who opt for additional learning support find it beneficial. Good use is made of learning support assistants in the classroom. The tutorial system is in a stage of transition and care students resent the fact that the general studies programme is compulsory. Tutors offer good career advice and encourage students to consider applying for courses in HE. The library has a good range of textbooks, but little relevant stock to give students a wider perspective of their subject.

Leadership and management

93. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff have responded effectively to the care training needs of the local community. There is close teamwork and teachers value the support and encouragement they receive from managers. Individual courses are well managed, but there are few formal procedures for teachers to share good practice. Course targets are set and progress towards reaching them is monitored. There is insufficient focus at staff meetings, however, on ways of raising retention and pass rates. Staff have current occupational expertise and they are able to update their professional skills. However, there are no structured plans to meet the requirement of the NVQ code of practice and provide professional development for staff who teach on NVQ courses.

Visual and performing arts, music and media



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

Strengths

- high and rising pass and retention rates on GCE A-level courses
- imaginative teaching
- high standard of students' practical work
- benefit to students of the current commercial skills and knowledge of teachers
- stimulating curriculum enrichment activities.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on GCSE, national diploma and some GCE AS courses
- inadequate resources and accommodation in some curriculum areas.

Scope of provision

94. There is a wide range of courses at level 3. These include GCE AS and A level in art, drama, film studies, photography, media studies, music, theatre, and performance studies. Vocational courses

include the national diploma in media and National Certificate of Further Education (NCFE) courses in video production and music. GCSE courses are available in photography and media.

Achievement and standards

95. Pass and retention rates are high. In 2002, they were above the national average on all GCE A-level courses and in GCE AS art and music. All students taking GCE A-level art were successful in 2002. In 2001, retention and pass rates on GCE AS courses in performance studies and media were below the national average. In 2002, retention rates were low on the national diploma in media and GCSE media courses, but all students remaining on the course were successful in obtaining their qualification.

96. Learners produce work of a high standard in workshops, studios and other practical situations. There is much successful experimentation and innovation in all the curriculum areas, particularly in work for media, textiles, photography and film projects. All teachers encourage students to work responsibly on their own and be creative. Art and photography work is exciting and is displayed around the college.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE AS media	3	No. of starts	*	103	97
		% retention	*	79	81
		% pass rate	*	92	89
GCE AS art	3	No. of starts	*	159	55
		% retention	*	85	89
		% pass rate	*	88	94
GCE AS performance studies	3	No. of starts	*	32	24
		% retention	*	75	77
		% pass rate	*	90	88
GCE A-level art	3	No. of starts	83	57	37
		% retention	70	80	92
		% pass rate	84	98	100
GCE A-level photography	3	No. of starts	78	91	41
		% retention	60	70	100
		% pass rate	75	75	90
National diploma in media	3	No. of starts	20	14	11
		% retention	55	71	64
		% pass rate	**	90	100

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

* course did not run

** data not available

Quality of education and training

97. Teaching is mainly good and some is very good. Teachers build carefully on what the students already know, through appropriate reference to theorists and practical exploration of their ideas. Students work creatively when presenting their ideas and in their coursework assignments. In a lesson on a national diploma course, for example, the students were absorbed in their editing of a music video and had previously been shooting material and selecting background.

98. Teachers use imaginative approaches to engage the interest of students and to develop students' creativity and practical techniques. Teachers work with students individually or in small groups, to help them develop ideas and carry out projects. The teaching of theory lessons is less effective. Confident students express their views articulately and intelligently, but on occasions they are allowed to dominate discussions. Some teachers fail to ask students penetrating questions in order to check their understanding. Some students arrive late for lessons and disrupt them but the teacher does not ask for any explanation of their lack of punctuality.

99. Skills such as time management and team building are developed successfully by students on performing arts and music courses, particularly through preparing for performance. Students benefit from, and have much respect for, the current commercial skills and knowledge of the teachers. The support provided by technicians is good.

100. There are some problems in respect of resources and accommodation. Although there are sufficient cameras for media and film courses, too few computers for editing are available to learners. For example, during one lesson, there were only 12 computers available to 32 learners. The performing arts studio has dated lighting and sound equipment, torn blackout curtains and the floor is unsuitable for dancing. The kiln is no longer in use. The teaching accommodation is spread out across the college and resources have to be carried from one part of the college to another.

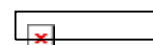
101. Students have good working relationships with teachers and tutors, and value the support they receive. They are kept well informed of their progress, through regular discussions with their teachers. The parents of students aged 16 to 18 are kept informed of their progress at parents' evenings and in written reports. Students understand assessment requirements relating to their course. The written feedback they receive on film coursework is helpful and constructive. Some schemes of work cover key skills adequately.

102. Curriculum enrichment activities are very good. They include a college-wide musical production performed at a nearby theatre, additional courses in music and video production, and visits to galleries and theatres. Film and media students have the opportunity to visit New York. The curriculum area has good links with the local community. Students perform at local venues and college bands play at local events. The media team has responded proactively to commercial requests, from local schools and Hastings County Council, to produce short video promotion material. These projects are now used as an integral part of the core programme.

Leadership and management

103. Curriculum management is satisfactory. Staff who teach art, media, photography, and film communicate well and work effectively together in teams. Drama and music staff do not hold formal meetings to discuss issues relating to students and the curriculum. Some course teams do not carry out quality assurance with enough rigour.

Humanities: History, classical studies, religious studies and philosophy



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

Strengths

- much stimulating teaching
- very high pass rates on all courses
- high retention rates on most courses
- high standard of students' work
- very effective support for individual students
- well-managed courses.

Weaknesses

- insufficient co-ordination of curriculum management.

Scope of provision

104. GCE AS and A-level courses cover a wide range of subjects. The following subjects were inspected: history, classical studies, religious studies, and philosophy. History is offered in two options: modern, and 16th and 17th century. At the time of the inspection, there were around 200 enrolments for these subjects, with history attracting over half of them.

Achievement and standards

105. Pass rates on all courses are consistently very high. In 2002, all students passed in GCE AS and A-level religious studies, GCE AS history, and GCE A-level classical studies and philosophy. In 2002, 95% of students passed in GCE A-level history, although only 30% secured high grades. A value added analysis of results in 2001, that compares the grades students obtain at GCE A level with their previous attainment in the GCSE, shows that students' achievements in history and philosophy placed the college in the top quartile of sixth form colleges for value added scores. Retention rates have risen substantially in history and classical studies. In GCE A-level history they rose from 64% in 2000 to 95% in 2002.

106. The standard of students' work in lessons and in assignments is high. Students work with confidence and enthusiasm and the level of their attainment is high. GCE AS students in particular, although at a comparatively early stage of their course, demonstrated that they had already made considerable progress.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities: history, classical studies, religious

studies and philosophy, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE AS history	3	No. of starts	*	51	56
		% retention	*	88	88
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE A-level history	3	No. of starts	42	54	44
		% retention	64	72	95
		% pass rate	96	97	95
GCE A-level classical studies	3	No. of starts	*	8	10
		% retention	*	63	100
		% pass rate	*	100	100
GCE A-level philosophy	3	No. of starts	*	13	7
		% retention	*	54	100
		% pass rate	*	86	100
GCE AS philosophy	3	No. of starts	*	19	16
		% retention	*	89	75
		% pass rate	*	76	80
GCE AS religious studies	3	No. of starts	*	10	7
		% retention	*	80	86
		% pass rate	*	88	100

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

* course not running

Quality of education and training

107. Most teaching is very good and no lessons inspected were unsatisfactory. Teachers command the respect of their students. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives. Much teaching is very lively and consistently challenges students to think for themselves. In a GCE AS history lesson, students very effectively studied the changing economic policy in Russia in the years after the revolution. Individual students were asked to articulate the contrasting perspectives of different groups: factory workers, peasants, ex-soldiers, and party officials. Teachers encourage students to take a balanced view. In one history lesson the teacher was careful to explain the grievances, which caused mutinying Spanish soldiers to commit atrocities in Antwerp during the 16th century. In religious studies and philosophy lessons, the teacher encourages students to discuss issues and students work purposefully in groups. In a religious studies lesson, students working in groups examined the tenets of considering Buddhism, and gave cogent and thorough feedback on their findings. Occasionally, there is a tendency for the teacher to become too dominant, with over use of loaded or rhetorical questions.

108. Students are given stimulating handouts that explain the tasks they have to carry out. In a lesson in classical studies, students examined an account of Caligula's supposedly outrageous behaviour, written half a century later, and discussed what was likely to be true in the account. Students in a GCE AS philosophy lesson considered St. Anselm's and Descartes' justifications for the existence of God, and gave their own reactions to them in a lively discussion. Course handbooks give students essential information about course content, structure and assessment requirements. They provide little guidance, however, on how to obtain additional information. There is no guidance

on using appropriate web sites and the college intranet contains no information on these four subjects.

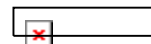
109. Teachers set appropriate work regularly. Assignments are well marked. Students value the very extensive written comments teachers give them on their work, to indicate how answers could be improved. In some cases, the comments relate exclusively to the questions set, and do not touch on ways in which students can enhance the overall quality of their work. Students' assignment work is thorough and perceptive. Some students have good ideas but cannot always express them accurately in correct English.

110. Support for individual students is strong. Teachers are very willing to make appointments to help individual students. In history, extra revision lessons take place during half-term holidays.

Leadership and management

111. This group of subjects, managed by a director of studies, forms a curriculum area within a faculty. Teachers have been bold in establishing new courses. They have pioneered three new subjects and an alternative history syllabus in the last three years, and these courses operate efficiently. Teachers work well together, but do so mainly on an informal basis. There is insufficient co-ordination of the overall curriculum area. For example, there are few formal meetings with minutes to record important decisions. Self-assessment reports are for individual subjects and do not give an overview of the whole area. Development plans do not address overall issues, such as accommodation and resources. Some effective action is taken on the views of students collected annually through questionnaires relating to each subject. Students' views are not summarised, however, to provide an overall picture of what students think of the curriculum area.

English and modern foreign languages



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

Strengths

- good teaching
- high retention and pass rates at GCE A level
- good accommodation and resources for languages
- well-produced and imaginative learning materials
- a wide range of languages provision

- effective course management.

Weaknesses

- insufficient attention to students' individual needs in language teaching
- little provision of courses at level 2 in English.

Scope of provision

112. The provision mainly serves the needs of full-time students aged 16 to 19. GCE AS and A-level courses are offered in English literature, English language and literature, French, German, Spanish and Italian. The provision also includes GCSE courses in English, Spanish, and Italian. Beginners' courses in Spanish and Japanese are currently offered and these lead to NVQs. At the time of inspection, there were 388 students enrolled on these courses. There is little provision of courses at level 2 in English.

Achievement and standards

113. Students' achievements at GCE A-level are high, with pass rates above the national average. Students attain a high proportion of higher grades in GCE A-level English literature, English language and literature, French and German, and GCE AS English literature. Pass and retention rates in GCE A-level French have risen continuously for the last three years, and in 2002, were at 100%. The percentage of GCSE English candidates gaining grades A* to C has been above the national average, although the retention rate on the GCSE English course is consistently below it. Analysis of the value added to students' achievements shows that most students obtain higher GCE A-level grades than those predicted for them on the basis of their GCSE grades on entry. Many students progress to HE. They apply to a range of universities and eight former Bexhill students are now at either Cambridge or Oxford studying English.

114. Much of the students' work was good. In their GCE A-level coursework, students show a high level of analytical skill and good depth of knowledge. Students produce some outstanding work. For example, one student gained full marks for an extended essay comparing Salman Rushdie's and E.M Foster's respective treatment of attitudes and cultural differences in post-colonial India. The essay was scholarly, elegantly written and demonstrated maturity of judgement on the part of the author.

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

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCSE English language (grades A* to C)	2	No. of starts	146	148	128
		% retention	73	58	68
		% pass rate	62	66	58
GCE AS English literature	3	No. of starts	*	79	98
		% retention	*	87	85

		% pass rate	*	90	95
GCE A-level English literature (two year)	3	No. of starts	81	95	56
		% retention	78	81	98
		% pass rate	87	100	98
GCE A-level English language and literature	3	No. of starts	49	22	21
		% retention	84	86	90
		% pass rate	93	100	95
GCE AS French language	3	No. of starts	*	21	30
		% retention	*	100	86
		% pass rate	*	86	74
GCE A-level French language	3	No. of starts	26	19	15
		% retention	65	68	100
		% pass rate	82	92	100

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

* course did not run

Quality of education and training

115. Most teaching is good or very good. Teachers make sure all students become fully absorbed in their work and find it stimulating. Lessons are well planned. Teachers succeed in exciting the students' interest. They make lessons lively and animated, but ensure that all students are able to keep up and understand what is being taught. Students work well and teachers encourage them to ask questions, contribute to discussion and think for themselves. They develop high levels of skill and are keen to succeed. In the best lessons, the teacher makes sure all the students are totally absorbed in what they have to do and pursue their own lines of enquiry effectively. Schemes of work are realistic and designed to allow teachers some degree of flexibility when implementing them. Teachers are able to exercise individual initiative in the classroom, whilst ensuring that what they teach is consistent with the scheme of work concerned. Teachers place importance on giving individual students support and helping them to become more self-confident in their studies. For example, in one lesson, students reading *The Go-Between* engaged in a lively discussion on issues of gender and class. The teacher facilitated the discussion skilfully with a light but disciplined touch and encouraged the students to take part in it. Students' contributions to the debate were valued and, where necessary, the teacher helpfully improved upon them. In another lesson, GCSE students were introduced to some love poetry including Shakespeare sonnets, and the teacher sensitively enabled them to discover meanings and emotions expressed in the poetry through relating it to their own experience.

116. There is good language teaching. A clip from a German satellite television programme on drugs, for example, was shown as part of a German lesson. The extract contained complex concepts of language structure and vocabulary, which the teacher skilfully helped the students to understand. In lessons, teachers used the language being learnt confidently when giving instructions and explanations. In some instances, however, the teacher does not ensure that the needs of individual students are met. All the students are given the same task, which is insufficiently demanding for some and too easy for others.

117. Teachers are well qualified and expert in their subjects. Resources and accommodation for modern foreign languages teaching are good, and include a language laboratory and hardware satellite television. A language assistant works with two or three students at a time to give them dictation and help develop their oral and aural skills. Rooms used for the teaching of English are well equipped, but some are cramped and they are widely dispersed. In the best lessons, staff used

imaginatively designed learning materials presented in a variety of visual styles and students value these. Modern foreign language teachers make good use of current television programmes in the language being learnt to enable students to gain familiarity with the culture and language.

118. Students' work is marked well. Teachers provide students with helpful comments on how they may improve their work and these are followed up in subsequent lessons. Students' work is marked by more than one member of staff and there are good arrangements for the internal verification of assessment. Some students on the English language and literature course lack confidence in using appropriate technical vocabulary.

119. Good curriculum enrichment activities are available to language students, such as foreign exchanges and overseas trips. The English team offers students preparation for the advanced extension award. All students are eligible to take part in college drama and arts activities. Students in this area receive good help and support from both subject and personal tutors, particularly through individual reviews during tutorials. Students have confidence in staff and feel they are approachable and helpful.

Leadership and management

120. Course management is effective. Staff give priority to ensuring that teaching and assessment are carried out well. Staff hold curriculum meetings regularly. Much of the day-to-day work in the curriculum area is governed by informal rather than formal procedures. Systems for course planning and development are not used consistently. Self-assessment is thorough and actions to build on strengths and rectify weaknesses are carried out. Staff change their practice in the light of lessons learned from self-assessment. Staff work together well as a strong team with shared responsibilities. They co-operate effectively and aim to achieve the continuous improvement of provision.

Part D: College data

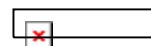
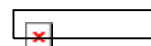


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18	19+
1	4	5
2	8	13
3	85	32
4/5	0	0
Other	3	50
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	1,374	152	23
Land-based provision	11	1	0
Construction	0	0	0
Engineering, technology and manufacture	18	0	0
Business administration, management and professional	378	95	7
Hotel and catering	122	48	2
Health and community care	268	210	7
Art and design	1,011	32	15
Humanities	2,849	133	44
Basic education	29	84	2
Total	6,060	755	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	228	183	229	63	47	35
	Retention rate	71	77	86	68	83	88
	National average	81	83	*	74	74	*
	Pass rate	57	55	87	63	41	84
	National average	70	66	*	65	66	*
2	Starters excluding transfers	587	609	602	108	91	78
	Retention rate	79	77	73	91	95	79
	National average	81	81	*	75	74	*
	Pass rate	81	76	86	70	67	74
	National average	79	83	*	68	67	*
3	Starters excluding transfers	1,852	3,713	3,358	273	286	216

	Retention rate	73	79	79	86	88	87
	National average	80	84	*	70	71	*
	Pass rate	73	74	82	42	38	49
	National average	85	85	*	63	66	*
4/5	Starters excluding transfers	0	0	*	35	19	*
	Retention rate	**	**	*	89	95	*
	National average	**	**	*	**	**	*
	Pass rate	**	**	*	3	53	*
	National average	**	**	*	**	**	*
Short	Starters excluding transfers	311	198	15	385	285	305
	Retention rate	98	93	100	97	99	99
	National average	**	**	*	**	**	*
	Pass rate	84	78	93	43	71	92
	National average	**	**	*	**	**	*
Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
Key skills	Starters excluding transfers	0	1,193	*	0	10	*
	Retention rate	**	91	*	**	80	*
	National average	85	85	*	63	72	*
	Pass rate	**	0	*	**	0	*
	National average	47	31	*	61	30	*

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).

**not applicable*

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

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 2002.

2. College rates for 1997/98-1998/99: Benchmarking Data 1997/98 to 1999/2000: Retention and Achievement Rates, produced by the Further Education Funding Council, September 2000.

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

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

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	68	30	2	107
Level 2 (intermediate)	63	32	5	38
Level 1 (foundation)	0	0	0	0
Other sessions	0	0	0	0
Totals	66	31	3	145

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